

Shadowing Silence: A Spatial Rewriting of Myths and Fairytales

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This item has been published in Issue 01-02 'On Behalf of Silence, Seeking Sanctuary,' edited by Shura Dogadaeva and Andrei Zavadski.

To cite this item: Şenel A, Yetim E (2023) Shadowing Silence: A Spatial Rewriting of Myths and Fairytales. *The February Journal*, 01-02: 139-160.
DOI: 10.35074/FJ.2023.48.17.008

To link to this item: <https://doi.org/10.35074/FJ.2023.48.17.008>

Published: 28 February 2023

Shadowing Silence: A Spatial Rewriting of Myths and Fairytales

Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim

This paper, through theory and the authors' own pedagogical and critical spatial practice, explores the ways in which myths and fairytales may suggest playful and collective storytelling to create a plurality of meanings and corporeal engagements that are often silenced through the hegemonic structures of society. Referencing feminist philosophers Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, and H el ene Cixoux, the authors take myths and fairytales

as a medium to address individual urban experiences and resistance against the city's gentrification through neoliberal administrations. Their practice, entitled Spatialized Myths, includes a collective mapping of historical and contemporary myths and rewriting of them through a shadow performance with students of architecture in a non-functioning synagogue in Gaziantep, a former Roman city in southeastern Turkey.

Keywords: feminist storytelling, Gaziantep, myths, shadow play, urban transformation

Fragments of a city appear and disappear in the pitch dark. At one point, there is a sea of roofs and windows, and then a labyrinth of underground vaults and wells. Colors and lights flicker and move around behind the curtain (Figure 1). Sounds of rustling, crunching, swishing, and scratching are heard from time to time behind the storytellers' voices. While the shadow figures on sticks play on the screen, behind them are a tangling of arms and rushing bodies that try to move from one side of the hexagonal platform to the other throughout the performance (Figure 2). This transformation story of a city and its inhabitants subversively adopts well-known characters, places, and events in myths, fairytales, and history without prioritizing any. Traces of everyday urban experience materialize on the screen and in the darkness surrounding it: the flow of crowds in urban squares, the sound of water within the fountains and wells, and the textures of stone walls and underground caves.

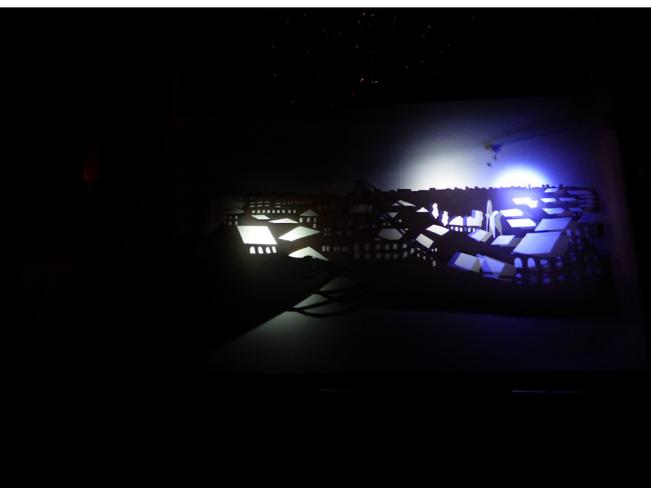
Briefly depicted above is the final performance of a workshop that took place over a week in January 2016 in the city of Gaziantep, Turkey.¹ This workshop and its final performance are, for us, ways of addressing imposed and

adopted silences in the city throughout its conflicted history of displacements and urban transformations. Here, we argue that silence is hardly a mere vulnerability or the dichotomous opposite of the dominating voice; it also offers possibilities for resistance and collaboration with a heightened sense of spatial limits, material qualities, and corporeal abilities. The workshop cultivated these sensibilities with several on-site drawing, painting, and writing exercises and a final shadow theater performance, which were intended to reveal the spatiality and materiality of those silent practices. Through the workshop we manifested a kind of collaboration with silent participants of the city such as ethnic minorities, refugees, and informal inhabitants and workers, and those others who are often excluded from the city for being non-citizens and non-humans. By collaboration, we mean providing the space and time to recognize and appreciate silence and silent practices: drawing and painting to reveal the traces of silent productions in the built environment, rewriting myths and fairytales to draw attention to suppressed and unvoiced collectivities, and appropriating the traditional Turkish art of shadow play as a medium to propose that an alternative narrative should be fragmentary, multiple, and incomplete in order to give silences some space and time.

Belonging to the second and third generation of migrant families from southeastern Turkey, the authors of this article inherit stories of women's suppression on the maternal side, where women's silence and submission were expected. Those stories of silence transferred to us from our mothers and grandmothers give us incentive to explore the city of Gaziantep beyond the tourist's gaze. We wonder how this socially and spatially rich city hides its variety of voices within a singular dominant one of nationalist and touristic

Figure 1. A scene from the *Spatialized Myths* shadow play (2016) Gaziantep. © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.

Figure 2. Performers seen behind the scene during the shadow play. © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.



tendency. Besides this personal interest, our architectural and academic backgrounds lead us to critically read the ways in which spatial practices, such as building, rebuilding, displacement, and representation, play a significant role in silencing many different voices in this city. Yet, as stated above, while official spatial practices tend to silence the minorities and the marginalized, our intention in this article is to also argue for existing and potential resistant silence practices that participate in the production of space. For this, we first explore the relationship between our own spatial practices and the silent practices that produce the city beyond given orders and fixed conceptions. Drawing on the theories of Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Michel de Certeau (1984), we acknowledge everyday spatial practices (such as routines, seemingly insignificant work-related or leisure activities, and simple acts of living) as part of the production of space. We show that the way we approach the city through certain kinds of drawing, painting, and writing may reveal suppressed spatial and material knowledges in the built environment. This helps us establish that these suppressed knowledges are silenced yet still exist in other forms, and as such they need to be accessed differently.

Here, we will propose certain kinds of drawing, painting, and writing as silent textual practices that pose resistance to authoritarian material and discursive practices of building and mythmaking. As literary and architectural theorist Ann Bergren (1983) reminds us through her study of ancient Greek history and mythology, textual practices of, for example, weaving may be regarded as alternative ways of communication for women who are traditionally silenced. Both literally and metaphorically, weaving with thread to produce textiles and weaving with words to produce poetry make 'silent material speak'; they are 'material representation of audible, immaterial speech' (Bergren 1983: 72). Architectural theorist Jennifer Bloomer (1993) agrees with Bergren with regard to textile/text being more than a substitute for a lack of voice and enabling a resurfacing of the hidden and the repressed. Bloomer (1993) adds that text is hardly 'a transparent medium through which speech or truth is expressed' (p. 10), operating through allegories, cryptic messages, and signs, just like other textual media such as hieroglyphs, collages, etchings, and maps. We regard rewriting myths as another such textual practice that can resist established meanings. To conclude, we illustrate our thesis of resistant silent practices through a depiction of our myth rewriting and shadow performance.

Searching for silent practices through drawing and painting

During the workshop, drawing, painting, and writing were used as forms of participation in the production of urban space, as means of performing those spaces before listening to authoritative stories and repeating established meanings. The participants produced personal and collective knowledges of the city's topography, streets, traditional and informal architecture, everyday life, and ongoing urban transformation. We, as workshop organizers,

conducted collective drawings with different materials and techniques in specific locations, aiming to reveal those resistant knowledges of silent practices. One of these locations was a Roman underground cistern from the thirteenth century, Pisirici Kasteli, which was drawn with charcoal on a fifty-centimeter-wide paper extending along the five-meter length of the cistern's floor (Figure 3). The dim light and cool humid air of the sonorous cistern were transferred onto the paper through a contrasting of the white of the paper and the dark shades of the charcoal, faded and blurred at the edges as it was smudged by the continuously moving hands and arms of the drawers. After a few minutes, participants rotated around the paper clockwise and continued drawing where the previous participant left off. Participants' initial hesitation and insecurity about drawing faded away as they modified an already existing drawing, a similar approach to retelling an existing myth. The rotation repeated a couple of more times, and individual drawings transformed into a collective one, gaining a common language since all the students were involved in every part of the drawing. The print of the floor tiles, the humid air, the pressure of participants' bodies, and the residues of their hands all found their way onto the drawing paper. Reciprocally, the dust of the floor and the charcoal gathered on the participants' hands and clothes. This reminds us that the performance of touch, as feminist and queer theorist Sara Ahmed (2004) points out, is sticky. '[W]hat sticks "shows us" where the object has traveled through what it has gathered onto its surface, gatherings that become a part of the object, and call into question its integrity as an object' (Ahmed 2004: 91). The cistern, the drawing, and



Figure 3. Collective charcoal drawing practice at Pişirici Kasteli. © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.

our bodies exchanged materials and affected each other; such experiences would be carried over in different forms to the final performance.

Moving on from the underground, participants were brought to the busiest square of the city during rush hour. They were asked to make a blind contour drawing of this place, not looking at what they were drawing while continuously drawing what they saw (which in this case was rapidly moving people and vehicles) (Figure 4). Our standing point overlooking this square was along a wall that acted as a table for another five-meter-long drawing paper. The performance of drawing intrigued pedestrians, who paused what they were doing and started checking out the drawings, even giving participants some feedback. Therefore, the act of drawing became not only a communication medium with the pedestrians but also a bodily intervention into the daily routine of the urban space. For another task, the participants had to use a scratchboard drawing technique where they painted layers of oil pastel and scraped the upper layer to create various textures. They were expected to reflect urban texture from one of the highest points of historical Gaziantep, the Center for Gaziantep Research. As they scratched into the paper, they brought out both the texture of the medium (paper) and the content (site). Therefore, the haptic experience of painting/scratching also added another layer of the information accumulated from the site. Texture painting/scratching was followed by a visit to the Zeugma Mosaic Museum, where the participants collected and drew narratives linking places, objects, and characters that would be used during the performance later on.

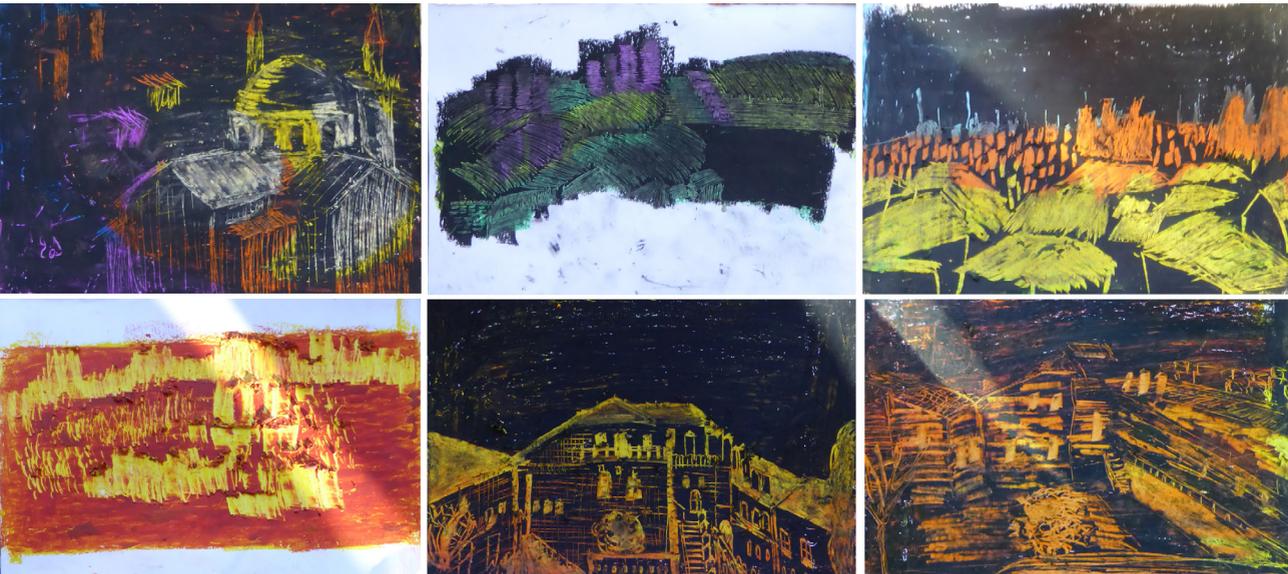


Figure 4. Collective blind contour drawing practice at Suburcu Street. © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.

We believe that these representation techniques respond to the authorities' urban planning strategy. The government's undemocratic urbanization policies are radically transforming the city's vernacular architecture, homogenizing both the urban texture and the city's demography. Moreover, the tension related to the Syrian refugee crisis and the authorities' xenophobic scapegoating create another layer and add another problem to the socio-political setting of the city. The scratchboard drawing technique brings out hidden and unexpected textures both literally and figuratively, whether that be a color underneath many others, several-thousand-year-old Roman mosaics, or even the diversity of ethnicities that exist in the same region (Figure 5). The blind contour continuous line technique challenged the hierarchical approaches in urban planning that result in control, segregation, and destruction of those regarded as inferior. In the drawing, a line follows, links, and superposes the contours of bodies. There is no separation between objects and subjects, living and nonliving, human and non-human, and foreground and background. This kind of drawing suggests a non-hierarchical and dynamic understanding of the environment and allows all to exist together (Figure 6). The charcoal drawing suggests a multiple view of a place. Different perspectives are drawn simultaneously, negotiating space on the surface of the paper and allowing for articulation through the openness of unfinished lines, while the blurry edges of lines and clouds of charcoal smudges foster the viewer's imagination (Figure 7). We suggest this technique as a critique of top-down, unifying urban planning strategies.

In addition to the drawings' techniques, their locations are important for understanding the city and its past and present myths, which are employed to silence multiple cultures, ethnicities, genders, and spatialities. The Roman cistern where we did the charcoal drawing is

Figure 5. Scratchboard drawings showing views of the city of Gaziantep from the terrace of the Center for Gaziantep Research. © The workshop participants, all rights reserved, used with permission.



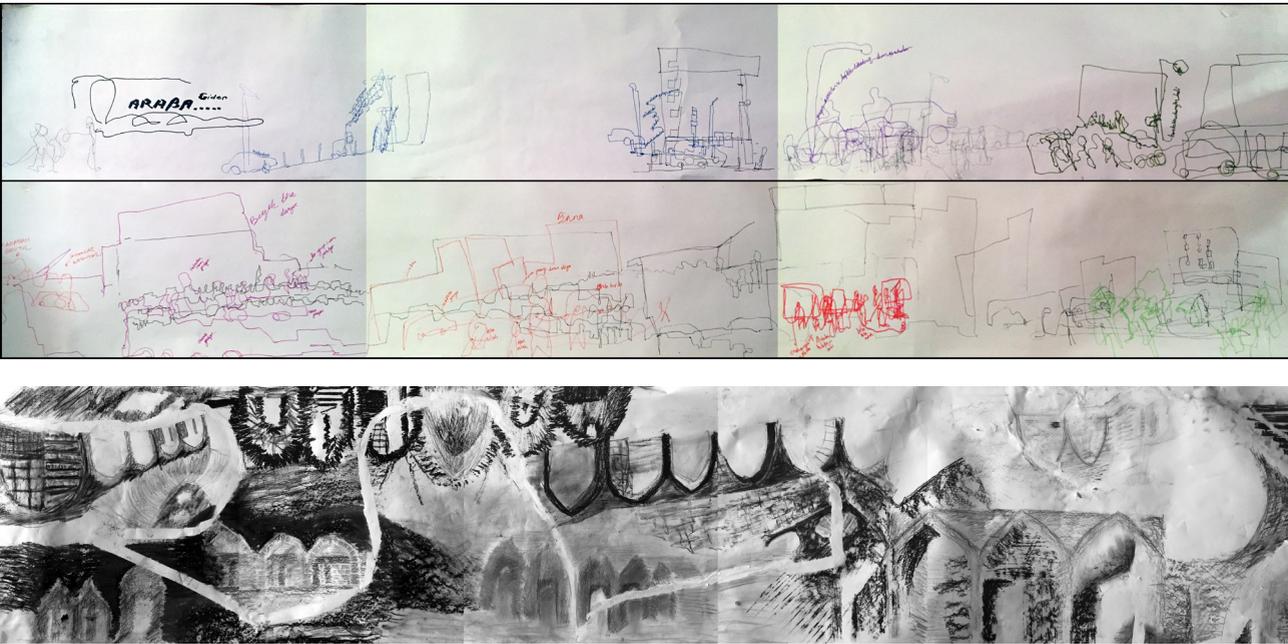


Figure 6. Detail of the collective blind contour drawing. © The workshop participants, all rights reserved, used with permission.

known as a *kastel*; it is part of a great underground network connected to almost every house through tunnels called *livas* (Yamaç and Eğrikavuk 2013). More than supplying fresh water to every household, it literally creates an underground solidarity for women, where they unite and connect while doing laundry; meanwhile, their kids play in the pools during hot summer days. Modern scholarly myths of the contemporary city, as political scientist Elif Ekin Akşit (2011) suggests in the context of *hammams*, have claimed traditional public baths to be the opposite of healthy, modern, and rational ways of living associated with large open squares for public activities and individual bathrooms at apartment flats. The demeaning of historical public baths in the modern culture of Turkey results in a binary thinking of public and private spaces, conceived as male and female spheres respectively. In the same context, *kastels* are mostly abandoned today and regarded as tourist sights. It may be argued that women's public presence and socializing without consumption (as in contemporary shopping malls) is significantly discouraged through the lack of variety of public spaces. Our charcoal drawing aimed to capture the spatial and material qualities that allowed women a public presence in the old days.

The site of the blind contour drawing was one of the busiest squares in the historical center of Gaziantep. This square is formed at a clearing on Suburcu Street that provides an occasional rest stop on this commercial street leading to the trade center at one end and governmental buildings at the other. This part of the historical city went through an extensive renovation process in the 2000s. This renovation aimed to assert a cosmopolitan urban identity, yet as sociologists Meltem Karadağ and Şenay

Figure 7. Detail of the collective charcoal drawing. заменить на © The workshop participants, all rights reserved, used with permission.

Leyla Kuzu (2018) argue, it actually resulted in a social transformation in favor of more elite city dwellers and tourists instead of the inhabitants of surrounding relatively impoverished neighborhoods. As Kuzu (2020) points out, among those who are excluded from the public spaces in the historical city center are mostly Syrian refugees, specifically women, who either chose to stay silent to blend in or have no means of access to those places. Our drawing practice at this small central square allowed us to observe the spatiotemporality of everyday life and the passers-by rushing between official buildings and shops. It also made us question the ways in which exclusion from public space and segregation works by silencing certain voices through a constructed myth of cosmopolitanism.

The Center for Gaziantep Research, at which we completed the scratchboard drawing practice, is located in one of the oldest residential neighborhoods of Gaziantep, *Bey Mahallesi*. Refurbished to commemorate an elite Turkish Gaziantep politician, Ali İhsan Gökçü, the historical house in which the research center resides is one of the many former Armenian houses in this neighborhood. The center is surrounded by other newly restored former minority houses, which are now museums, hotels, and cafes. As Karadağ (2011) reminds us, the restoration process works as an erasure of the former Armenian history. From the terrace of the research center, one can see courtyards behind the high stone walls along the labyrinthine streets; the former Armenian Apostolic Church, which was converted into Kurtuluş Mosque in 1980s; the urban regeneration taking place on the outskirts of the historical city; and new high-rise apartment blocks in the background. The scratchboard process invited participants to slow down and look from a distance at the diversity of spaces that make up this city.

The last location of the workshop was the new Gaziantep Mosaic Museum, which is a large-scale contemporary building on the ring road at the edge of an industrial district. While the museum is advertised as the largest mosaic museum in Europe, conserving the remarkable Roman archaeological heritage, it was built, as urban studies scholar Tahire Eman (2013) reminds us, by demolishing the modern architectural heritage of a state tobacco factory. The contrast between the large, aluminum-clad building of the museum and the surrounding low-rise and weary concrete urban texture is striking. Today, the area is under the pressure of urban regeneration without a proper plan for sustaining its socio-spatial life. The process of collecting and articulating narratives using fragments of archeological findings, the museum's building parts, and the surrounding urban views led us to question the homogenizing urban policies and history-making attempts (contemporary myths) of the authorities.

Rewriting myths and shadow performing as ways of 'listening to' silences

In addition to specific drawing activities and field trips, the third pillar of the workshop consisted in finding out about city myths, fairytales, and hearsay

with the aim of rewriting them. Interestingly, the urban space of Gaziantep is concentrated with such narratives. For example, the Roman underground infrastructure is the source of many mysterious, hilarious, and troubling stories on real and imagined links between places and people. The tombs of Islamic holy figures are plenty within and around the city (Durma 2005). Most of them are associated with stories of certain miraculous events and powers. It is not unlikely that these religiously significant places have been similarly meaningful for the previous societies that lived on these lands. In a recent archeological finding, one of the tombs, the Father Dülük Tomb, was traced back to the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus, which was found at the same location (Winter and Blömer 2018). Father Dülük is associated with the Roman Semitic storm god Hadad, the Hittite Teşup, Jupiter Dolichenus, and Zeus, all of which are believed to give power to young men.

The city reasserted its identity through heroic figures and victorious fights from the time of the 1919–22 Turkish War of Independence, when Gaziantep was occupied by French troops. Firstly, the combinatory name of the city was formed in 1921 with the addition of the word *gazi*, which means ‘veteran’ in Turkish. The traces of gunfire on the former Kendirli Catholic Armenian Church, which was used as a French base during the Independence War, the neighborhoods and streets named after the civil heroes of the war (e.g. Şehitkamil, *Karayılan*), and the city’s war museums (the Museum of Gaziantep Defense And Heroism Panorama, the Şahinbey Museum of National Struggle) are continuous reminders of this victorious past. War memorials are still being constructed, such as the Memorial for the Martyred Women of the War that was erected in 2016. More contemporary myths claim economic growth through tourism and construction industries. For example, a mosaic that is a partial portrait of a ‘Gypsy Girl’ is used to generate mystery, excitement, and interest at the mosaic museum. Reproductions of this incomplete image support the identity of Gaziantep as an archaeological heritage site (Savaş 2019; Tanaka 2015). The unique cuisine of the city and the need for new high-rise apartment blocks are some of the contemporary myths that support authenticity and modernity as new identities produced for the city’s stake in global tourism and the economy.

Myth, with regard to a place, is produced by two specific processes: one by the authorities through dominant representations and selective conservation and construction practices, and the other by people through attaching meanings and emotions to certain places and reproducing them by means of hearsay, fairy tales, folk music, and the like. Here, we include in our work ancient and historical foundational myths about how the city is established the way it is, more recent ideological ones about the urban identity that is adopted in times of conflict and crises in order to provide a collective drive for the society to live and build the city, and everyday material reminders of conflicts and collaborations in urban life found in modern mythical narratives, like those Roland Barthes (1957/1991) has written about. Myths work as an affective infrastructure for society, linking in a supportive manner different times, people, animals, objects, and places.

Cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1991) defines myths as people's way of giving meaning to places, transforming them into significant presences for a society by naming and storytelling. Myths, as Tuan suggests, have this transformative power because of their foundational character, which seeks to explain the ways in which society operates, and thus strengthen one's bond to a place.

Without forgetting the oppressive agency of myths, which we discuss in detail below, it is worth acknowledging their potential to regard a place as an unchronological, more-than-human assemblage that supports collective life in a place by providing bonds among different cultures and times and imagining other possible bonds. For example, in Gaziantep, water myths bring to mind the more-than-human assemblages that accommodate urban life. In urban space, we continuously come across infrastructures of transportation and distribution of water: drainage, and irrigation systems such as *kastels* in public space; pools and wells in the courtyards of houses; modern-day municipal clean water and sewage systems and their manhole covers visible on the roads. There are many place names that refer to infrastructures that are non-existent today, such as Suburcu (meaning 'water tower' in Turkish) Street and Kastelbaşı (head of a *kastel*/water structure) Street. There are narratives about the efficiency of old infrastructures for separating clean and used water, about children wandering from under one house to another through underground water pipes, and about socialization along the Alleben River and at *kastels* (Erdal 2010: 64–69). While the stories about thriving public space are told like myths, urban regeneration projects transformed those narrated sites into mere touristic consumption. Today, children of the poor neighborhoods of Şehitkamil play at the edge of a 'rehabilitated' riverbed, and the municipal swimming pool provides a structured public practice. There are narratives about earlier urban agricultural practices along the Alleben River. Mythological characters like Oceanus and Tethys, who are the prolific ancestors and guardians of waters on earth, together with other water creatures on the walls of Roman houses and in the mosaics at the museum, are constant reminders of human and non-human collaborations. All these narratives and material reminders of myths in the city, we argue, referring to anthropologist Anna Tsing (2015), remind us of entanglements between human and nonhuman, everyday practices and ideological strategies, and past infrastructures with present habits of living. Our shadow play aimed to refer to these entanglements through performing water in different forms (as wavering or flowing colored lights, as swishing sounds made by ruffling plastic bags between hands, as textures created by shadows of crinkled tracing paper) and with different agencies (moving between scenes as the character of Tethys to disable and enable others in their practices of sustaining urban life, connecting the city's old and contemporary buildings from the underground by being a fixture in different scenes).

Three sources formed the basis of our myth-rewriting for the final shadow play performance: corporeal knowledge produced through our drawing activities and field trips; the myths, fairytales, and hearsay of the city we collected; and our research on socio-spatial urban transformation.

The continuous movement in the final performance between the underworld and the contemporary city reminds us of our visits to underground *kastels* and hearing numerous stories from the locals about the underground infrastructure. The rich textures in the scenes drew on the ones collected from the city through the charcoal drawing and engraving. The heroic characters that Gaziantep's place names continuously reminded us of played a significant role in the process of our myth-rewriting, which questioned existing male national heroes, especially the renowned Karayılan (Blacksnake).² The main character from the city's epic poem about the French occupation in WWI was analyzed and rethought from an antiheroic perspective. In our performance, Karayılan becomes a snake that collaborates with other characters to keep the city floating on the waters, yet forgets its mission while playing in the pool of a *kastel*.

The myth-rewriting during the workshop consisted of a discussion of existing myths and a collective roundtable rewriting following the aforementioned drawing practices, visits, and research. Existing myths were questioned for their hegemonic, nationalistic, and violent content. Each participant proposed a sentence that responded to the previous participant's one. There were some rules for proposing sentences for our attempt to retell the myths of the city: there are going to be no heroes or violence; no hierarchies would be created between genders or species; everyday and insignificant events will be told to acknowledge forgotten stories; and the plot would encourage a more just city for its inhabitants. As organizers, we—when it was our turn to speak—postponed the ending by adding new events and characters, and introduced plot twists to make the participants think further.

The story starts with a scene of a public picnic on the banks of the river, which is a common memory articulated by citizens during our workshop. Today, the area has been transformed into a public park and the river rehabilitated for people to visit in a more structured way at a swimming pool, a shopping mall, and exhibition halls. In the story, a drought drives the citizens to seek help from the national heroes of the Independence War, Şahinbey and Karayılan (Blacksnake), who lose their way and get separated in the underworld, which is ruled by Tethys, the materialization of rivers (Figures 8, 9). Şahinbey then tries to seek help from the citizens by opening up the underground waterways that reach up to and connect all houses in the city. Our myth makes the heroes vulnerable, and victims become agents who act for their rescue. The citizens let their children down into the narrow wells on ropes, which are eventually entangled and must be cut, releasing the children into the waters to get lost in the underworld. The children are claimed by Tethys to swim and play joyfully for the rest of their lives. Syrian refugee children, who want to play along the river despite the administrations' attempts at banning such activities, are implied here. Şahinbey digs his way up to a *kastel* and meets the long-gone minority citizens, who then help him to build winding stairs up to find the Titan partner of Tethys, Oceanus, and to bring them together to solve the ecological crises that caused the drought in the first instance (Figures 10, 11).



Figure 8. A scene from the *Spatialized Myths* shadow play showing Şahinbey and Karayılan (Blacksnake) in the underworld. © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.

Figure 9. A scene from the *Spatialized Myths* shadow play showing Şahinbey talking to Tethys, Titan of rivers. © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.



Figure 10. A scene from the *Spatialized Myths* shadow play showing Şahinbey talking to the minority citizens. © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.

Figure 11. A scene from the *Spatialized Myths* shadow play showing the buildings of Gaziantep. © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.

Historians often refer to the early twentieth-century displacement of Armenians, who were most of the city's builders and craftspeople, as a great loss in terms of architecture and artifacts in addition to the loss of multiculturalism. The workshop's story presents minorities as builders of stairs who provide the city with a possibility of survival, yet, in reality, that multiplicity of possibilities has already been lost. So, instead of finding a possible solution to the crises, Şahinbey could only reach out to a well-known antihero in fairytales, *Cilalı Çengi* (Glossy Dancer), a queer figure who dances in order to turn people's worries into joy (Figures 12, 13). Şahinbey offers Gaziantep's trademark dessert, *baklava*, to the dancer. The dessert is an important part of the contemporary authentic identity of Gaziantep, as mentioned above. Today, culinary day trips to the city are quite popular, yet because of tourism, the informal residential buildings along the airport road are being demolished to build high-rise apartment blocks (Karadağ 2011: 402).

In the story, the relation between myths and spatial transformation is referred to with a plot twist where the dessert that is said to consist of forty layers metamorphizes into apartment blocks with forty floors. The dancer complicates the conditions rather than solving the problem. The new myths of modern identity are implied in the story to have worsened the

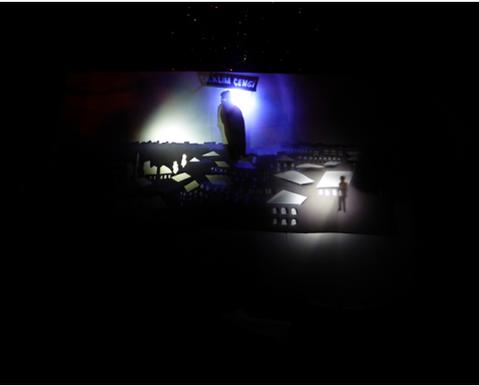


Figure 12. A scene from the *Spatialized Myths* shadow play showing Şahinbey asking for help from Cilalı Çengi (Glossy Dancer). © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.



Figure 13. A scene from the *Spatialized Myths* shadow play showing layers of Gaziantep. © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.

ecological crises. The last scene depicts Gaziantep's urban sprawl of the last decades using the lengthening shadows cast by blocks (Figures 14, 15). When Oceanus's anger is aroused, the growing blocks and dark clouds, which capture the water that is missing in the first scene, spread over the city. This evokes extreme weather events, which are argued to be a result of imbalances in the urban ecosystem. Our myth is left unfinished, and the ending is unknown, inviting the viewers to complete it with their own multiple speculations, unlike in the didactic and imposing traditional myths (Figures 16, 17).

Our rewriting of myth uses humor to point to those who are silenced in the process of rapid neoliberal urbanization, non-humans, vulnerable people who are deprived of public spaces, and minorities who have had to leave the city. As feminist thinker Helene Cixous (2009) points out, 'The myth poets of Antiquity knew what they were doing: they were putting to fable the socio-political structures of their civilization' (p. 16). Our story used the structure of classical myths to embed poor redevelopment politics, forced evictions, mass housing monopoly (TOKI), and the Syrian refugee problems into the myth retold. The rewriting of myths, we argue, allows us to raise criticism against authoritarian administrations and speculate on other ways of setting up the present.

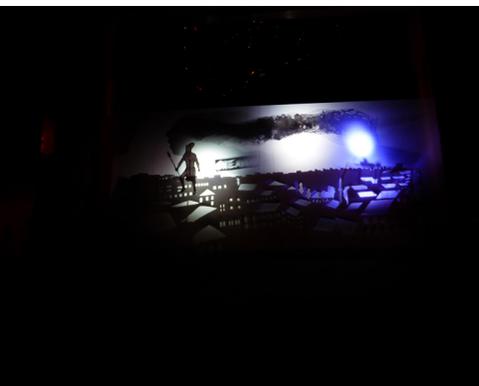


Figure 14. A scene from the *Spatialized Myths* shadow play showing Oceanus' anger and the clouds covering the city of Gaziantep. © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.

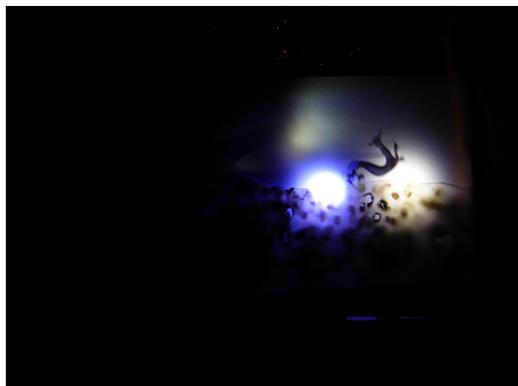


Figure 15. A scene from the *Spatialized Myths* shadow play showing Karayılan (Blacksnake) playing (courtesy of the authors).



Figure 16. Audience watching the *Spatialized Myths* shadow play. © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.

Figure 17. Audience watching the *Spatialized Myths* shadow play. © Aslıhan Şenel, Ece Yetim, all rights reserved, published with permission.

The contemporary world deems myths and fairytales futile, the opposite of rational thinking. The reason for this, as literary critic Susan Sellers (2001: 21, 23) points out, are the condescending views towards myths as being false, primitive, and pre-scientific in texts dating from classical Greece to the natural sciences of the Enlightenment. Historically, *logos* came to mean truth, reason, meaning, mind, thought, and speech, and to refer to the masculine qualities, while *mythos* refers to something unreal and fantastical—the Other of *logos*. Structuralist studies of the twentieth century, however, tend to regard myths and fairytales as functional keys to analyzing the ideologies that underpin a society's understandings and cultural production. Sellers (2001: 22) points out the ways in which both the narrative content and the operation of myths and fairytales are set in the established binary oppositions that structure patriarchal societies. Those binary oppositions, as widely argued by poststructuralist and feminist thinkers (Grosz 1994; Jay 1981; Prokhovnik 1999), suggest a hierarchy between the two opposites in order to privilege one over the other, which is suppressed, devalued, and even left unmarked, a mere negative of the dominant one. As examples, we may think of the dichotomies of men-women, mind-body, speech-silence, and creation-reproduction. In the content of myths, one may find misogynistic narratives that depend on those binaries, such as the Medusa myth, in which the female is associated with danger and evil; violent and deprecating ones, as in the Odysseus myth, where women are possessions to be gained and discarded with no initiative of their own; and ones silencing women, as in the myth of Philomela, whose tongue is cut to prevent her from saying that she was raped and who still finds a way to express herself through weaving instead of speaking.

Feminist thinkers suggest that the misogyny and deprecating hierarchies of classical myths continue in other forms in knowledge production and societal relationships through the scientific narratives of enlightenment, modernism, and the contemporary world. For example, through a reading of feminist philosopher Elizabeth Potter's critique of enlightenment natural scientist Robert Boyle's studies, feminist philosopher Donna Haraway (2018) reminds us that women were left out of knowledge production in modern science through empirical experiments' implicit construction of the modest,

reliable witness as male. As such, rational scientific knowledge may be regarded as a fiction that we were made to listen to through so many sources that we started to believe it. Yet Haraway (2018) suggests that the only possible way to produce alternatives to the patriarchal totalizing knowledge is still through telling stories: 'There is no way out of stories; but no matter what the One-Eyed Father says, there are many possible structures, not to mention contents, of narration. Changing the stories, in both material and semiotic senses, is a modest intervention worth making' (p. 44–45). Haraway (2016) herself practices such storytelling throughout her works (she calls her stories 'speculative fabulations'), narrating human and non-human entanglements to question traditional human-centric knowledge patterns. However, Haraway does not aim to diminish the world to mere stories and myths; her project is to reveal the ways in which the material and the discursive are simultaneously produced and transformed by each other. The act of mythmaking, for Haraway, is an embodied practice, in which one is aware of one's multiple, fragmented, and situated perspective. This is significantly different from the traditional myths that assume an all-knowing stance.

Like Haraway, feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti (2002) urges us to consider the embedded and embodied character of myths. According to Braidotti, myths may be transformative when told with ethical responsibility. As Braidotti (2002) points out, mythmaking may challenge both the established facts and fixed subjectivities: 'Narrativity is a crucial binding force here, but I interpret it as a collective, politically-invested process of sharing in and contributing to the making of myths, operational fictions, significant figurations of the kind of subjects we are in the process of becoming' (p. 21–22). Braidotti calls for a collective effort to question the unitary subject positions imposed on us through logos and its rational systems of thought. Braidotti offers instead the myth of a 'nomadic subject' as a non-unitary, dynamically changing position, which takes a political stance 'by injecting affectivity, self-reflexivity and joy in the political exercise' rather than committing to morals of 'decency, social justice and human rights' (p. 61). Braidotti warns us that these values may also be rationalized as beliefs and policies, even though they are initially driven by a desire that cannot be structured and dismissed. Braidotti's nomadic subject allows us to consider the irrationality of myths to take a position against the oppressing logos, thought, and action driven by so-called scientific rationality.

Hélène Cixous (2009), well known for her political project of advocating for a feminine positioning through laughter and irrationality, points to the kind of freedom the myths may provide:

'There's an extraordinary freedom in myth, one can do the impossible: when one is dead, one comes back, one can go back down to hell, etc. [...] Everybody pays, including the gods who are supposed not to pay, that is to say, the main gods, the father gods. It's very "moral," after all: totally immoral, but of an immorality which constantly comes with some sort of ethical retribution. I dare say that when the Greeks and the Romans were living it, it must have helped them a lot, nothing being stable, nothing being irreversible since there can be a return, even if it's very short-lived. The blind see' (p. 17)

The existing potentials of myths, as Cixous points out, may be reversibility, dynamism, and ethical retribution. This optimistic view of myths, however, should not deceive us into thinking Cixous's position passively accepts the myths as they are. On the contrary, Cixous suggests questioning their established dichotomies, and rewriting myths and fairytales in order to inscribe alternative modes of being and relating within the world. For example, in 'Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing,' Cixous (1993/2012: 199–205) rewrites the tale of the king's daughters who are assumed to be passive while kept in their rooms at nights by their father. The daughters wear out their shoes by running away at nights from under their bed. As Cixous argues, wearing out shoes is an act of rebellion against the stability expected of sleeping/dreaming and of women's bodies in general. Cixous's rewriting of the tale suggests that dreaming, a seemingly passive activity, is instead corporeal, something we experience with our bodies. While the fairytale associates the interior with the female and dreaming, the rewriting shatters the way we perceive dichotomies of walking and dreaming (of walking), exterior and interior, and body and mind. Hereby, Cixous claims that, like dreaming, writing is an active production.

Drawing on feminist criticism and practice, we argue that rewriting myths and fairytales may exceed rational binary orders, including the foundation of the totalizing *logos* in contrast to the unreliable, irrational *mythos*. Our interest in rewriting myths and fairytales comes from a desire to address individual urban experiences and resistance to rapid, large-scale transformations of the city under the influence of neoliberal policies and oppressive administrations. We are aware of the limits of our bodies (individual and collective), so we acknowledge the capacities of our bodies in every stage of this project, from the first drawing practices to the rewriting of myths and fairytales and then the performance. Mythmaking, for us, is a material discursive practice that transforms us as subjects during the process. By adding playfulness and wit, we aim to transcend structured patterns of thought.

Since the performative medium of our myth-rewriting was shadow play, the performers disappeared into the dark during the performance, which helped collective participation to emerge. Performers composed each scene together on a makeshift curtain wall. Each performance altered the myth slightly, as the performers improvised lighting, movements, and sound-making in reaction to each other and the audience. The possibility of difference is a necessity for performativity. This difference is created every day in the use of language. For instance, as philosopher of language J. L. Austin (1961: 12) argues, making an utterance is doing something rather than merely saying something. Austin reminds us that speaking activates the words and intentions of the speaker; it puts them in a context, and the cultural codes shared by the speaker and listener take them around the world of meanings. The distinction between performance and performativity is crucial for understanding the ways in which storytelling works in a creative and critical way in our shadow play. Performativity is defined by cultural theorist

and video artist Mieke Bal (2002: 175–212) as the probability of participation of various subjects in a performance. An execution of a performance brings it out from a personal space to an intersubjective space. Performances can only be performative when the embodied memory of the subject is awakened. Performativeness needs to be deliberately sought in this case.

Unlike its precedents in traditional shadow plays, ours was distinctive in form and representation. The form of the stage was circular. Because the workshop space was an abandoned synagogue,³ we transformed the center platform, the *bimah*, into a stage in order to appreciate the memory of the space and its history. The stage's circular form not only enables the storyline to unfold physically on a continuous surface, but also draws the audience into the story by gesturing to them bodily to accompany the story. Therefore, the myth-rewriting transformed into an interactive performance which respects the recollection of the space. In addition, representation became a very essential aspect of the show. The city was revealed in plans and sections through participants' experiences of its topography, historical silhouette, and underground structure network in order to create a site-specific myth. Then, participants designed props with different textures and opacities to create a between contrast the subjects and the background. They used multiple flashlights to produce a depth of shadows and multilayered collection of information on-site.

Silence can be asserted by urban spatial strategies such as naming places, repurposing buildings, structuring what can be done in public space, and demolishing the heterogeneous parts of old neighborhoods to construct unifying large-scale buildings. These material spatial strategies are often paralleled by discursive ones which tell the story of the sovereign by silencing the multiplicity. But silence can also be a spatial resistance tactic for the suppressed, like living at the margins and building in small sizes and with multiple materials while negotiating their surrounding conditions as in the slums. Our practice of rewriting the myths and fairytales of Gaziantep referred to the strategies of silencing through subverting their literary techniques, including by making antiheroes, telling ordinary and forgotten stories, and leaving plots fragmented and unfinished. The retold myth partially achieved this aim, as our process was a constant negotiation within the group. Heroes and big sensational events were still enticing for the group, and their appearance in the play became inevitable. Yet, they were challenged continuously by plot twists and humorous elements. Since this workshop also had a pedagogical aim, it was important for us to allow freedom of voice and possibilities for collective and individual subjectivities to emerge. So, we refrained from imposing our own opinions, but pushed students towards self-exploration. What was more experimental for us was suggesting spatial tactics for the silence to be heard, rather than filling the space of the others with our (academics and students', workshop organizers and participants') voices, which could still find opportunity to be expressed. The performativeness of our drawing practices, rewriting, and shadow play provided an open space for others to participate with multiple voices and interpretations. The drawing

practices and the transferring of our embodied knowledges through shadow play suggested a pre-linguistic acknowledgement of multiplicity and spatiality of voices and silences. This experience showed us that each voice and each silence spatialize in its unique way. We learned that there are different kinds of silences. Not all silences are imposed by the authorities: we may also recognize resistant, partially imposed, and other kinds of silence. Our aim here was hardly to define silences or capture their whole stories, not that we believe these can ever be done. Nor do we suppose it is possible to end the silencing practices of the authorities in the built environment. Rather, we practiced more sensitive ways of understanding silence and suggested giving it a space of expression. As Cixous (1981/2012) says, we 'write to read better' (p. 98). We tell to listen better.

1. The workshop was co-organized with local academic and architect Esra Gürbüz, with the participation of architecture bachelor's students from various universities around Turkey (Asena Gözde Altınel, Asiye Koral, Bartu Karagöz, Cahit Canberk Andaç, Ekin Ünlü, Elif Keser, Emre Günel, Merve Bıyık, Müberra Şen, Sema Şeker, and Tamar Zorlu) organized by UMÖB (National Association of Students of Architecture).
2. Poet Nazım Hikmet (1939–41/2002) tells the story of Karayılan as that of a young person who hides from the French troops until, one day, he witnesses death and revolts against the occupation of the city. He becomes a hero for the citizens, representing inner courage found in desperate times.
3. Gaziantep Synagogue was transformed into a Cultural Center by the government after its restoration in 2012 (Güleryüz 2012). The synagogue had been left to ruin for 40 years after the Jewish population left the city during the 1970s. Due to the nationalist politics and xenophobic regulations of the governments in Turkey, the majority of the Jewish community left the city between 1920s and 1960s (Şanlı 2019: 27–29).

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