Your spirit is mingled with mine
as wine is mixed with water;
whatever touches you touches me.
In all the stations of the soul you are I.[1]

[1] Mansur al- Hallaj. Music of a Distant Drum. Translated by Bernard Lewis
https://www.poetry-chaikhana.com/Poets/H/HallajMansur/Yourspiritis/index.html

مُزِجَت روحُكَ في روحي كَما

تُمزَجُ الخَمرَةُ بِالماءِ الزُلالِ

فَإِذا مَسَّكَ شَيءٌ مَسَّني

فَإِذا أَنتَ أَنا في كُلِّ حالِ

Dear Ulrike,[2]

I am allowing myself to start this letter in a sense of close familiarity and friendship,

Last time we talked, you shared with me a little story about when you were young. Thank you for sharing. For me, such moments are pearls found in the sea.

And thank you again for connecting me with Mattijs Van De Port, this poet I would certainly want to take with me as a travel companion.

Although I started this letter with a poem by al- Hallaj, the reason is not the heartbreaking idea that was performed on him, but because of the thoughts of fusion he sought.

To bring life-given development and creativity instead of issuing physical><spiritual death

2nd July 2021
Revisited 22 November 2022

[2] This document was sent to Ulrike Scholtes, one of the mentors of the master program.

In 1995 (15 years old) I planned to enter the institution of fine arts in Baghdad and decided to enroll in the next course. When I got to know the distance between the house where I used to live and the location of the institution in the city, together with my single mother we had to invent a job so I could support myself. The job was selling cigarettes in the streets.
Such jobs were invented by the poor people (financially) in the 90's after the so-called coalition of the gulf war bombarded Baghdad in 1991, which turned the infrastructure and the architecture of the city to dust. All the bridges between the two famous rivers in Baghdad were torn down, turning the water to mud. This was followed by an embargo imposed by the United Nations security council on Ba'athist Iraq. Such punishments affected the working class people, and the poor only. The rich of the country and the high rank members of the Ba'ath party kept living a life of kings.

By the "law" selling cigarettes in the streets was not allowed. However, everything was degenerating at that period and the amount of jobs invented by the poor made them care less about the so-called "law". Some had no other choices of income, people had to be creative otherwise they would literally starve to death. So as my mother and I invented cigarettes selling in the streets, other people sold water, sold tissues, some sold their own clothes and furnitures; begging, robbing, selling one's own organs, prostituting, and whatnot.
This manufactured lots of difficulties to try to have a grip of the situation and left the society with no space to figure out a healthy public relations.

Thus, the streets required extra awakening and one had to always be alert.

After some months I started to recognize most of my customers; heavy weight smokers didn't like it when I tried to light-up their cigarette. They preferred to take the lighter from my hand and light their own cigarette in their mouth themselves. On the contrary, novice smokers liked the action very much and let me light their cigarette, which I did with care to avoid burning their mustaches.

Lighting up the cigarettes of the consumers was something required in the job of selling cigarettes in the streets to prove that one is a professional seller. Though with loads of passing cars that triggered crazy wind, not to mention the many dust storms that were invading the city every other day, a simple action like lighting a cigarette was not an easy move to do.
Females rarely stopped to buy cigarettes from street sellers. Instead, they mostly went to the shops.

Pedestrians who only wanted to use a lighter were asking for it in a classy way.

I must mention that the moods of the clients were always changing. Habitual clients were usually kind, but on other occasions they would be mean and a curse.

It was at that time when I noticed a person with a tan cotton hat hiding his long hair under it. His hand was turning prayer beads and his mouth was moving while walking. The man was not a usual customer but it was hard not to notice the character.

I took this very specific observation and went to my grandmother and asked her if she could decode the image for me.

- Mother, what is a man that has long hair with prayer beads in the hand?

“Where did you see such a man?” My grandmother didn’t wait for my answer and added “He is a Darwish. Your great grandfather (her father) was one of them. People used to call him Darwish Muhammad. He too had long hair until here (she pointed to her hip) and people used to go to his house to ask him questions.” She again repeated her question. “Where did you see such a man?”

When I saw the Darwish again, I approached him and asked him some questions. His name was Zahir. An easy man to talk with, calm, humorous and listened with care. It appeared that he was following the same Sufi order which my great grandfather followed!

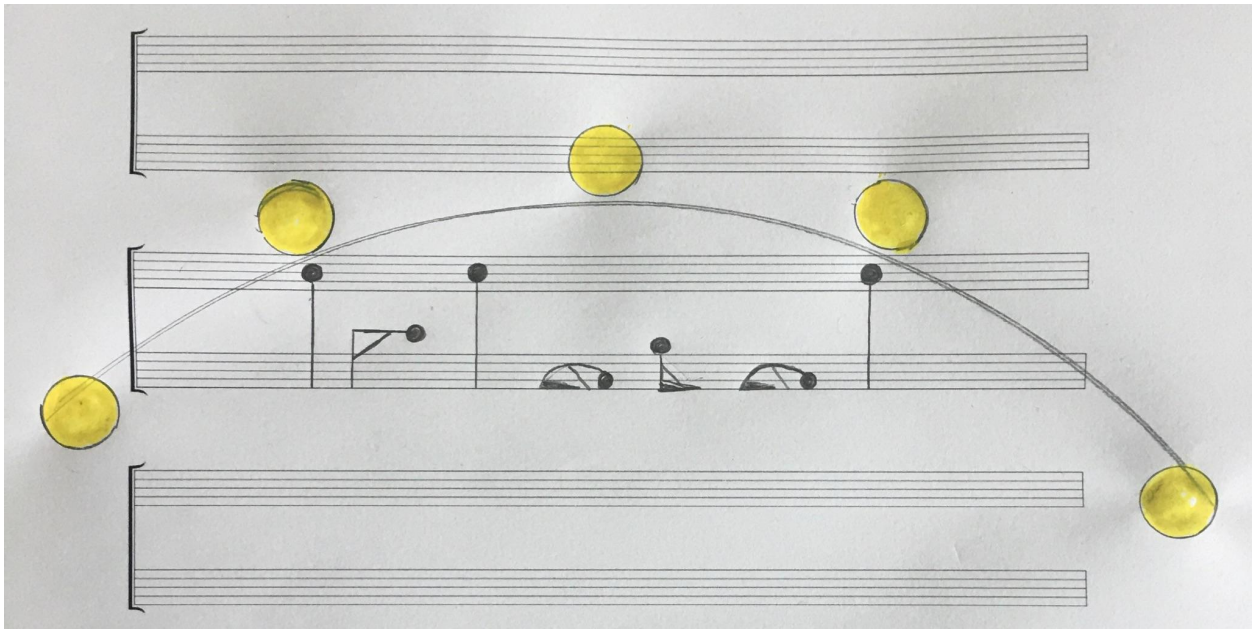
There are various ‘tariqas’ (Sufi orders) in Iraq, each with a different method of teaching discipline and spiritual knowledge. The name of the house where Sufi followers meet is called ‘Tekije’. Doors of the Tekije(s) are always open and everybody is allowed to enter for whatever reason; seeking rest, peace, food, answers, spiritual healing. It is also allowed for all kinds of people to attend their rituals and ceremonies as a guest or an observer. However, as every tariqa has many houses, each house has a different set of teaching methods and house regulations.

Sufi disciples follow the basic Islamic set of prayers, with the addition of: praying with beads, sitting silently, playing Daf or Tabla and dance, singing, practicing spiritual sport (becoming vegetarian for four weeks during a year), seclusion (inside one of the Tekije’s room or going to the caves in the mountains), working on oneself, seeking self-awareness and philosophizing with oneself and with other fellows: how to see, what is seeing, thinking, speaking, working, living… how to sleep… What are the mind’s potentialities? Learning to be modest and asking questions: What is repentance, trust, fear, imploring, honesty, devotion, patience, piousness, asceticism, satisfaction and thankfulness, truth and existence?

I asked Zahir if he could take me with him the next time he goes to the Tekije. He agreed and requested that I prepare myself before going.

- How do I prepare myself?’ I asked.

“Put all kinds of judgments aside because what you will observe will be something that you have never seen or experienced before’. Zahir answered.



3

Twice a week on mondays and Thursdays after the sunset and the evening daily 'Salat' prayers, the followers of the Kasnazani Sufi order give a ritual called ‘Dhikr’ (remembrance). They stand beside each other in one or two (sometimes more) imperfect circles to perform, chanting, playing music and dance (a set of put-up movements).

Unwell people (sick: mentally or physically) may situate themselves in the center of the ceremony to gain energy and perhaps heal.

During the Dhikr the Darwish could experience ‘Hãl’ (a state, a condition, a situation). Sufi orders say that ‘hãl’ is a work of the heart without intention or hypocrisy: some could experience joyful jumps or a moment of enlightenment in their thoughts. Others might utter sounds that they have never uttered before and release shouts. Kasnazani

[3] The rak'ahs of the 'Salat' (pray) in Islam. Five times a day. 1- sunrise consisted of two rak'ahs. 2- noon consisted of four rak'ahs 3 - Afternoon consisted of four rak'ahs 4 - sunset consisted of three rak'ahs 5 - evening consisted of four rak'ahs. This drawing was created as part of a mini essay and sent to professor Peter Peters, one of the mentors in the master program.

used to say that an honest Hãl experienced by a Darwish during the Dhikr would not sabotage the harmony of the ceremony and it will not cause injury to oneself or to the other darwish at the sides

During the Dhikr there are two instruments playing Daf & Tabla. These instruments perform six rhythms and the darwish chants and move

**First rhythm:** Hayalla Maqam (dum dum ka tak tak)
“Hayalla, Hayalla” (God lives, God lives) hymning from the throat. Hands covering the navel and the head goes to the right with the first Hayalla and then with the second Hayalla the head goes to the left. (creating a horizontal eight-like-shape)

When all Darwish gather in the circles and the guests sit down, the ceremony moves to the next stage and rhythm

**Second rhythm**: Haddadi Maqam (dum dum ka taka taka)
“Hay-alla” (God-lives) this hymn comes out from the belly, and it is called ‘المخفي’ (the hidden) Head and torso go down and up to the left, and then down and up to the right. (creating a vertical eight-like-waves)

**Third rhythm**: (dum dum dum taka taka)
“Hay hay hay-Allah” (lives lives god-lives) head and torso go to the right, then left and then to the right again and with the word of Allah eyes look up and then to one’s own heart. Repeated with the other side

**Fourth rhythm**: Daem Maqam (dum tak ka tak tak ka)
“Daem Daem” (forever) head and torso go right and left, or left and right and there is also bouncing in the knees

**Fifth rhythm** (dum dum dum taka taka) similar to the third rhythm but a bit faster
“Hay hay hay-Allah” head and torso go down and up

**Sixth rhythm**: Daem Maqam (same as the fourth rhythm)
“Daem Daem” (forever) head and torso move from side to side

After three years of practicing in different ‘Tekije(s)’ (houses) I decided to focus more on my theater study, especially since it required lots of reading and exams. Also, by advancing in my study, I could prevent serving in the army.

In Iraq at the beginning of the 90's, the Mexican telenovelas and American movies (box office) invaded our lives completely, instead of the Egyption series and the Indian movies that were the dominant previously.

The Ba'ath nationalistic system which prohibited internet and allowed only one tv channel controlled by the party did different sets of new "law". Every couple of weeks some new horror: cutting heads of the prostitutes in the streets, burning the goods of the street workers, traders were executed, cutting the ears of the runaway soldiers, and prohibited the practice of Sufism (this was not the first time the authority of the national party prohibiting rituals; at the beginning of the 80's they prohibited the Shia from performing Ashura).

When the houses of the Kasnazani were ordered to close, the followers decided to keep performing Dhikr on their own responsibility, each time they gathered secretly in a different house and performed the ritual without playing the instruments, and kept hymning very softly. A phenomenon of transformation?

What made the situation of the society more surreal, in addition to the plague of war and dust storms, on each long hot summer, different phenomena invaded the city of Baghdad: Rats, locusts, black beetles and frogs.

"Knowledge about what is and isn't good to eat may be shared by telling stories."[4]

[4] Mol, Annemarie. (2012) Layers or versions? Human bodies and the love of bitterness, in Brian Turner, the Routledge Handbook of the Body, Oxon & New York: Routledge (pp119-129)

By 2008 when I arrived in the Netherlands to perform a performance invited by Dancing on the Edge festival, the Sufi practice I had when I was young was part of the past ecstasy. After I finished performing in the festival I applied for the immigration process in Ter Apel!

In 2011 while being invited to the Seattle international dance festival in the United States, two of the members of the team couldn't make it to the festival due to visa complications. In the plan of the festival one of them was supposed to give a workshop to dance students in Seattle. Subsequently the director of the festival approached me and asked if I could give the workshop instead!

"When do we feel happy" as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi would ask and "how to put more and more of everyday life in the flow channel"[5].
Instead of making a political demonstration, especially since we couldn't perform our performance in the festival in Seattle and San Francisco because of the missing members, I thought of the Dhikr, and offered it as an experience for the dancers.
I used a five liter water bottle plastic and a piece of wood as a drum (as I was not prepared and had to improvise). Part of the workshop was to tell them how I got the chance to give the workshop, then I explained the movements of the Dhikr, I played and the students danced them.
An incident stayed with me during that very first workshop. One dancer fell on the ground during the second rhythm, but the person gathered the body and the mind, stood up and continued dancing. After the workshop I asked that person about what happened and told me that while shifting from the first rhythm to the second rhythm she opened her eyes and that caused her imbalance. She was not hurt.

In 2013 I was invited to give a Sufi workshop at the Sufi Night festival in Bozar. This time I worked with a Daf player.[6] During this workshop I mentioned that some would feel imbalance during the second rhythm if the eyes suddenly open.
One person, indeed, fell on the ground during the second rhythm. After the workshop she came to me and thanked me for mentioning the phenomenon because it helped her to not panic.

Such a way of sharing and getting feedback confirmed to me that I would keep considering sharing my research and encounters with the participants.

In 2017 I was asked to give the Sufi workshop in kunstZ in Antwerp. At the start of the workshop two young men came to me and asked if what I am going to do is a religious thing, or something. I explained that the origin of it comes from a religion. Indeed it is

[5] TED ideas worth spreading. (February 2004) Flow, the secret to happiness. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (video). https://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_flow_the_secret_to_happiness#t-61
[6] Gernas Maao.

coming from a religion. But I also explained that I am not offering it from a religious point of view and that I am doing it with theatermakers as an experience to taste something ritualistic and discuss together some subjects and terms that were often evoked among artists such as: ritual, ceremonies, performance, transformation and acting.

“Ik doe niet mee” the two young men demonstrated.

I asked them if they want to leave the room or if they want to stay and watch.

“Can we just watch?” One of them asked.

- Yes, of course. I was exhilarated.

They decided to sit aside and watch. And at the end of the workshop they came to me and thanked me for letting them watch because they felt the experience in their gut.

The fourth time was in the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp 2018. This time I got the opportunity to have five days to work with six students.
The space offered us to practice various different warm-ups. So we prepared our body and mind using techniques from hatha yoga (as I studied it in Rotterdam and became a yoga teacher for beginners).

At the end of the week all the students of the drama department came to watch the result of the five days. We did 25 minutes of Dhikr (the actual time of the ceremony at the temple was an hour and half. Sometimes (though rarely) the chief would order to perform less, sometimes on special occasions when the ceremony was done the guide of the ceremony would ask the darwish (whoever can) to stay and perform one more round).[7]
The students who were watching had almost the same experience in their guts as the ones who participated and both felt that the duration of the performance was much shorter.[8] This, feels, corresponds with the phenomenology of enjoyment.[9]

[7] This happened once or twice when the chief was sick and could not attend the ceremony for a couple of times, so the darwish wanted to offer extra praying and healing energy.
[8] A conversation with Arthur Decock.
[9] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Harper and Row. (1990). Flow: The psychology of optimal experience. https://mktgsensei.com/AMAE/Consumer%20Behavior/flow_the_psychology_of_optimal_experience.pdf

The fifth was for a master student Arthur Decock from Royal Conservatory of Antwerp, as his subject was “Ritual//Theatre. 2019

Arthur wrote in his essay:

“Zo werd ik vorig jaar in contact gebracht met een eeuwenoud Iraaks ritueel, onder de leiding van Iraaks theatermaker Duraïd Abbas Ghaieb. Hij zong, we dansten in een cirkel, we maakten afgesproken bewegingen, we ademden ritmisch en gecontroleerd. We huilden daarna, we lachten daarna, we waren gelouterd daarna: hevige verkropte emoties en gedachten kregen tijdens en na het uitvoeren van het ritueel plots voet aan grond, werden ten volle gevoeld.
Ook kaderde Duraïd het ritueel als een theatraal gebeuren: en in plaats van een heus toonmoment op poten te zetten, voerden wij, op de finale dag, het ritueel op voor het publiek.
Ook zij waren gelouterd, ook zij lachten erna, en huilen kwam er net niet aan te pas.
Ik wist dus dat ik, door het uitvoeren van dit ritueel, snikkend ineen was gezakt op de vloer, maar ik wist niet waarom.
Ik wist dat het publiek werd geraakt, gepord, geduwd, maar ik wist niet waarom.
En Wikipedia en de Van Dale zwijgen daarover in alle talen.”[10]

[10] Arthur Decock. RITUEEL//THEATER. EEN EMOTIONELE SOM. Scriptie Master drama, Woordkunst Academiejaar 2019-20. (Koninklijk Conservatorium Antwerpen).

In my application for the master program, I wrote, I want to interview the participants who already attended the Dhikr workshops I gave and share experiences we had together: what remained within them? What can be improved in my communication and research?

I also wrote that I want to try to do some more workshops inside the academy of Maastricht but as the Corona situation invaded our world in 2020 this was not possible to arrange especially because the workshop requires direct contact and a lot of breathing in the same room.

I also wrote that I want to interview some other people who have experienced other kinds of ritualistic ceremonies.

Now, I feel like I need to talk with them to exchange stories and experiences rather than interviewing them with a set of prepared questions.[11]

[11] A special thank to Somalia Williamson for her help in correcting the text

Post covid-19 and corona lockdown!

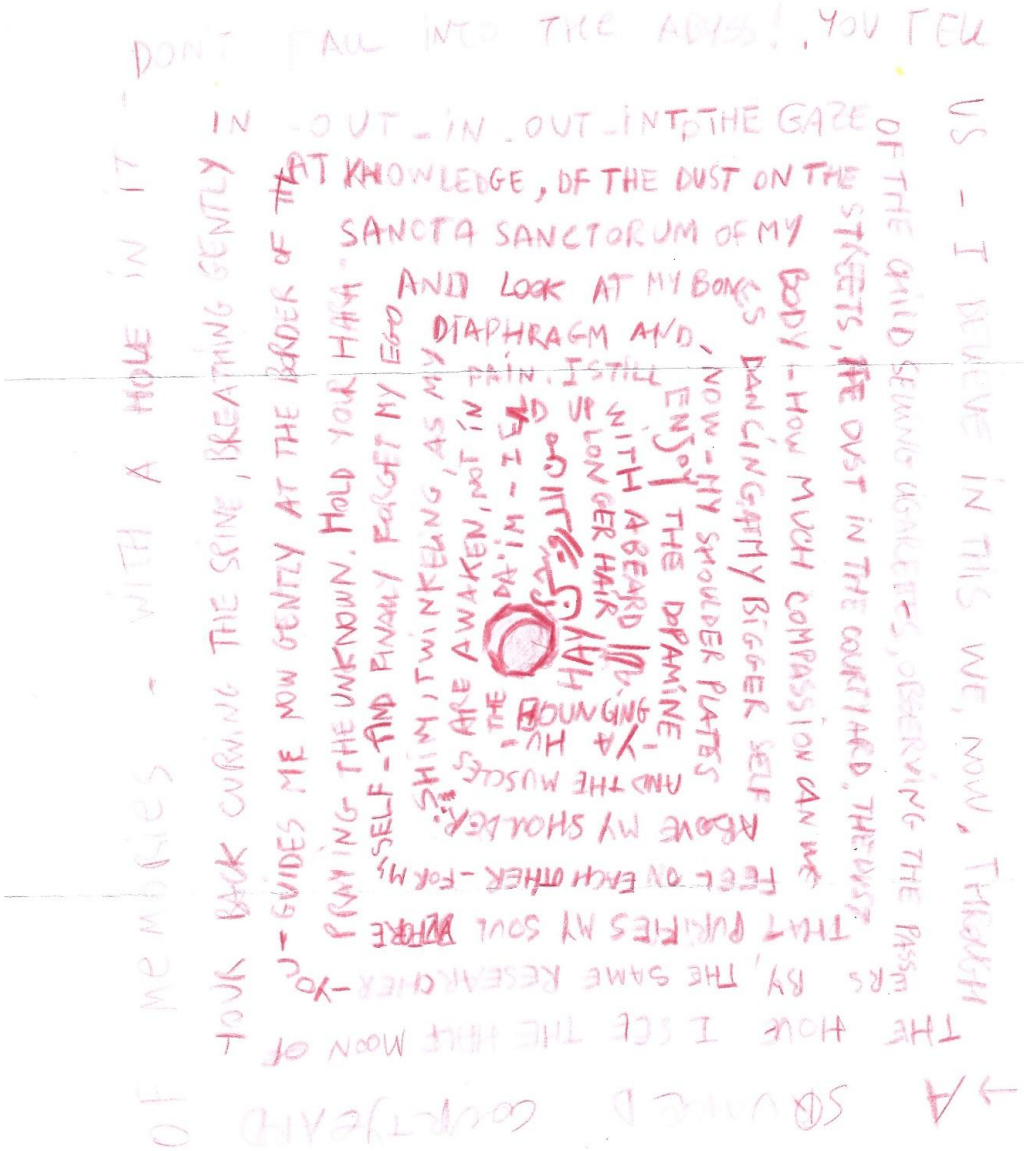
The sixth Sufi Dhikr workshop was shared as my curated day with my fellow master students at ‘Toneelacademie Maastricht’ on 19 November 2021.

Some immediate reactions from my peers at the end of the day were:

“Time disappeared”.[12] “The whole day was meditative”.[13] “Feeling fresh. Happy”.[14] “Similar to Rebirthing Breathing exercise”.[15] “Centered”, “Sharing the research and the stories behind the ritual created an extra awareness”.[16] “Breathed together”.[17] “Consciousness of body & mind. I did not judge, but conscious”[18]. “After performing the ritual I am now warmed and ready to act”.[19]

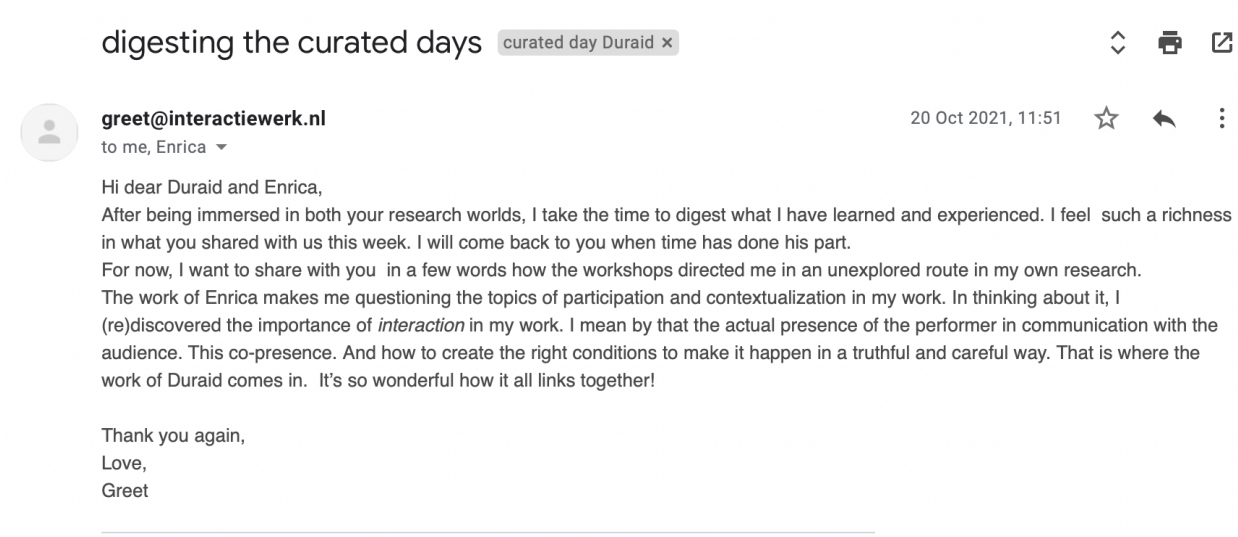
Later reactions came in different forms:

[12] Yasmin Ederoui. Nefeli Bravaki.
[13] Enrica Camporesi.
[14] Greet Mertens.
[15] Bram De Win.
[16] Annelie Koning.
[17] Nefeli.
[18] Yasmin.
[19] Romke Gabe Draaijer.




A drawing from Enrica Camporesi

An email from Greet Mertens



digesting the curated days curated day Duraid ×

**greet@interactiewerk.nl** 20 Oct 2021, 11:51

to me, Enrica

Hi dear Duraid and Enrica,
After being immersed in both your research worlds, I take the time to digest what I have learned and experienced. I feel such a richness in what you shared with us this week. I will come back to you when time has done his part.
For now, I want to share with you in a few words how the workshops directed me in an unexplored route in my own research.
The work of Enrica makes me questioning the topics of participation and contextualization in my work. In thinking about it, I (re)discovered the importance of *interaction* in my work. I mean by that the actual presence of the performer in communication with the audience. This co-presence. And how to create the right conditions to make it happen in a truthful and careful way. That is where the work of Duraid comes in. It's so wonderful how it all links together!

Thank you again,
Love,
Greet

I have collected some more observations from the previous five workshops but I don't want to sound like I am mapping because I do agree with Bonnie Cohen that "... the maps are not the experience."[20]

Positive and encouraging feedback creates massive responsibility and urges me to do more research. Go further

By offering the experience as a storytelling way I am learning a lot from participants, peers, coaches and mentors; I got introduced to other practices and exercises that have similar basis. This widened my senses and knowledge, personally recharged and gained me energy, transformation and healing.

Practices such as: Rasa aesthetics.[21] Traditional African religions and storytelling with music and movements such as Kpanlogo.[22] Candomblé.[23] Mysticism in Turkey, Morocco[24] and Kazakhstan, Qadiri Sufi Hadra in Chechnya.[25]
Each ritual does a different set of movements than the Kasnazani way although the form of a circle, drums and daf playing, chanting, dancing and meditating, are always found.

Could the structure of an atom, DC generator and virus help me to understand the mystery of the circle? Nature/culture?

**Ecstasy** that is reached by consuming alcohol during parties, feast (such as the two week carnival I observed in Guamote/Ecuador) or by Ayahuasca[26], or by MDMA, similar to the ecstasy reached during religious rituals such as the Kasnazani Dhikr? Does our body release the same hormones?

Is DMT really produced in the body by repeating movements?

Could what I am encountering and collecting relate to what George Gurdjieff did in his movements?

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[20] Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen. An Introduction to body-mind centring. (1993. 1998. 2012. 2017) https://www.bodymindcentering.com/introduction/
[21] By a workshop of Nitish Bharadwaj.
[22] By a workshop of Daniel Dji.
[23] A conversation with Lumarsol Brito de Oliveira.
[24] By a conversation with Mustafa Benkerroum, mentioned to me 'الطريقة الكركرية' (the Karkarian Sufi method). And 'الحضرة الشفشاونية' (Chefchaouen Mazār).
[25] By a conversation with Timur Magomedgadzhiev.
[26] By a conversation with Cornelia Zambila.

"Reach across differences; learn from others; connect. Interesting things may yet emerge from mixing practices".[27]

In Kasnazani order one can easily find hierarchy as in any nature/culture. Some stories, myths and administrative transactions are set to stay secret. The Kasnazani used to perform blood rituals like body piercing (not anymore)[28]. Some people in the society (in Iraq, at the time when I was practicing) who heard about the blood sacrifice or watched it used to think it is magic, others referred to parapsychology or heresy). Sufi orders say it is the power of god within the disciple. I can add that it was a painful practice.

In the 90's Kasnazani had published one book about their way. Nowadays, they are using media to promote the sect and have already made a website and a youtube channel; regularly every period they attract and invite politicians to join and support the movement.

Many stories and description that Mattijs van de Port had described in his work about the Candomblé'[29] matches with the phenomena of the Kasnazani way.

But to write properly about the Kasnazani way one needs to go back and do field work again.

[27] Mattijs van de Port & Mol, A. (2015) Chupar frutas in Salvador da Bahia: a case of practice-specific alterities. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (NS) 21, 165-180
[28] Alla Kadhim. A leader and an initiator of the Kasnazani Dhikr in Baghdad 2022.
[29] Mattijs van de Port. Visualizing the sacred: Video technology, "televisual" style, and the religious imagination in Bahian candomblé. University of Amsterdam (pp 444-461)