# (RE)CONSIDERING TURKISH THEATRE IN THE REPUBLIC'S CENTENARY




**EDITORS**

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İSTANBUL UNIVERSITY PRESS

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# (Re)considering Turkish Theatre in the Republic's Centenary

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Cover Image Türkiye Theatre Foundation Archive. Mehmet Akan and Arif Erkin in *Büyücü Oyunu* (The Wizard Play) performed by *Genç Oyuncular* (The Young Players) at the 4th Erdek Festival.

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# Preface

*(Re)considering Turkish Theatre in the Republic's Centenary* was prepared to pay tribute to the memories of our invaluable master academicians, who have contributed greatly to the shaping of the history of our theatre and our collective theatrical memory, and who are no longer with us. Following in the footsteps of books written for important anniversaries such as *50 Years of Turkish Theatre and Turkish Theatre in the 75th Year of the Republic*, the aim was to assess the 100th anniversary with a focus on the republic's theatre history and leave a lasting source for future generations to celebrate upcoming anniversaries.

However, a different approach was taken in the shaping of this book compared to previous ones. First, instead of the usual chronological historiography, thematic headings that could be considered vital in defining the characteristics of theatre were selected for research. In this way, section titles such as *Stages-Troupes-Audiences, Education-Institutionalization, Genres-Repertoires*, and *Tradition-Transition* emerged. For each section, an effort was made to focus on topics that had not been sufficiently explored or addressed previously under those thematic headings in theatre research. On the other hand, in order to increase the international recognition of Turkish theatre among researchers and to expand international publications on Republican Theatre, it was decided to publish the book in English.

The book in your hands came to life thanks to the patient support of our dear researcher colleagues who responded to the collective production call made by the Department of Theatre Criticism and Dramaturgy at Istanbul University Faculty of Letters, and it was finalized with their contributions.

The first part of the book focuses on two fundamental elements of the art of theatre—the actor and the audience—and the troupes that form the driving force of the republican theatre environment. The opening article of this part was written by one of our esteemed theatre researchers, Ayşegül Yüksel. Known as one of the masters of her field, with her unique, fluid, humanistic, and in-depth analyses, she discusses the role of private theatres in renewing and revitalizing theatre while resisting political pressures, tracing this evolution from the 1950s to the present. Zerrin Yanıkkaya, in her article, examines the tour theatre experiences often overlooked by academic research and theatre histories, offering valuable guidance for future studies. Emre Yalçın, in his article, comprehensively brings the characteristics, historical continuities, and stagings of university theatres from the time of the People's Houses to the present into the realm of academic research. The final article of this part by Dila Okuş, about Kanto—a subject rarely explored in academic research—investigates the journey of this popular stage performance from the final years of the Ottoman Empire to the early years of the Republic, questioning the changes in its social position during the sharp political upheavals of the time.

The first article of the second part of the book, which explores the crucial role of education and institutionalization in the development and dynamism of theatre art, was written by another esteemed theatre researcher and the "teacher of teachers", Dikmen Gürün. Having taken pioneering roles in shaping many institutional processes that have contributed to the development of our theatre education, Dikmen Gürün, in her article, presents the historical evolution of the Republic's theatre criticism from its early years to the present. At the same time, she provides a profound and multi-dimensional analysis of the interaction between socio-political changes and critical thinking. In the second article of this part, by Hasibe Kalkan, explores the process of institutionalizing Ballet in Türkiye, based on the lesser-known writings of Metin And, one of the country's most prolific theatre theorists and educators. Nilgün Firidinoğlu, in her article, examines the official regulations on school plays during the Early Republican Period, addressing how school plays were constructed as an ideological field, beyond their function of fostering an appreciation for art in children and serving as an auxiliary tool in education. In the fourth article, İstek Serhan Erbek examines the institutionalization of theatre during the Early Republican Period, which has left permanent marks on contemporary theatre, through the

lens of the concept of "Ethical Regime" by the famous contemporary philosopher Jacques Rancière, questioning the connections between artistic and political regimes. Finally, Nihan Şentürk, drawing from the ideas of Stephen Wilmer, one of today's prominent theatre theorists, critically examines the distinctive features of the theatre historiography of the Republic period in Türkiye.

The third part of the book is dedicated to dramatic literature of the Republican period. The trends, genre or form explorations, and distinct repertoire strategies that emerged during the Republican era are examined. In this context, in the first article of this section, Dilek Zerenler focuses on the interaction with Shakespeare's plays, based on the concept of intertextuality and through critical adaptations. Esra Dicle explores the role of plays written during the era of the People's Houses in shaping national identity and presenting the emotion repertoire of Turkishness. Müşerref Öztürk Çetindoğan investigates strategies of resistance against forgetting by examining the process of memory and remembering in playwriting in the 1990s. The final article in this part, by Zeynep Günsür Yüceil, offers a comprehensive and critical review of the phenomenon of physical theatre, which has gained prominence and spread in recent years, using historical examples to present an analytical perspective.

The emergence of theatre as part of the Westernization process in our country and its relationship with traditional performing arts has long been an important area of discussion in theatre studies. The final part of the book attempts to present articles that offer new perspectives on this field. Oğuz Arıcı traces the "ontological crisis" created by the conflict between emulating Western theatre and forming a national theatre identity, discussing the dominant tendency of Turkish performing arts as metadramatic/meta-theatricality and argues that the main reason for this tendency is rooted in the hijab (curtain). Esra Çizmeci, drawing on recent Performance Theory discussions, examines the theatrical processes in contemporary Turkish Sufi culture, focusing on a specific case study: a group of Romani teenage semazens embodying theatricality in an Armenian church in Çanakkale. In the final article of this part and the book, Reha Keskin discusses, from a historical and critical perspective, the struggles of Armenian theatre artists who have played pioneering and decisive roles in the emergence, recognition, popularity, and acceptance of theatre in Türkiye since the beginning of the Westernization process, as well as their efforts to survive and maintain their traditions.

Without a doubt, when it comes to reconsidering theatre in the republic's centenary, dozens of research topics could be added to those presented in this book. As revealed by the archives, seminars, and symposiums of the Türkiye Theatre Foundation (TTV), which has stood by us since its establishment and helped us choose and use the cover image of this book, there is a wealth of material in the field of theatre in Türkiye that remains to be discovered, brought into the light, and further developed through ongoing discussion and exploration. If the articles in our book can inspire and encourage new research and approaches in this field, we would consider it a great achievement! Wishing you an enjoyable reading experience.

Kerem Karaboğa

# Part I

## Stages-Ensembles-Audiences

Chapter 1

# The Function of Private Enterprise in Promoting Free Speech and Innovating New Forms in Turkish Theatre during the Republic's Centenary

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## Abstract

Turkish theatre history has followed a path of harmony and disharmony between the strict measures of the State and the freedom of discourse in the performing arts. Although the State has usually been a major source of sponsorship for promoting the ways of the theatre, it was for private enterprise to undertake the struggle against political restrictions that barred the innovations and radical changes in the development of the performing arts. The article aims at discussing how private enterprise sustained the freedom of speech on the stage during times of political suppression while, at the same time, keeping up with innovations that renew the faces of the art of theatre, with particular emphasis on three main headings: Use of Stage Adaptations from Poetry and Fiction, promotion of Documentary Drama and the advent of Playwrights' Theatre.

**Keywords** private enterprise · political suppression · stage adaptations · documentary theatre · playwrights' theatre

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In Ottoman times, musical or theatrical artists passed a box, a tray, a hat, etc. after their performance to collect money from spectators. When they took part in festivals organised by the Ottoman Palace, they received tips (baksheesh). As centuries passed, spectators came to be expected to pay a certain fee for entrance to performances. (In modern times, numerous methods of selling tickets for all kinds of shows have been devised.) However, the general status of theatre companies based on private enterprise has not changed much over the centuries. Private companies have survived as long as they were tolerated by the State and found audiences willing to pay for their performances.

The theatre history of Turkish culture owes a lot to private theatre groups. Meddah, Karagöz and Ortaoyunu were improvisational spectacles created by artists from among the common folk, who based their craft on popular taste and the financial support of their audience. Private enterprise in the early decades of the 20th century has played an important role in institutionalizing that -once amateurish- traditional groups as professional private theatres.

Private enterprise has also functioned well in promoting and popularising the European style of theatre, which is based on dramatic texts. A good number of celebrated stage craftsmen, including Armenian Güllü Agop, who, in the last quarter of the 19th century, owned the monopoly of stage productions in Turkish for ten years, and Armenian Mardiros Mınakyan, who translated into Turkish and staged a good number of plays in Istanbul and other big cities, have not only laboured hard but also invested a considerable amount of capital to establish the European style of theatre in this country. Moreover, the native musical "theatre of improvisation" (Tuluat Tiyatrosu), which combined the style of European theatre with that of popular traditional theatre, flourished in private companies at the turn of the 19th century as well as in the early decades of the 20th century and reached the time of the Republic.

In the early stages of the Republic, there were only touring (travelling) theatre companies in Anatolia. In Istanbul, however, private companies that staged comedies mostly based on improvisation and operetta performances were extremely popular.

The first private modern theatre that produced European drama was Küçük Sahne (Small Stage), founded in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul in 1951. Financed by a Turkish bank and directed by Muhsin Ertuğrul, the great innovator of Turkish theatre with great contributions to the development of Istanbul Municipal Theatre as well as Ankara State Theatre, Küçük Sahne excelled in the productions of foreign plays including Samuel Beckett's brand-new *Waiting for Godot*, John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, Federica Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, John Millington Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet*. Since the advent of Küçük Sahne, a good number of companies have been formed in Istanbul. The earliest had a good share in promoting Turkish theatre life in the late 1950s and 1960s with superb acting and high-quality productions of foreign and native plays. Among those companies, the most noteworthy were Kent Oyuncuları (City Players), Dormen Tiyatrosu (Dormen Theatre), Gülriz Sururi ve Engin Cezzar Tiyatrosu (Gülriz Sururi and Engin Cezzar Theatre), Ulvi Uraz Tiyatrosu (Ulvi Uraz Theatre), Gen-Ar Tiyatrosu (Gen-Ar Theatre), Arena Tiyatrosu (Arena Theatre) and Devekuşu Kabare Tiyatrosu (Ostrich Cabaret Theatre) in Istanbul. Along with Istanbul Municipal Theatre these private companies prepared the grounds for radical political drama with the Turkish premieres of plays like Bertolt Brecht's *Mr. Puntila and His Man Matti, Three Penny Opera, The Good Woman of Setzuan,* Jaroslav Hasek's -The Good Soldier Schweik, Heiner Kipphardt's *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer* and many others.

The newly written native plays, which mostly had world premieres by productions of private companies, involved problems of social order (Haldun Taner's *Gözlerimi Kaparım Vazifemi Yaparım* (I Close My Eyes and Do My Duty), *Vatan Kurtaran Şaban* (Şaban the Saviour of the Nation)), slowly paving the way to a more direct questioning (in the1970s, '80s, and '90s) of issues like social and economic injustice, inadequacy of bureaucracy, and the status of the working class. In the 1960s, the discussion

of social and economic problems in rural life (Necati Cumalı's *Nalınlar* (The Cloggs), Cahit Atay's *Pusuda* (In Ambush), *Ormanda* (In the Woods), Güngör Dilmen's Kurban (The Sacrifice), immigration to big cities and life in city slums (Haldun Taner's *Keşanlı Ali Destanı* (The Ballad of Ali of Keshan), Orhan Asena's *Fadik Kız* (A Girl Called Fadik), Oktay Rifat's *Çil Horoz* (Freckle Rooster) was very much in vogue. Most of these plays were premiered by private companies.

## Contribution of Private Enterprise to Political Drama

After the military intervention of May 27, 1960, which, in 1961, led to another phase in Turkish democracy, private theatre companies devoted to political drama were gradually formed. The earliest was Arena Theatre in Istanbul, founded in 1962 by Asaf Çiyiltepe, an actor-director, who introduced to Turkish audiences the work of playwrights including the French Alfred Jarry (*Kral Übü* (Ubu Roi)), Rumenian Ion Loco Caragiale (*Kayıp Mektup / O Scrisoare Perduta* (A Lost Letter)), and Czech Jaroslav Hasek (*Aslan Asker Şvayk* (The Good Soldier Schweik)).

In 1963, Asaf Çiyiltepe and a group of his friends, who had worked in the productions of Arena Tiyatrosu, moved to Ankara and established Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu (Ankara Art Theatre) (A.S.T.). Next came -in Istanbul- Halk Oyuncuları (Folk Players) and Dostlar Tiyatrosu (Friends Theatre), founded by Genco Erkal and a group of his friends in 1969, Ankara Birliği Sahnesi (Ankara Unity Stage), a short-lived company initiated by Vasıf Öngören, one of the leading writers of Turkish political drama, who was also the director of the world premiere of his masterpiece *Asiye Nasıl Kurtulur* (How to Save Asiye). (Audiences in Ankara and Istanbul also had the chance to see a good many political plays produced by smaller private companies.) In 1968, the right-wing Adalet Partisi (Party of Justice), then running the government, began to feel disturbed by the student unrest that led to boycotts and anti-American protests. That was the time when the Military Law was put into effect. The military coup of March 12, 1971 was near at hand.

Plays were banned and some private theatres put an end to their productions. All the same, political theatre companies grew in number. Aside from those already mentioned, the best known were Çağdaş Sahne (The Contemporary Stage), Ankara Birlik Tiyatrosu (ABT) (Ankara Unity Theatre), Ankara Halk Tiyatrosu (AHT) (Ankara Folk Theatre), and Istanbul Birlik Sahnesi (Istanbul Unity Stage) established in 1976 by Vasıf Öngören. Thus, although the involvement of theatre in politics was discouraged, the 1970s turned out to be a decade in which political drama was highly popular.

The military coup of 1971 soon paved the way to a good number of restrictions in democratic procedures. Political theatres were at a loss in forming for themselves a proper repertory of plays. It was then that theatre companies devised new ways of enriching their political repertory. Those innovations that gained immediate popularity were stage adaptations from different genres of literature, documentary drama dealing with events that had actually taken place, and playwrights' theatre, which allowed the playwright to write and produce plays for his/her own private company without having to look for another theatre willing to stage his/her plays. These innovations have enabled the writers and companies to freely decide about subjects to be brought to the attention of the theatre public and to experiment with different dramatic forms.

## Stage Adaptations

One approach towards enriching political repertory was to make stage adaptations of texts representing various genres of literature. Through such adaptations, it was possible to convey contemporary —though indirect— political messages on the stage, as the literary works in question were not banned.

The most popular poet of the time was Nazım Hikmet, who, after a good number of years of imprisonment, was released in 1951 and soon exiled himself in the Soviet Union. In 1974, Genco Erkal, the founder of Dostlar Tiyatrosu, compiled a good many of Hikmet's poems and produced a one-actor recital he titled *Kerem Gibi* (Like Kerem), which presented the inner voice of the poet in the process of composing his poetry. The production was so successful that most of Nazım Hikmet's poetic work came to be adapted for the stage in the 1970s and the decades that followed. Thus, the adaptations that combined Nazım's humanism and socialism created a new mode of political dramaturgy. The most noteworthy productions by private theatres included the double bill *Tarantu Babu and Jokond ile Si-ya-u* (Joconde and Si-ya-u) (presented by actress Zeliha Berksoy), *1941-42'den İnsan Manzaraları* (Human Landscapes from 1941-42'), adapted by Vasıf Öngören from Nazım's *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* (Human Landscapes from My Country) (Istanbul Birlik Sahnesi, solo performance by Meral Taygun), *Kuvayi Milliye Destanı* (The Epic of the War of Turkish Independence) (Çağdaş Sahne), also produced later by Kent Oyuncuları as a one-actor (Müşfik Kenter) drama, Nazım produced by Zafer Diper (Bizim Tiyatro (Our Theatre)), *Sevdalı Bulut* (The Amorous Cloud) (adapted by director Mehmet Ulusoy and produced both in France (with the title *Nuages Amoureux*) and in Turkish by Dostlar Tiyatrosu), and another version of *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* (Human Landscapes from My Country) by Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu.

In Dostlar Tiyatrosu, Genco Erkal increased the number of his solo appearances—solely based on Nazım's poetry—with the production he titled *İnsanlarım* (My People), and other compilations. *Yaşamaya Dair* (On Living), was presented as a duet (based on poems and songs made from Nazım's poetry) between Erkal as the poet and singer-actress Tülay Günal as the women he had been in love with.

Stage adaptations of poetry turned out to be so popular that, in time, not only private companies but also municipal theatres and the State Theatres welcomed the practise of productions based on the work of various Turkish poets. One of the most popular was Murathan Mungan's dramatic composition of poems by celebrated poet Orhan Veli with the title *Bir Garip Orhan Veli* (Orhan Veli in Solitude), produced by Kent Oyuncuları and presented by Müşfik Kenter.

Aziz Nesin, a celebrated essayist, short-story writer and novelist, also wrote comedies and serious plays for the stage. Yet, adaptations of his short stories and essays reflecting his unique sense of humour and power for satire have proved to be as popular on the stage as his original comedies. Adaptations of Nesin's work that have had a great political impact include *Azizname* (a collection of his stories) by Dostlar Tiyatrosu (1972-73), and in the following decades *Birtakım Azizlikler* (Some Sort of Jocular Touches) (a collection of his essays and stories) as well as *Nereye Gidiyoruz* (Where are We Going), all composed and performed by Genco Erkal as Dostlar Tiyatrosu productions. Director Yücel Erten has also compiled and directed Nesin's short stories with the title *Azizname*, a spectacle that ran for years throughout productions by various companies. Nesin himself also contributed to the trend by adapting his novels for the stage, most notably *Yaşar Ne Yaşar Ne Yaşamaz* (Yaşar Neither Lives Nor is Dead), a great satire on bureaucracy and *Sait Hopsait* (Sait Offside), the story of a young man torn between the false values of high society and the football world. *Aziz Nesin Kabare* (Aziz Nesin Cabaret) by Cengiz Toraman is a recent (2019) stage adaptation produced by Levent Üzümcü Tiyatrosu (Levent Üzümcü Theatre).

Yaşar Kemal, the celebrated novelist-short story writer, was another person whose work was dramatized both in Türkiye and abroad. His novel *Yer Demir Gök Bakır* (Iron Earth Copper Sky) was first adapted for the stage by Nihat Asyalı and produced in the 1960s by the amateur group, Ankara Deneme Sahnesi (Ankara Experimental Stage), with the title *Uzundere*. He participated in an international amateur theatre festival that took place near Nancy (France), sharing the first prize with a Brazilian group. The same novel has also been dramatized by various writers and produced with the original title by Istanbul Municipal Theatre, State Theatres and private companies, Dormen Theatre (1960s) and Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu (1990s). *Yılanı Öldürseler (To Crush the Serpent)*, was dramatized in French by Marianik Revillon and produced by Theatre de la Cite Internationale in Paris. *Ortadirek* (The Wind from the Plain), was adapted by Mehmet Ulusoy with the French title *Le Pilier* and produced by Theatre de Liberte, in Paris in 1991. Yaşar Kemal's *Teneke* (The Drumming-Out) was also produced as an opera (music by Fabio Vacchi) in La Scala, Milano in 2007. His *Binboğalar Efsanesi* (The Legend of Binboğa (Taurus Mountains)) was (in June 2023) adapted as "music theatre" (music by Michael Ellison) and presented at Süreyya Operası (Sureyya Opera) during the 51st International Istanbul Music Festival.)

During the 1970s, Dostlar Tiyatrosu presented the stage adaptation of Yaşar Kemal's *Ağrı Dağı Efsanesi* (The Legend of Mount Ararat) by actor-director-writer Macit Koper. Another adaptation produced by Dostlar Tiyatrosu in the 1970s was John Steinbeck's *Bitmeyen Kavga* (In Dubious Battle) (adapted by Genco Erkal). A third production by the same company was the adaptation of Turhan Selçuk's *Abdülcambaz* (comic strip series of political satires).

Çağdaş Sahne presented in Ankara in the 1970s an adaptation (by Nihat Asyalı) of Soviet writer Fedor Gladkov's novel *Çimento* (Cement). Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu had already produced Nesin's *Sait Hop Sait*, Orhan Kemal's *Yetmiş İkinci Koğuş* (Ward 72), Kerim Korcan's *Linç* (Lynch), along with some other stage adaptations in the 1970s. In 1981, the same company came up with the musical production of German writer Hans Fallada's novel *Küçük Adam Ne Oldu Sana* (Little Man What Now), adapted for the stage and brilliantly directed by writer-actor-director-translator Yılmaz Onay.

Orhan Kemal was a novelist and short story writer whose work was also thought to be proper material for political theatre. His *İspinozlar* (Snowbirds), had already been adapted for the stage and produced by Istanbul Şehir Tiyatrosu in 1964. Orhan Kemal's own adaptation of *Yetmiş İkinci Koğuş* (Ward 72), the world premiere of which was made in 1967 by the masterly production of AST, encouraged further stage adaptations in the 1970s. Ankara Halk Tiyatrosu adapted two of Orhan Kemal's works for the stage: Bir *Filiz Vardı* (There Was a Girl Named Filiz) and *Müfettişler Müfettişi* (Inspector of Inspectors). Orhan Kemal's notable work *Murtaza* was soon to be adapted for the stage by dramatist Orhan Asena and produced in 1979 by Istanbul State Theatre during the short period of democracy that Türkiye enjoyed before the military coup of 1980.

Most of the stage adaptations initiated and produced by private theatres in the 1970s and 1980s have, in time, come to be included in the repertory of both municipal and State Theatres and have enjoyed a good run every time they were produced.

## Documentary Drama

Professor Metin And has pinpointed the fact that documentary theatre appeared in Turkish theatre life in Ottoman times during the second phase of the Constitutional Period (1908). In an Interview published by the Book Fair (TÜYAP) Special Supplement of Dünya Daily (October 26, 2007, p. 12), he says that during this period the theatre-goers were highly interested in politics and loved to see on the stage the recent affairs concerning the leading political figures of the time. As Metin And tells us, the prominent people of İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Union and Progress Society) frequently watched themselves as characters on the stage.

The first staged documentary play of the Republic was written by Güngör Dilmen. The play called *İttihat ve Terakki*- a detailed dramatic account of the historical Union and Progress Society—was a joint venture by Haldun Dormen Tiyatrosu, Gülriz Sururi ve Engin Cezzar Tiyatrosu and some other private companies in 1969. Since then, documentary drama has appeared in political theatres either as translations or newly written native plays. As already discussed, the restrictions in freedom of speech that followed the coup of March 12, 1971 had led private political companies toward stage adaptations. Documentary drama turned out to be another alternative for discussing the social and economic problems of the 1970s, '80s and '90s.

Soon after Dilmen's work, Ergin Orbey, a prominent director of political drama, composed *Birinci Kurtuluştan* (From the First War of Independence), which was an account of the Turkish War of Independence, and staged it in Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu in the 1970-71 season. Various events from various phases of the War of Independence were also composed as documentary plays in the following decades. A significant play dealing with the early phase of the Republic was *Karanlıkta Bir Işık* (A Light in Darkness), by Ülker Köksal, which represented the tragic event of the 1930 murder of Kubilay, a young military officer by a group of religious fundamentalists who wanted to do away with the regime of the Republic and instead establish "sharia" (religious law).

In 1971, Dostlar Tiyatrosu produced *Alpagut Olayı* (The Alpagut Affair), which was composed by the workers' branch of Dostlar Tiyatrosu. The story is based on a true event—a workers' protest—that took place in a coal mine in Alpagut, Çorum in 1969. The final version of this adaptation was written by actor-director-writer Haşmet Zeybek and produced professionally. In 1975, writer-actor-director Macit Koper wrote *Sabotaj Oyunu* (The Sabotage Play), fully based on the legal documents concerning the trials of various acts of sabotage including the fire that had caused great damage in the newly built İstanbul Atatürk Cultural Centre at Taksim. Koper's hilarious satire on the authorities who claim that students and workers were responsible for this fire, which was supposedly a sabotage, was magnificently staged by Genco Erkal at Dostlar Tiyatrosu.

In 1976, one of the Çağdaş Sahne productions in Ankara was *Grev* (The Strike), a documentary play written by Nihat Asyalı and directed by Yılmaz Onay. The play was based on a recent story (1973) of a strike by workers in an automative company in Bursa. Fully based on documents that give a detailed account of this event, the play illustrates the limits to the defence of workers' rights by union trades in the legal conditions effective in Türkiye in the 1970s.

Devrimci Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu (DAST) (Revolutionary Ankara Art Theatre), a short-lived private political company, produced in the 1970s *Toprak* (Land), a documentary play that tells about the struggle of labourers who claimed their rights from the landowners at Pazarlık.

During the 1976-77 season, Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu produced Ömer Polat's documentary play *804 İşçi* (804 Labourers). This play takes place in the course of building the Iraq-Türkiye oil topline by Mannesman Werke A.G. in 1975. The author has based his story on documentary evidence that gives a full account of why and how Turkish labourers protested against the double standard that denied them the privileges that foreign workers enjoyed.

*Gün Dönerken* (From Darkness Into Light), was a documentary play by Yavuzer Çetinkaya, dwelling on the case of Bulgarian revolutionist Dimitrof, who was held responsible for the 1933 Reichstag Fire in Nazist Germany.

Uğur Mumcu, a brilliant journalist of the 1970s and 1980s, adapted his book *Sakıncalı Piyade* (Inconvenient Infantry) for theatre in 1978 as a humorous/sad documentary account (an inside story) of the military world during the time of the coup of March 12, 1971. The play is composed of a good number of scenes narrated by the character who represents Mumcu himself. This work also has significance as

the first dramatic encounter with the military intervention of March 12, which was in 1980 followed by the military coup of September 12.

The painful traces of the executions of left-wing activists during the military interventions of 1960, 1971 and 1980 led to the questioning of the acts of justice in general. In 1985, Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu staged an adaptation of Faruk Erem's *Bir Ceza Avukatının Anıları* (The Memories of a Criminal Lawyer), a documentary account of various incidents observed during his professional experience.

In the 1983-84 season Ankara Halk Tiyatrosu staged Erhan Bener's own adaptation of the novel *Bürokratlar* (The Bureaucrats), a documentary story of the author's long years of experience in bureaucracy.

1990s was a time when authors looked back in a pathetic mood to past events that had left unpleasant marks in the Turkish political scene. In the 1994-95 season, Ankara Ekin Tiyatrosu (Ankara Ekin Theatre) staged Haluk Işık's *Külrengi Sabahlar* (Ashgrey Mornings), a bitter account of incidents, including executions that were not fully justified, during the critical period that followed the military coup of September 12, 1980. Although the names of the characters are not mentioned in this documentary play, the dates of the events have been clearly pointed out.

Then came Metin Balay's account of the story the execution of young activist Deniz Gezmiş and his two friends after the military coup of March 12, 1971, in a play titled *Deniz Diye Bir Delikanlı* (A Young Man Called Deniz), produced by Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu.

In the early years of the new millenium, there were two documentary plays by Cuma Boynukara that dealt with events taking place in the international scene. In 2001, Bizim Tiyatro staged his *Ölüm Uykudaydı* (Death Was Asleep), which deals with the struggle of four intellectuals against fascistic pressures, including physical torture, in a prison cell in a South American country. In 2010, the production of Boynukara's *Yoksun* (You Do Not Exist) was presented by İzmir State Theatre. This documentary play portrays photographer Kevin Carter, who had captured with his camera a vulture in the act of watching a little African girl about to die of hunger, so that it could tear her to pieces and eat her. This photograph titled *The Vulture and the Child* won Carter a Pulitzer Prize in 1994. Strongly blamed for not having come to the rescue of the child, however, photographer Carter soon committed suicide.

In 2002, Ali Berktay wrote *Benim Meskenim Dağlardır* (Mountains are My Home), a documentary account of the life of the foregoing Turkish intellectual Sabahattin Ali, who was a novelist, a short story writer and a translator. The play gives us a panorama of his activities in the 1940s and 50s and presents the veiled mystery of his murder.

In 2008 Serdar Doğan came up with the documentary of the Alevi massacre by a right-wing group in the city of Kahramanmaraş, which lasted from December 19th to 26th, 1978. This tragedy had cost the lives of more than a hundred left-wingers and Alevi people. The play was produced by Canlar Tiyatrosu (Canlar Theatre).

In the 2007-8 season Genco Erkal designed a performance of five actors narrating and at the same time living through the Sivas massacre of July 2, 1993, which was caused by Islamic fundamentalists' setting fire to Hotel Madımak, where visitors who had come for the Pir Sultan Abdal Festival were staying. The tragedy occurred because the necessary measures had not been taken in good time and had cost the lives of 33 visitors and two hotel staff. Erkal's production of *Sivas '93* at Dostlar Tiyatrosu was based solely on documentary evidence, including video displays of the tragedy as well as sound and voice recordings and narrations by the observers.

Levent Üzümcü Tiyatrosu has also contributed to documentary theatre by two plays Cengiz Toraman wrote: *Ben Türkan Saylan* (I, Türkan Saylan), a one-actress drama (presented by Şenay Gürler) with

the accompaniment of Seven Voices (2022), and *Unutma Bizi-Uğur Mumcu Anısına* (Do not Forget Us-In Memory of Uğur Mumcu), a two-actor drama enriched by recordings of Uğur Mumcu's speeches (2023).

## Playwrights' Theatre

Playwrights' theatre was introduced in Türkiye by dramatist-short story writer Haldun Taner. His original aim was to begin the practise of political cabaret theatre that he had greatly enjoyed while he was a student of theatre in Germany. The fact that cabaret plays were based on a series of episodes and that the genre served as a convenient means of political burlesque and satire encouraged Taner to form a synthesis that brought together the European cabaret with popular Turkish theatrical traditions. His first experiments with the Turkish style of cabaret performances took place in the 1960s when he formed Devekuşu Kabare Tiyatrosu in 1967 with actors Metin Akpınar, Zeki Alasya and Ahmet Gülhan. *Vatan Kurtaran Şaban* was hailed as a great innovation and the genre became immediately popular. Taner, who, at the time, was already a well-known dramatist, was now the producer of his plays. In a few years, however, his co-partners began to think differently about the way cabaret theatre should be presented and Taner walked out. In 1969, Taner collaborated with famous actor Münir Özkul and actor-director Çetin İpekkaya to establish another private theatre and *Sersem Kocanın Kurnaz Karısı* (The Cunning Wife of the Stupid Husband), which turned out to be one of Taner's masterpieces, had its world premiere with actor Özkul in the leading role. Due to financial problems, this theatre was short-lived, and after another attempt at a new cabaret theatre with actor Ahmet Gülhan, Taner gave up the idea of becoming a producer.

Luckily Ferhan Şensoy took over the task of building a playwrights' theatre in 1980. He was a great Haldun Taner fan and mostly wrote satires in the cabaret style. Şensoy's first play with his brand-new company Ortaoyuncular was *Şahları da Vururlar* (They Shoot Shahs Too). This play that dealt with the overthrow of the last shah of Iran by religious fundamentalists, was a great success. It was soon followed by *Ferhangi Şeyler* (Ferhanlike Things), a one-actor show that parodied the topical social and political scene by daily newspaper readings that changed at almost every performance by Şensoy. This show continued for forty years until the death of the author in 2021. Şensoy had written a new play (sometimes an adaptation, most of the time an original work based on either traditional Ortaoyunu style, or an absurdist approach that at times tended towards pathos, and a few one-actor plays for actresses or himself) for every new theatre season. His great contribution to Turkish theatre also included becoming a shareholder, restoring and bringing back to life the historical Ses Tiyatrosu (Ses Theatre) in the Beyoğlu district of İstanbul in 1989. Şensoy's was a true playwrights' theatre, where he worked not only as actor-director-writer-translator-producer, but also as stage designer and music composer. One of his most recent plays was *Masal Müfettişi* (Inspector of Children's Stories), a satire on the suspicious attitude of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) (The party for Justice and Development), the right-wing party that has been in government for more than two decades at the beginning of the new millenium.

Actor-director-writer Yılmaz Erdoğan also had a hand in popularising playwrights' theatre with Beşiktaş Kültür Merkezi (Beşiktaş Cultural Centre), BKM, in the 1990s by *Otogargara* (Comedy at Central Bus Terminal), *Sen Hiç Ateşböceği Gördün mü* (Have You Ever Seen a Firefly), *Bana Bir Şıhlar Oluyor* (Something (or Sheikh) is Happening to Me), and the recent *Aydınlıkevler* (Well-lit Homes). An artist of diverse talents, Erdoğan writes scripts for and shoot films, as well as creating and producing comedy series and sketches for television.

Actress-director-writer-acting trainer Şahika Tekand has been involved in productions devoted to "performative staging and acting" with her group Studio Oyuncuları (Studio Players). She usually

re-writes classical and modern works. Sophocles' *King Oedipus* and Samuel Beckett's *Play* are two significant examples.

In the early 2000s, actress-director-writer Nesrin Kazankaya wrote a good number of original plays and stage adaptations for Tiyatro Pera (Theatre Pera) in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul. Two examples are *Dobrijna'da Düğün* (Wedding in Dobrijna), partly fact, partly based on the playwright's imagination, and *Şerefe Hatıralar-Istanbul 1955* (Cheers to Memories-Istanbul 1955), partly a documentary of the political life of the 1950s in Türkiye.

The new millenium has also given rise to a younger generation of playwright-actor-directors, who have been producing plays for the playwrights' theatre they have established. Among them, the most noteworthy are Berkun Oya's Krek Tiyatrosu (Krek Theatre) *Bayrak* (The Flag), *Güzel Şeyler Bizim Tarafta* (Nice Things Are Over Here), *Babamın Cesetleri* (Dad's Corpses), Yiğit Sertdemir's Altıdan Sonra Tiyatro (Theatre After Six (p.m.)), (444, *Kral -Soytarım- Lear* (King -My Clown- Lear), *Faili Müşterek* (Co-Perpetrator)), and Yeşim Özsoy's Ve Diğer Şeyler Topluluğu (And Other Things Company) (*Aksak Istanbul Hikayeleri* (Staggering Tales of Istanbul), *Noter* (Notary), *Yüzyılın Aşkı* (The Love Affair of the Century). The founders of these theatres have turned out to be highly prolific writers and directors. They felt free in the choice of their themes and experimented with new forms.

Among these actor-writer-producers, the most prolific is Genco Erkal, who designed his work for Dostlar Tiyatrosu. Erkal's dramatic presentations have always been highly political. Some foreign plays produced by Dostlar Tiyatrosu have had to face the pressures of the Military Law in the 1970s. The performance of Erkal's one-actor show *Her Gün Yeni Baştan* (Everyday All Over Again) was not allowed during the coup of September 12, 1980, and the production of his one-actor or two-actor playtexts in the 2010s faced problems with hiring performance space in State Theatres, state universities, and others.

Actor-director-playwright Ali Poyrazoğlu, who is in charge of Ali Poyrazoğlu Tiyatrosu (Ali Poyrazoğlu Theatre), has been adapting or writing plays (usually one-actor shows) that he produces in his theatre. Among the one-actor plays he wrote, produced and performed, the most recent ones are *Habanera Takımı* (The Habanera Team) (2022), *Hayatım Roman* (My Life is Like a Novel) (2020), *Ödünç Yaşamlar* (Lives Borrowed) (2015), *Kaplumbağa* (The Tortoise), adapted from Juan Mayorga (2013) and *Ben Eskiden Küçüktüm* (Once I was Little) (2005). *Tamamla Bizi Ey Aşk* (Love, Make Us Complete) (2015) and *Usta ve Çırak* (The Master and His Apprentice) (2017) are two plays for more than one actor that Poyrazoğlu has adapted for the stage. Like Erkal's, Poyrazoğlu's one-actor playtexts are mostly modern versions of the traditional Meddah (the storyteller), who also performs the scenes making up his stories. The difference between the styles of the two actors is that Erkal sticks to the playtext he has put down on paper, while Poyrazoğlu deviates from the text and, like the traditional Meddah, resorts to improvisation. Poyrazoğlu's satirical comments on the problems of social life, economic matters and the attitude of political authorities in Türkiye are usually a part of such improvisational additions to the original playtexts.

Actor-director-producer Levent Üzümcü, who had to establish his own private theatre when he was discharged -for his political activism- from Istanbul Municipal Theatres in 2015, has, among stage adaptations and documentary plays, also included in his repertory two Meddah productions, the playtexts of which were written by actor/director/playwright/music composer Cengiz Toraman, who presently writes almost exclusively for Levent Üzümcü Theatre: One is *Anlatılan Senin Hikayendir* (What is Being Told is Your Own Story), composed of three tales and the other one is titled *Rüstemoğlu Cemil'in Tuhaf Hikayesi* (The Strange Story of Cemil, the Son of Rüstem). Both shows are based on stories from Ottoman times in the Aegean area that also included the Greek islands. Both performances, which combine the traditional Meddah style with modern acting, are politically oriented and refer to the deeply rooted friendship between Turks and Greeks, yearning, at the same time, for peace and

brotherhood among people from all nations, races and religions. (Üzümcü is now back home in İstanbul Municipal Theatres, yet his theatre is still active.)

Actor-director-writer Müjdat Gezen, who is also the founder of Müjdat Gezen Sanat Merkezi (Müjdat Gezen Centre for the Arts) (1991) and Müjdat Gezen Tiyatrosu (Müjdat Gezen Theatre) (2006), has, like Genco Erkal and Ali Poyrazoğlu, made his debut in private theatres in the 1960s and has built his career under the political pressures of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. He is the author of about twenty plays. For the last seventeen years, he has been writing and producing playtexts for his own theatre and acting in them. Some of his political plays are 1881, *Atatürk Geldi* (Atatürk Has Come), *Olmasaydı* (Had It Not Happened), *Yalandan Kim Ölmüş* (Nobody Dies for Telling Lies) and *Kuvayi Milliye* (Turkish Forces (War of Independance)).

The State has partly sponsored the activities of private theatres since 1983. Since the second decade of the 2000s, however, the opposition of political theatres to the strict measures taken by the government has put an end to the State Sponsorship they had formerly been granted.

## To Conclude

This brief survey of the contribution of private enterprises to the development of native drama shows that, aside from supporting the work of Turkish playwrights through productions and world premieres of their work, private companies have helped to perpetuate the zeal of theatrical life at times of political suppression that frequently interrupted the normal flow of democracy. During the Turkish Republic's Centenary, it was for private theatres to undertake the struggle against restrictions by means of new stage adaptations, documentary plays and playwrights' theatre. Their endeavour to promote free speech on the stage has thus led to a variety of innovations that also contributed to the Turkish performing arts.

Our thanks go to hundreds of writers, actors/actresses, directors, stage/costume/lighting designers, composers, choreographers, and all the other workers of private companies, who have spent their labour -in spite of low wages and inconvenient working conditions - for the love of theatre throughout our Republic's Centenary.

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Chapter 2

# A Panoramic Journey Through Türkiye's Touring Theatrical Landscape

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## Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive exploration of the history of touring theatre in Türkiye, an often overlooked aspect in the country's theatrical narrative. Existing scholarly works on Turkish theatre history have predominantly catalogued theatrical activities or analysed dramatic texts while leaving touring theatre, a significant historical phenomenon, underexamined. The transient nature of touring troupes, coupled with the absence of comprehensive records, has contributed to the neglect of this aspect in theatre history studies. Drawing on available sources, including interviews, memoirs, and historical articles, the article sheds light on the development of touring theatre in Türkiye, focusing on key periods, influential figures, and the socio-political contexts that shaped its trajectory. It seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Turkish theatre history by unravelling the experiences, challenges and contributions of touring theatre to the cultural landscape, aiming to fill a notable gap in existing scholarship.

**Keywords** touring theatre · private troupes · theatre history · theatrical mobility · actresses on tour

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## Introduction

This article focuses on an important yet often overlooked part of the theatre history of Türkiye, which has not received the attention it deserves from theatre historians and remains largely unexplored. Academic studies on theatre history that is written by now in Türkiye either have calendared activities by documenting the remains of theatrical life or attempted to comprehend a particular era's theatre through analysis of dramatic texts. Touring theatre or travelling players have remained excluded from theatre history studies except for a few sporadic mentions, mainly due to the lack of records and the transient nature of touring troupes, which typically disbanded when the tour ended. Unfortunately, there are no journals maintained by touring actors, specifically detailing their travels. Such records could have provided valuable insights into their itineraries, repertoires, and experiences, as are often found in Western practises. However, studies conducted in cities such as Izmir, Trabzon, Adapazarı, Adana, and Gaziantep where touring theatre troupes followed the route or frequently visited, provide us with limited information on this subject.[1] There are few additional sources that I came across during my research that I cannot fail to mention: *Turne Tiyatroculari -Söyleşiler* (Touring Theatre Players -Interviews) by Oktay Güzeloğlu[2] and *Bir Aktörün Anıları- Silvain'in Şakird-i Marifeti* (Memoirs of an Actor: Silvain's Ingenious Disciple) by actor Burhanettin Tepsi[3] who was the leader of one of the touring companies in 1940's even though it was not focused on the touring theatre period of the actor.

However, what attracted me to this subject was a seven-part article series titled *Turneli Tiyatro – Türk Tiyatrosunun Anadolu Öyküsü* (Touring Theatre: The Anatolian Story of Turkish Theatre) by Tarık Dursun K., originally published in Milliyet Newspaper in 1986[4], which I still have the newspaper clippings. The series of articles directly inspired me to interview the actresses of the touring theatre for a documentary film workshop I later attended. I aspired to shed light on an uncharted facet of theatre by using a documentary film to capture the memories and narratives of these actresses. By doing that, I aimed to achieve a secondary but equally important objective to enrich the theatre's historical narrative by incorporating the stories, experiences and perspectives of women from the point of view of these actresses.

## Beginnings: An Overview of Touring Theatre in European Theatre

I do not intend to provide an exhaustive account of the entire history of touring theatre in Europe in this part of the article, but rather focus on certain periods and unique circumstances during those periods. We can easily say that touring in theatre is as old as theatre itself. Thespis, recognised as to be the first actor in history, is believed to have been the first performer to separate himself from the chorus to portray a character in the play. Oscar Brockett, with reference to Horatius, points out that he was also the first to tour a show and adds *"if this is true, Thespis has given performances in many Greek cities other than Athens"*.[5] He would travel from town to town in a waggon with all his supplies in tow so that these stories could entertain others. R. Henke and E. Nicholson, referring to a panel (1340s) carved by the sculptor Andrea Pisano, elaborates on Thespis's role and the significance of mobility in

[1] Please see Veysel Usta-Ömer İskender Tuluk, *Trabzon'da Tiyatro* (Trabzon: Serander, 2017). Özlem Nemutlu, II. Meşrutiyetten Cumhuriyete İzmir'de Tiyatro (İzmir: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kent Kitaplığı, 2011). Cahit Saraç, *Gaziantep Tiyatro tarihi ve Geçmişten Esintiler* (Gaziantep: Cahit Saraç) (Self- published, 2012). Nurhan Tekerek, *Cumhhuriyet Döneminde Adana'da Batı Tarzı Tiyatro Yaşamı* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1997).

[2] Oktay Güzeloğlu, *Turne Tiyatroculari Söyleşiler* (Istanbul: Hiç Yayınları, 2003).

[3] Burhanettin Tepsi, *Bir Aktörün Anıları- Silvain'in Şakird-i Marifeti* (Istanbul: DBY Yayınları, 2018).

[4] Unfortunately, since I have only written the year on the clippings I have and there is no information on the date even in the Taha Toros archive, I cannot give the exact month and days of publication. Hence, I found out that he published another book about touring theatre later in: Tarık Dursun K., O Şehir Senin Bu Şehir Benim, (Istanbul: Literatür Yayınları, 2002).

[5] Oscar Brockett, *Tiyatro Tarihi,* trans. S. Sokullu, T. Sağlam, S. Dinçel, S. Çelenk, S. B. Öndül, B. Güçbilmez (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, 2000), 28.

the history of theatre: *"Mobility... is at the heart of theatre. The mule- or horse-drawn carts and wagons transporting... actors from early modern European town to town recall the legendary wagon of the first "hypocrite", or impersonating actor, Thespis, who was said to use the wagon as his temporary stage when he would arrive in a village".*[6] Therefore, Henke and Nicholson have claimed that this bas-relief of Pisano's *"implication is that mobility is endemic to the craft of theatre".*[7] They go one step further and say that *"Dionysus himself, the patron deity of Athenian theatre, was often figured as a traveller, either riding a donkey or seated in a mule-driven cart."*[8]

Sophia Aneziri, in her article "World Travellers: The Associations of Artists of Dionysus" states that in the Hellenistic period and in the Roman empire period "the volume of the travel was very great" because of the *"explosion in festival culture that took place at the beginning of these periods."*[9] She also mentions that in Asia Minor (today's Anatolia- Türkiye) *"the earliest evidence dates from the second half of the third century BC"*[10] for the travelling performers of the Association of Artists of Dionysus. From its inception as an art form, theatre has inherently embraced mobility. While the term 'theatron' indicates a fixed performance space, the essence of theatre is, in fact, profoundly mobile. It thrives on the dynamic presence of artists on the move, carrying stories, emotions, and creativity from place to place. Theatre's vitality lies in its ability to traverse boundaries, both physical and imaginative, making it a compelling force in the world of the performing arts.

Even though theatre had travelled widely before, the nineteenth century was a pinnacle for travelling theatres, because of the expansion of imperial and other trade networks. New developments in communication and transport, such as the telegraph, railways, and steamships, have increased mobility and the volume of exchange. Players had a chance to navigate the seas and travel overland routes to distant locales. Thus, we can say travelling theatre was, as mentioned in the editorial text of *Beyond the Playhouse: Travelling Theatre in the Long Nineteenth Century*[11], a "global phenomenon" for the nineteenth century, although it had been "a neglected one" by scholars until more recent times. Itinerant theatres and individual actors of all origins and from all types of theatre practises with different qualities performed in theatre performances from big cities to the provinces. As we encounter Western-style theatre in this century, mostly through touring theatres, its impact on our theatre history cannot be understated. According to Berenika Szymanski-Düll, touring stars like Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) or Eleonora Duse (1858-1924) *"transgressed not only territorial but also cultural boundaries, which had several impacts on the theatre business: theatre grew to become a transnationally, even globally connected medium with numerous possibilities of cross-cultural encounters and entanglements".*[12] While this century is narrated in art history books through the foundations of Romanticism and Realist theatre, there is no mention of the touring troupes that transcended both linguistic and cultural boundaries, their transnational activities, and their contributions and impacts on globalisation, despite the establishment of nation-states replacing empires and kingdoms after the French Revolution. During that period, historiography, which developed in line with the nationalist perspective of the nineteenth century, became of defining a national theatre in accordance with ideological aims and turned the theatre into a place of representation of the national identity to be constructed.

[6] R. Henke and E. Nicholson, *Transnational Mobilities in Early Modern Theatre* (Surrey&Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 15.
[7] Henke and Nicholson, *Transnational Mobilities in Early Modern Theatre,* 15.
[8] Henke & Nicholson, *Transnational*, 15.
[9] Sophia Aneziri, "World Travellers: The Associations of Artists of Dionysus," in *Wandering Poets in Ancient Greek Culture,* ed. Richard Hunter & Ian RHuherford (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 217.
[10] Aneziri, "World Travellers", 220.
[11] Tobias Becker & Kedar A. Kulkarni, "Editorial: Beyond the Playhouse: Travelling Theatre in the Long Nineteenth Century," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 44, no. 1 (2017): 3-7.
[12] Berenica Szymanski- Düll, "To Speak Shakespeare in German is almost to speak it in English- Translocation of Languages on Nineteenth-Century Stages," *European Journal of Theatre and Performance,* no. 3 (2013): 262.

Therefore, there is an interesting point in this century's transnational mobility activities. It was less the chance to move around that tempted actors and companies to travel than commercial deliberations—new audiences promised financial gains—and the prestige that went along with having succeeded elsewhere. Travelling as such did not result in a cosmopolitan outlook, nor did it create 'international' supra-regional publics. Often, it reinforced existing identities—whether local, regional, national, or imperial—and brought existing affinities and frictions to the surface. While some troupes sought out migrant audiences from their native lands, others played to much more diverse and heterogeneous audiences. This makes the travelling theatre so interesting, not only for the history of the theatre but also for the history of cross-cultural contacts and conflicts in the long nineteenth century.[13]

As theatre historian M. Carlson mentioned that the conventional *"theatre history developed in the shadow of European high culture of the late nineteenth century and almost universally accepted the values of that culture".*[14] The binary oppositions between high and low art, or elite art and the popular art made them cast popular entertainment—in this case, touring theatre—as the other of the theatre art. Thus, the touring companies and artists that have been artistically underestimated, ignored and undervalued by the historians mostly stayed out of this history. They are only acknowledged in the annals of theatre history in the cases only when they have established theatre companies across various societies. We see that the touring theatre artists in Türkiye were not different from their European counterparts.

## Touring Theatre in Türkiye

It is already known that players/storytellers who perform traditional theatre genres tell stories by wandering. Refik Ahmet Sevengil notes that in the festivities held outside Istanbul, *"people from Istanbul... who practised the entertaining arts... showed their skills."*[15] Therefore, it is evident that people engaged in traditional theatre were on the move within the Ottoman territories. The scope and specific configuration of this mobility can be subject to another study. In this article, my focus will primarily be on discussing tours that occurred after the emergence of Western-style theatre.

The period when the Ottoman Empire encountered Western theatre coincides with the period when travelling theatres in the West crossed the borders of countries, namely the second half of the 19th century. At the beginning of that century, as part of the Westernisation movement in the Ottoman Empire, Western theatre was encouraged. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Ottoman government allowed foreign troupes to come to the country to play in languages other than Turkish.[16] As a result, Istanbul became a centre of attraction for foreign theatre troupes. Refik Ahmet Sevengil highlights another aspect of this mobility, asserting that after the *Tanzimat* (Renovations- 1839), European capital perceived the Ottoman Empire as highly exploitable and ripe for plundering, with aspirations to establish colonies in the region, seeking secure markets. He further claims that European Art, along with European trade, came to Istanbul while wandering around in search of new markets.[17] Indeed, French journalists who wrote articles justifying Sevengil's argument talked about the importance of touring first-class French theatre performances to Istanbul for the spread of their language and culture as well as the growth of trade. According to Norill, during the so-called "golden age" described by Afioun Efendi[18] in his book Paradoxes sur la Turquie (Paradoxes on Türkiye), France "benefited commercially

[13] Tobias Becker, "Emotional Journeys: Itinerant Theatres, Audiences, and Adaptation," Web, August 17, 2023. https://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/fdkn-125005

[14] Marvin Carlson, "The Theory of History," in *The Performance of Power: Theatrical Discourse and Politics,* ed. Janelle Reinelt and Su-Ellen Case, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 276.

[15] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Eski Türklerde Dram San'atı* (Istanbul: Maarif Basımevi, 1959), 44-45.

[16] Metin And, "Eski Istanbul'da Yunan Sahnesi",*Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi,* (1972): 90.

[17] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (Istanbul: Kanaat Kütüphanesi, 1934), 11.

[18] W. H. de Morfinay, who wrote a book titled "Paradoxes sur la Turquie" in 1908, is known as Afioun-Effendi.

from the flow of business that followed each visit" of the actresses to Istanbul. However, after the French government withdrew its financial and moral support, second-class companies appeared on the Pera stages, and Italian, German, and English actors/actresses who received support from their own governments promoted their own culture and became commercial competitors.[19]

The first touring troupes began to give performances in their own languages in the entertainment venues of Beyoğlu. These plays were attended by local Christians proficient in foreign languages, Muslim intellectuals who had been to Europe, theatre enthusiasts among young Ottomans and diplomatic personnel from foreign embassies. The Sultans occasionally attended these plays behind special enclosures built for them. To increase the audience, summaries of the plays in Turkish were distributed before each performance and advertisements were featured in newspapers. It is worth mentioning that the French, Italian, Greek and English troupes extended beyond Istanbul to include cities such as İzmir, Trabzon and other important cities within the Ottoman geography, including Cairo and Aleppo in their tours. Important European actors/actresses such as Sarah Bernardt, Coquelin Cadet and Mounet Sully of the period toured more than once and performed in the Ottoman Palace in front of the Sultan.[20] Additionally, we can include renowned actors, actresses and directors from that era, such as Andre Antoine, Gabrielle Réjane, Eugène Silvain and Adelaide Ristori.[21] These international troupes mark the earliest instances of touring in Ottoman territories, apart from the travel of performers in traditional genres who participated in festivals and various entertainments. Undoubtedly, the performances by these travelling troupes in the Palace or Beyoğlu theatres contributed to the development of Western-style professional theatre, fostering the emergence of new theatrical genres (*tuluat*) and catalysing the transformation of cultural life in the Ottoman Empire.

As for the local touring theatre in the country, Tarık Dursun K. notes that the first touring troupes in the Ottoman period were Armenian companies led by actors such as Bengliyan and Manakyan, who travelled to Edirne with their operas and operettas to entertain the Russians upon their entry into Edirne in the spring of 1877.[22] Given that Western-style theatre in the Ottoman Empire took its initial steps in the 1850s in the halls of Armenian schools and some houses, featuring performances of translated European plays arranged by teachers and students, it is not surprising that the first tours were undertaken by Armenian troupes.[23] According to Şarasan,[24] Istepan Ekşiyan went on a tour to İzmir in 1862 with a company he assembled by reuniting the actors of the disbanded Şark Tiyatrosu (Oriental Theatre) and staged plays there for a short time.[25]

[19] Jean Norill, "Le Theatre et L'influence français en Turquie," *Correspondence Orient,* no. 303 (1923).

[20] Gökhan Akçura, "Abdülhamid'in huzurundaki yıldız," *Milliyet Gazetesi,* June 3, 2013. https://www.milliyet.com.tr/cadde/abdulhamid-in-huzurundaki-yildiz-1717671

[21] Although Refik Ahmet Sevengil, in his book *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi,* points to newspaper advertisements about Madame Ristori's performances in Istanbul, Şarasan in *Türkiye Ermenileri Sahnesi ve Çalışanları* states that she came to Istanbul in 1863-1864 and was welcomed with enthusiasm by the audience, Madam Ristori does not mention her tours to Istanbul in her book titled *Adelaide Ristori Studies and Memoirs* (1888). Similarly, Sarah Bernardt, who had been to Istanbul four times (in 1888, 1893, 1904, 1908) does not include any mention of her Istanbul tours and the medal given to her by Sultan Abdülhamid in her book *My Double Life* (1907).

[22] Tarık Dursun K., *O şehir senin, Bu şehir benim: Turne Anıları* (Istanbul: Literatür Yayıncılık, 2002), 12.

[23] For recent studies on this subject, see: Sarkis Tütüncüyan (aka. Şarasan), *Türkiye Ermenileri Sahnesi ve Çalışanları,* (Istanbul: bgst Yayınları. 2008); Aşot Madatyan, *Sahnemizin Değerleri,* (Istanbul: Aras Yayınları, 2022); Nesim Ovadya İzrail, *Düşler Ülkesinde: Rejisör Aşod Madatyan ve Kozmopolitizmden Milliyetçiliğe Türkiye'de Tiyatro 1902-1962,* (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2022); Hagop Ayvaz, *Sahne Arkadaşlarım: Türkiye Tiyatrosundan Simalar,* trans. Payline Tomasyan (Istanbul, Aras Yayıncılık, 2020); Nesim Ovadya İzrail, *Osmanlı ve Türkiye Tiyatrosunda Şahinyanlar,* (Istanbul: bgst Yayıncılık, 2018).

[24] Sarkis Tütüncüyan (aka Şarasan), *Türkiye Ermeni Sahnesi ve Çalışanları* (Istanbul: bgst Yayınları, 2008), 18.

[25] In the chapter on Bengliyan of the same book, Şarasan reports another date and states that this tour occurred in 1861.

Hence, it can be affirmed that the Armenian troupes had engaged in touring before 1877, albeit briefly and limited to a single city. However, the Edirne tour facilitated Armenian troupes to embark on longer and more extensive tours. For example, after the success of the Edirne tour, the Bengliyan Troupe embarked on a three-month tour to Adana in 1879 and a tour to Greece between 1879 and 1884, where they performed plays in Turkish in cities such as Thessaloniki, Kavala, Athens, Patros, Zanta, Pirgos and the islands of Limnos, Lesbos, and Samos. The same group toured Egypt in 1884-1885 and 1887.[26] During an era when European troupes were touring to propagate the language and culture of their nation-states and enhance their trade network, an Armenian ensemble from the Ottoman Empire embarked on a tour in a country that had gained independence from the Ottoman Empire nearly fifty years earlier, not in their own language, but in Turkish, and the Leblebici Horhor Operetta they performed was praised in Greek newspapers and held up as an example for Greek actors. One could assume that they undertook this to reach a broader audience in a country where there is still a Turkish-speaking population; however, a review of newspaper articles reveals that their audience was not homogenous, encompassing Greek theatre and opera enthusiasts who attended the performances and were notably impressed by the acting and the musical performances.[27]

Tovmas Fasulyeciyan, who "placed great significance to Anatolian tours", embarked on a tour to Bursa in 1880 and stayed there until 1885 at the request of Ahmet Vefik Pasha, the Governor of Bursa. According to the memoirs of Ahmet Fehim, one of the first Muslim actors to tour with this troupe, their first tour was to Bursa, and Ahmet Vefik Pasha promised them that he would establish a theatre building if they remained in the city, and he soon fulfilled this promise.[28] The troupe mostly performed Moliere plays translated and supervised by the Governor himself.[29] After the dismissal of Vefik Pasha in 1882, the troupe encountered difficulties in staging plays in Bursa and travelled to Plovdiv-Bulgaria to perform a repertoire of Moliere plays again. However, the "nationalist Bulgarian newspapers", as noted by Ahmet Fehim, "... started to make a fuss. They write column after column every day" objecting to the performance of plays" in the Turkish language, which "they are trying to uproot from their homeland". A dispute arose between those who argued that they could not attend the theatre due to the absence of their own theatre and those who opposed this stance, and eventually, the advocates for theatre-going prevailed and performances continued. Meanwhile, an amateur Bulgarian theatre group played Moliere's *The Miser* in Bulgarian and, according to Ahmet Fehim, they played a pivotal role in the birth of the Bulgarian Theatre.[30] Interestingly, predominantly the Armenian actors, who were Ottoman citizens, exerted an influence on the theatrical landscape of these newly independent states, but governed as monarchies rather than nation-states, by performing Western-style theatre from Europe in Turkish.

In a period when theatrical activities in Istanbul became difficult due to restrictions imposed by Sultan Abdülhamid, Rıdvan Pasha, the Mayor of Istanbul at the time, was disturbed by the prominence of his son Reşad Rıdvan in the Ottoman Comedy Company, and in November 1904, with a decree signed by the Sultan, all the theatres in Istanbul that gave performances in Turkish were banned and closed.[31] Foreign troupes, Karagöz and Meddah performances were excluded from this ban. The troupes dispersed out of Istanbul in despair. It wasn't until the assassination of Rıdvan Pasha in 1906 that no theatre in Turkish resumed in Istanbul.[32] Intensive tours to Anatolia occurred after this date. In 1908, with the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy, Armenian troupes that had been performing plays

[26] Tütüncüyan, *Türkiye Ermeni Sahnesi*, 60-63.

[27] İ. İzidoridis Skıgislis, "Armenians in Faler", *Efimeris Newspaper,* August 7, 1883. Cited by Tütüncüyan, 66-67.

[28] In his memoirs, Ahmet Fehim wrote that they went to Bursa six months after he started working at the Gedikpaşa Theatre in 1876, but considering that Ahmet Vefik Pasha was the Governor of Bursa between 1879 and 1882, he is making a mistake about the date.

[29] *Ahmet Fehim Bey'in Anıları,* ed. Hafi Kadri Alpman, (Istanbul: Tercüman, 1977), 15.

[30] Ed. Alpman, *Ahmet Fehim,* 19-20.

[31] Nesim Ovadya İzrail, *Düşler Ülkesinde: Rejisör Aşod Madatyan ve Kozmopolitizmden Milliyetçiliğe Türkiye'de Tiyatro 1902-1962* (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2022), 15-16.

[32] Metin And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e Türk Tiyatrosu* (Ankara: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 91.

in Tbilisi and Baku started performing in Istanbul. According to Izrail, it was a common practise for these troupes, which performed not only in Istanbul but also in Izmir, for example, to supplement their casts with local actors.[33]

After the Armenian troupes that made tours at home and abroad, it is pertinent to highlight an institutional theatre that toured Anatolia. In 1914, the Mayor of Istanbul, Cemil Topuzlu, invited French director André Antoine to establish a school for theatre education. *Darülbedayi,* which they founded together, was soon transformed into the first subsidised/institutional theatre affiliated with the Istanbul Municipality, due to the onset of the First World War. In the early phase of *Darülbedayi,* the selection of plays was influenced by the performances of foreign touring troupes in Istanbul, the "Petit Illustration" magazine that published theatre plays in full text and the plays admired by theatre artists such as Muhsin Ertuğrul and İ. Galip Arcan during their travels abroad. They either translated or adopted the plays they watched and included them in their repertoire.[34]

Following the Turkish War of Independence, *Darülbedayi* actors organised their first Anatolian tour to Izmir in 1923, compelled by economic challenges. Some actors, unaccustomed to touring and reluctant to participate, opted out of this journey made by ferry. Refik Ahmet Sevengil reports that this tour was organised by actor Muvahhit, who took the initiative to travel to İzmir, secure the capital, and coordinate with the local venues. His wife Bedia joined the tour to accompany her husband.[35] Mustafa Kemal was in İzmir at the same time. Darülbedayi actors Muvahhit, Şadi, and Behzat Bey, representing their friends, arranged a meeting with him and received his approval to tour and perform plays in various cities of Anatolia. This meeting held additional significance in another respect as well. Mustafa Kemal specifically requested that Bedia Muvahhit, whom he had previously seen and admired in the movie *Ateşten Gömlek* (The Daughter of Smyrna or The Shirt of Flame), be included in the group as a Muslim woman actress. Bedia Muvahhit rapidly prepared for the roles and started to take part in theatre plays starting from the very same tour. During this tour, the troupe not only visited İzmir but also travelled to Söke for a performance. Between 1923 and 1942, Darülbedayi[36] regularly organised annual domestic tours. Additionally, tours were conducted to Egypt in 1928 and to Cyprus in 1929 and 1930. Bedia Hanım, who was a Darülbedayi actress at that time, travelled to Greece in 1931 and performed a play in Greek in Athens and received great appreciation from both the audience and the press.[37]

Mustafa Kemal emphasised the importance of touring theatre for the new republic when he met with the artists who gave performances in Bursa on 10th of June 1926: *"I highly appreciate your work. You also have important contributions to our revolution... your greatest contribution to the homeland will be travelling throughout Anatolia and elucidating to our people what art is. Therefore, continue your tours on a regular basis."*[38] In response to Atatürk's special request, *Darülbedayi* (later Istanbul City Theatre) expanded the frequency of Anatolian tours. Between 1923 and 1942, Darülbedayi artists, both men and women, conducted a total of 134 tours, including 36 in the Aegean region, 23 in the Black Sea, 9 in Marmara, and 23 in Eastern Anatolia. In 1930 alone, *Darülbedayi* performed 191 plays in 182 days in Anatolia.[39]

Did the touring theatre, tasked with the mission of disseminating the concepts of art and the Republic ideals, but often lacking official support with a few exceptions, truly engage in such an

[33] İzrail, *Düşler Ülkesinde,* 28.
[34] Özdemir Nutku, *Darülbedayi'in Elli Yılı* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Yayınları, 1969), 126-130. In this book, Nutku gives detailed information about which plays were translated, which ones were adopted and which foreign companies performed these plays.
[35] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, "BEDİA: ailesi, hayatı, sanatı," *Jübile Dergisi,* 1950, 1-5.
[36] In 1934, the name Darülbedayi was changed to Istanbul Şehir Tiyatroları (Istanbul City Theatres).
[37] "Bedia Hanıma Yapılan Büyük Kabul", *Son Posta,* September 27, 1931. https://www.gastearsivi.com/gazete/son_posta/1931-09-27/1
[38] *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri II,* ed. Sadi Borak and Dr. Utkan Kocatürk, (Ankara: Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınlar, 1972), 258.
[39] Seda Bayındır Uluskan, *Atatürk'ün Sosyal ve Kültürel Politikaları* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2010), 435.

idealistic endeavour? Like European theatre companies employing international tours to propagate their culture and explore new markets, the companies of this genre, evolving in urban centres, mainly in Istanbul, redirected their attention to Anatolia, which they saw as a source of profit, once the theatre season in the city ended. Additionally, was the Anatolian audience ready to embrace theatre? Could the actors, many whom were *alaylı* (self-educated), bear the weight of this responsibility on their shoulders? In 1930, as the theatre season ended in Istanbul, İ. Galip, an actor from Darülbedayi, wrote an article titled "Our Tours" for the First Spring travel issue of Darülbedayi Magazine, referring to Thespis, stating that *"He travelled from country to country with a companion and all his belongings in a big carriage, offering divine pleasures to virgin souls thirsting for the excitement of art and poetry. I wonder what Thespis would have thought if he had seen his grandchildren travelling through the ages, under what conditions, braving what manias, listening to what winds."*[40] The author questions and reflects on the challenges faced by theatre actors for the sincere eyes waiting for them in the cities they visited on tour, and the multitude of pure hearts fluttering with longing, as someone embracing the legacy of Western-style theatre despite all the years that have passed after Thespis. Could they really meet "pure hearts" that were waiting for them and longing for them? Or was the actor being sarcastic about what is lacking in their experience or what they were expecting from their audience?

After 1942, the City Theatre experienced financial challenges arising from the Second World War, preventing them from undertaking tours. Although they resumed touring in 1949, the decision to tour Anatolia was reconsidered with the initiation of tours by the State Theatre and an increasing number of private theatres and they opted to establish theatre venues in various districts of Istanbul.[41] Due to the persistent problems and conflicts experienced since the establishment of Darülbedayi, numerous actors, including Muhsin Ertuğrul, engaged in tours both with *Darülbedayi* and with touring theatre companies they either joined or founded upon departing from *Darülbedayi.*

The tradition of private theatre, existing since the Tanzimat era, continued after the declaration of the Republic. Among the early private theatres established after 1923 was *Milli Sahne,* a touring troupe directed by Fikret Şadi. Fikret Şadi (Karagözoğlu) founded the *Türk Tiyatrosunu Himaye Cemiyeti* (Society for the Protection of Turkish Theatre) and became the first private theatre company to receive support from the state.[42] Şadi was also one of the first actors of *Darülbedayi* to receive a salary of 8 liras.[43] His troupe is also the troupe where Afife Jale toured for a period. Afife made history as the first Muslim woman actress to appear on stage in 1919. She faced arrest and eventual dismissal by the Darülbedayi management.[44] After this separation, she worked with *the Burhanettin Tepsi Company,* where she went on tour for the first time and then with *Yeni Tiyatro.* While working for this theatre, she inspired Turkish girls named Seniye and later Mebrure and Leman to step onto the stage. Later, during her Anatolian tour, she ensured that other Turkish girls named Huriye and Hikmet in İzmit and Ruhat in Trabzon also had the opportunity to appear on stage.

Beginning with the aforementioned troupes such as *Milli Sahne* and *Burhanettin Tepsi Kumpanyası,* a vibrant touring theatre scene emerged and continued until the 1970s. It is evident that many companies toured Anatolia. Most of these troupes, except the ones formed by artists like Burhanettin Tepsi, Muammer Karaca, Şadi Tek etc., which were relatively more consistent, that went on tours in Anatolia came together in Istanbul only for the tour and disbanded or reorganised either on the road or upon their return to Istanbul. However, it is possible to speak of various travelling companies that

[40] İ. Galip (Arcan), "Bizim Turneler", *Darülbedayi Dergisi,* 1930, 3.

[41] Nutku, *Darülbedayi,* 222.

[42] Selen Korad Birkiye, "Kültür Politikaları, Türk Tiyatrosu ve DT Örneği/Cultural Policies, Turkish Theatre and State Theatres," *Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölüm Dergisi,* no.10 (2012): 81-82.

[43] Tarık Dursun K., "Turneli Tiyatro", Milliyet Gazetesi, 1986, n. d.

[44] In 1921, with the decision of the Ministry of Interior, the Municipality issued the declaration dated February 27, 1921, with number 204 and sent it to the board of directors of Darülbedayi and Afife Hanım was excluded from the staff by Darülbedayi.

are named after their directors, as the composition of actors changes with each tour. Information about the tours of these troupes can be found mostly through advertisements in local newspapers and, if any unfortunate incidents occurred, through judicial records. In addition to figures like Sadi Tek/Şahin Tek, Kemal Sahir, Muzaffer Hepgüler, İsmail Müştak, Ulvi Uraz, Ertuğrul Sadi, Kenan Güler, Hayri Karabay, Tevhid Bilge, Kazım Köklü, Avni Dilligil, Raşit Rıza, Özdemir Yücel, Hasan Koloğlu (in some documents Hasan Kol), Nuri Genç, Ziya Akelli, İsmail Rona, and Nejat Uygur, there are also touring troupes with female directors such as Halide Pişkin[45], Sabite Tur[46], and later Lale Oraloğlu, who are known to have conducted tours in Anatolia.

Apart from these troupes, there are two other touring troupes that are related to them or sometimes even intertwined with them: *Çadır Tiyatrosu* (The Tent Theatres)[47] and *Cambazhaneler* (The Circus/Acrobatics or Juggling Houses).[48] These troupes, for which we have the fewest records[49], were also the troupes that faced great difficulties during their extensive tours and often performed in the most rudimentary locations. It is notable that even artists touring with established theatre companies sometimes performed in tent theatres or *Cambazhane*.[50] Therefore, the touring troupes were all working within the same theatrical culture, sharing a commonality of experience. Nevertheless, it appears that they made a certain distinction within themselves, such as high culture and low culture. For example, when I questioned the actresses who I interviewed for the above-mentioned documentary film about the challenges they faced as a woman on tours, they either claimed nothing unpleasant happened to them or they avoided discussing the matter.[51] However, they acknowledged having heard of certain women encountering unfavourable situations, particularly those working in tent theatres.

## Being an Actress in a Touring Troupe

At the beginning, these theatre troupes were travelling by train and covered as many places as possible. However, in some regions, they journeyed on scheduled buses, minibuses, trucks, tractors and even on mule backs or on foot.[52] In all cities and towns, they required permits from local authorities to stage performances. Furthermore, the authorities compelled the actresses to obtain a certificate allowing the sex workers to work in the city, sometimes requiring them to be examined by a gynaecologist. Particularly in small towns, the intense interest of male audiences, the practise of dancing and singing to attract illiterate people to the theatre and the cultural difference between urban and rural areas made their lives on tour challenging. The difficulty of being labelled as irreligious and

[45] Some sources refer to it as Halide Pişkin- İhsan Balkır Theatre. It is not clear whether they are referring to two different troupes or the same ensemble.

[46] There exists a Sabite Tur Özerman, who is referred to as Sabiye, Sabrite and Sabite Tur in interviews and conversations, and who was later mentioned as the wife of one of the owners of the Ses Theatre.

[47] Tent Theatres are travelling theatres, which were established for commercial purposes, where songs, dance performances and vulgar jokes were performed in a large tent, similar to circus tents. It is a method used since the XVth century.

[48] The word, *cambazhane* etymologically derived from Persian, means a place where acrobats perform by risking their lives, but in Türkiye, cambazhanes had the appearance of a circus where dance, song, acrobatics and sometimes theatrical pieces were performed.

[49] Journalist Necmi Onur went on tour with a tent theatre troupe in disguise in 1966 and reported his observations. See Necmi Onur, Çadır Tiyatrosu. Istanbul: Kurul Yayınları, 1966. Regrettably, there is not much information about the *Cambazhane*s other than the accounts of actors/performers such as Cambaz Şevket, Osman Obüs, Madame Kokoraça, and Madame Kalyopi, whom Oktay Güzeloğlu interviewed in his book, *Turne Tiyatroculari: Söyleşiler.*

[50] Cambaz (acrobat) Şevket in his interview with Oktay Güzeloğlu states that theatre actor and touring theatre leader Avni Dilligil performed his plays in their Cambazhane for two nights because he could not find a place to perform in Manisa, and that after this experience he even tried to establish a on his own but was not successful.

[51] During our two-hour telephone conversation, Aysel Gürel, whom I wanted to feature in the study back in 2006 but regretably could not meet due to a lack of permission from her daughters, revealed that in certain small cities and towns, particularly with state officials responsible for authorising performances, the plays were only allowed if they saw the "women" in the acting troupes, sometimes even requesting one of them to be sent over. Aysel Gürel mentioned that she could provide the names of the persons who held significant state positions at the time of our conversation. In Oktay Güzeloğlu's book, Madame Kalyopi, Feza Serengil, Ayşe Çakar and Kazım Köklü also talk about these kind of experiences by giving the names of places and sometimes even officials.

[52] Oktay Güzeloğlu, "Feza Zerengil- Söyleşi," in *Turne Tiyatroculari Söyleşiler* (Istanbul, Hiç Yayıncılık, 2003), 41, 44, 49.

immoral was a consequence of both religious and official attitudes, and it was a widely shared belief in many places. However, this association between immorality and theatre is not uncommon in the history of world theatre. According to some scholars[53], there is a historical link between "immorality" and both prostitution and theatre rooted in misogyny and disdain for the female body/femininity. A similar perception persisted for the second generation[54] of touring actresses I interviewed. This issue came up in two different ways. First, when they announced their desire to pursue acting, most of them faced similar reactions of refusal or accusations of immorality, with family members asking if they were destined to become "prostitute". Second, they were not allowed to go shopping alone or wander around alone during the tours, and most of the time a man from the company or the wife of an elderly actor had to accompany them on the streets. If not, they faced verbal and sometimes physical harassment from men on the streets and in shops. Not just the residents, but even educated officials would refer to address them as "women". Once, during a tour in Konya, Halide Pişkin became upset when one of the sequestration officers threatened her, saying, "I'll arrest you, woman!" In response, she said, "I'm not a woman, I'm Halide Pişkin, recognised by 18 million people," eventually preventing the seizure.[55]

Finally, it is crucial to address the plays performed by these theatre troupes. While established troupes and institutional theatres in Istanbul staged their plays throughout the year in Istanbul to tour, even these companies might have "adapted" or modified some parts of their plays during tours in Anatolia. Variation in practises are evident among the troupes that came together for touring. Some well-known plays might have been performed repeatedly with some modifications. In certain groups, the "owner" or leader of the troupe, who assembled the team, created a repertoire of plays they had seen or read before and wrote them down in a notebook.[56] Afterwards, when they started travelling, the leader provided a rough outline of the play and assigned roles before arrival at their destination for performance. If time allowed, a rehearsal similar to a reading rehearsal was held in the travelling vehicle. The plays were based on improvisation as in *tuluat*[57] theatre. They were extended or shortened based on the circumstances and the audience. Songs and dances were incorporated into or between the plays. For example, Ahmet Fehim notes in his memoirs that the actresses in the Bursa theatre had to sing at every performance at the request of Ahmet Vefik Pasha.[58]

There are numerous other aspects such as experiences of the actors on the road, in the hotels where they stayed, various locations such as gardens, makeshift venues, tents, etc. where they performed their plays; being stuck in hotels or on the road; the theatre leader collecting the proceeds and leaving the actors penniless and alone in the hotel or on the road; actors lost in traffic accidents, actors who united with other groups they met on the road in order to continue touring despite the loss of their friends; the attacks they suffered; the meals they cooked and shared on the "Kamomoto" stove in hotel

[53] See, Kirsten Pullen, *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Baris Jonas, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Josep Lenz, "*Base Trade: Theatre as Prostitution*", ELH Journal, 60.4 (1993), 833-855.

[54] In my opinion, the first generation of actresses in this land are Ottoman Armenian and Ottoman Greek women.

[55] Oktay Güzeloğlu, "Nabi Atay- Söyleşi," in *Turne Tiyatroculari Söyleşiler* (Istanbul: Hiç Yayıncılık, 2003), 205.

[56] During my interviews for the documentary film, Gül Yalaz, one of the interviewees, had an old wooden suitcase in her house containing the notebooks of Şahin Tek and his father, Sadi Tek, with whom she had worked for many years, when they went on tour. When the family wanted to throw it away, Ms. Yalaz prevented them and confiscated the material. We had talked about donating it to a university. However, after Ms. Yalaz passed away (2013), I was unable to learn the fate of the suitcase.

[57] Tuluat is a theatrical genre invented by Armenian and Turkish actors together during the Tanzimat period to overcome the concession of playing in Turkish. It is unique to these lands, is based on improvisation and brings together traditional theatre and Western theatre forms.

[58] Ed. Alpman, *Ahmet Fehim*, 18. Music and dance were integral components of 19th century theatre, and many theatrical productions, even traditional plays and dramas, featured musical elements, including live music, singing, and sometimes dance sequences. Since this period is taken as an example, it is normal to preserve such practises as they were at the beginning. However, the continuation of the same practise even in the new century must have been used as a way to bring Anatolian audiences to the theatre.

rooms to save money; and noteworthy occurrences like "tour nuptials". Nevertheless, the limitations of this article only allowed for the presentation of a broad overview.[59]

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Chapter 3

# The Shadow Side of Our History of Theatre: University Theatres in the Second Half of the Republic

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## Abstract

History is, in most instances, not a progressing accumulation of successively emerging narrations within a chain of cause and effect, as historians wish to believe or make believe. It is rather a single narration, which the historian constructs by taking certain preferred historic sections and putting other narrations in the shades with the endeavour to construct or conduct the collective memory. The actions of "great persons" shape this singular narration; names that are not great enough have no place in this narration. With "their absence in our official history of theatre", "the university theatres" epitomise this situation. Having become effective in the second half of the republican period and brought up many writers, directors, performers, and critics, besides having set a precedent for the first international theatre festivals and brought a qualified amount of audience in our theatres, university theatres are usually not included in historical studies. This study aims to provide an alternative reading of the Turkish Theatre history through the experiences of university theatres. Accordingly, each having created a tradition of university theatre in our country with their roots reaching the 1950s, the theatre companies "ÖKM" (Istanbul University), "BÜO" (Bosphorus University), "ODTÜ Players" (METU), and "EÜTT" (Ege University), will be examined under the four mutual topics "Origin", "Identity", "Mise-en-scene", and "Solidarity".

**Keywords** Turkish theatre · university theatres · history making · grotesk · Istanbul University Youth Theatre

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## Introduction

In most cases, history is not, as historians would like to believe/make believe, an accumulation of successive narratives that reveal each other in a cause-and-effect chain and progress to the present. Rather, with the endeavour to establish or manage social memory, the historian creates a single narrative by selecting certain historical sections and overshadowing other narratives. This single narrative usually appears as *"the narrative of great personalities' deeds"*,[1] in which the historian is included or identifies with. Those "who are ordinary or not great enough cannot find a place in this narrative".[2] Their existence is in danger of being gradually erased from the collective memory.

When looking at the theatre history studies on the Republican period in our country, one sees that the same perspective is effective. For instance, we see that the first-period historians, who dominated historical research on our theatre with their founding thoughts, studies, and views, dealt with the History of Turkish Theatre as a single narrative by arranging historical sections, in which great personalities played leading roles, one after the other. To establish a national identity and memory in our theatre with the ideals of the Republic's founding ideology, these historians searched for a history of the Modern Turkish Theatre as a single and holistic narrative focusing on the actions of great personalities, notably Atatürk (politicians, playwrights, theatre directors, stage directors, performers, etc.) and institutions (subsidised theatres, private theatres, conservatories, associations, assemblies, etc.). Those not able to establish an organic relationship with their value judgements and the single narrative they created those who did not cross paths with big names, who were not important enough, or were ordinary, could not find a place in theatre history research.

With their place in our theatre history, or to put it more accurately, with their "absence in our official theatre history", "university theatres" embody this act of ignoring. Although they have been influential in alternative theatre during the second fifty years of the Republican period, from the 1950s to the 2010s, they placed the art of theatre at the centre of their philosophical, political and cultural living spaces, with concerns about national and world issues, not commercial ones, have trained many writers, directors, performers, academics and critics, carried out aesthetically advanced productions, experimented with acting and staging by organising laboratory studies, created the first examples of international theatre festivals, published qualified theatre journals, established and organised platforms among themselves and have always brought qualified audience to our theatres, university theatres are often not included in historical studies, sometimes only mentioned between the lines.

With respect to the studies regarding the history of theatre in the Republic period as a holistic, single narrative, Metin And states in his study *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu (1923-1983)* (Rebuplican Period Turkish Theatre (1923-1983)) that *"Since amateur theatre is so extensive to be scrutinised separately, they were not given place except for significant works such as the Halkevleri and the semi-professional State Conservatory Tatbikat Sahnesi"*. He adds *"A separate study is required on amateur workings, which proved to be sometimes superior in value to professional theatre workings"*[3] Afterward, while referring in the book to the audience and festivals, he mentions amateur groups. Herein, Genç Oyuncular, Istanbul University Gençlik Tiyatrosu and ODTÜ Oyuncuları (METU Performers) are mentioned in a few sentences.[4] Özdemir Nutku gives brief information about the youth theatres between 1950 and 1970 in the second volume of his work *Dünya Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (World Theatre History).[5] University theatres are not mentioned in Nutku's *Atatürk ve Cumhuriyet Tiyatrosu* (Atatürk and

[1] Jim Sharpe, "History from Below," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 26.
[2] Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 3.
[3] Metin And, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu (1923-1983)* (Ankara: Doğuş, 1983), 34.
[4] And, Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu, 75.
[5] Özdemir Nutku, *Dünya Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (Istanbul: Remzi, 1993), 333.

Republican Theatre), N. Akı's mainly drama-based *Çağdaş Türk Tiyatrosuna Toplu Bakış (1923-1967)* (An Overall View on Contemporary Turkish Theatre (1923-1967)), and Sevda Şener's *Gelişim Sürecinde Türk Tiyatrosu* (Turkish Theatre in the Development Process), which focuses on theatre writers. Furthermore, it is quite interesting that *Tavtati Kütüpati*, which is seen as one of the first Turkish absurdist scripts, is not mentioned at all in these studies. After the 50s and 60s, university theatres experienced their biggest rise in the 90s. Yet, in the meetings held in 1998 within the scope of the 75th Anniversary of the Republic and later published as a book by Sevda Şener, alternative theatres in Türkiye have been discussed, but university theatres not even mentioned.[6]

This study proposes an alternative history reading on Turkish Theatre in the Republican Period via the experiences of university theatres. In this direction, first of all, Gençlik Tiyatrosu (Istanbul University Youth Theatre) ve Genç Oyuncular (Young Players), which left their mark on the 1950s-60s, will be examined and their historical values and works, which have been left in the background in our theatre history, will be examined. Afterwards, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Oyuncuları (Bosphorus University Players), ODTÜ Oyuncuları (METU Players), Istanbul Üniversitesi ÖKM Sahnesi (Istanbul University ÖKM Stage), and Ege Üniversitesi Tiyatro Topluluğu (Ege University Theatre Group), which have established a strong university theatre tradition in our country, will be examined under four common headings as "Roots", "Identity", "Mise-en-scéne", and "Solidarity".

The aim of the study is to create via these ensembles a historical record of university theatres, particularly between 1990 and 2010, when they started to rise again, and to raise questions and make inferences about the general trends, ways of seeing and the fields of discourse produced by the founding, history-creating thinkers in our theatre history by making an area visible that is generally ignored by theatre studies in our country. In this direction, the course of the study will not only proceed through historical data but will also attempt to reveal the common structural features of these ensembles.

The biggest handicap of the research is that, as mentioned above, there are few academic studies on university theatres between 1990 and 2010. Except for BÜO, the groups have a weak archive on their past and scarcely any written material. Accordingly, with the interviews done with names that took part in these ensembles, in order to get information about ODTÜ, ÖKM and EÜTT, it will be tried to overcome this problem to some extent. On the other hand, it is thought that the fact that the researcher of this study has been involved in I.U. ÖKM for many years and knows these four ensembles closely, has witnessed many of the aforementioned developments and has personally watched many productions to be mentioned, will provide an advantage in overcoming this handicapped situation.

[6]Although few, we observe that studies focusing on university theatres have recently, in the 2000s, appeared in undergraduate and doctoral dissertations, articles, and interviews with names who have been a part of this history. Among these, Ö.Faruk Kurhan's *Türkiye'de Öncü ve Deneysel Tiyatronun Başlangıç Yılları: Absürdizmden Siyasal Tiyatroya (The Commencement of Avantgarde and Experimental Theatre in Türkiye: From Absurdism to Political Theatre), Deniz Başarı's English-written Performative Publicness: Alternative Theater In Türkiye After 2000*s, Özge Ayşegül Bayduz's master's thesis titled "*İstanbul'da Geleneğini Oluşturmuş Okul Tiyatrolarının Alternatif Tiyatro Alanında Var Olması*" ("*The Presence of School Theatre Groups Which are Traditional in Istanbul in the Area of Alternative Theatre*"), and İ. Kerem Karaboğa's examination of Genç Oyuncular with its historical background entitled "Absürd'den Geleneksel'e Genç Oyuncular Deneyimi: *Tavtati Kütüpati ve Vatandaş Oyunu*" ("The Experience of Genç Oyuncular (The Young Players) from Absurd to Traditional: *Tavtati Kütüpati* and *Vatandaş Oyunu*") are historical and academic studies that place university theatres in a central position. In terms of non-academic sources, Atilla Alpöge's book *Hayat Ağacında Tavuskuşları (Peacocks on the Tree of Life)* is the only source that provides detailed information about Genç Oyuncular and contains archival value. Furthermore, Nurgül Bayram's documentary *Gençlik Tiyatrosu (Youth Theatre)* on Istanbul Gençlik Tiyatrosu and the book *Çıktık Açık Alınla: Gençlik Tiyatroları (We Proceeded Honestly: Youth Theatres)* are valuable studies that shed light on the university theatres of the 50s and 60s. Again, the interviews conducted with names such as Cüneyt Türel, Mehmet Akan, and Yılmaz Onay in the 6th and 7th issues of the journal Mimesis are among the sources that provide historical information on university theatres.

## Origins:

## From Halkevleri to the University Theatres: Gençlik Tiyatrosu and Genç Oyuncular

Observably, the experience of the Halkevleri is the most important factor constituting the source of university theatres. They were active between the years 1932-1951 leaving their mark on the years of the establishment of the Republic and escalated after the 1950s. Being today, as it was back then, in a debated position regarding their political, ideological, and cultural presence, Halkevleri did not let theatre be merely an art in Istanbul, Izmir, or the new capital Ankara, but carried it into the lives of the people throughout the whole country. During the approximate 20 years they have been active, they have strived to develop the cultural life of the country in 478 centres and 4233 associations with a volunteer crowd of which the majority were young people. Having been active in other fields besides theatre, such as history, literature, other fields of arts, sports, library services, peasantry, museology, exhibitions and public courses, Halkevleri acted with the aim of improving the knowledge of the largest segment of society and fuse universal values with folk tradition and culture.[7] The following were part of the objectives of their theatre section: "*Bringing Halkevleri alive (...) Helping meet the need of theatre in cities and small towns (...) Allowing room talents with the potential to be theatre performer to show ability (...) Giving beneficial inspiration to the country and society (...)*"[8]

In regard to the following statement of Cüneyt Türel, it is not difficult to speculate on the historical value and meaning of these objectives for a youngster who watched his/her first theatre plays in Halkevleri, maybe performed in a play, and performed at the university during the period of 1950-60:

> *Changing society via theatre, improving society and discussing the capital-labour relationship came to the agenda. While all this was going on, nationalism became predominant. This was not simply nationalism. It was about addressing the proletarian people. Certainly, there have been internationalist approaches, but nationalism was predominant*[9]

The connection between Türel's expressions and the aims of the Halkevleri theatre branch is the formation of the thespian characteristic concerned with national and world issues, which will create social change via theatre and establish alternative art and living spaces. On 19 May 1953, Gençlik Tiyatrosu was established within the Istanbul Üniversitesi Talebe Birliği (Istanbul University Student Union) affiliated to the Türk Milli Talebe Federasyonu (Turkish National Student Federation). Gençlik Tiyatrosu became Türkiye's fifth institutional theatre after Dar'ül-bedayi, Devlet Tiyatrosu (State Theatres), Bursa Ahmet Vefik Paşa Tiyatrosu (Bursa Ahmet Vefik Paşa Theatre), and Adana Tiyatrosu (Adana Theatre).[10] Having realised their rehearsals and performances on Eminönü Halkevi Sahnesi (Eminönü Community Centre Stage), the first play of the company was Terentius' *The Mother-In-Law* (1954) under the direction of Avni Dilligil, one of the notable thespians of the era. A year later, they produced P. Carlo Magno's *Tomorrow Will Be Different*. With this play, they went to the Erlangen World Youth Festival in Germany, and for the first time, Turkish theatre expanded to Europe. Their 1956 play was Necati Cumali's *Boş Beşik* (Empty Crib), for which they received the first prise at the same festival.[11] After these achievements, Gençlik Tiyatrosu followed Şehir Tiyatrosu (City Theatre) and DevletTiyatrosu

[7] Nurhan Karadağ, "1932-1951 Yılları Arasında Halkevleri Tiyatro Çalışmaları," *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no.8 (1988):135.
[8] Karadağ, "1932-1951", 136.
[9] Cüneyt Türel, "Cüneyt Türel ile Söyleşi", interview by Lale Ulutepeand Sevilay Saral, *Mimesis 6*, 1996. https://www.mimesis dergi.org/mimesis-dergi-kitap/mimesis-6/cuneyt-turel-ile-soylesi/
[10] Türel, interview.
[11] Nurgül Bayram, *Çıktık Açık Alınla* (unpublished book), 5.

(State Theatre) in ranking.[12] They were sponsored by Akbank, performed *Amédée* as the first absurd play in our theatre history, and started the first international theatre festival "T.M.T.F. Uluslararası Kültür Festivali" ("T.M.T.F. International Culture Festival"). Thereafter, as another first, they performed *Pabuçcu Ahmet* (Ahmet the Shoemaker), which is evaluated as the first traditional theatre script in Türkiye. Subsequently, plays by writers such as Turgut Özakman, Güngör Dilmen, Necati Cumali, and Sermet Çağan were performed again for the first time by Gençlik Tiyatrosu. Many performers, writers, and stage directors, who later became influential in Türkiye's theatre after the 1950s, came through Gençlik Tiyatrosu. Among these performers, stage directors and writers are Avni Dilligil, Nisa-Metin Serezli, Metin Akpınar, Zeki Alasya, Tuncel Kurtiz, Vasıf Öngören, Zihni Göktay, Semine Celasun, İzzet Günay, Erol Keskin, Cüneyt Türel, Şemsi İnkaya, Yılmaz Gruda, Can Kolukısa, Halit Akçatepe, Aykut Oray, Yurdaer Erşan and Metin Deniz.

Another significant university company of the time, "Genç Oyuncular", was founded in 1957 in Istanbul. Being established by names from Istanbul Technical University and Galatasaray University, which have formerly worked together in high school and university theatres, this company wrote and performed the play *Tavtati Kütüpati*, which Yılmaz Onay considered as Türkiye's most qualified absurd play.[13] The company created the theatre festival "Erdek Şenlikleri" and continued it from 1958 to 1962. Starting with genres such as the absurd (*Ders, İskemleler, Tavtati Kütüpati*) and expressionism (*Hesap Makinesi, Rice, 1957*), with the contributions of the writer Ahmet KutsiTecer, there was a shift in the company's initial line to traditional theatre (*Ayyar Hamza, Akçagüller ile Karagülmez, Büyücü Oyunu, Kiraz Çiçek Açıyor Aykırı Dal Üstüne*) and, subsequently, they started to produce with the 60's more political plays (*Çürük Elma, Kervan, Vatandaş Oyunu*)[14]. "*Having raised names such as Ergun Köknar, Arif Erkin, Genco Erkal, Atilla Alpöge, and Mehmet Akan, they play a pioneer role in the developing of the political theatre tradition that started to rise between the 60's and 80's*".[15]

## Alternative Orientations Prominent in Two Ensembles of Turkish Theatre

As can be seen, both troupes carried the goals set by Halkevleri with the founding values of the Republic to an advanced stage in the 1950s and 60s. Primarily, they created dynamism in universities through theatre, met the theatre needs of the society through festivals and tours, nurtured professional theatre with the performers they trained, enabled young people to reveal their talents in this direction and tried to raise public awareness of national and world affairs through their productions. Then, they have gone beyond that and put their signature under productions that became an alternative to the existence and practises of subsidised and private theatres. It is possible to identify this alternativeness in two intertwined main planes in intellectual/political and aesthetic/artistic terms.

When focusing on the intellectual/political level, we can see that it is not a coincidence that the youth, symbolised by these two troupes in our country, manifested itself through theatre and created a dynamism in theatre in the 1950s. The developments that took place at a dizzying pace both in the country and in the world in the aftermath of the Second World War, the youth's belief that they should be a part of this great change and the intellectual attitude they developed were the triggers of this mobilisation:

[12] E. Dilligil, *Avni Dilligil'i Anıyoruz* (Istanbul: Nurdoğan Matbaası, 1979), 72.

[13] Yılmaz Onay, "Yılmaz Onay ile Söyleşi", interview by Sevilay Saral and Lale Ulutepe, Mimesis 6, 1995. http://www.yilmazonay.org/yazilari_soylesileri/yilmaz_onay_ile_soylesi_artizan.html

[14] Atilla Alpöge, *Hayat Ağacında Tavuskuşları: Genç Oyuncular* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut, 2007), 31-99.

[15] Kerem Karaboğa, "Absürd'ten Geleneksel'e Genç Oyuncular Deneyimi: Tavtati Kütüpati ve Vatandaş Oyunu, "*Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 13(2002): 3-4. https://dspace.ankara.edu.tr/xmlui/handle/20.500.12575/56354

> *(...) a world changing its shell within the tension that emerged after the Second World War... The space age has begun. Scientists have defined the DNA (...) Türkiye is in a state of change in its own way (...) An inturned order was abandoned and a more liberal, populist approach came to power. The process of transition to a monetary economy is reflected. Economic problems are increasing. A great wave of migration is flowing from the countryside to the cities. Society is in a state of dynamism. Tensions and conflicts erupt from time to time. This dynamism has also embraced the youth. They are getting organised, questioning the issues they care about, reacting and resisting oppression (...) In such an environment, a productive, chirpy, fresh theatre movement begins in the country. Amateur troupes were founded and hundreds of young people stepped onto the stage for the first time (...) What brought them together (...) was not to go on stage and act; they believed that theatre had a social mission. They looked at what was happening around them and the functioning of social mechanisms and were disturbed by what they saw. They realised that the enlightenment project of the republic was not yet complete (...)*[16]

Alpöge's sentences, mostly used to describe Genç Oyuncular, reveal the "spirit of the time" for young people in the 1950s and 1960s, including Gençlik Tiyatrosu. After a brief period of economic relief and development in the 1950s, problems such as poverty, unemployment, and forced migration from the village to the city, which peaked alongside the oppressive Democratic Party administration, which was built around nationalism and conservatism[17], formed the basis for the productions of young people.

Existentialism was the first philosophically influential station in the productions of these troupes. The character described by Aydın Engin, a writer who was raised in Gençlik Tiyatrosu, as "We were all existentialists" turned into absurdist plays for Genç Oyuncular as they were influenced by Ionesco, Beckett, and Adamov. Again, following the French magazine "Théâtre Populaire", examining genres such as expressionist and absurdist theatre and the TNP (National People's Theatre), headed by the famous director Jean Vilar, had a great influence on the intellectual development of Genç Oyuncular. Afterwards, Brecht's ideas, which gained great popularity as the leftist winds began to blow in the country, found their direct counterpart in Gençlik Tiyatrosu.[18] In the last year of the troupe and afterwards in professional theatres such as the Dostlar Theatre, Genç Oyuncular interacted with Brecht and Epic theatre:

> *Towards the 1960s, that is, when these student movements started, of course the repercussions of this were also present in theatre (...) Then thoughts towards Brecht's theatre developed (...) Towards the 60s, we became interested in making that kind of theatre.*[19]

> *We had started discussions on Brecht in the last period of Genç Oyuncular, but we did not start to practise it. It was at the Dostlar Theatre when we did theoretic studies on Brecht and then practised it for the first time... Dostlar Theatre did not carry the bannerfor Brecht, but it learned from Brecht.*[20]

[16] Alpöge, Hayat Ağacında Tavuskuşları, 5.

[17] Erik J. Zurcher, Türkiye: A Modern History (London: İ.B Tauris, 2004), 221-241.

[18] In the early 60s, Yurader Erşan and five friends, including Vasıf Öngören, went to West Germany to Piscator. They wanted to watch his rehearsals and learn a thing or two.Piscator was impressed by the five youngsters' enthusiasm, but stated that his time had passed. He tells them to go to the East to Brecht's theatre if they want to understand the theatre of the new age. Furthermore, he elaborately writes a letter to Helene Weigel, the Berliner Ensemble's general art director and Brecht's wife. Thanks to this letter, these five friends from Gençlik Tiyatrosu were allowed to visit the Berliner Ensemble and watch their rehearsals and plays. (Interview with Aslı Öngören, Documentary about Youth Theatre)

[19] Yurdaer Erşan, "Gençlik Tiyatrosu", interview by Nurgül Bayram, Çıktık Açık Alınla (unpublished book).

[20] Mehmet Akan, "Mehmet Akan ile Söyleşi", interview by Lale Ulutepe and Sevilay Saral, Mimesis 6, 1995. https://www.mimesis-dergi.org/mimesis-dergi-kitap/mimesis-6/mehmet-akan-ile-soylesi/

Although the intellectual/political attitude of the two troupes interacted with many universal philosophical mentalities and artistic production styles from Existentialism to Marxism, from expressionism to absurdism, it is obvious that they never drifted apart from ideas and traditional theatre forms that took the country's unique conditions and cultural richness into account. In this context, it can be seen that Genç Oyuncular was highly influenced by the ideas and literary productions of Sabahattin Eyüpoğlu, İ. Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, A. Kutsi Tecer and Mahmut Makal on traditional culture and Anatolianism.[21] The intellectual attitude of these young people, who were raised with the founding values and institutions of the Republic, was to create a social impact in an egalitarian, libertarian and progressive stance, somewhere between the universal and the traditional. By bringing theatre to large segments of society through stagings that made social problems visible, tours from the west to the east of the country, and plays performed for a nominal fee or feeless, they produced a "populist theatre" character that was not only for entertainment or for the aesthetic pleasure of a certain class. This character was decisive in the choice of plays, staging, tours, and festivals organised by the troupes.

The aesthetic/artistic alternative stance of the young troupes is identical to their intellectual/political stance. The Istanbul Şehir Tiyatrosu (Istanbul City Theatre), which Haldun Taner described as "*a rotten boat that has dropped into the second league*"[22] , and which Adnan Benk, one of the critics of the period, thought had "*become a warehouse of worthless plays*"[23] was also considered by the young ensembles to be "*outdated in their understanding of theatre and unable to respond to the needs of the rapidly changing society*".[24]

Under such conditions, young thespians' alternative productions were realised in many ways. For example, the texts of authors who could not find a place in the subsidised and the few private theatres due to various objections or because they were written by new authors were staged for the first time in the Youth Theatre. Necati Cumali, Güngör Dilmen, Turgut Özakman, Sermet Çağan, Oktay Arayıcı, and Fakir Baykurt are examples of such writers. Second, they presented the plays of many foreign and contemporary authors to the audience for the first time. In this respect, Genç Oyuncular, most of whom were fluent in foreign languages, translated their own works and wrote their own texts. The third alternative stance emerges in the production processes. They were completely democratic and did not have an omnipotent, god-like understanding of the director:

> *When we were making theatre, we used to read the text together, discuss the text, and exchange ideas on how to do it (...) It was the ensemble that decided this, and the director who implemented it (...) We looked at theatre with an understanding that everyone who performed the event was the hero of this event, rather than exhibiting protagonists in our theatre. There were no leading roles in the plays we chose (...)*[25]

Similar to the above mentioned practises of Gençlik Tiyatrosu, Genç Oyuncular redefined the function of the director:

[21] Alpöge, *Hayat Ağacında Tavuskuşları*, 27-145.
[22] Özdemir Nutku, *Atatürk ve Cumhuriyet Tiyatrosu* (Istanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 1999), 80.
[23] Alpöge, *Hayat Ağacında Tavuskuşları*, 15.
[24] Alpöge, *Hayat Ağacında Tavuskuşları*, 16.
[25] Erşan, interview.

> *Collaborative thinking brought with it the concept of "collective creation". In other words, the theatre event should not be created in an environment in which the writer, director or the lead performer ruled alone, as a single person, responding to their individual needs or opinions. The creative process had to encourage participation and keep the doors open for sharing contrary thoughts and feelings. The conventional "director's theatre", in which one person emerged as the director and individually determined the entire structure and style of the performance, had longe since been overcome.*[26]

The alternativeness of such a collective production is not directed towards the subsidised theatres of the period, where the director was determined by appointment or seniority, or the professional theatres, where the owner of the theatre automatically became the director. At the same time, it is directed against the ways of seeing the history-making grand narrative of Turkish theatre. In And's following sentences about Muhsin Ertuğrul, it is possible to detect traces of the general discourse about how the fate of theatre depends on great historical figures with a divine power:

*Ertuğrul, as "the only man", constantly announced the lack of a theatre man for more than fifty years (...) an original theatre could not be established, and all theatre efforts sought the existence of a creative theatre man who would give aesthetic direction (...) Zihni Küçümen mentions in one of his articles (...) that although Ertuğrul was more or less a theatre man, he was not a groundbreaking theatre man, and that the Turkish Theatre was waiting for a groundbreaking theatre man.*[27]

The criticism of the history-creating perspective is directed only at Muhsin Ertuğrul's bossism, not at bossism itself. What is required is a messianic saviour, a great historical personality who will give aesthetic direction to all theatre efforts and solve deep-rooted problems such as inauthenticity. Against the narratives of history dominated by such a quest, Gençlik Tiyatrosu and Genç Oyuncular place them in a completely alternative position by carrying out their productions through a division of labour within a collective and democratic organisation, which will be taken as an example by the university student troupes that will be established after them. Different directors or "outside eyes" who are not directors, productions of which they themselves produce the setting, costumes and accessories, and qualified productions sought through experiments are indispensable for the ensembles.

The experiments supported by the training-research activities carried out by Genç Oyuncular have carried this alternative stance against both the professional theatre and the history-making perspective quite far. They started their journey with the theatre of the absurd and transformed it into a public theatre that could be watched by everyone, everywhere, with their research and stage experiments on "Ortaoyunu" (traditional improvised theatre), "Karagöz" and "Seyirlik Oyunlar" (theatrical plays). Later on, they wanted to carry out their research work under the name of "Theatre Research Centre" (TAM) and in this way, in addition to conducting research within the community, they wanted to encourage other researches outside the community and "*help the concept of theatre research to develop and spread*"[28] Accordingly, stagings in which the frame stage was abolished; productions in which dance, movement and music were not a spare part of the show but were integrated into the whole play; techniques such as the use of masks and mime gave direction to the innovative productions of the troupe[29] The acting practises they developed within themselves - they would get to know Stanislavski later on - moved their educational research studies entirely to the laboratory environment. In this respect, the acting exercises they described as "softening" are quite interesting:

[26] Alpöge, *Hayat Ağacında Tavuskuşları*, 122.
[27] And, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu*, 18.
[28] Alpöge, *Hayat Ağacında Tavuskuşları*, 136.
[29] Alpöge, *Hayat Ağacında Tavuskuşları*, 126.

> *At that time, there was no habit of using methods in our country (...) Young performers were doing some acting exercises developed by themselves (...) One of the most important of these was the "softening exercise". The starting point of this exercise was traditional theatre (...) The performer acted by establishing a partnership with the audience. That is to say, without denying the existence of the audience, by talking directly to the audience, by creating a series of "acceptences" in the comfort of children playing games. This was a different kind of theatre, out of the ordinary.In addition to forcing the performer to have various talents, it also required him/her to be extremely relaxed, to stay away from stress without being embarrassed, in other words, to be able to act recklessly almost without setting any limits for him-/herself (...) The aim was to remove the psychological pressures that surrounded, controlled and oppressed the person, thus opening the door to "comfort and recklessness".*[30]

As can be seen, the group, without being acquainted with any acting method, carried out exercises to relax the performer on the stage, similar to Stanislavski's "relaxation" and "concentration" exercises and M. Chekhov's "relaxation" exercises. Moreover, they talk about being "as relaxed and intimate as a child playing a game" as Stanislavski explained, and the concept of naivety that he expected from the performer and acting "without denying the presence of the audience" as Brecht described the epic performer. Although it is difficult to believe in such an approach, which refers to many methods without knowing any of them, what is important here is that this young ensemble thought so much about the problems of acting and tried to develop solutions to them.

At this point, the following can be asked: Why are these young ensembles, which broke ground in Turkish theatre, shaped the 1960-1980 period, which is considered to be the golden years of out theatre, with the writers, performers and directors they trained or made space for their practises, tried to create a public theatre culture by carrying forward the founding values of the Republic embodied in the Halkevleri, and produced aesthetically qualified works with the research/experiments they conducted and the methods they developed, not given enough space in historical narratives? "Could it be that they were not sufficiently recognised?" The following sentences about Genç Oyuncular in Metin And's columns in the Ulus Newspaper eliminate this possibility:

> *Even though being penniless and unsubsidised, the "Genç Oyuncular" are the ones who see our theatre problems and the way to a national theatre the best. If you ask me, I would separate the State Theatre and all the theatres in Türkiye on one side and the "Genç Oyuncular" on the other*[31] *(...) With their love and respect for theatre, their research power and teamwork, they have taken the front row in our theatre life*[32]

Why does And, who admires their work so much and thinks that they see the path to national theatre the best, not show the same value in the history of Turkish theatre? Because they are not rational for a modernist historical narrative. It is possible to think on many ideological, cultural, sociological, and even psychological planes about the modernist reflex to select, classify, exclude, and accept in the rational historiography developed by early historians. Ideologically, the limits of the historical value or narrative framework of historians who internalised the founding ideology of Republican modernisation and were raised as organic intellectuals in the Gramscian context should be regarded primarily from this point. The establishment of modern theatre institutions, which the founding establishments, especially Atatürk's ideas, saw as one of the most important steps towards modernisation, and the necessity of the instrumentalisation of these institutions for the protection

[30] Alpöge, *Hayat Ağacında Tavuskuşları*, 141.
[31] Metin And, *Ulus*, May 2, 1963.
[32] Metin And, Ulus, May 16, 1963.

and advancement of Atatürk's reforms, form the basis of this historical perspective. In this context, it would make these institutions, and therefore the revolutions, questionable to describe at length the achievements of amateur young people alongside the many shortcomings of the City-State Theatres, institutions, committees, laws, regulations, buildings, conservatories, and theatre professionals as symbols of progress and modernisation established by the great historical personalities of Republican modernism.

From a sociological point of view, early historians were academics in theatre departments. They train theatre professionals such as writers, performers, dramaturgs, directors and theatre researchers. At the same time, they are part of the professional theatre community as critics in newspapers, directors in theatres, consultants, etc. The process of professionalisation, says Larson, connects a body of abstract knowledge to a market.[33] In this context, professionalisation itself enables those who produce special services to create a market for their expertise and to control this market. The fact that the terms used here are economic terms should not create a simplistic and reductionist perception that relates to a relationship of interest in monetary terms. The exchange value created by knowledge here is more complex and comprehensive if it can be found on the sociological and even psychological levels. In this respect, Jusdanis' arguments for the professionalisation of criticism may be illuminating. According to Jusdanis, the professionalisation of criticism -in our view also the professionalisation of academics:

> *(...)is a function of the general process of social differentiation in modern society by which subsystems dissociate themselves from the social milieu to become autonomous entities. It occurs when a community of specialists distinguishes itself from other groups, develops a discourse, establishes rules for exclusion and admission, and organises and disciplines its members. It forms its own code of ethics to guide behaviour and to ingrain its praxis in practitioners (...) Each profession considers itself the appropriate organ to study or speak about its domain.*[34]

Thus, the professional academy functions sociologically as a quasi-community. In the community structures of modern societies, value is the interactional relationship between the categorisation of an object (in this case history books) and the function it is expected to perform. In this respect, the value of a thing is a product of the needs, desires and interests of the subject who creates it—a personal value system that forms part of the subject's broader system. Accordingly, there is a constant oscillation and drift between individual goals and the standards of taste accepted by the community. The two systems are in constant interaction and are mutually interdependent. From this perspective, to write about the amateur university students' innovations, researches, experiments, aesthetic sophistication, and that they achieve practical rather than theoretical results with a focus on the problem of establishing a national theatre, would threaten the legitimacy of the professional community, in which history-making academics are included. "If amateur university students can be so good, then what do professional organisations and their components do?" may be the first question that comes to mind.

From a psychological point of view, it should not be forgotten that our history writers who are interested in the history written by great personalities are themselves great personalities. It should not be easy for names, who were educated in the first theatre-related institutions of Türkiye, who, at the same time, went through the advanced educational training of Western countries, who "became the educators of educators", to give place in history to the achievements of uneducated, amateur young people, who are inadequate in terms of theatre knowledge. It is possible to substantiate this idea in Özdemir Nutku's *Atatürk Cumhuriyet Tiyatrosu* (Atatürk's Republican Theatre) and *Dünya Tiyatrosu*

[33] M. S. Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: Monopolies of Competence and Sheltered Markets* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 40.
[34] Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 147.

*Tarihi (Volume II)* (History of World Theatre). In the first book, Nutku does not include Gençlik Tiyatrosu and Genç Oyuncular, who stormed through our theatre in the 1950s and 1960s, in his historical narrative, but he mentions the amateur work he did alongside professional theatres. He mentions how he and his students from Ankara University's theatre department won the second prise at the Erlangen International Festival with Sermet Çağan's *Savaş Oyunu* (War Play) (1965) (Nutku, 127). However, as mentioned above, Gençlik Tiyatrosu participated in this festival many times and returned with awards. In the second book, under the title "Gençlik Tiyatroları" (Youth Theatres), the total space allocated to the Gençlik Tiyatrosu and Genç Oyuncular is equal to the space allocated to the troupe directed by Nutku. Here, too, the author does not mention the international achievements of Gençlik Tiyatrosu, except for the festival it organised, but describes the awards and praise received by his students. Moreover, he underlines the characteristic of the troupe he directed as "*engaged in amateur practices in an academic way*".[35] As can be seen, the two troupes we examined were not given enough importance and value even under the title of Youth Theatres, let alone being considered side by side with private and subsidised theatres in a "history-making" perspective.

## Four Groups on the Track of Genç Oyuncular and Gençlik Tiyatrosu: Odtü, Eütt, Büo and Ökm

As can be seen, the works of amateur young people are like a kind of anomaly for our modern, rational and at the same time professional historical narrative built around great personalities. The biggest damage caused by such historical studies in the history of university theatre is that they become established as canonical texts and shape subsequent theatre studies. If we start from the "*canon's original meaning–"as a norm, standard, or rule seeking to determine and measure other entities*"[36], and a text has power over those who accept its judgement, we are left with the fact that "no matter what amateur university students do, they will still remain amateurs, and the role of those who were previously valued will not change". In this direction, university theatres, which did not find a place in history even in their brightest periods and were not the subject of theatre research, have not been valued in the next rise that developed with the 90s, and they literally experienced the experience of "writing on water" in historical terms.

The first of the troupes to be analysed, ODTÜ Oyuncuları, was founded in 1960 in Ankara in the old campus of METU. The group's first play was Holworthy Hall and Robert Middlemas' *The Valiant*. Having produced during the 60s plays by Chekhov, Arthur Miller, Mark Twain, Harold Pinter and Aziz Nesin, they gradually tended towards political theatre. In 1969, they staged Brecht's *Senora Carrar's Rifles*. After being shut down between the years 1969 and 1977, they produced the self-written play *Gelin Görün* (Come and See). In 1978, they performed Orhan Asena's *Şili'de Av* (Hunting in Chile) and Proust's texts on colonialism, and in the years 1978-79 Brecht's *The Informerand The Life of Galileo.* Being shut down for one year after the 1980 coup d'état, their archive has been dispossessed[37] and kept under tight control for a long time. The ODTÜ Tiyatro Şenliği (METU Theatre Festival), which they organised in 1966 for the first time and is still carried on traditionally, bears an alternative stance as a space in which political characters as well as experimental theatrical practises are shared.[38]

[35] Nutku, *Dünya Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, 334.
[36] Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity*, 55.
[37] On the second day of the coup, law enforcement officers made a huge fire in front of the clubs' cabins, which the students named "Goebbels' Fire", and burned down photographs, books, leaflets, and documents they collected from student clubs such as ODTÜ Sinematek, ODTÜ Oyuncuları, and ODTÜ Edebiyat Kulübü.They kept documents they could use in investigations and lawsuits against the students.
[38] "ODTÜ Oyuncuları Tarihçesi", Middle East Technical University, accessed September 2, 2023, http://odtuoyunculari.metu.edu.tr/#.

Another notable university club, which was founded in 1965 in Izmir and still exists despite some disruptions, is Ege Sanat Tiyatrosu (Ege Art Theatre), later named EÜTT. Having performed Sartre's *The Dead Without Burial* as their first play in 1966, they staged plays by writers such as Pedro Bloch, Rıfat Ilgaz, and Aziz Nesin with support from outside the group. Since 1984, they have become a self-sufficient group in an artistic sense and have performed Dürrenmatt's *Romulus the Great* in 1985 and Frisch's *The Fire Raisers* in 1987. In 1988, the first Ege Üniversitesi Tiyatro Şenliği (Ege University Theatre Festival) was organised and is still carried on today. Therewithal, it is known that the group has had a scattered system and it was the year 2000 when it's actual system and disciplined, organisational structure was built. In the 2000s, the idea that EÜTT only plays the theatre of the absurd lost its validity. Having begun to look at human and social issues from perspectives other than existentialism, the group tended towards texts and productions of a different kind. Regarding the plays they performed since the 2000s, the prominent productions were *Daddy War* (2003), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (2004), *Notes From Underground* (2005), *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* (2006), *The Horse* (2007), *Cyrano de Bergerac* (2008), *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (2009), and *Ayak Bacak Fabrikası* (Foot and Leg Factory) (2010).[39]

Being, without dispute, the most corporate of university theatres in Türkiye, BÜO was founded in 1971 by taking over the tradition of the Robert Koleji Oyuncuları (Robert College Players) when Robert College was turned into Bosphorus University. Having been one of the centres of the political and experimental tradition deriving from the 50s, BÜO produced worthy plays in Istanbul during the years after 1971: Peter Weiss' Marat/Sade (1975), Brecht's The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui (1977), and, adopted from Brecht's texts, Beş Paralık İşler (Five Penny Things) (1977-78) were some of them.[40]

The arrests, tortures, and oppressions that came with the Military Coup of September 12, 1980, destroyed all artistic and cultural foundations in the country, including university theatres. In 1980-81 ODTÜ Oyuncuları was closed down. There is no record of what happened in these years to the pioneer group of today's EÜTT. In the same era, BÜO's workings were also interrupted and their political attitude was intimidated. What Istanbul University went through the years 1970-80, is unclear.

After 1983-84 BÜO experienced a period of director theatre, in 1988, Sevilay Saral, Ö. Faruk Kurhan, Cüneyt Yalaz, Metin Göksel, and Hakan Gürel came together to create a formation focusing on various methods and research. In this context, in 1988, the currently existing research and translation journal on theatre, *Mimesis*, was published for the first time. With the 90s, BÜO reached the intended system and institutionalisation by establishing a cultural and political structure in theatre with their training-research workings, workshops, productions, in which they wrote their own texts and dealt with the classics, and the publications with which they derivatized all these productions.[41]

In the mid '90s, members of BÜO and their collaborate group BÜFK (Bosphorus University Folklore Club) started to graduate. When the wish of these graduates to continue performing art with the same understanding met the perspective not to waste their artistic and cultural accumulation after graduation, BGST (Bosphorus Performing Arts Group) was founded in 1995. BGST consists of four main departments and branches: theatre, music, dance and social research. The members of these four departments comprise two groups, one of which are the amateurs, who produce art while pursuing their own jobs and the other the professionals, who are full-time occupied with the arts. With this new wave, BGST made a breakthrough.[42] While the musical department "Kardeş Türküler" became a group

[39] Edip Deder, EÜTT, interview by Emre Yalçın, unpublished, 2023.

[40] Muhsin Ertuğrul followed BÜOs plays closely and bought his students tickets telling them to go there, "that the theatre is there". See Cüneyt Yalaz, "BGST", interview by Özge A. Bayduz, İstanbul'da Geleneğini Oluşturmuş Okul Tiyatrolarının Alternatif Tiyatro Alaninda Var Olması, 2015, 132.

[41] Cüneyt Yalaz, "BGST Birlikte Oluşturduğumuz Bir Gelenek", interview by Sabit Erdoğan, 2017. https://www.mimesisdergi.org/2016/06/cuneyt-yalaz-bgst-birlikte-olusturdugumuz-bir-gelenek/.

[42] Yalaz, interview.

with an audience of hundreds of thousands with their album, the theatre department succeeded with quality productions such as Galip Sokaklara Talip (Galip Aspires to the Streets) (1995), The Tempest (1997), Tiyatro Yeniden (Theatre Again) (1998), Yeni Bir Hayat İçin (For a New Life) and Pilavdan Dönenin Kaşığı Kırılsın (Break the Spoon of the One Who Returns from the Rice) (2000).*"The Tempest is granted the Avni Dilligil jury's special award."*[43]

Until the 1990s, serious practises approaching the theatre tradition established by Gençlik Tiyatrosu between 1953-1968 did not emerge. In 1990, a theatre club, ÖKM Sahnesi, was founded in the I.U. Students' Culture Centre, which brought the faculty clubs together. While in the mid-90s the club was an unorganised group of young people making artistic experiments, in 1995 Ihsan Kerem Karaboğa, who later became a lecturer at I.U. Department of Theatre Criticism and Dramaturgy became the advisor of the club and triggered a new artistic, cultural, and political progress and system that would take over the tradition of Gençlik Tiyatrosu. By making a contemporary reproduction of Sermet Çağan's *Ayak Bacak Fabrikası* (The Foot and Leg Factory), which was staged by Gençlik Tiyatrosu in 1964 under the direction of Cüneyt Türel and made a great impact, ÖKM carried this historical connection a step further in the 1999-2000 season. Herewith, approximately a quarter-century after its closure, Gençlik Tiyatrosu's artistic, cultural, and political spirit revived within ÖKM. Non-stop training activities, intensive rehearsals, dramaturgy readings, workshops, hours spent at solidarity platforms, and quality productions created an ongoing theatrical culture and system. *Dona Rosita the Old Maid* (1995),*Cimrinin Uşakları* (The Miser's Servants) (1996-99) *Ayak Bacak Fabrikası* (The Foot and Leg Factory)(1999-2001), *The Tragicomedy of Don Cristobita and Dona Rosita* (2000), *The Horse* (2003), *İki Seyirli Oyun* (The Two Course Play) (2004), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (2005), *The Japanese Puppet* (2007), *Man Equals Man* (2009), and *Yedi Kapılı Thebai* (Thebes of the Seven Gates) (2010) are among the significant productions by ÖKM from the 1990's to the 2000s.[44]

This dynamic ÖKM achieved in the 1990s and early 2000s, on the one hand, ensured the continuity of a qualified student theatre, and on the other hand, it made way to graduate theatre. ÖKM EAT (ÖKM Stage Training and Research Ensemble) (2001) and the afterwards founded ISTAT, (Istanbul Theatre Studio Ensemble) (2005) are examples of these practises. Productions such as *Three Familiar Stories* (Dario Fo-Franca Rame, 2003), *Göç Hikayeleri I Türkiye/Almanya: Turnalar* (Stories of Migration I Türkiye/Germany: The Cranes) (2006), and *Göç Hikayeleri II: Denize Dökülenler* (Stories of Migration II: Flown into the Sea) (2009) directed by İ. Kerem Karaboğa, are among the works of these two groups. Köşebaşı Sahnesi, founded in 2011 in Beşiktaş, has also been among the graduate theatre attempts but did not last for long.[45]

ODTÜ and EÜTT have also founded graduate groups and carried out significant productions. Besides ODTÜ Oyuncuları MD (METU Players' Alumni Association), which still exists in the METU Alumni Association, we can mention Oyunbaz, founded by the alumni Abdullah Cabaluz, Tiyatro Lokomotif by Ahmet Bülent Acar, Heveskar, again with graduates among the founders, Ayakbağı, and Boş Sahne, which was founded by Saim Güveloğlu and Filiz Bozkuş and produced notable works during the beginning of the 2010's. As for the alumni of EÜTT, they founded ESA (Ege Art Studio) in 2008. Especially under the direction of Edip Deder, this group produced plays such as *Başka Türlü Bir Şey* (Something Else) (2008), *Sekerat* (2009), *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife* (2010), and *The Secret of Santa Vittoria* (2013), which were watched with great interest in Izmir. Over time, it also occurred that the alumni of the ensembles acted in each's plays. For instance, METU, ÖKM, and EÜTT graduates took the stage together in Oyunbaz's *Cherry Orchard*. Further, Baraka35, a short-lived team founded in Izmir by graduates EÜTT and ÖKM in

[43] Leman Yılmaz, Leman Yılmaz ile Söyleşi,"interview by Süveyda E. Çil, 2016, https://haberler.boun.edu.tr/tr/haber/bogazici-kulupleriyle-tam-anlamiyla-bir-sanat-okulu-oldu-bizler-icin.
[44] S. Emrah Özdemir, "Ökm Sahnesi," interview by Emre Yalçın, unpublished, 2023.
[45] Özdemir, interview.

2016, and its production *Örümcek Zamanı* (The Age of Spiders), staged during the years 2016-19, can be recorded as a similar production.

## Identity:

The traces of the intellectual, political, pioneering, and collective theatre identity that began with the community centres' culture of the 1930s and which we saw in Gençlik Tiyatrosu and Genç Oyuncular in the 1950s and 1960s, are also evident in these four theatre companies.

## Politicalness

Although the university clubs built up in the mid '80s have a political identity that is rooted in Halkevleri and the clubs from the '50s and '60s -a political identity that is "concerned with social problems of the country as well as the world and that is sensitive to oppressor-oppressed and exploitation relations in social life" – there are also various aspects in their identity that differ from them. The first is an ideologic differentiation. While the first generation of university clubs, raised with the values of Kemalism as the founding ideology of the Republic, followed a nationalist line that centred their political orientation on the liberation of the oppressed classes along with the ideal of a fully independent Türkiye on an anti-imperialist line, the ideologic-political orientation of the post-'90s university groups are considerably diverse. "*In this respect, political-ideological topics such as Feminism, Gender Inequalities, Orientalism, and the Kurdish Question in our country came to the fore. Alongside class problems, social issues such as language, identity, racism, marginalisation, belief and cultural differences became the focus of the groups.*"[46]

ODTÜ's production *The Maids* (1993), which is based on the problems of gender and sexuality, and *The Screens* (2001), which dramaturgically deals with problematics such as consumer culture and orientalism, exemplify these new ideological/political orientations. EÜTT's *The Merchant of Venice* (2007), in which the group dealt with the problem of otherness on the planes of race, faith, and culture, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (2006), in which they handled the same problem via "madness", stand out within this topic. Being also prominent in BÜO's tradition, these ideological and political orientations are present in almost all of their productions within central or sub-themes. In this context, the productions *Turandot or the Whitewashers*' (2017) Congress, which deals with the issue of racism and intellectuals,[47] *Ben de Bunları Anlatmazsam* (If I Don't Tell These Things) (2006), which also approaches the problem of racism as a sub-theme, *The Inspector-General* (2007)[48] and *The Good Person of Szechwan*, (2012)[49] in which feminist dramaturgy occupies an important place, can be given as examples. When we look at ÖKM's tradition, *The Tragicomedy of Don Cristobita and Dona Rosita* (2000), in which the problem of fascism and gender are dramaturgically brought to the forefront, *Üç Tanıdık Hikaye* (Three Familiar Stories) (2003), which is based on the gender problem, and *Mehmet'in Hikayesi* (Mehmet's Story) (2006), which deals with the media-society relationship in the context of the state's ideological apparatuses, the production of *Turnalar* (The Cranes) (2006) and *Denize Dökülenler* (Flown Into the Sea) (2009), which focuses on topics such as migration, identity, language, and otherness as an alumni production, can be observed as practises in which these diversifying ideological and political orientations are transformed into production.[50]

[46] Özdemir, interview.
[47] Günkut Güven and İlker Ergün, "Aklayıcılar Kongresi Süreç ve Dramaturji Notları", Büo Yıllık 14, 2017, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vr0E-9vLP31KAVbLxVIYY8_xJaDlZlqQ/view
[48] "Müfettiş 2007", accessed May 6, 2023, https://buoboun.com/mufettis-2007/
[49] "Cinsiyeti Giyinmek: Sezuan'ın İyi İnsanı'nda Toplumsal Cinsiyetin İnşası", BÜKAK, 2012 http://www.bukak.boun.edu.tr/?p=826&page=2
[50] Özdemir, interview.

## Collectivism

One of the major difficulties someone may confront when joining one of these four groups would be being part of a collective life, leaving behind the "egocentrism" daily life imposes upon people and obtaining a collective identity. "*Each member goes through a tough training and adaptation process, being sometimes responsible of the existence of one set piece on stage and sometimes of telling about a theme of which he/she had no idea of before.*"[51] Finding his/her own position within the never-ending chain of responsibilities, the member goes through a rapid liminal process from child- to adulthood.

Collectivism is the catalyst of producing theatre for every university ensemble that makes its new members go through such an initiation. Collective warm-up and stretching exercises, training-research processes that spread around the whole group, text readings, choosing a text, stage management and dramaturgy practises, partner relationships, mise-en-scene flows, on- and backstage duties, cleaning of the stage, hall, and room, dealing with the institutions the group is attached to, protection and care of the lighting and sound system, and many more essential divisions of work and distributions of tasks create this collectivism. Collectivism means, in this context, not that everyone equally does everything, but that everyone does one's own part or what they can do by maintaining a moral value for the whole of the group. In this regard, university groups do not allow space for egoistic behaviour and arrogance. In such cases, what has been learned over the years, rights and oral culture passed down from generation to generation as tradition, becomes the insurance of collective functioning.[52]

One of the most important topics that all four groups have in common is their strict working discipline. Especially during production processes, the ensembles shut themselves in rehearsal spaces for months, suspend their social lives, and do not allow any behaviour or attitude that may disrupt this process. Stanislavski's statement, "*Never come to the theatre with mud on your feet. Leave your dirt outside*,"[53] is indispensable for these groups. Coming to rehearsals on time and prepared, and fulfilling production tasks and responsibilities are vital for existing within the collective. This is why each group places a similar emphasis during the first meeting with new members: "*This is not the right place for just socialising*"[54].

As can be seen, although they differed from the young thespians of the 50s and 60s in their worldview and their ideological/political attitudes (moving from a nationalist-left political/ideological stance to a manifold oppositional view), they continued their alternative stance with their egalitarian, libertarian, and collective identity. It has become more difficult for them in conjunctural terms. They are making theatre in an age in which technologies such as television, the internet, and later social media are increasingly influencing the mass. Funded theatres have become more institutionalised and increased in number, while private theatres, besides increasing in number, have incorporated celebrities and television stars and begun to cultivate an apolitical, superficial entertainment culture based on easy consumption. Moreover, the field of alternative theatre, of which university theatres were a direct part in the 50s and 60s, has also diversified considerably. Groups such as Stüdyo Oyuncuları (Studio Players), TAL, Bilsak, Kumpanya Tiyatrosu (Company Theatre), and Tiyatro Oyunevi (Playhouse Theatre) were the first to come to mind when thinking of alternative theatre.[55] Under all these conditions, these four groups, which have established their own traditions, have tried to preserve and develop their alternative theatre identity in terms of aesthetic/artistic as well as ideological/political aspects.

[51] Özdemir, interview.
[52] Deder, interview.
[53] Constantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character*, trans. Elizabeth R. Hapgood (London: Methuen, 2001), 251.
[54] Saim Güveloğlu, "Odtü Oyuncuları," interview by Emre Yalçın, unpublished, 2023.
[55] Ayşegül Yüksel, "1980 Sonrası Tiyatromuz,"in *Türk Tiyatrosu*, ed. Hasan Erkek and Buttanrı (Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi, 2019), 189-192.

## Mise-En-Scéne

The key role in considering ODTÜ, BÜO, ÖKM, and EÜTT as qualified ensembles lies in the fact that, after all the staging and production process, they make the world they create on stage as orderly, aesthetic, innovative, alternative, and performative as possible in terms of acting, design, direction, and dramaturgy. In this respect, they resemble the university theatres of the 1950s and 60s. The main distinction in terms of their artistic approach is that the "traditional theatre research", which was constantly on the agenda of the young people of the 50s and 60s and for which they searched for its equivalent both in theory and practise, gradually fell from favour in the ensembles of the 90s and 2000s. It can be observed that traditional theatre is, most of the time, used only for intellectual equipment and sometimes for reading trainings for the analysis of the texts to be played.

*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, staged by the student and alumni members of ÖKM in 2005, is one of the rare productions in which we see traditional theatre elements on stage. Under the direction of the director, İ. Kerem Karaboğa, the performers who played Azdak and Grusha, the two main characters of the play, also played the bard as the narrator character in two different acts. Both bards tried to use the Meddah (public storyteller) features in their relationship with the audience, and they wrote new texts for the Meddah narration at the beginning of the acts.[56]

The expectation of a person with sufficient idea about the plays of these troupes between 1990 and 2010 we examined, is to be part of a critical view, a qualified entertainment that will suspend the boredom of daily life, an experiment different from the known conventions of subsidised or private theatres, be a participant in an event where not stars, but crowded and energetic young people are moving on stage. These troupes, mostly with an audience of university students, strive to preserve producing "a qualified work" on stage as a tradition coming from the past. In this context, the artistic determinants of the staging processes of these four troupes are "training and research", "experimentality", and "grotesque and stylisation".

## Training and Research

In the readings made in the axis of this study (BÜO publications) and interviews (Saim Güveloğlu-ODTÜ, Edip Deder-EÜTT, and S. Emrah Özdemir-ÖKM), it has been observed that the determining role in the activities of the ensembles belongs to the training-research processes. From the adaptation processes of new members to summer workshops, from acting practises shaped according to the chosen play to reading and dramaturgy studies, from the processes of creating their own texts to workshops with experts, training and research are continuous for the ensembles.

Stanislavski and Brecht are the most common names among the groups with regard to the training and adaptation of the newcomers. Experiencing the act of performing on stage with Stanislavski's practising, terminology, and ethical framework, the newcomers acquire a framework of the group's historical, social, and artistic perspectives on what theatre is and how it should be done via Brechtian concepts such as "theatre of the age of science", "gestus", "alienation", "epic", and "dialectic". Strictly disciplined body exercises are practised. Improvisation topics, text fragments (monologues or dialogues), and readings (Stanislavski's articles such as "When Acting is an Art", "Ethics in Theatre", or Brecht's "A Short Organum for the Theatre" etc.) are given to the new members as homework. It is compulsory for new members to attend and maintain attendance teachtraining on the schedule. A member who misses one or two training sessions is excluded from the group and must wait for the next year's intake of new members to attend again. Thus, the number of new members, which rises to hundreds at the beginning, decreases considerably at the end of the process, sometimes down to

[56] Özdemir, interview.

five to ten people. Those who remain are quickly adapted to that year's production. ODTÜ and EÜTT take care to put all the remaining new members on stage. For this reason, it becomes possible to watch a *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (ODTÜ, 2010) with up to fifty or *Ayak Bacak Fabrikası* (The Foot Leg Factory) (EÜTT, 2010) with up to forty performers. To enable each member to gain acting experience on stage, sometimes lines are divided, sometimes new lines are added, and characters are created. Mostly, a collective scene consisting of new members is teachtraining created.

The summer trainings' topic, calendar, and content are shaped according to the problems, needs, or goals of the group that have become obvious during the previous period. For instance, a general acting problem of the group can be a determining factor for the summer training. Or, if the troupe is going to perform a Molière text that year, the agenda may include mask, grotesque, stylisation as well as Commedia Dell'arte research and experiments. In these processes, workshops can be taken from the groups' former members or experts outside the group. "*For a certain period in the 90s, BÜO members took pantomime classes from Vecihi Ofluoğlu*."[57] When İ. Kerem Karaboğa, who was ÖKM's advisor for a long time, first went to Japan to Tadashi Suzuki's training centre for his research and then to Athens to work with Terzopoulous, he gave ÖKM members workshops on these topics and the group added what they learned to their training repertoire."[58]

In all four ensembles, the research processes mostly consisted of dramaturgical readings for that year's production and historical-social background research for the text. Systematisation processes, potentialities and limitations can sometimes lead ensembles that decide to write and perform their own texts to other challenging research processes. For instance, based on the problems experienced by students at the Kilyos Campus of their university in 2006 and on-stage improvisations about the oppression, bans, marginalising discourses and educational problems of young people in Türkiye, BÜO wrote the text *Ben de Bunları Anlatmazsam* (If Don't Tell These Things) during the improvisation and text writing processes. The group members conducted interviews with students and academics in Kilyos about campus problems. Additionally, by undertaking a research process on national and worldwide educational problems with the suggestions they received from professors from various departments, they organised reading-discussion meetings based on the works of Michael Albert (*Education Today and in the Future: Two Economic Tales*) and İsmail Kaplan (*Türkiye'de Milli Eğitim İdeolojisi* (National Education Ideology in Türkiye)). In this process, they also examined other universities to determine students' problems in a broader framework. For example, they interviewed the students of Istanbul University, who were under great pressure in those years due to the change of rector.[59] A similar process of text writing and staging has been experienced in ÖKM and during the writing process of *İki Seyirli Oyun* (The Two Course Play) (2004), which they later developed as *Mehmet'in Hikayesi* (Mehmet's Story) (2006). On the basis of a newspaper article, they went to Dolapdere and interviewed the residents of the neighbourhood. Starting to create their text by building on the distorting and alienating effect of the media on people's perception of reality, the group went through a long and intensive research process based on the works that are on the media-society relationship of writers such as Noam Chomsky (*Media Control*), Martin Esslin (*The Age of Television*) and Neil Postman (*Amusing Ourselves to Death*).

## Experimentality

The artistic experimentation of these four groups should be considered alongside the pioneering quality they have internalised. This duality is primarily related to the fact that they are not dependent on market mechanisms such as private theatres or institutions above them like subsidised theatres.

[57] Yalaz, interview.
[58] Özdemir, interview.
[59] Eser Dilsöz and Nihal Albayrak, "Ben de Bunları Anlatmazsam Süreç ve Dramaturji Notları," *Büo Yıllık 8*, 2007, https://buoboun.com/8-yillik/

Ensembles that do not have any financial expectations, do not worry about "whether this play will be liked", and do not give an account of their artistic work to the university administration, naturally explore fields that not every theatre maker would dare to go into. They choose the texts and make the dramaturgical connections as they wish. They can portray issues on stage that are suppressed to be spoken in society. They see no problem in interfering with texts that many consider sacred, such as those of Shakespeare (BÜO, *The Tempest*, 1997), Brecht (ÖKM, *Man Equals Man*, 2009), Molière (ÖKM, *Cimrinin Uşakları* (The Miser's Servants), 1997), or Lorca. Sometimes they shorten these texts, and sometimes they write additional and interlude texts. They can make intertextual transitions (BÜO, *Çingenenin Şarkısı* (Song of the Gypsy), 1999) and create collages. They can adapt novels (ODTÜ, *Momo*, 2016), movies (EÜTT, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, 2008), stories, or poems to the stage. At this point, their pioneering role combines with their experimentally. Their staging experiences create models and inspire other alternative groups. They render their experiments continuous and turn experimentation into an aesthetic value among alternative groups.

Such experimental productions were frequently encountered in university theatres in the 1990s. One of these is ODTÜ Oyuncuları's *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Ayşegül Yüksel wrote the following remarks in *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi* (Republic Newspaper) about the play:

> *After the Polish production Karmaşa, presented at the Istanbul Festival, I can say that the theatre work that impressed me the most this year was ODTÜ's production of A Midsummer Night's Dream (...) The main reason that led me to this conclusion is (...) that about 40 young people crazy about theatre brought together the new interpretation with the right interpretation with the mastery of a magician in their happy meet with Shakespeare and Can Yücel.*[60]

Bülent Acar, a recent graduate of ODTÜ at the time, adapted the Athenian aristocrats in the text to the 1920-30s Europe, portraying them as mafia-like rich and idle people living in castles guarded by chained dogs. The goblins and fairies were replaced by pop music icons, singers and dancers who left their mark on the 20th century. Madonna replaced Titania, while Elvis Presley replaced Oberon. The amateur performers in the original text have been transformed into a "Sulukule" team speaking in the Gypsy dialect. The stage consists of two play planes: a real world, which is structured in the form of a semicircle, including a part of the audience rows, and a dream world resembling a circus stage where the performers roll around and are pulled up with ropes. In addition to these two planes, the hall was turned into many playing fields and the audience was turned into a participant of a multidimensional performance in which lighters ran around the audience with spotlights in their hands instantly illuminating the performers who suddenly appeared all around the hall.[61] Ayşegül Yüksel describes Waiting for Godot, another experimental play directed by Acar at ODTÜ, which received an award from Türkiye Eleştirmenler Birliği (Turkish Critics' Union) in '94, as "*the most brilliant show in the history of amateur theatre made at Odtü.*"[62]

Staged in 1993 by BÜO and BÜFK, Galip Sokaklara Talip (Galip Aspires to the Streets) is another important production that stands out among the experimental productions of the 90s. The play is about Galip, the mischievous, high school dropout son of a poor civil servant family, who, after a quarrel with his father, leaves his home for a day and becomes involved in street life. The show, practised on the metaphorical mime represented by the French mime Marcel Marceau and folk dances, is mainly based on the improvisation of a sketched sequence of events by the performers on stage. "*The refined mime performance of İ. Kerem Karaboğa, who played the main character Galip, and 'Cüneyt Yalaz's and*

[60] Ayşegül Yüksel, *Sahneden İzdüşümler* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut, 2000), 140.
[61] Yüksel, *Sahneden İzdüşümler*, 141.
[62] Ayşegül Yüksel, *Cumhuriyet*, May 7, 1995.

*Metin Göksel's microphone voicing of all on-stage speeches and sound effects with unerring timing and competence*"[63] placed this experimental play among the unforgettable ones of university theatres.

In the 2000's, ÖKM and EÜTT's productions also featured many plays in which experimentation came to the fore. Examples for ÖKM's productions of this kind are *Cimrinin Uşakları* (The Miser's Servants) (1998), in which the group takes *The Miser* as its centre and transitions between Molière's texts and transforms the staging text into an epic-political narrative through Lafleche's narration; Dario Fo and Franca Rame's *Japanese Puppet*, in which they took the original text and placed it at the centre of a machine consisting of the performers' body; and *Yedi Kapılı Thebai* (Thebes of the Seven Gates) (2010), in which they interpreted Antigone based on Meyerhold, Terzopoulos and Tadashi Suziki's physical practises. Among the significant experimental productions of EÜTT are *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (2006), which the group adapted from film to stage, and *Cyrano de Bergerac* (2008), in which they turned the stage into a huge oratorio.

## The Grotesque and Stylisation

Grotesque and Stylisation are two significant concepts that come to the fore in the search for an alternative theatre form and theatrical language. The concept of the grotesque has an important place in university theatre practises that try to approach human-world matters with unconventional forms. The ensembles' approach to the concept, which for many still merely means farce, caricaturing, and exaggeration, can be concretised with Bakhtin's treatment of the term. According to Bakhtin, the grotesque does not pretend to have nothing to do with vulgar things, nor does it claim that the world and the body are two independent things. On the contrary, according to the grotesque image, not being something individualised, the body and corporeal life belong to the cosmic and the whole public. Thus, corporeality does not reside in the individual or the bourgeois ego in the biological sense, but in an ever-growing and renewing folk. This is where the grandiosity, exaggeration, and excessiveness of everything corporeal in the grotesque lies.[64] This excessiveness brings everything supreme, spiritual, ideal, and abstract down from above and disgraces it as clowns, harlequins, dwarfs, jugglers, comic rites, and cults did in the early carnivals.[65]

The traces of such a grotesque imagination and spirit are frequently seen in the stagings of the four troupes. In this direction, ODTÜ reveals the Grotesque in its Momo production by creating a staging in which "they put aside hierarchical ranks, privileges, norms, and habits with a carnivalesque spirit". We can see a similar orientation in ÖKM's productions of *Ayak Bacak Fabrikası* (Foot and Leg Factory) (1999) and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (2005) as well as in EÜTT's productions of *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (2009) and *The Secret of Santa Vittoria* (2013), in which they strongly made use of grotesque elements regarding acting, music, dance, use of masks, and stage design.

One of the most fundamental qualities of the grotesque image is its ambivalence.[66] This duality is revealed by the fact that the state of becoming in the image contains the two poles of transformation together. The fact that it carries such extreme poles as ridiculous and grief, fear and courage, death and birth, love and hate, absurdity and logic, angel and devil, etc. together reveals that it cannot be included in any completed canon."*In the 90s and early 2000s, when there was not yet as much diversity in private theatres as there is today, ensembles exposed this quality of the grotesque while searching for forms that would be an alternative to the funded theatres' identical stagings, dramatic conventions, charismatic voice acting, and cliché designs shaped solely through imitation*"[67] Accordingly, ambiguous situations

[63] Yüksel, *Sahneden İzdüşümler*, 152.
[64] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 19.
[65] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 21.
[66] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 24.
[67] Özdemir, interview.

and acting orientations, in which "horrible and ridiculous", "reality and fantasy", "tragic and comic", "purity and sin", "absurdity and logic" are intertwined, can frequently be seen in their productions. The body, which conventional theatre seeks on the stage as an ideal, representing beauty, conservative and as a substitute for speech, exists on the stage as the centre of communication for these ensembles as incomplete, imperfect and sometimes exaggerated. In this context, the effect created by the grotesque elements, which are often revealed unexpectedly, is the revelation of ridiculousness with a creepy tension. *The Tragicomedy of Don Cristobita and Dona Rosita*, which ÖKM staged as its first alumni play in 2000, emphasises this ambiguous quality of the grotesque in the staging script, stage direction and acting preferences, live music, the use of masks, costumes, setting, and accessories of the stage design. The most grotesquely ambivalent element in the staging is the character of Don Cristobita. Cristobita, a Spanish puppet theatre figure derived from Pulcinella, one of the Commedia Dell'arte masks, presents a caricature of the conservatives of Granada, whom Lorca describes as "*the lowest bourgeoisie of Spain*".[68] Accordingly, ÖKM has produced this grotesque ambiguity throughout the play by making an extremely humorous interpretation of Don Cristobita, from his speech to his stylised movement on the stage, from his rural cunning to his foolishness that comes with his desire for Rosita, in addition to the horribleness of the values he represents such as fascism, conservatism and machismo. With his stick in his hand, his exaggerated speech while committing horrible murders in a place where fantasy and reality intertwine, his potbelly, his animalistic behaviour and his Commedia Dell'arte mask, Cristobita exists on the stage as both a nightmare and a comic caricature.

"Stylisation", another concept that occupies a central place in the alternative theatre understanding of university groups, essentially describes the creation of an artistically alternative theatrical language shared by "counter-realist tendencies" that developed in the twentieth century theatre in opposition to realist conventions that peaked with naturalism. In Meyerhold's terms to stylize "*a given period or phenomenon means to employ every possible means of expression in order to reveal the inner synthesis of that period or phenomenon, to bring out those hidden features that are deeply rooted in the style of any work of art*".[69] The projection of this expression in the practises of ensembles is pregnant with consequences such as producing forms of body, movement, speech, expression and behaviour outside the patterns of everyday life in acting, simplifying and functionalising the means of staging and directing the audience to forms of communication in which their imagination and consciousness are constantly active.

Therewithal, the relationship that ensembles establish with stylisation is based on very concrete needs and obtainments for each of them. For instance, a minimal stage (setting, costume, accessories, etc.) equipped with stylised functionality is often a necessity rather than a preference for financially limited ensembles. A similar necessity is always on the agenda of the ensemble in terms of acting. In Meyerholdian terms, within the freedom of "running to the task of each of the possible forms of expression", stylisation is extremely functional in the adaptation processes to the mise-en-scenes of new members, who are obliged to be on stage together with experienced performers."*Especially in crowded scenes, the stylised presence of performers, who can keep the mise-en-scenes well-coordinated and who can hold each stock character with their presence in the text, plays a vital role for the whole of the staging.*"[70] Accordingly, theatrical elements such as the scenes in which the crowds move with the music, the use of masks, techniques such as slow-motion, mime, acrobatics, and dance existing with stylised creativity and functionality in the stagings of the ensembles, are frequently seen.

[68] İ. Kerem Karaboğa and Oğuz Arıcı, "Don Cristobita ile Dona Rosita'nın Acıklı Güldürüsü: Reji ve Dramaturji Notları," *Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi*, no. 1, (2002): 156-201.
[69] Edward Braun, *Meyerhold: A Revolution in Theatre* (London: Methuen Drama, 1988), 33-35.
[70] Özdemir, interview.

## Solidarity

Coups, changing government, reforms, breakthroughs, economic crises, restrictions, epidemics... In a country where art institutions are the first constitutions to be questioned whenever there is a problem or change on the agenda, theatre clubs feel the danger of being blocked, banned or closed down at any moment.Groups that cannot transform their productions into a direct value for the administration, such as career or science and technology clubs, and which keep their distance from the political power—and therefore from appointed rather than elected administrators—are often in the lion's mouth because they are regarded as unnecessary, costly, and arrogant. Without any explanation, their clubs can be closed down and their archives confiscated (ODTÜ, 1984), their stages taken away and demolished (ÖKM, 2014), their plays banned (EÜTT, *The Possessed*, 2015), and their budgets restricted (EÜTT, 2017). It can be seen that whenever such a situation occurs, the university groups stand side by side and act with solidarity.

When BÜO sustained pressure to pay royalties for the text of its 2012 project Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan*, all university theatres supported them.[71] When ÖKM was closed several times between 2007 and 2013 and its stage was finally demolished in 2014, university theatres came together and created an important public opinion.[72] A similar common attitude emerged after the ban on EÜTTs play The Possessed (2015) at Ege University.[73] No matter what happens to any group, others consider it their duty to stand by its side, share its problems and raise their voices. Solidarity in this context reflects an intellectual attitude towards the protection of alternative artistic and cultural spaces and a political and ideological awareness of history.

To stand together against such threats and to develop each other in a corporate, artistic, and intellectual sense, groups have developed different organisational strategies, established platforms or participated in these associations from time to time and organised joint activities. The ATÇ (Amateur Theatre Circles), established in the early 1980s and including BÜO and later ÖKM, and the İATP (Istanbul Amateur Theatre Platform); which they joined after the split in this association, are examples of these platforms. Founded in 2017 to share the common problems of university groups, ATD (Amateur Theatre Solidarity), which includes ODTÜ and EÜTT, and the Kıyı Ege ve Ege Tiyatrolar Birliği (Union of Coastal Aegean and Aegean Theatres), of which EÜTT is a member, are among these associations, too.

Besides such associations and partnerships, the most significant phenomenon that brings university societies together is festivals. ODTÜ has been organising the ODTÜ Theatre Festival since 1960, BÜO the İATG (Istanbul Amateur Theatre Days) since 1985, EÜTT the EÜTT Theatre Days since 1988, and ÖKM the Istanbul University Theatre Festival together with other groups at the I.U. since 2007. In these festivals, after the performances, foyer talks are organised in which the processes related to the play and the ensemble are discussed, audience criticisms are received about the play and training workshops, panels and interviews are included in the festival programmes. These festivals play a great role in the practises of the groups. Such that some university groups premier their plays at these festivals. "*Sometimes, when it seems that their play is not going to be produced due to various problems, they make an extra effort and produce it just to be able to attend these festivals.*"[74]

Such an atmosphere of artistic, cultural, and philosophical sharing between the communities, in addition to all its obtainments, brings together alternative constitutions that are identical to each other, creating a great network of communication and solidarity. Those who offer their stages to each other, who support each other in directing, production, and acting, those who come side by side in troubled

[71] "Eütt'den Telif Açıklaması", Mimesis, accessed September 8, 2023, https://www.mimesis-dergi.org/2013/01/ege-universitesi-tiyatrotoplulugundan-telif-aciklamasi/
[72] Özdemir, interview.
[73] Deder, interview.
[74] Deder, interview.

times... Most of the time, the aura that brings university communities closer to each other, making them a kind of companion, is a spirit that emerges in festivals: the festival spirit.

## Conclusion

The first-period historians, who dominated the historical research on our theatre with their founding thoughts, studies and views on theatre in our modernisation adventure in the Republican period, wrote the History of Turkish Theatre as a single narrative by arranging the historical sections of great personalities' deeds one after the other. Those who were not able to establish an organic relationship with their value judgements and the single narrative they created, those who did not cross paths with big names, who were not big enough or ordinary were not given place in theatre history studies.

Accordingly, although university students in the 50s and 60s left their mark on the theatre climate of their period with their intellectual stance, artistic richness, investigative spirit, experimentation and the festivals they organised, they could not exist in the single, holistic and rational historical narratives of our theatre. As examined in the study, it is possible to consider the reasons for this situation on ideological, sociological, and psychological levels in terms of a history-making perception. From an ideological viewpoint, this act of ignoring university theatres by history writers can be associated with the mission of protecting and advancing the modernisation moves of the Republic, which is important for the founding ideology in which they were raised as organic intellectuals. City and state theatres, conservatories, theatre institutes, private theatres, selection committees, laws, regulations and writers of the Republican period... Each title in the history is the face of the reforms in theatre. Establishing a national identity and creating a common memory about the theatre depends on telling their stories, making their problems visible and striving for their progress. Not of the amateur youth.

While thinking again about the reasons for these acts of ignoring by the historians, it should not be overlooked that, on a sociological level, they are also part of the professional theatre community. The historians, who work as critics, consultants, columnists, and sometimes stage directors in addition to training theatre professionals such as writers, performers, directors and dramaturgs in the institutions where they work as academicians, are both a part of and a determinant of the theatre market, "even if not in monetary terms". Furthermore, like all professionals, they often feel that they alone have the right to speak about or act within the field of expertise they occupy. In this context, a historical narrative in which historiographers write at length about the achievements of amateurs would contradict this objectivity.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that history writers are themselves great historical figures, just like the great personalities they include in their historical narratives. It is not easy for names who were educated in the first theatre-related institutions of Türkiye, who at the same time went through the developed educational training of Western countries, who "became the educators of educators", to give place in history to the achievements of uneducated, ordinary young people who lack theatrical knowledge.

The greatest damage caused by such historical studies in the history of university theatre is that they become established as canonical texts and shape subsequent theatre studies. Accordingly, what the first-generation historians did was not only create a historical fiction on a coherent, progressive, and rational construction of history, but also an order of discourse on theatre with canonical texts that is handed down from generation to generation. This is a set of truths that draws the boundaries of what is valuable in theatre and what is not, that in Foucauldian terms, restrains, controls and sorts out

uncertain phenomena[75] and puts everything in its place. In this respect, the task of the discourse is to reproduce itself in everyone associated with theatre.

The place of university theatres with a pioneering, experimental and political identity, which try to create an alternative to the given art environment as is tried to be highlighted in this study, in this discourse order is their existence as "amateurs". Amateurism as it is understood by large sections of society—besides having a dreamy spirit as its only positive aspect—is equated with lack of education, inadequacy of skills and abilities, or lack of artistic competence to undertake great works. Professionalism, on the contrary, implies education, professional mastery, artistic depth, intellectuality as an apriori quality, and the ability to overcome psychological and physical challenges.

The circulation of such a discriminative discourse in our theatre environment, which makes crude, reductionist and superficial inferences about art/theatre, one of the most complex self-production processes of human existence, based on the short history of excessive work sharing and specialisation as the result of meta circulation and technological development, which Adorno sees as the culture industry, while Lukacs and Heidegger see as reification, is ritualistic. As defined by Foucault, the movement of this ritualistic discourse "*requires taking a position within the framework of recitative reading or speaking*".[76] It determines actions, behaviours, attitudes, words, and conditions. Accordingly, in the first layer of the discourse, not the quality of the work or performance but its labelling is valued. For instance, the conservatory from which the performers graduated, the name of the director and designer, the financial power behind the production or what stage it is come first. Again, for many, the hi-tech plays of light, fog machines, snow machines, advanced microphones, and sound systems are as important as the performance. If these are not present, especially if the conventions that will convince everyone are not followed, the discourse of amateurism immediately comes into play and the words "it was a very amateur play" are whispered in the foyers. Further, in this ritualistic discourse, amateurs are viewed as characters detached from the reality of life because they are not tied to their work with money, attribute great meanings to their work, are a renunciant, etc. This viewpoint does not consider amateurs as subjects who make life choices outside the market, who have philosophies, ideologies, and political attitudes, but as incompetents who have become amateurs because they cannot be professionals, or as surreal beings that wallow in vain endeavours with blind idealism.

The history of unofficial theatre in the second half of the Republic, which this study attempts to focus on, is full of examples of university groups that artistically and intellectually disrupted this discursive order. The examples of I.U. Gençlik Tiyatrosu and Genç Oyuncular of the 50s and 60s, and BÜO, ODTÜ, ÖKM, and EÜTT of the 90s and 2000s, have all produced dozens of quality theatre events that confuted the clichés about the amateur-professional dualism, interacted with large groups of young people, and created a significant artistic richness and cultural sharing environment around them. With their intellectual/political stance, their democratic and collective structure, their collective training-research activities, their solidaristic character, their experimentalism fed by different theatre methods such as grotesque and stylisation, university ensembles have formed an important course of the alternative theatre field in our country in the 90s and 2000s, as they did in the 50s and 60s, and it is highly likely that they will continue to do so. In this respect, the fact that they are not valued by the creators of history and bearers of the ritualistic discourse is far from their historical development, ideological/political stance, artistic production, group processes, artistic blockages, or institutional predicaments that reveal their existence in the real world.

[75] Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Unitying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed.Robert Young (Boston: Routledge, 1981), 52.
[76] Foucault, "The Order of Discourse", 61-63.

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Chapter 4

# *Kantocu* Women: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of Changing Practises from the Late Ottoman Period to the Republic of Türkiye

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## Abstract

*Kanto* is a popular stage performance that originated in 19th century Istanbul and was performed by non-Muslim women until the beginning of the 20th century. It began as a form of entertainment aimed at a subculture in the mid-19th century and gained popularity with its inclusion in the programme of the Tuluat Theatre. In *kanto* performances, women were dancing and singing unusually in terms of the social values of the time. For this reason, *kanto* became a target of criticism for decades. After the declaration of the Republic of Türkiye, the situation of *kanto* in social life became more complex, and the elites of the new order took up the previous complaints and transformed the practise according to their needs. Since *kanto* is performed by women, all transformations were related to the position of women in social life. This study aims to highlight the changes in *kantocu* women's social status and artistic practises after the declaration of the Turkish Republic and develop a socio-cultural analysis of the performance.

**Keywords** kanto · women in theatre · tuluat theatre · Istanbul · kanto songs

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## Origins and Early Practises

> *The famous entertainment venue of Direklerarası would be covered in red colours when Şamram Hanım would take the stage. Kantocu, on the other hand, is like a piece of fire in the red decoration. When she jingles with cymbals on her hands, she will burn the audience. After this introduction, which she makes by wandering around the stage, it comes to the belly dance: "There is a fire, there is a fire / I'm burning/Catch up, friends / I'm on fire", the audience will be eager to extinguish this fire of love.*[1]

*Kanto* is a branch of performing arts, mostly performed by non-Muslim women as singing and dancing on the stage, became significantly popular in 19th century Istanbul. Among this popularity, *kanto* performances gained both positive and negative attention of the public. While big fan groups gathered around *kanto* artists, some people described it as a light banal type of performance and accused *kantocu* women (women who performs *kanto*) of being meretricious. *Kanto*, transformed throughout the early republican era depending on the employment of Muslim women as actresses and the changing moral and social values of the emerging order of republic. This study will analyse transformation of women's position and practises in *kanto* performances from the late Ottoman period to the republican period regarding the social and cultural context surrounding the artists and audience.

Any issue that is related to *kanto* is related to women's social identity, as women are the main performers of this practise. Even in a few examples of *duetto*'s men and women singing and dancing together, the controversial dimension of *kanto* arises because of its women implementers. However, the relationship between *kanto* form and women is not the aspect that makes the form interesting by itself. What is challenging about studying *kanto* is that women became a part of the theatre job market in an era where women were not welcome on the theatre stage in terms of moral concerns. To understand this moral condemnation deeply, first we should look at the socio-cultural structure and performance practises of the 19th century, the golden age of the *kanto*.

The early *kanto* performances of 19th century Istanbul were happening in the venues called *baloz* in Galata. *Baloz* was the alcohol-served place where mostly Greek seamen went to drink, dance, and entertain. At those places, as a part of the entertainment, a woman sang and danced while accompanying music composed of Western instruments and traditional melodies. There were a few main characteristics of *kanto* performances, which will be discussed in detail in this study; the first was that audiences mainly described women's behaviour during the performance as flirtatious. Second, the performer wore a fancy dress unusual for daily life because the clothes did not cover her arms and legs. Third, the way of singing did not follow the rules of an appropriate form of singing. The instruments and vocal melodies do not necessarily overlap in every note. The final characteristic was that the lyrics were talking about a specific character from daily life, which differs in every song, so while the performer sings that song and dances, at the same time, she represents the story that the lyrics tell us by performing the behaviour of the character in the piece in physical and vocal layers. It is claimed that besides the *baloz's*, *kanto* was performed in night clubs and beer houses at Pera and theatres in Galata, Direklerarası and Kadıköy and coffee houses where Italian comedies were being performed.[2] However, its prominent popularity gained when it became a part of *tuluat* (improvisational) theatre.[3]

*Tuluat* is a particular form of theatre which arise through westernisation movement in the Ottoman Empire. In 1839, during the period of Abdülmecid, the declaration of the Edict of Gülhane brought many

[1] Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar* (Istanbul: Sabah Kitapçılık, 1999), 38.
[2] Ruhi Ayangil, "Kanto," in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, no. 4 (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1994), 419.
[3] Selçuk Alimdar, "XIX. Yüzyıldan İtibaren Osmanlı Devleti'nde Batı Müziğinin Benimsenmesi ve Toplumsal Sonuçları" (PhD diss., Istanbul Technical University, 2011), 370-380.

changes to the social and economic life of Ottoman society. The theatre also had its share from these changes. In the Tanzimat period, the Ottoman state gave Güllü Agop the privilege of staging text-based theatre performance in Turkish in Istanbul. Therefore, many theatre practitioners started to search for a way to perform their productions and make money.[4] The "privilege" covered the theatre activity in Istanbul, based on the text yet it didn't include musical and improv theatre. Therefore, operas, tours out of Istanbul, and *tuluat* theatre became a way of theatre activity without challenging the "privilege". *Tuluat* theatre was not based on a text, which required the actor to memorise. *Tuluat* is a theatre genre in which the plot of a play is based on a predetermined outline, and the play is performed in an improvised manner based on certain character types.

In the competitive theatre market, *tuluat* theatres developed an attitude that prioritise catching the audience's attention to earn money. *Kanto* performances often integrated into the programmes because of this attitude. *Kanto* performances are useful to catch the public's attention both because a woman singer dances and sings on the stage and the content of the songs. For instance, some *kanto* songs had lyrics that encouraged the audience to buy something to eat and drink. The presentation of these songs aimed to increase the sales of food and drink in theatre. Another strategy to attract the audience was performing songs that talked about people from different occupations and social groups. Küçük Amelya (Little Amelya) from Galata Theatre was famous for singing *"Kanto* of Crew". "Driver *Kanto"* and "Pickle Seller *Kanto"* are also examples of craftsman *Kanto*s.

*Kanto* songs were extremely popular at the end of 19th century, and many people knew the lyrics and the information about the private life of the *kantocu* women was discussed by people. *Kanto* became a product of popular culture in a way. Thus, Cemal Ünlü describes *kanto* as the primary example of popular music in Istanbul.[5] The *kanto* songs were rememberable and enjoyable, and they mentioned the daily events of the period's Istanbul life.

However, for some people *kanto* is a not artistic, and banal performance. *Kanto* was performing in coffee houses and night clubs before it engaged in *tuluat* theatre, and its audience was people from the lower class.[6] Because *kanto* was a performance for people who were not elites, that form was always described as banal by some groups. That opinion did not change when the *kanto* became a part of *tuluat* theatres. Moreover, *tuluat* was also seen as a banal performance compared to western style theatre that become widespread among the Ottoman Empire. Another criticism of banality towards *kanto* arises because women do not sing the songs following the rules of mainstream singing and they present a loose image with their racy clothes. Therefore, it is critical to analyse the performance practises of *kanto* to understand the origins of these comments.

*Kanto* defined by Refik Ahmet Sevengil as *"...it is a woman dancing and singing on the stage, but the singer arranges her movements according to the subject of the song."*[7] The dance of *kanto* singer is coherent with the atmosphere of the song that is created by the lyrics and with an imaginary character that is represented in the story of the song. The costume of *kantocu* also supports the representation. A performer who performs a gypsy woman dress as a gypsy, a woman who sings shepherd *kanto* dress as a shepherd, a girl who is in love with the shepherd or the girl's father.[8] *Kanto* performances create the imitation of the world where the story of the song occurs. In that sense *kanto* is not only a singing activity but also a stage performance that contains a high level of theatricality.

[4] Metin And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e Türk Tiyatro Tarihi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2022), 86.
[5] Cemal Ünlü, *Kantolar, CD- Booklet.* Istanbul: Kalan Müzik Arşiv Serisi, 1998.
[6] For detailed information on the audience profile of kanto see; Erik Blackthorne-O'barr, "Song and Stage, Gender and Nation: The Emergence of Kanto in Late Ottoman Istanbul" (MA diss., Sabancı University, 2018).
[7] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (Istanbul: Alfa Yayıncılık, 2015), 408.
[8] Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar*, 42.

The content of the *kanto* song is related with the theatre play staged before or after the song. Murat Belge, who defines the *kanto* as a theatral form, claims that the gestures and mimics that are presented in the dance intensify the emphasis of the lyrics.[9] *Kanto* can be performed either by a woman singer as solo or as a duetto with two performers. Because the lyrics develop a dialog in duettos, the theatricality is more dominant in these performances.

*Kanto* songs are different from the other songs in terms of the musical performance as well. The melody of the vocal and the melody of the instrument do not necessarily overlap. This fact is accused of not singing properly. Singing without following the rules becomes an issue of criticism. The argument that *kantocus* cannot sing properly uses the pronunciation of the lyrics as an example as well. The *kanto* songs were performed by non-muslim women who are not native to Turkish, so their pronunciation of Turkish is often "not correct". However, over time, incorrect Turkish became the characteristic of the songs and in the following years even the singers who are native in Turkish performed the lyrics in an incorrect way.[10] The famous actress Gülriz Sururi also mentions that the way of performing is a basic characteristic of the *kanto*:

> *There is no such thing as staging a perfect kanto. In fact, the kanto was sung in a bad language, but a sympathetic stage show was the ingenuity of the Armenian chants. If you sing the same song beautifully, it would be "singing", not "kanto". I love kanto's and kanto singers who put "e" in places where the artists get stuck, take a deep breath, and end the song with a cry because their voices are not enough in the final part.*[11]

Sururi argues that the *kanto* singers end the song with a cry because their voices are not enough.[12] However, most of the *kanto* songs are composed by the *kantocu's* and it is not convincing that women compose the songs that their voice is not enough. Another argument can be that their physical movements affect their vocals: *"probably the extensions because of foot movements..."*[13] Which is a more convincing explanation as it refers to the relationship between physical action and vocal action. The performance based on incorrect vocalisations and pronunciation in the *kanto* is consistent within itself and creates its unique structure. *Kanto* songs tell a story; stage tools such as voice, instrument, movement, and costume come together in an unusual way to establish the world of that story. For this reason, it is necessary to evaluate the ways in which artists perform the *kanto* not according to the usual accuracy criteria, but by following the action created by the *kanto* performance.

The effectiveness of the *kanto* depends on the creation of expansive emotions and enthusiasm in the audience. A significant issue of discussion is whether the *kanto* reaches the effect with the women's existence and her flirtatious attitude on the stage or with the behaviour of the imaginary character which is represented within the *kanto* song. The representation of the world created by the story of the *kanto* performance and the daily existence of the *kanto* performers are interchangeable in the eyes of the audience. While the *kanto* performer on the stage sings the gypsy *kanto*, she represents the "gypsy" as a character and her love. As a matter of fact, the same *kanto* performer can also sing the "pickle seller *kanto*" in her next performance. However, the audience may believe that the "gypsy in love" on the stage is speaking to them in person. This preference for reception may have two causes. First, the *kantocu*-audience relationship may be affected by the *kanto* watching habits that people (mostly men) have brought from the past. This form of entertainment, which is performed in coffeehouses and night clubs without being part of a theatre show, has the direct function of entertaining men. This direct

[9] Murat Belge, *Sanat ve Edebiyat Yazıları*, Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009.
[10] Özge Şen Tuncel, "Kantonun Tanımı ve Dönüşümü," in *Kanto Kitabı*, ed. Emine Gürsoy Naskali (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2018), 20.
[11] Gülriz Sururi, *Kıldan İnce Kılıçtan Keskin*, Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1978.
[12] Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar*, 15.
[13] Şen Tuncel, "Kantonun Tanımı ve Dönüşümü," 20.

relationship may have been carried over to theatre programmes. Second, because women appearing on stage in revealing clothes attract the audience, theatre bosses underline the femininity of the *kanto* performers on the stage.

## *Kantocu* Women of the Ottoman Empire

In the late 19th century, the main performers of the *kanto* were non-Muslim women because Muslim women were not legally allowed to perform in public. During that period, the most productive and famous singer and composer of Istanbul were Peruz Terzekyan. Following Peruz, many non-Muslim *kanto* performers came to the theatre stage as; Şamram Kelleciyan, Küçük Virjin, Mari Ferha, and Amelya.[14] At a time when only non-Muslim women could be on the stage, a Muslim woman named Kadriye performed on stage in Nazilli under the pseudonym Paşaköprülü Amelya. However, when it was understood that she was Muslim, she had to end her stage life.[15]

Peruz founded a stage group called *Sahne-i Alem* at the end of the 19th century. In this group, she worked with kantocu women as Şamram, Amelya, Küçük Virjin, Violet, and Flora. *Sahne-i Alem* also functioned as an institution of education. Peruz educated women there and provided employment for them.[16] Şamram Kelleciyan, another Armenian *kanto* singer in the Ottoman Empire, was a cousin of Peruz and became a *kanto* singer thanks to her.[17] Just like Şamram, Küçük Virjin also became a *kanto* singer with an offer from Peruz.[18]

Many women began to practise *kanto* as a profession, especially with Peruz's encouragement. Doing this job professionally reveals the fact that they have created a place for themselves in the economy. However, it is debatable to what extent the *kanto* profession was a choice for these women. As a matter of fact, *kanto* is an art generally performed by women who are in an economically difficult situation.[19] Therefore, women's practise of *kanto* as a profession was not a choice but an indirect obligation in a period when the professions open to women were limited.[20]

## Reception and Moral Critics of Early Practises

*Kantocu* women face sharp criticism because they get on the stage as a woman and sing in a flirtatious way. Sahne-i Alem is mostly seen as a scandal. That attitude could be the continuation of the attitude that approaching *tuluat* theatre as unserious and non-artistic. Moreover, when the artists, as women, appeared on stage wearing clothes that were considered revealing for that period, harsh criticism became inevitable. Women who appear in public spaces wearing revealing clothes, even if they do not commit a crime legally, go beyond the usual social rules and pose a threat to the social order.

Serpil Çakır argues that some women associate the hijab and veiling with exclusion from public space. Regulations regarding clothing are problematised by women in the Ottoman Women's Movement in the context of their participation in social life. Additionally, the requirement to wear body-covering clothing on the street and in the presence of men does not discriminate between Muslims and non-Muslims. Similar rules are in charge regarding women's visibility in social life. In this sense, although clothing regulation has a cultural background, it becomes a matter of state administration aimed at

[14] Esra Aydınlıoğlu, "Udi Şamlı Selim'in Kanto Mecmuası," (MA diss., Ege University, 2021), 8.
[15] Ahmet Fehim, *Sahnede Elli Sene* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları), 2002.
[16] Blackthorne-O'barr, "Song and Stage, Gender and Nation: The Emergence of Kanto in Late Ottoman Istanbul," 40-50.
[17] Şamram Kelleciyan, "Tiyatromuzun Eski Bir Emektarı: 34 Seneden Beri Kanto Söyliyen Şamram Hanım Tiyatroculuğa Nasıl Başladı?".
[18] Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar*, 44.
[19] For more information about how women became *kanto* artists, see the biographies in Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar.*
[20] Hasmik Khalapyan, "Theatre as a Career for Ottoman Armenian Women, 1850 to 1919," *A Social History of Late Ottoman Women: New Perspectives,* ed. Duygu Köksal and Anastasia Falierou (E-book: Brill, 2013), 31.

ensuring social order. According to Çakır, the aim of "*clothing shaped by hijab is not only to protect privacy and sexuality and not to show them, but also to protect social order.*"[21]

In the testimonies of *kanto* performances, we encounter a common understanding that women performing *kanto* have erotic connotations for the audience. Salah Birsel thinks that the audience watching the *kanto* chanted because the performers were wearing *kanto* clothes that could be considered "revealing" for that period. When we look at the criticisms, the *kanto* performances in Direklerarası were defined as more elite and cultivated than the ones in Galata. However, the expectation of seeing a woman's body was still valid. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın claims that the announcement of "*kanto* one act" automatically brings along the promise of seeing a woman's body.[22] Due to these reasons, *kanto* performances were named as "*agitation area of prostitution*" by Ahmet Rasim and others.[23] Women's visibility with revealing clothes in public threatens the social order's survival. Therefore, the moral accusations against *kantocu* women are based on the concern that they threaten the social order.

The approach that questions the moral value of kantocu women also prevents the visibility of their artistic knowledge. However, in the *kanto* magazines, it is evident that these women have a creative knowledge that cannot be underestimated, both from the number of lyrics and compositions we encounter and from the statements and writings in which they praise the *kanto* performers. Musahipzade Celal mentions that Peruz has a good musical knowledge. Furthermore, in the *kanto* magazine of Udi Şamlı Selim, we can find 131 song lyrics that are written by Peruz.[24] İsmail Dümbüllü; thinks that Peruz is one of the best *kanto* performers of her time. Naşit describes Peruz as "*the highest of the female artists trained in the tuluat theatre*" and adds that she knows notes at an excellent level and teaches to everybody.[25]

While some groups criticised the activities of *kanto* performers on the stage, no one would object to women's knowledge of music, only if they used it to entertain their husbands at home, not performing publicly with improper dresses. Another reason for the unfriendly reactions may be that the women transferred their musical knowledge into an income-producing activity. For some period, Peruz was known as the highest-earning artist of the *tuluat* theatre.[26] Şamram also known as an artist who earned high salaries with her performances in Ramadan.[27] Despite their popularity, many women who performed *kanto* had economic difficulties in the last period of their lives.[28] The reason for the decline in the life standards of these women needs to be considered in the context of the evaluation of entertainment habits within the transformation process from the empire to the republican era.

*Kanto* had its golden age in *tuluat* theatre programmes until the beginning of 20th century. In 20th century even if *kanto* remains a crucial form of popular music, it tends to lose its dominance in the theatre stage. In other words, the public presence of the *kanto* transformed due to the changing social structure. Researchers like Berna Özbilen and Cemal Ünlü categorise the eras of *kanto* in several time-based categories. While Cemal Ünlü divides into two periods as before and after the republic, Özbilen categorises into four periods. The first one is *tuluat* theatre period. After the *tuluat* theatres, with the recession in entertainment life because of the political and economic situation, the recordings of *taş plak* (gramophone record) became more common and *kanto* became a musical entertainment that is

[21] Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2021), 244.
[22] *Türk Tiyatrosu Ansiklopedisi*, ed. M. Nihat Özön and Baha Dürder, 240.
[23] Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar*, 17.
[24] Aydınlıoğlu, "Udi Şamlı Selim'in Kanto Mecmuası," iii.
[25] Naşit, "Hayatım. Peruz'un parlak günleri," *Son Posta*, January 28, 1939.
[26] Naşit, "Hayatım. Peruz'un parlak günleri".
[27] Şamram Kelleciyan, "Tiyatromuzun Eski Bir Emektarı: 34 Seneden Beri Kanto Söyliyen Şamram Hanım Tiyatroculuğa Nasıl Başladı?".
[28] Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar*, Musahipzade Celal, "Kafesler kâfi görülmedi, localara birer de tül gerildi," interview by Hikmet Feridun, *Akşam*, November 16, 1936.

listened to at home. In 1960's, it became popular again as a nostalgic product. However, at this period *kanto* didn't become a part of the theatre stage, but it revived on the programmes of night clubs, just like the very first performance places. Many actresses included *kanto* songs to their programmes. Nurhan Damcıoğlu was an important figure who performed *kanto* until she passed away in 2023. In an interview, she mentioned that she adopted *kanto* performances according to the needs of her time:

> *I have created my repertoire with modernisation of kanto performances in 30's. I got on the stage for the first time in 1968 in Mücap Ofluoğlu Theatre as kantocu. Later, I performed kanto in night clubs as Urcam, Maksim, Lunapark, Çakıl and Klüp 12. I make the forgotten kanto popular again. I helped people remember important kanto artists as Şamram and songs like Yangın Var (There is a Fire). I modernised the classical dance figures of kanto.*[29]

Kanto began to be performed only in Ramadan entertainments after rich and diverse programmes in night clubs lost their popularity because of the economic crisis in the 1980s. However, artists such as Huysuz Virjin, Nurhan Damcıoğlu, Meral Küçükerol and Oya Alasya tried to continue the performance.[30]

The main principles of *kanto* have been transformed during 20th century in terms of performers and the mediums of the performance. This transformation is directly related to the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish republic and the effect of the social and cultural politics of the republic on social life and entertainment habits. Analysing the transformation of the main characteristics of *kanto* performances in *tuluat* theatres among the cultural change with the republic will be helpful to understand both the form and performers and the cultural life of the period.

## *Kantocu* Women of the Republic

As *kanto* gained real popularity with its involvement in the *tuluat* theatre programme, it is possible to argue that the main milestone that transformed the position of this form among social life is the decrease in the effectiveness of *tuluat* theatres. The reasons for this transformation should be investigated in the changing dynamics of the cultural field. The transition process from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Türkiye brought about many changes not only in the field of state administration and bureaucracy but also in the cultural field. Theatre activity has also affected by this change. The nationalist thought that prepared the declaration of the Republic required a new national identity. The entertainment habits that belong to the Ottoman Empire began to be transformed in that sense. The new national identity was contradictory, on one had an original national values and habits were trying to be established. On the other hand, the new nation should be modern and contemporary. Enlightenment was associated directly with western values and habits in the republic's understanding of modernism. Almost all aspects of social life were filtered in terms of the suitability for the new social order. This filtering applied in theatre activity as well. While text-based theatre that adopted from the West was welcome, *tuluat*, which is associated with the traditional form of a performing art, was not very welcome by the elites of the new order. Of course, the form did not disappear in an instant, and it also transformed in years. However, it is obvious that the popularity of the *tuluat* and *kanto* was damaged due to the transformations in cultural policies in 1920s.

Text-based western style theatre is appropriate for the cultural politics of the republic. Western style theatre plays that became popular in the late 19th century became manipulated in terms of their contents according to the needs of the republican era. The new republic's ideology highlights that theatre should be an educational activity rather than an entertainment. Therefore, any theatre

[29] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreci ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi" (MA diss., Istanbul Technical University, 2006), 55.
[30] Cemal Ünlü, *Kantolar, CD- Booklet.*

performance that serves for entertainment was strongly criticised and the theatre activity that aims to educate the society in the direction of the new values of the republic was celebrated.[31]

Throughout the early republican era the theatre organisations institutionalised to strengthen the connection between the state and the theatre. *Darülbedayi*, today the Municipality Theatres, became a funded theatre and strengthened its corporate identity. It was founded in 1914 aiming to educate actors that can answer the needs of western style theatre activity that the republic requires yet it became a theatre group that only performs plays rather than conducting education activities. As it turned its face to the western style theatre activity, *Darülbedayi* became dominant over *tuluat* theatres. Even though *tuluat* artists continued their activity, economic and structural conditions were a pressure over them.

Haldun Taner emphasised the narrowing of *tuluat*'s activity opportunities and the desperation of Ismail Dümbüllü, a famous *tuluat* actor, with the following words: "*What could Dümbüllü do? How could he continue defending the authentic forms of traditional theatre over against the European style presentations of Darülbedayi?*"[32] The activity of *tuluat* theatres continues until 1940s. In 1941, an important theatre building in Direklerarası, Ferah Tiyatrosu, was fired. Naşit Özcan a famous *tuluat* actor of the period, passed away in 1943. Kerem Karaboğa argues that these two cases imply the end of the Direklerarası period.[33] The social structure of the region was also changed, and old elites that lived in this region moved to the Bosporus or the new popular regions of the Istanbul and in 50's completely new group who had no connection with the previous entertainment culture settled in the region. *Tuluat* as a form of theatre continued in disseminated theatre activities and it could not gain the popularity like it was in Direklerarası again.

*Kanto* performances could not be a part of *Darülbedayi* programme like *tuluat* theatres. In the early republican period, the artistic genres and audience tastes were changing in the context of cultural policies that strived to weaken ties with the Ottoman Empire in every sense. *Kanto* and *tuluat* could not take place in the entertainment culture of the social identity that the republic is trying to build. The entertainment of the Republican period was based on an elitist cultural taste. Popular culture also changed during this period. The new culture embraced the popular trends of Europe. Forms such as the Charleston and rumba have become popular in music. This new culture of elite taste wants to weaken its ties with the banal habits of the past while building a new identity. As a result, the connection of *kanto* performance with the theatre stage weakens and *kanto* becomes a branch of music. However, even in music, in the early years of the Republic until 1935, genres such as tango and Charleston overshadowed *kanto*. Murat Belge states that *kanto* was seen as a non-respectable form but is also loved and compares this position with blues and tango. Class snobbery keeps folk songs at a distance and finds the music of the lower class of the urban population banal. *Kanto* is such a form because it is originally a product of subculture and was used in *tuluat* theatres to entertain ordinary people.[34] In the following years when the *kanto* became popular again, it performed using a music integrated with the melodies of tango and Charleston. This transformation may be interpreted as the assimilation of the form by the elites in terms of manipulating the songs to make them suitable for themselves. Although *kanto* was not a part of theatre plays during the Republican period, some essential performance characteristics were hidden in musical plays and operettas. Elements such as the incorrect pronunciation of the words, melodic

[31] To see more about the theatre of Early Republic see; Levent Boyacıoğlu, "Tek Parti Döneminde İnkılâp Temsilleri," Tarih ve Toplum, no. 102 (June 1992); Nilgün Firidinoğlu, "Tanzimat'tan Erken Cumhuriyet'e Tiyatro ve Eğitim İlişkisi: Mektep Temsilleri (1896-1936)" (PhD diss., Istanbul University, 2015); Esra Dicle Başbuğ, *Resmi İdeoloji Sahnede* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013); Elif Çongur, *Ulusal Kimliği Tiyatro İle Kurmak- Türk Tiyatrosunun Kimlik İnşasındaki İşlevi*, (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2017), İstek Serhan Erbek, "Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Tiyatro Oyunlarında Köken ve Medeniyet Miti," *Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Dergisi/ Journal of Theatre Criticism and Dramaturgy,* no. 30 (2020).

[32] Erkan Canak, *Tuluat Tiyatrolarında Kantoculuk ve Kantolar* (Istanbul: KDY, 2020), 123.

[33] Kerem Karaboğa, *Geleceğe Perde Açan Gelenek: Geçmişten Günümüze İstanbul Tiyatroları I, Suriçi İstanbul'u, Bakırköy ve Çevresi* (Istanbul: YKY Yayınları, 2010), 113.

[34] Şehvar Beşiroğlu, "Türk Müziğinin Popülerleşmesi Sürecinde Yeni Bir Tür: Kantolar," accessed August 2023, http://www.musikidergisi.net/?p=688.

extensions at the ends of the lines, dance characteristics identified with the *kanto*, and action-based representation of the character discussed in the song could be visible in musical theatre. Operetta songs and *kantos* have been in mutual interaction in every period. Some pieces that are compatible with *kanto* song's structure could be taken from the performance and circulated as independent *kanto* songs. Two important songs are examples of that. After the success of the Leblebici Horhor (1876) operetta, the "Leblebici (roasted chickpea maker) *Kanto"* was included in the *kanto* repertoire in *tuluat* theatres. Hamid Bey from Bursa sang the song for Columbia Records after more than 50 years in 1932. Haydi Dostlar Rumba (Come on Friends Rumba), recorded in 1933, is another example. That *kanto* is a part of the Lüküs Hayat (Luxury Life) operetta, composed in 1933 by Cemal Reşit Rey, and sang by Mahmure Şenses for Sahibinin Sesi Records.[35]

Another critical factor that determines the place of the *kanto* form in the entertainment culture of the republican period and its impact on the public visibility of women is technological developments. *Kanto* performance began to get homes with the spread of radio and recordings in 1927, and *kantocu* women existed only with their voices rather than bodily presence. In 1930s singers sang to record many songs. Recording companies such as Sahibinin Sesi, Odeon, and Columbia became active in Istanbul so not only the popular *kanto* performers of *tuluat* theatres as Peruz, Şamram, but also women singers such as Bayan Neriman, Fahire Hanım, Mahmure Suat Hanım, Makbule Enver Hanım sang the songs. Former *kanto* singers, who had financial difficulties after the *tuluat* theatres lost their effectiveness, found the opportunity to earn money in this way. However, their public physical visibility has diminished. Serpil Sancar, in her book *Türk Modernleşmesinin Cinsiyeti: Erkekler Devlet, Kadınlar Aile Kurar*[36] (Gender of Turkish Modernisation: Men Establish the State, Women Establish the Family), argues that women were excluded from the state building process of the republican era, and they took part in modernisation of the family and the household. The main responsibility of the women was not to be a founder of activities in the public sphere but to be the manager of modernisation steps in the private sphere determined by the state, that is, within the household. One can argue that *kantocu* women suffered from the same division of labour. They have a place in social life, but the new order determines the boundaries of this place. On the one hand, they are encouraged to be an artist but by following the rules the republic sets. *Kantocu* women were not just *kanto* performers during the *tuluat* theatre period. They also appeared in the plays as actresses before or after the *kantos*. During the Republic period, they gave up their acquired knowledge and field of activity and were trapped into records in terms of *kanto* activities.

In the late 19th century, both the composers and performers of *kanto* were women. As of the Republican period, men were also actively involved in the production processes of the *kanto*, and male composers who were educated with the knowledge of European music began to compose *kantos*. Composers like Kaptanzade Ali Rıza Bey, Refik Fersan, Dramalı Hasan, Sadettin Kaynak, Cümbüş Mehmet, and Mildan Niyazi Bey were composing *kanto* songs with the order of recording companies.[37] Within the desire for localisation and nationalisation of entertainment culture, the instruments used in *kanto* songs have changed. While *kanto* was performed with local maqams and Western instruments, it began to be performed using regional and national instruments as of the republic. It is now played with instruments such as cümbüş, oud, castanets and qanun.[38] The singer is accompanied by an ensemble of Turkish music instruments in the "Kara Kız (Black Girl) *Kantosu"*, which Bayan Neriman recorded on Columbia Records.[39] Almost all the composers of the songs that take place in the album *Kantolar* (1905-1945) produced by Kalan Music are men. Women were excluded from the production process of

[35] Cemal Ünlü, *Kantolar, CD- Booklet.*
[36] Serpil Sancar, *Türk Modernleşmesinin Cinsiyeti: Erkekler Devlet, Kadınlar Aile Kurar* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014).
[37] Gülnihal Ünal, "Batı-dışı Modernlik Kavramı Bağlamında Kanto," *Online Journal of Music Sciences* 2, no. 3 (2017): 263.
[38] Ünal, "Batı-dışı Modernlik Kavramı Bağlamında Kanto," 263.
[39] Cemal Ünlü, *Kantolar, CD- Booklet.*

the *kanto* activity somehow. Within the modernisation attacks of the republic, Muslim women were also allowed to be on stage as performing artists. However, in the period that proudly enabled Muslim women's existence on the scene, excluding women from the composition activity, although they have a historical accumulation, shows us that the new cultural settlement's rules determine the scope of women's artistic movement. The modernisation claim of the new order has expanded the boundaries of women's existence in social life to some extent, but it is not possible to say that women who are freed from legal obstacles have truly become liberated:

> *On the one hand, nationalist movements invite women to participate more in social life as national actors, mothers, educators, workers, and even warriors. On the other hand, it determines the boundaries of culturally acceptable female behaviour and forces women to express their interests within the discourses determined by nationalist discourse...*[40]

Muslim women who became a part of *kanto* performances need to regulate the scope of their activity according to the discourses of the new order. In the middle of 19th century when *kanto* was very popular, Muslim women were not allowed to be on the stage. Therefore, Armenian and Greek women were mostly the performers of *kanto*. In the republican era, Muslim women began to be on the stage and perform *kanto*. It is not surprising that women who were recently allowed to be on stage prefer to stay away from the *kanto* performances, which are morally condemned. There is no longer any legal obstacle for Muslim women to go on stage. Still, it is equally frowned upon for Muslim women to perform erotic dances on stage in the revealing clothes worn by non-Muslim women. As a result of these changes in the people performing it and the execution channels, the *kanto* was tamed to transform it into a form suitable for the acceptable female citizen demanded by the republican period.

As the musical knowledge and artistic practises of *kanto* composers changed in the 19th century, the quality of the compositions also changed, and this new musical infrastructure did not allow the original physical performance to continue as it was. Since the 1930s, *kanto* pieces have been written and composed mainly for singing rather than performing onstage. Performance in *tuluat* theatres has a structure that combines dance, music and theatre. In this sense, there is a loss. As Berna Özbilen mentions, Metin And also argues that the structure of *kanto* performance answers the needs of the western arts: "*Artists who perform musical comedies in the West are required to be both theatre, voice, and dance artists. The old* kanto *players were artists who could do all three of these.*"[41] While *kanto* performers were multi-skilled performance artists, their removal from the stage prevented them from transferring this knowledge to other generations. In other words, the republic's ideological priorities polished the Western-style theatre's entertaining features. As a result, the performer profile demanded by the West has moved away from Westernisation. Even though the women became distant from the stage, their vocal technique in the recordings distinguishes the *kanto* songs from any other song. The action of the story told by the song transferring to the vocal action. Therefore, the representation of the character and story is executed by vocal actions. For instance, Necmiye Hanım sang the *kanto* song "Gittin Yarım, Gittin Elden (Dondurmacı)" (You are gone my love, you are gone from me (Ice Cream Seller)), recorded around 40's, in a men's behaviour and imitating an accent.[42] That preference is a proof that *kanto* performance was still close to theatre even in the recording period.

In terms of their contents, *kanto* songs mostly talk about the people and daily scenes from Istanbul life like; craftsmen, conflict between men and women, drunk people etc.... A similar trend continues in the songs made after the Republic. Cemal Ünlü gives the example that the characteristic of man-woman conflict continued in post-republican *kanto* pieces. In addition, during this period, songs also

[40] Deniz Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar: Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2007), 169.
[41] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreci ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi".
[42] Cemal Ünlü, *Kantolar, CD- Booklet.*

revealed the new and modern identity of women, which is acquired in social life with the republic. Of course, these songs were also a tool to make fun of this transformation. Drunk girls or women drivers and the profession of secretary are featured in the songs.[43]

The *kanto* song named "Kadın Şoför (Woman Driver)" was composed by Fahriye Aslan and Bayan Semiha, who sang it for Columbia Recordings at 1943-44. The lyric of this song describes a woman who is a driver and challenges men with her occupation.[44]

*They call me a woman driver*
*I pass beyond the flying birds*
*They call me a crazy driver*
*I climb the slope*
*I blow a horn on the road*
*I smash the men up*
*They call me the driver girl*

Another example of women in the social life *kanto* song is "Daktilo (Typewriter)", recorded by Seyyan Hanım between 1937 and 1940. That song describes a woman who is working as a secretary, and the song praises women who can work as a secretary.[45]

*Typewriter typewriter little typewriter*
*I am by the phone, hello?*
*What a beauty*
*What a modern*

The lyrics of these songs describe women's changing existence in public space and celebrate the new modern social order regulated by the republic's vision. Women were encouraged to take part in new branches of occupations, and the oppression over them claimed to be eased. However, while the women were canalised to be an active part of the social order and take part in employment, they were stuck in a position where they could only exist with their voices regarding *kanto* performances. This contradiction can be considered as the appearance of the characteristic of republic modernism, which floats between the Western lifestyle and its core values. On the one hand, women have begun to take part in public life and go on the theatre stage, but on the other hand, they are asked to stay within the moral standards of national values. This contrast proves that women can only exist in the public sphere as the new order allows.

## Conclusion

*Kanto* had its share of the cultural transformation that took place during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Türkiye. *Kanto*, a popular entertainment activity and sub-culture product, could not find a place in the decent republican culture, especially in the early republican period. The form's theatrical aspect was dominant during the Ottoman period, yet it became a sub-branch of musical entertainment during the republican period. While there was a severe reaction to the entertaining function of theatre in the early republican period, it is possible to consider music and entertainment together. During this period, the profile of performers also changed; Muslim women joined the performers, and men joined the composers. In terms of the medium of the performance, *kanto* squeeze in the recordings. After 1960's, as a part of the search for national and regional cultural

[43] Cemal Ünlü, Kantolar, CD- Booklet.
[44] Information about the song can be found in *Kantolar* by Kalan Music. Accessed August 2023. To listen to the song "Bayan Semiha-Kadın Şoför", you can visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cR0MPBmk43c
[45] More information about the song can be found in *Kantolar* by Kalan Music. Accessed August 2023. To listen to the song "Seyyan Hanım-Daktilo", you can visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnXGC6viL9s

values, *kanto* found a place in the night club's programmes. When the night clubs with performance programmes lose their popularity, it remained a nostalgic item only performed in Ramadan festivals.

The social reforms that came with the Republic have led to specific improvements in women's lives, and one result of this is the elimination of the legal obstacle for women to appear on stage. However, the extent to which eliminating this obstacle leads to women's liberation in social life and artistic performance is a matter of debate. The reforms have created a cultural control mechanism, and the public visibility of women's sexuality is an area where this control operates most harshly. For this reason, *kanto*, an artistic practise performed by women with erotic connotations, was tamed within the framework that the new order would allow.

Although *kanto* performances have ceased to be a direct part of theatre, the influence and elements of the form continue. Rather than looking at whether *kanto* is dead or not, investigating what it has transformed into and why brings us closer to historical awareness. Understanding the journey of *kanto* is valuable both in terms of shedding light on the social and cultural position of women, and as it is a significant form that involves the performance of dance, music, and theatre together. For this reason, instead of claiming that the *kanto* has disappeared, revealing how the performance practises have changed will open a window into the history of theatre and the performing arts.

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# Part II

## Education and Institutionalization

Chapter 5

# Theatre Criticism in the Republican Era

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## Abstract

The journey of theatrical art and criticism in the Ottoman Empire was a long process, and the emphasis was mostly on definitions and educational content about theatre. Theatre criticsm appears to have accelerated with the rise of theatrical life after 1908 (Meşrutiyet / The Constitutional Era). With Darülbedayi's foundation (Istanbul Municipal Theatre) in 1914, our first subsidised theatre would become operational, sparking a movement in the realm of criticism. In the meantime, Muhsin Ertuğrul, a decisive and leading name of the modern Turkish theatre who for many years was also the artistic director of the Istanbul Municipal Theatre, emphasised that criticism is a profession and a challenging art form.

In time, theatre had increasingly been interpreted as a distinct discipline of art subject to extensive analysis, discussions, and scrutiny with its various aspects. In general, the primary focus of the critic was based on textual analysis to encourage the evolution of modern Turkish theatre. In the 1960s, with the declaration of the 1961 Constitution, the concepts of democracy, human rights and personal liberties influenced the political functions of the theatre. Following those years, the search for new forms became more important. While epic theatre was considered as the basic element of public's revolutionary ideals, dramatic theatre was considered the symbol of bourgeois ideals.

The years between 1960 and 1980 were a period in which both critics and artists questioned and examined concepts of nationality and universality, as well as concepts of socialist theatre, public theatre and populist theatre.

When we examine criticism from the 1980s to the present, we see that the picture that emerges does not have the same dynamics, colours and vibes. The main reasons for this are coups, oppressive education, freedom restrictions, social turbulences...

**Keywords** criticism · critics · Republican Era · theatre history · theatre criticism

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Throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, the principles of liberty and democratic governance were reinforced via the emergence of the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, a period characterised by significant intellectual and cultural advancements such as the Renaissance and the Reformation. Additionally, the advent of the Industrial Revolution played a pivotal role in facilitating the development of new social structures. Hence, the Ottoman Empire could not be detached from the impact of scientific, intellectual and aesthetic advancements in the Western world influenced by modernisation throughout the ages. In summary, questioning the Western world and subsequent developments in the Ottoman Empire may be traced back to the latter part of the 17th century and the early part of the 18th century. Hence, the "Tanzimat Edict" (Reform and Reorganisation) of 1839 presents a significant turning point. The establishment of interactions with Western countries and the pursuit of modernisation must be understood as a mandatory outcome. In this particular environment, an examination of the domain of culture and art reveals the emergence of a theatrical comprehension that aligns with the prevailing trends in Istanbul, the capital of the Empire.

During the 1840s and subsequent years, there exists a body of literature authored by notable foreign writers. Gerard de Nerval (1808–1855), a famous French poet and traveller, is one of them and extensively discusses in his book *Voyage en Orient (Doğu'da Seyahat)*, the theatre scene in Istanbul, especially the theatres built along the Grand Rue de Pera (Beyoğlu) and the vibrant theatrical milieu that flourished there... Adolphe Thalasso (1857–1919), an art historian of Venetian origin, who, after living many years in Istanbul, moved to Paris where he continued to write valuable articles on Ottoman painting, music and theatre. In this respect, *La Revue Theatrale: "Le Theatre Turc*" is worth mentioning as a valuable reference as well.

Naturally, the presence of foreign visiting troupes played a significant role in the revitalisation of the Grand Rue du Pera district. On the other hand, the efforts made by troupes established by the Ottoman artists of Armenian descent towards the development of contemporary Turkish theatre had a significant impact.

In the 1840s, the *Ceride-i Havadis* newspaper published pieces intended to educate the public. Along with the public notification of foreign troupes and summaries of theatrical productions anticipated to be staged at theatres such as Bosko, Naum and/or others on the Grand Rue du Pera, these summaries also provided polite instructions to the spectators on proper theatre etiquette.

Within this frame, we come across the earliest instances of theatrical criticism in the newspaper Diyojen, which was published twice a week between 1870 and 1873 by Teodor Kasab, an Ottoman journalist of Greek origin. In his various critiques of mainly Güllü Agop's (Hagop Vartovyan) Ottoman Drama Company, Teodor Kasab argues that Turkish theatre should not blindly embrace Western influences, but rather prioritise its own traditional forms:

> *There exists no compelling rationale for the adoption or utilization of Greek, Roman, French, or British theatrical traditions. Whether it was developed through adaptation and imitation or because it has been around for a long time, our people have the concept of a theatre and we have a theatre that we call Zuhuri*[1]*. If the existing state of this theatrical heritage is underdeveloped and fails to cater to our contemporary requirements, it is imperative that we elevate it to a level that aligns with our present-day demands.*[2]

[1] Zuhuri is a form of Traditional Turkish theatre used synonymously with Ortaoyunu. To summarise; Zuhuri comes from the root to appear. Ortaoyunu is performed in a square and in the middle of the audience.
[2] Teodor Kasab "Osmanlı Tiyatrosu Mes'elesi" *Diyojen* 168, Cuma-ertesi 25, Teşrin-i sani 1288. as cited in Şükran Oğuz, "Tanzimat Döneminde Mizah ve Diyojen Gazetesi" (MA Thesis, Balıkesir University, 1998), 1235-36.

The issue emphasised by Teodor Kasab was to be a topic of ongoing discussion in the years to follow. In the late 1870s, the *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* newspaper reported that Ahmet Vefik Pasha; governor of Bursa and a highly esteemed playwright mainly known for his adaptations and translations, had been doing the same thing; teaching the public the manners of viewing theatrical performances in the *Hüdavendigâr* newspaper published in Bursa.

It is interesting to note that in 1858 İbrahim Şinasi; a journalist, editor and poet, wrote a comedy in the Western genre: *Şair Evlenmesi* (Marriage of the Poet). A critical play based on conventional marriage customs. In this respect, it has a special place in modern Turkish theatre and the criticism scene. In 1859 Şinasi published *Tercüme-i Manzume* based on the translation of selected poems by Racine, La Martin, and La Fontaine. He evaluated poetry as a theatrical form...

Two articles on theatre written by Namık Kemal; a nationalist and intellectual writer of the Tanzimat Era, published in the *Hadika* newspaper in 1872, are noteworthy. The first article attempts to address the question, "What is theatre?":

> *It is an imitation. What is it attempting to imitate? The human condition! I believe these four factors sufficiently demonstrate that theatre is the most useful form of entertainment. What benefit can be greater than being exemplary in entertainment?*[3]

In this context, in his second article Namık Kemal highlights notable Western works and playwrights while stressing the shortcomings in our theatre. He addresses the facts that hinder the playwrights from making the necessary progress. His subsequent piece maintains a similar trajectory:

> *The theatre is not Ortaoyunu, as Ortaoyunu is merely a farce. Ortaoyunu exhibits the most clownish mannerisms, the most indecent language, and the most incomprehensible and rude expressions.*[4]

His third article is the preface to his historical play *Celaleddin Harzemşah*. In this critical and long piece, inspired by Victor Hugo's introduction to *Cromwell*, Kemal analyses different aspects of theatre, which he identifies as a living language of literature: "*If literature is the voice of a nation, then theatre is the living language of literature*."[5]

The journey of theatrical art and criticism in the Ottoman Empire was a long process, and the emphasis was mostly on definitions and educational content about theatre. Theatre criticism appears to have accelerated with the rise of theatrical life after 1908 (Meşrutiyet/The Constitutional Era). With the foundation of the Darülbedayi (Istanbul Municipal Theatre) in 1914, our first subsidised theatre would become operational, sparking a movement in the realm of criticism. The actors, acting, selection of plays and playwriting were all widely criticised. In the years following World War I, various famous literary figures and artists such as Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Muhsin Ertuğrul, Nurullah Ataç, Selami İzzet Sedes, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar and Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil wrote essays about general issues in the Turkish theatre. In the meantime, Muhsin Ertuğrul, a decisive and leading name of the modern Turkish theatre who for many years was also the artistic director of the Istanbul Municipal Theatre, emphasised that criticism is a profession and a challenging art form:

[3] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, "Tanzimat Tiyatrosu", *Hadika Gazetesi* 33, 27 Şevval 1289/Miladi January 8, 1873, 171.
[4] Refik Ahmet Sevengil "Tanzimat Tiyatrosu", *İbret Gazetesi*, 2 Sefer 1290/Miladi March 11, 1873, 174.
[5] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, "Tanzimat Tiyatrosu: Namık Kemal 'Mukaddeme-i Celal'," *Mecmua-i Ebü-z Ziya 43*, Sene Hicri 1302/Miladi 1884, 224

> *This is a profession, an art, one of the most challenging fields of the arts, and it necessitates deep research... While this is an issue, some column scribblers, who are unable to maintain consistency in any other vocation, discovered this unoccupied area and are now writing recklessly. We must stop them.*[6]

Throughout the 1940s, we came across names like Nusret Safa Coşkun, Selim Nüzhet Gerçek, Tunç Yalman, Fikret Adil, Vecdi Bürün, Senih Mümtaz, and Burhan Arpad in the field of criticism. Temaşa, published between 1918 and 1920, was a highly prominent journal of theatre. Its focus was on the formation of Turkish theatre while examining the key aspects of the purpose and aim of theatre criticism. In the meantime, the fact that Muslim Turkish women could not appear on stage and that Armenian artists took on this task was the basis for various criticisms. As is well known, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, ordered the abolition of this regressive practise in 1924.

From the early days of the Republic until the 1950s, the emphasis was mostly on the repertoire policy of the Municipal Theatre. Muhsin Ertuğrul justified the idea that world classics will enhance theatre culture and apprehension:

> *The most unforgivable thing regarding the art of a country is to create a work reflecting the preferences of the community. [...] Furthermore, my opponents claimed that showing plays by Ibsen and Strindberg to the public would be pointless because they were not even well understood in European cities. But witnessing a great artist like Meyerhold... continuing down the same path, has reaffirmed to me once again that I was not mistaken. Now I know who the most pitiful beings are: those who, like us, want to offer the world true art but have chosen the wrong path.*[7]

A leading critic of the era, Nurullah Ataç, stated that the function of the theatre was to interact with society and that the public's taste could only be catered to in this manner:

> *We are aware that most population is illiterate. Thus, they do not apprehend beauty as they should. Instead, they are satisfied with the unpleasing. I know and I'll say it again: If an artist wants his work to continue in time, he needs to base it on the cultural edifice of the nation. To do so, he must consider or better sense the general approach of the public. Is the public insipid? Then the artist's duty will be to avoid such tastelessness and replace it with the concept of beauty.*[8]

One of the first and foremost figures of the Republican era, professor of education science at Istanbul University; İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacoğlu stressed the fact that theatre is primarily a creation of the mind. His book *The Theatre* is as remarkable today as it was then:

[6] Muhsin Ertuğrul, "İhtisas İşi," *Darülbedayi Dergisi* 2, March 1930, 1.
[7] Muhsin Ertuğrul, "Halka İnmek Değil, Halkı Yükseltmek," *Vakit*, October 2, 1925.
[8] Nurullah Ataç, "Tiyatro Üzerine," *Ülkü*, January 1947. As cited in Metin And, *Ataç Tiyatroda* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1982), 86.

> *Our objective was not to acquire the creative minds of Europe, but rather to gain their affecting display. Unfortunately, we failed to grasp the creative core of Western Theatre. Our predecessors, the Karagöz Puppeteers, Meddahs, and improvisators, demonstrated a profound understanding of the fundamental aspects of artistic expression. They prioritised the essence over superficial elements, the core over superficial appearances, and the form over preconceived templates. As a result, they produced exceptional and innovative works. What actions were undertaken by us?*[9]

Muhsin Ertuğrul consistently advocated in the following years and emphasised at every opportunity that the theatre should also be examined on scientific grounds:

> *Each profession possesses distinct expertise. When one chooses critique as a vocation, it necessitates a certain level of expertise, proper conduct, and familiarity with the global theatrical industry.*[10]

Such disputes, which have lasted for years and have drawn many theatre artists into their sphere of influence, would inevitably bring up the subject of establishing a National Theatre. What is the definition of a national theatre? The notion that the establishment of a national theatre mainly depends on the presence of national playwrights was widely accepted. However, the approaches to reach this consensus varied. Some claimed that attaining a sense of national theatre and universal beauty in theatre could be achieved by an exploration of the world's classics and distinguished examples of contemporary international plays. Others insisted that a similar outcome could be obtained by delving into the foundations of our own traditional theatre forms.

In this decade, theatre had increasingly been construed as a distinct discipline of art subject to extensive analysis, discussion, and scrutiny with its various aspects. One of the issues under consideration; namely playwriting, was the continuation of a longstanding discussion. The limited availability of private theatres throughout the 1950s necessitated the engagement of writers with subsidised theatres. Such cooperation had its ups and downs. There were instances of severe critiques being directed at the Literary Boards of the Istanbul Municipal Theatres and Ankara State Theatres over their selection of the plays. Adnan Benk emerged as an outspoken critic, known for his precise assessments, uncompromising attitude, and rigid yet ethical style.

> *In these circumstances, no critic would like to cooperate with the Literary Board. Every time the Board stages poorly organised plays, critics will try to prevent audiences from seeing them. We will not tolerate seeing defective plays. People are not the artists' test subjects to experiment on. Under such circumstances, it is unlikely that any critic would be willing to collaborate with the Literary Board. Every time the Board puts on a poorly staged play, critics will try to prevent the audience from watching it. We shall not tolerate watching flawed theatrical performances. The public is not the artist's testing ground.*[11]

In general, the primary focus of the critics was based on textual analysis to encourage the evolution of modern Turkish theatre. Within this context, critiques could be categorised into two groups: 1. National plays are necessary for the advancement of Turkish theatre; however, the Literary Board is hampering the work of native playwrights. 2. It is true that Turkish theatre needs native plays to flourish, but playwrights do not know the technique of playwriting.

[9] İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, "Türkiye'nin Tiyatro Davası," *Hürses*, September 25, 1953.
[10] Muhsin Ertuğrul, "Çizmeden Yukarı," *Küçük Sahne Dergisi* 5, November, 1953, 81.
[11] Adnan Benk, "Bizde Tiyatro Yazarı Yoksa Bundan Edebi Heyet Mesuldür." *Dünya*, November 25, 1955.

Such criticisms gradually centred around the production quality of the subsidised theatres. Administrative organisations and various artistic boards and repertoires were being questioned by the critics. In the meantime, at the beginning of 1950s, de-centralisation of the State Theatres proposal; establishment of the Regional Theatres Statute proposal were put on the table by Mushin Ertuğrul. He evaluated the Regional Theatres as the fourth pillar of the theatre art and education. It was not implemented for various reasons. The main reason for the refusal of the legislation-draft was solely political. The disruptions in the functioning of subsidised theatres today as well as the centralist structure that is gradually making them cumbersome, are the result of the mentality that hindered the Legislation Draft in the past. Critics and artists of the time emphasised the structural difficulties of both the State and the Municipal Theatres, but substantial improvements did not occur.

Another focus of criticism in the 1950s and 1960s was on the actor and director. For many years, the director was the organiser of stage traffic, but from the 1950s on, the director came to be recognised as the interpreter of the artistic work. Similarly, criticisms directed towards performers and performances were precise, straightforward, and rather severe. Today, we do not come across such styles. Certainly, it is feasible to analyse this situation from many perspectives; the most important one being the lack of the necessary distance between the artists and the critics. Yet, it should also be underlined that there has always been an exception to the rule.

In the same year disputes regarding the aim and purpose of criticism had continuity. This is one of the more significant and vivid symptoms of the critical environment of that period. As an example; Nurullah Ataç formulated a definition for criticism as follows:

> *"What exactly is criticism?" Is this something we simply cannot do? In truth, we have no idea what criticism is... The real criticism is this... To analyse, to study. We cannot do this... Criticism is the examination of things created by other people.*[12]

Theatre audience was also a crucial subject of discussion. The importance of introducing theatre into schools beginning with primary education was strongly emphasised. The audience-theatre interaction was regarded as an important phenomenon in the cultural development of the society.

There is consistency in the criticisms published in journals and newspapers between the 1950s and 1970s. We can determine the press interest in theatre in those days by comparing it to the rather disappointing present-day situation. Because of such enthusiasm towards the theatre scene in the past, theatre criticism was also in effect. Discussions on the qualifications of the critic were an important issue. We can commemorate names like, İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, Nurullah Ataç, Sabri Esad Siyavuşgil, Metin And, Burhan Arpad, Refii Cevad Ulunay, Selami İzzet Sedes, Hasan Ali Ediz, İbrahim Hoyi, Özdemir Nutku, Nureddin Sevin, Vala Nureddin, Oktay Akbal, Tevfik Sadullah, Tarık Buğra, Vedat Nedim Tör, Adnan Benk, Lütfi Ay, Sunullah Arısoy, Melih Cevdet Anday, and Nurullah Berk during this period.

At the beginning of the 1960s, with the declaration of the 1961 Constitution, the concepts of democracy, human rights and personal liberties influenced the political functions and responsibilities of the theatre. Naturally, the artist's and critic's social perspectives gained importance as well. According to Nurullah Berk, a constructivist painter and lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul, a critic in general was an individual possessing the necessary understanding to evaluate the role of art within the context of historical and political developments:

[12] Nurullah Ataç, "Gene Eleştirme," *Son Havadis*, February 19, 1953. As cited in Asım Bezirci, *Nurullah Ataç: Yaşamı, Kişiliği, Eleştiri Anlayışı, Yazıları* (Istanbul: Varlık Yay., 1983), 102.

> *What is the most important characteristic of a critic? Is it only a matter of possessing refined aesthetic sensibilities, taking a certain stance and trying to distinguish between what is superior and what is not? In addition to the tremendous challenge of discussing the evolution of art within the context of history, a comprehensive understanding is needed for evaluating contemporary artistic trends and identifying the artists to be affiliated with them. Typically, those who engage in the discourse of art within our nation sometimes face constraints in their ability to devote sufficient time towards acquiring comprehensive knowledge in this domain. In contrast to the West, art criticism is not regarded as a distinct profession in our country.*[13]

The mission of theatre as a social and political power was established, and debates about "what kind of theatre?" dominated the agenda. The dynamic private theatres began to create their own audiences in the democratic atmosphere of the 1960s. In the meantime, theatre inflation was on its way. Yet, this freedom lasted until the mid-1970s. With the 1971 Military Memorandum, private groups besides facing censorship had to deal with economic crises.

Starting with the mid-1960s, most of the theatre critics insisted that the theatres should stop being a bourgeois entertainment and start meeting the needs of the working class; this was an ideological change in the theatre scene, which also sparked lengthy debates. Left-wing winds; although not strong enough, began to blow mostly on the stages of private theatres. Bourgeois theatre was being discussed by the socialist critics as a genre with no educational value aside from its entertaining a certain class of people. Such discussions highlighted the contrast between dramatic and epic theatre as well as the relationship between content and form. Theatre critic Günay Akarsu argued that the social context of theatre should integrate with the intellectual structure and aesthetics of the public, and the factor of "consciousness" should not be overlooked: "*In socialist theatre, the consciousness curve of the audience must be constantly raised.*"[14]

Akarsu evaluated the consciousness curve on two levels: audience and theatre company. Again, in those years, the relationship between theatre and society was under scrutiny and there were many heated discussions about the intersection of art and politics and art and propaganda. What was the artist's position? Critic Ayperi Akalan says:

> *It has been a long time since art has ceased to be a subject of aesthetics or beauty has ceased to be a subject of art... Accepting that art and artists can exist outside of politics is to ignore not only the realities of our time but also daily events.*[15]

On the other hand, critic Mehmet Fuat, emphasises the link between politics and propaganda as follows:

> *The artist I long for is an artist who has attained a world view and that puts thought at the forefront... Not someone apolitical, withdrawn, and isolated from the outside world... Artists tasked with disseminating politicians' "ready-made" truths are on the verge of becoming mechanical propaganda tools... Being "political" or "un-political" does not allow you to succeed in art. Because if this is one side of art, the other side is the artistic value.*[16]

While the relationship between theatre and society was being questioned, new questions emerged: "Should the value of a work of art be determined solely by current interests?", "Should a play that does

[13] Nurullah Berk, "Tenkit Ahlakımız," *Varlık*, August 15, 1959.
[14] Günay Akarsu, "Halk ve Tiyatrosu," Gelecek 2, June, 1971.
[15] Ayperi Akalan, "Sanat ve Politika İlişkisi," *Yön* 74, May, 1963.
[16] Memet Fuat, "Sanat Politika İlişkisi," *Yön* 75, May, 1963.

not focus on social problems but has high artistic value be performed in a country where imperialist powers chase rainbows?" or, "By ignoring artistic criteria, should theatre serve only an ideology?" Journals such as *Yön, Meydan, Türk Dili, Forum, Yeni Dergi, Oyun, Hisar, Tiyatro 70, Sanat Dergisi* and *Papirüs* served as a foundation for this healthy discussion forum.

Following the 1960s, a new generation of playwrights emerged. The search for new forms became more important during this period. While epic theatre was considered to be the basic element of the public's revolutionary ideals, dramatic theatre was thought to be the symbol of bourgeois ideals. Such debates, which included critics, theorists, artists, and playwrights, were crucial in determining the existence of a certain level of consciousness and knowledge. It should be noted that the 1960s were a dynamic period not only for theatre but also for criticism. From a broad perspective, the tendencies of the playwrights in this period can be divided into three categories: 1. Social structure and the status of the individual. 2. Mythology and the contemporary inquisitions. 3. Analysis of the effects of the feudal system in Anatolian villages.

Again, during those years, imitating the West was viewed as a multifaceted problem, with the synthesis of content and form being emphasised while questioning why we did not turn our faces towards our own resources rather than imitating the West. The notion that playwriting is a branch of literature that necessitates scientific research and investigation in addition to creativity has gained importance. Another issue that was constantly brought up was that instead of presenting social problems as a fantasy to the bourgeois audience of big cities, they should be encouraged to embrace and discuss the living facts. This was considered as the playwright's responsibility because art is a form of rebellion against society's corrupted values. The playwright's responsibility was constantly on the agenda in the 1960s and 1970s. Sevda Şener defends this point in her book *Problems of Morality, Economy, and Culture in Contemporary Turkish Theatre.*

Throughout these years, subsidised theatres faced heavy criticism. It was underlined that outdated mechanisms in these institutions, such as Literary Boards, needed to be replaced by dramaturgs. The main point of these criticisms was that subsidised theatres were not effectively functioning in producing politically controversial plays. In the meantime, those theatres needed to take a step forward to break free from the top-down management structure. During these years, subsidised theatres were denounced as political powerhouses. The ordinary plays and musicals that were staged at large scales were viewed as numbing plays that were disconnected from society.

Once again, the criticism of the audience stands out in this period. Inflation in the private theatre industry began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Theatres opening one after the other and/or emerging from each other caused debates about the quality and quantity. In these debates, the audience was addressed as both passive and active elements. On one hand, audiences were blamed for causing a theatre crisis, while on the other hand, theatres were blamed for driving audiences away. Another topic of discussion was the attitudes of the audience. While some avoided going to strongly political theatres, others supported both bourgeois-oriented and the political groups. Especially in the 1970s, the audience was portrayed as an oppressive force driven to corruption by social changes. It was emphasised that political theatre, which was built on solid foundations, needed to take the path of integrating with the audience. Günay Akarsu and Özdemir Nutku have noteworthy criticisms in this regard.

When viewed through the lens of criticism, theatre depression in this period, particularly beginning in the mid-1970s, has three major causes: 1. Imitation of the Western style productions. 2. Theatres falling behind the level of social development. 3. The treatment of the theatre phenomenon as a bourgeois art concept apart from dynamic progressive troupes.

On the other hand, one of the most important factors contributing to theatre depression was economics. Criticism directed at state aid was diverse. One group believed that it was the State's responsibility to support theatres, while the other group argued that such assistance would limit the freedom of private theatres.

To summarise, the years between 1960 and 1980 were a period in which both critics and artists questioned and examined concepts of nationality and universality, as well as concepts of socialist theatre, public theatre, populist theatre. It is a fact that changes in the socio-political structure and increased public awareness had a significant impact on the theatre. This shift marked a significant advancement in the critical approach as well. These years are known to be years of socialist art opposing the system. As it was emphasised that theatre should take its power from society, the idea of cultural imperialism negatively influencing art and the belief that society should gain cultural consciousness began to rise. The relationship between the theatre and the audience was highlighted as crucial to the theatre's ability to serve its social purpose. The audience was examined as the power that orients the theatre. If one pays close attention, one can see that between the 1950s and 1960s, the audience was considered an element of theatre that should be worked on, whereas between the 1960s and 1970s, it was emphasised that there is an organic bond between the audience and the theatre based on the idea that the audience of the future will create its own theatre.

In the 1970s, critics strongly condemned the pressure and censorship imposed on private theatre companies emphasising that such acts were symbols of fascist governments. In these years, apart from the names that came in previous decades, we can see names such as Günay Akarsu, Ayperi Akalan, Sevda Şener, Memet Fuat, Fikret Adil, Zeynep Oral, Hayati Asılyazıcı, Seçkin Cılızoğlu (Selvi), Dikmen Gürün, Ayşegül Yüksel, Ergun Sav, Ömer Atilla, Tahir Özçelik.

When we examine criticism from the 1980s to the present, we see that the picture that emerges does not have the same dynamics, colours, and vibes. The main reasons for this are coups, oppressive education, freedom restrictions, social turbulence, constantly rising economic imbalances, and deviations in the education system. Academic research in this area would be beneficial in various ways in the future.

The audience profile shifted in the 1980s. Values have changed. The transformation in social structure, the consumption economy, and the avoidance of questioning and examining shook the institution of criticism as well as other institutions. Today, only a few newspapers cover cultural and artistic events, let alone theatre criticism. This is also true for television channels. Art is on the verge of losing its meaning and purpose. Theatre criticism is inevitably congested in a degeneration-ridden environment. While value judgments deteriorate across the country, criticism is also in crisis.

Despite all these, the interaction of theatre and criticism is unavoidable. In recent years, our theatre has seen the rise of a new generation of artists who study, question and push the boundaries. Similarly, there is a young audience watching and discussing the progress... From this vantage point, young and deliberate critics would be the third leg of this integration. It should be noted that the Theatre Criticism and Dramaturgy Department, which was established in the Istanbul University Faculty of Arts and Literature in 1992, shows promising signs for the future by taking serious steps in this field.

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Chapter 6

# Metin And as a Ballet Critic

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## Abstract

This article focuses on the ballet criticism of And, who is primarily recognised as a well-known scholar and an eminent theatre and ballet critic in Türkiye. After providing a brief overview of Metin And's development into a critic, the article delves into the history of ballet in Türkiye. It then discusses the ballet criticism of Metin And, who received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation and studied ballet criticism in the USA. He started writing ballet critiques in 1954 for Forum magazine and continued this practise for 15 years, starting in 1957, in the Ulus newspaper. The reason for concentrating on his ballet criticism is that ballet was a newly developing art form in Türkiye during the fifties and And accompanied the developments in this art form. The aim of this article is to analyse the role of Metin And as a ballet critic and to explore the impact of his ballet criticism on the artistic and institutional development of ballet in Türkiye.

**Keywords** Metin And · ballet in Türkiye · Dame Ninette de Valois · criticism · Ulus

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## Metin And on the Way to Becoming a Ballet Critic

Metin And, who is the author of several books on various subjects such as the developments of the Turkish Theatre, the traditional miniature art and the origins of Turkish Theatre, also taught at the Theatre Department of Ankara University for many years. Despite his significant contributions as an intellectual and writer, he contributed extensively to Turkish cultural life with his articles about dramatic art appearing in various magazine and newspapers. Although his role as a critic has often overshadowed by his academic research, in this paper I would like to direct attention to his critical work.

This paper aims to analyse Metin And's identity as a critic, exploring the articles he wrote on ballet during a time when ballet was a newly developing art form in Türkiye. Despite his prominence as a scholar and educator, And's critical contributions, particularly in the field of ballet, will be examined to shed light on this aspect of his multifaceted career.

According to Meriç Sümen Kanan, one of the most important representatives of classical ballet in Türkiye, Metin And played a crucial role in the foundation of Turkish ballet. In her tribute to Metin And, Kanan expresses his contributions to the art of ballet in the following words:

> *Metin And was a precious guide in the foundation and development of the Turkish ballet, and he followed us for years and supervised us with his comments. One day, when I first started to perform in the ballet Giselle, he insisted on me performing in the first and second acts differently. I think in my third performance, he was sitting in the front row. When I bowed, I looked into his eyes to determine if I fulfilled his expectations; he looked at me with a very sweet smile.*[1]

Meriç Sümen Kanan's remarks about And reveal that he watched the same ballet performance many times and tried to contribute to the improvement of the stage performances by giving direct feedback to the artists. However, Metin And was not only a passionate member of the audience who gave verbal feedback, but he also published permanent critical articles in the fortnightly magazine Forum and for fifteen years in his column "Sahne" in the newspaper Ulus. In this context, it will also be analysed how Metin And, as a ballet critic, tried to direct the development of ballet art in Türkiye through his writings between 1954 and 1970. To understand the essence of his passionate interest in ballet, I want to take a look at his biography briefly.

Born on June 17, 1927, in Istanbul, Metin And was the son of a bank manager who had a deep appreciation for traditional Turkish art music and frequently hosted fasıl nights at home. However, And did not share his father's enthusiasm for this kind of music, and instead encouraged him to explore Western music. In response, And began to take piano lessons twice a week at the Istanbul Municipal Conservatory for a decade. He also received music analysis lessons from Cemal Reşit Rey and briefly played the piano in the school jazz band. Upon completing his studies at Galatasaray High School, he concluded that he lacked the natural talent to become a professional pianist, despite his dedicated efforts to deepen his understanding of Western music. He then decided to pursue further education in London, where he enrolled in a master's degree programme in law. It was during his time in London that And's interest in performing arts beyond classical music truly blossomed. Despite the difficulties of the post-war era, And was captivated by the lively cultural and artistic scene in the city. According to the book "Metin And'a Armağan" (A Tribute to Metin And), which features detailed interviews, Ands's transformative journey can be traced back to the Festival of Britain held in London in 1951.

[1] Meriç Kanan Sümen, *Metin And'a Armağan*, ed. M. Sabri Koz, (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Kültür Yayıncılık A.Ş., 2007), 188.

> *Even today, there is not that much art activity in England. It was marvellous. I went to all of them. I went to the galleries and everything. I went to everything. For example, for four weeks they did 18 one-act plays by Bernard Shaw. In the old Monte Carlo ballet, Leonide Massine danced alone. Unbelievable. Then there were people from Asia. There were Balinese dancers. So I dove into them. I said, "I found what I was looking for". It was more opera and ballet than theatre.*[2]

After his immersive experience watching ballet performances in London, he decided to abandon his law studies. He returned home in 1953 without completing his studies. Embracing his passion for the performing arts, he delved into the vibrant artistic scene of Ankara, which was highly active during those years. While working as a manager at his adopted uncle's winery, And began to follow and document Ankara's artistic life. In an interview with Füruzan, And mentioned that he reunited in 1954 with friends he had met in England, including Bülent Ecevit, Turan Güneş, Sadun Aren, and Bedii Feyzoğlu. Together, they initiated the publication of a bi-monthly magazine similar to the one they had worked on abroad.[3] To understand Metin And's role as a critic and the mission he embraced for his country through his writings, it is essential to closely examine the media platforms where he published his works.

Apart from the above-mentioned names, the core of the magazine was formed by a staff consisting mostly of faculty members from the Ankara University Faculty of Political Sciences and Faculty of Law (Bahri Savcı, Osman Okyar, Aydın Yalçın, Turhan Feyzioğlu, Nilüfer Yalçın, Kemal Salih and Nejat Tunçsiper). Forum, which was published every 15 days and defined itself as an impartial political, economic and cultural magazine, aimed to create a free arena of opinion.[4] According to Diren Çakmak, a political scientist who analysed the 1954-1960 period of Forum Magazine:

> *Forum Magazine, which was launched on 1 April 1954, was published twice a month and was an exceptional example of academic journalism, arguing that Türkiye's place in the West-East polarisation was in the Western bloc. The reason why the journal is characterised as exceptional is that the views it defended and the proposals it presented were put into practise. The proposed solutions to the political, economic and social problems of the country in the articles in the 1954-1960 issues of the journal were the source of the design of Türkiye envisaged by the 1961 Constitution. Therefore, it is thought that the journal had an impact on the functioning of Türkiye's political, economic and social system in the 1960s and 1970s, when the 1961 Constitutional system was dominant.*[5]

Çakmak emphasises the strong connection between the writers of the magazine labelled as 'Forumcu' and a system of thought inspired by the institutionalisation of democracy.[6]

The intellectual foundation of Forum magazine and some of its writers also played an active role in the Constitution adopted after the 1960 coup d'état. Türkiye's NATO membership in 1952 supported these developments, because the NATO membership brought Türkiye again into closer association with democratic values. An important role in this context was played by U.S. Foundations like the Rockefeller Foundation, which not only provided economic and technical assistance but also contributed to the development of humanities. According to David Stevens, an influential staff member of the General Education Board (GEB) and Rockefeller Foundation's (RF) Division of the Humanities, only through the

[2] Metin And, "Sınırsız Bir Merakla Oyuna Adanmış...", interview by Serhan Ada, *Metin And'a Armağan*, ed. M. Sabri Koz, (İstanbul, Yapı Kredi Kültür Yayıncılık A.Ş., 2007), 99.
[3] Metin And, "Bize Özgü Bir Rönesans Adamı: Metin And", interview by Füruzan, *Metin And'a Armağan*, ed. M. Sabri Koz, (İstanbul, Yapı Kredi Kültür Yayıncılık A.Ş., 2007), 68.
[4] Hasan Hüseyin Akkaş, "Forum Dergisi'nin Öne Çıkmış Temel, Entelektüellerinin Türkiye'nin Siyasal ve Kültürel Sorunlarına Yaklaşım Biçimleri (1954-1957)", (PhD diss., Ankara University, 2004), 1.
[5] Diren Çakmak, "Forum Dergisi 1954-60" (PhD diss., Ankara University, 2007), 1.
[6] Çakmak, "Forum Dergisi", 5.

humanities is it possible to create a new, i.e., better type of human being and to contribute to a better intercultural understanding between peoples.[7] In connection with Metin And, it should be emphasised that the Rockefeller Foundation, which awarded grants to successful or promising individuals in the fields of social sciences and art, decided to grant him an award for his contributions to the magazine Forum.

> *One day I got a call from the American Embassy. They said, 'The cultural director of the Rockefeller Foundation wants to meet you'. I went and looked and there was Bulent Ecevit. I said, "What's up?" He said, "John Marshall called me, he wants to talk to me about something." When it was my turn, I went in and there was a very polite and very cultured man. He knows Türkiye like the back of his hand. "We have translated your articles on ballet published in the Forum and elsewhere. After reading them, we decided to give you a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.*[8]

In the autumn of the same year, Metin And went to New York on a Rockefeller scholarship and was expected to see only theatre, ballet and opera performances. The foundation officials introduced And to three critics from the New York Times and the Harald Tribune and asked him to learn how newspaper criticism was conducted. However, And found the reviews written immediately after the performance in order to be printed too superficial and too commercial as they directly affected the success of the performances. During his stay in the USA, in addition to classical ballet performances, he watched contemporary dancers such as Martha Graham, observed educational institutions and conducted extensive research in the library. After his return to Türkiye, Metin And, upon the call of Bülent Ecevit, began to write ballet and theatre criticism in his weekly column "Sahne" in the Ulus newspaper.

A brief look at the history of the Ulus newspaper reveals its social mission very clearly. On 10 January 1920, the newspaper published its first issue under the name Hakimiyet Milliye and started its publishing life as the spokesperson of the National Struggle. From 28 November 1934 onwards, the newspaper was renamed Ulus, and in the following years it continued its existence as the spokesperson of the CHP's single party era. In 1953, the newspaper was closed down by the Democrat Party and all its properties were transferred to the treasury, but the newspaper was able to resume publication only two years later, in 1955.[9] He defines himself as an intellectual rather than a person with a political mission. According to the author, who wrote various articles on the requirements of being an intellectual in Forum magazine, the main characteristic of intellectuals is that they are independent and do not belong to any class. An intellectual is a person who can criticise himself/herself, is heterogeneous and produces original solutions to problems. These people, who act with the consciousness of being an intellectual rather than a class consciousness, are connected to a higher culture that criticises mass culture and aims to transform it. In addition, intellectuals are those who question and lead developments.[10] Based on Metin And's definition of the intellectual, his mission as a critic comes to light.

[7] David Stevens, *A Time of Humanities: An Oral History: Recollections of David H. Stevens as Director in the Division of the Humanities, Rockefeller Foundation, 1930-50* (Madison: Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, 1976), 21.
[8] Metin And, interview.
[9] https://dspace.ankara.edu.tr/xmlui/handle/20.500.12575/1133, Accessed: 23.07.2023
[10] Akkaş, "Forum Dergisi'nin Öne Çıkmış Temel, Entelektüellerinin Türkiye'nin Siyasal ve Kültürel Sorunlarına Yaklaşım Biçimleri (1954-1957)", 5.

## Ballet in Türkiye

Like theatre and opera, the first encounter with ballet occurs in the entertainment culture of the palace during the Ottoman period. It is recorded that a mime-ballet was performed during an entertainment organised on occasions such as weddings, circumcision and births, which lasted for days. According to Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's research titled "History of the Ottoman Empire" (Geschichte des Osmanischen Reichs), a mime-ballet titled "Aya Yorgi's Fight with the Dragon" was performed on 14 June 1582 at the circumcision feast organised by Murat III in Istanbul's Horse Square.[11] The first ballet performance in Istanbul is organised by Italians in the house of the Venetian ambassador in 1524. Metin And states that this ballet, which goes down in history as a drama with music (Dramma per Musica), cannot be compared with the examples of today.[12] The first examples of ballet, which are closer to the present day, emerged when Guiseppe Donizetti was invited to the country. Arriving in Istanbul in 1828, Donizetti invited ballet instructors from his country and began working in Abdülmecit's palace under the name "Ehl-i Fenn-ü Ma'rifet Kız Fanfarı ve Ballet Hey'et". In these studies conducted in the Harem, tall girls take on male roles, and the title of "head ballet dancer" enters the literature as "girl sergeant".[13] Refik Ahmet Sevengil describes this development in his work "Our First Contacts with Opera Art" as follows:

> *Italian teachers were hired separately to teach different instruments under the direction of Donizetti, and there were also masters who were engaged in dance lessons in the palace. To ensure that the music part of the performances to be given in the Harem by the Girls' Ballet Committee would be performed by girls, in other words to prevent male musicians from entering the Harem, this women's fanfare was organised.*[14]

From 1860 onwards, it is documented by Refik Ahmet Sevengil that various troupes called from Italy performed ballet shows at the Beyoğlu Theatre, also known as the Italian Theatre. Sevengil simplifies the definition of ballet made in this period as follows: "Ballet is performed entirely with raks. "*Although it is like a kind of pantomime, the dancers' body delicacy, gentleness and sweetness of movement are required to give pleasure and flavour to those who see it. Although the lower classes of people in Europe do not like this dance, the polite people like it very much.*"[15]

As in Europe, ballet in the Ottoman Empire was an art form that was only of interest to the court; this changed with the founding of the republic.

Believing that Western standards should be reached in the arts as in every field, Atatürk ensured that the foundation of the Ankara State Conservatory was laid in 1936. However, while Paul Hindemith laid the foundations of music education and Carl Ebert, both were invited from Germany, laid the foundations of theatre and opera education, ballet education could not be started yet. Although Ebert designed a three-term ballet school for ballet, ballet education must wait until 1947 due to the lack of instructors. The Turkish government invited Ninette de Valois, one of the directors of the British Royal Ballet, to investigate whether a ballet school could be established in the country. Metin And stated that he heard directly from Muhsin Ertuğrul about this development.

[11] Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, trans. Mehmet Ata, (Istanbul: Nefaset Matbaası, 1916). Cited by Jak Deleon, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Türk Balesi*, (Istanbul: Dönemli Yayıncılık, 1988), 18.
[12] Metin And, *Türkiye'de İtalyan Sahnesi, İtalyan Sahnesinde Türkler*, (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1989) 7.
[13] Jak Deleon, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Türk Balesi*, (Istanbul: Dönemli Yayıncılık, 1988), 21.
[14] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Opera Sanatı İle İlk Temaslarımız, Cilt II*, (Istanbul: Maarif Basımevi, 1959), 60. Cited by Deleon, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Türk Balesi*, 21.
[15] Sevengil, *Opera Sanatı İle İlk Temaslarımız, Cilt II*. 22. Cited by Deleon, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Türk Balesi*, 23.

> *Muhsin Ertuğrul was convinced that it was time to start ballet in Türkiye. In London, he met the priest of a cliché near the Old Vic theatre, who knew Dame Ninette de Valois well, and through him he asked if he could come to Türkiye to start the national ballet in Türkiye. When he received a positive reply in a letter from Dame Ninette de Valois, our government officially invited her to Türkiye.*[16]

Valois visits primary schools in Ankara and Istanbul for three weeks, examining children who might be suitable for ballet, and writes in a detailed report that a ballet school could be established, but that it would require a great deal of effort. With her initiative, Joy Newton and Audrey Knight, two instructors from the Royal Ballet of England, come to Istanbul to work in a ballet school to be established in a primary school in Yeşilköy. In the first stage, the instructors visited primary schools, selected 17 girls and 11 boys and started training on 6 January 1948. During this period, some students gave their first performances, and after three years of training, they moved to Ankara. This school, which has no official recognition, is affiliated with the Ankara State Conservatory. In 1956, the ballet department gave its first graduates and they took the stage in opera and theatre performances, which were gathered under the same roof under the name of State Theatre, Opera and Ballet.

Dame Ninette de Valois, the founding figure of ballet education in Türkiye, is the main point of Metin And's belief in and support for Turkish ballet. Founded in 1931 by Valois, the Royal Ballet of England soon became the largest of England's five major ballet companies, and in 1946 became the resident ballet company at the Royal Opera House and was granted a royal charter.[17] The fact that Valois, who was at the head of a world-class ballet in a short period of time, surpassing countries with a very strong ballet tradition such as Italy, the birthplace of ballet, or Russia, was devoted to Türkiye and continued her support both remotely and by visiting the country many times after she founded the ballet school, led And to have high hopes for Turkish ballet. On 19 May 1958, he wrote a review titled "A Glimmer of Hope: Turkish Ballet" on 19 May 1958, after evaluating the two dancers brought from England and the young local ballerinas and ballet dancers accompanying them, Metin And brings up Dame Ninette de Valois:

> *Those who see the curiosity and interest of this great creative woman, who has accomplished three centuries' worth of work in a quarter of a century, in Türkiye only from a political point of view, such as helping to develop the Turkish-English bond of friendship, are deceived. I say to them that if Dame de Ninette de Valois had not believed in the creativity and talent of Turkish children and had not seen it clearly, she would not have laid a finger on it.*[18]

In the polarised world after the Second World War, Türkiye, which had chosen the side of the West, approached the Anglo-Saxon world not only politically but also culturally. In 1951, the establishment of non-governmental organisations such as the Turkish-British Cultural Association or the Turkish-American Association and the frequent visits of artists from other countries to Türkiye can be considered as concrete reflections of this rapprochement. In the continuation of the above article, And states that the two performances that took place on the occasion of the cultural week celebrated by the British Cultural Delegation and the Turkish-British Association, in which British dancers participated, taught Turkish audiences great truths. "*First, we have seen what good results well-managed talents can produce in a short time. More importantly, if the work was kept tight, a Turkish National Ballet at a much*

[16] Metin And, "Dame Ninette de Valois", *Ulus*, February 25, 1967.
[17] "Kraliyet Balesi", Wikipedia, accessed June 20, 2023, https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kraliyet_Balesi.
[18] Metin And, "Bir Umut Işığı: Türk Balesi", *Ulus*, May 19, 1958.

*higher level than the Turkish National Theatre and the Turkish National Opera could be achieved, this is two."*[19]

Metin And does not see classical ballet as a goal to be reached, but as a stepping stone to Turkish stage dance. In this context, he gives the example of America, which has no stage dance tradition and has long been alienated from classical ballet. According to And, the New York City Ballet is a perfect example of a ballet that started from classical ballet and adapted it to its own national colours and style. The benefit of starting late is that they have developed not only a more original and contemporary approach to traditional ballet but another unique form such as modern dance. In a series of articles on ballet published in Kim magazine, And:

> *For 400 years, this stage dance has passed through various stages of experimentation in Europe and has been able to create a universal language based on solid logic and foundations that will attract the attention of the audience. First and foremost, we will use it as a tool to give direction to the body and its movements. Just as in architecture, we need to know material, structure and function; in music, we should know harmony and counterpoint*[20]

For Metin And, a well-trained national ballet company is a cultural ambassador that can promote and glorify the country abroad. However, to reach this level, the quality of ballet education is of great importance. For this reason, an issue And emphasised strongly in his writings was the quality of the education provided at the State Conservatory. According to And, the two teachers that Dame Ninette de Valois, whom he praised for her contributions to Turkish ballet, unknowingly put in charge of ballet education in Türkiye, constitute the biggest obstacle to the desired development of ballet. Writing on 18 November 1965 in the Ulus newspaper, he complains that the same two English teachers had been in charge of ballet education for ten years. Although nine classes and tens of ballet students are not enough, the critic thinks that the real problem is that these two teachers have turned the conservatory into a professional stage. According to And, the conservatoire, which gives performances every week instead of once a year like everywhere else in the world, disrupts its main job, which is education. In addition, the critic points out that this situation creates great dangers for dancers who are still in training and are forced constantly to perform on the stage. Stating that dancers who are forced to constantly go on stage before they have fully learnt the basic positions are often injured, And's anger towards the teachers overflows from the lines of many of his articles.

> *However, the most important thing is that dancers are inevitably forced to be extroverted, which is lacking in the basic structure, and this injures our young dancers. The dancers' legs, which mean everything to them, are in danger. As a matter of fact, what I feared happened was that one of our best male dancers, Sait Sökmen, who appeared a lot in these ballets, injured his leg in these struggles and may not be able to perform for a long time. … The first thing to be done is to immediately stop the classes of the Conservatory teachers in question and leave the teaching of the classes to the teachers and dancers of the State Theatre for the time being until new teachers come from outside.*[21]

Metin And not only closely follows the development of ballet students and warns the authorities, but also does not hesitate to repeat what he sees as wrong many times.

Another issue that And frequently mentioned and warned about in his writings was the draft law that would elevate the State Conservatory to the level of a university and allow professors to be given the title of professor "overnight". And argued that although many of them were valuable artists, having

[19] Metin And, "Bir Umut Işığı: Türk Balesi".
[20] Metin And, "Türk Balesine Doğru III", *KIM*, June 20, 1958.
[21] Metin And, "Devlet Konservatuarı", *Ulus*, November 18, 1965.

taught for years was not enough to become a professor, and that this would be unfair to other faculty members who were working hard to become professors. "*perhaps the AP government accepts this bill in good faith and without any ulterior motives. Let it do so, this will neither be the first nor the last of such crooked and wrong things to happen in our country. It is on us to say, to warn.*"[22] According to Metin And, the future of the Conservatoire, which employs young and talented teachers with very low wages, does not look bright.

Criticisms about the institutional structures of the State Theatre, Opera and Ballet are also among the issues that frequently appear in Metin And's writing. Metin And insistently opposed the demand that the State Theatre, Opera and Ballet, which had been gathered under the roof of a single general director in the early sixties, should now be separated from each other and that a general director who understood the business should be appointed to head each department and argues:

> *Actually, let us look at the place where the voice that says they should be separated comes from. Is this voice really looking for a solution to a problem, or is it really after something else? Those who want this separation want a general directorate for each department. Of course, each general directorate will have a separate organisation, assistants and a pile of pencil masters. In other words, they will create new expenses for a poor country out of nothing. But once these general directorates are set up, will things work out? As I said above, opera and ballet really need a head, but not yet from us, but from outside.*[23]

The author reminds us that a report prepared by the Theatre and Opera Committee, which convened after the coup d'état of May 27, 1960, which he calls the second revolution, and which was published in 1961, contains suggestions that would bring a solution to this issue. Although he emphasises the importance of the three being under the same directorate, Metin And states that opera and ballet should have autonomous structures under this roof. According to this report, ballet, whose social duties are to entertain the public—to educate the public—to develop national talents in the best way possible and to create works based on the national characteristics of the country[24], does not have such independence. In 1963, the critic stated that the State Theatre, Opera and Ballet should remain under a single roof, but only three years later he argued that these three departments should be completely separated from each other.

> *What will be the end of it? Of course, operas will pile up on top of each other, ballet performances will be disrupted because our ballet is always a crutch for the opera, and one day there will be no ballet performances at all. Like compound vessels, opera will eventually reduce ballet to its own level. This has already happened. The opera could not put on an additional performance for the 'Swans Ballet', which is popular with the public and for which people line up at midnight to get tickets. However, a daytime performance could be organised especially for our children audience who will be the audience of tomorrow. This was done for "Coppelia" and "Sleeping Beauty". ... But who would think of ballet when they are preparing one opera after another?*[25]

In the same article, Metin And, an unconditional defender of ballet, argues that the ballet deserves the orchestra and the stage more than opera because it gives better performances than opera, that dancers, who are forced to work under unfavourable conditions, do not deserve to be treated as stepchildren and that ballet should be separated from opera for this reason. He also proposes a solution by suggesting that Dame Ninette de Valois, or a British director to be nominated by her, should

[22] Metin And, "Devlet Konservatuarı Kanunu-Konuk Bale Topluluğu", *Ulus*, November 27, 1967.
[23] Metin And, "Operamız tiyatromuzdan niye ayrılamaz?", *Ulus*, September 26, 1963.
[24] Metin And, "Bir Konferansın Düşündürdükleri", *Ulus*, December 19, 1963
[25] Metin And, "Balemiz operamıza koltuk değnekliği edemez", *Ulus*, January 29, 1966.

be appointed as the head of the ballet, which was turned into an independent General Directorate. For Metin And, who sees the biggest obstacles in the development of the ballet in Türkiye not only in the deficiencies in education but also in the institutional structure of the State Opera and Ballet, the most important problem is the lack of local choreographers and managers who really understand ballet.

> *But the most important thing is the training of the Turkish choreographers. However, these are not the kind of people who can be trained on a whim like the others. A choreographer is the most difficult to train among art creators and the most rarely encountered. Even in countries where ballet is the most advanced, the number of choreographers can be counted on the fingers. Just as we cannot talk about the existence of a national theatre without a local playwright who feeds our theatres with his works, we cannot claim that we have a national ballet without local choreographers.*[26]

Metin And states that in order to train choreographers in Türkiye, people with talent and enthusiasm in the State Opera and Ballet should be sent abroad and a space should be created for them to make small experiments.[27] In his article written in 1967 on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Ninette de Valois's first visit to the country, Metin And reminds us that the first examples of national ballet were given by Valois, whom he calls the "guardian angel" of ballet, as there were no choreographers in the country.[28] Until this first Turkish ballet, "Çeşmebaşı", a complete work, apart from the pieces staged at the conservatory, was first staged in 1961, 13 years after the official establishment of ballet. In order to stage a complete ballet from beginning to end, not only sufficient dancers had to be trained, but they also had to have reached a certain level of maturity. Stating that "Coppelia", the first ballet to be staged as a whole, fit the young company like a glove, And attributes the success achieved by the dancers to Dame Ninette de Valois, even though it may have seemed unreal to many like a fairy tale. "*This was reality itself, and in order to reach this reality, the willpower and unbending faith of a creative woman who had the foresight to see ahead, combined with the talents of the young Turkish artists, and the bonds of knowledge, labour and order joined hands, and this incredible result was achieved.*"[29]

"Coppelia", the first complete performance, was followed four years later by "Çeşmebaşı", which Metin And described as the first Turkish ballet. While the debates on the characteristics of a national theatre were raging in the country, And also expressed his demands on the characteristics of a national ballet. Upon the critic's suggestion and with his support, "Çeşmebaşı", choreographed by Dame Ninette de Valois, was staged in 1965.

> *"Çeşmebaşı" was a very appropriate example for the question of the place and role of peasant dances and equipment in classical ballet choreography. In this ballet, Dame Ninette de Valois utilised the steps of our peasant dances, but you can never say that this or that is our peasant dance, it is simply absorbed into the purpose and atmosphere of the work Stripping 'Çeşmebaşı' from the circumstances and occasions of its preparation, we cannot say that it is a successful ballet, despite the enthusiastic applause of the audience on the first night. However, who knows when a Turkish choreographer will emerge. For the ballet repertoire of our young troupe, which was now successfully performing all kinds of works, a ballet with a Turkish flavour had to be found. Dame Ninette de Valois, who ran to every problem of our ballet, showed a sacrifice here too. But again she felt obliged to take the first step.*[30]

[26] Metin And, "Bale İşleri ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı", *Ulus*, July 18, 1963.
[27] Metin And, "Bale Opera'dan ergeç ayrılacaktır", *Ulus*, November 30, 1966.
[28] Metin And,, "Dame Ninette de Valois".
[29] Metin And, "Coppelia", *Ulus*, February 2, 1961.
[30] Metin And, "'Çeşmebaşı' İlk Türk Balesi", Ulus, February 25, 1965.

According to Metin And, "Çeşmebaşı", which Valois prepared on Ferit Tüzün's "Anatolian Suite" for orchestra, is a Turkish ballet even though its choreographer is not Turkish, because the music, costumes, décor, dancers and all the elements on which the dance and choreography are based are Turkish. In other words, And states that those who argue that the characteristics that make a ballet national are folk dances are mistaken, and points out that ballerinas and ballet dancers would not dance the horon because then they would be part of a folk dance ensemble that is different from ballet.

In the sixties, while there were discussions on how to make use of traditional forms in theatre and writers such as Haldun Taner and Sermet Çağan made various experiments in this direction, the issue of making use of traditional peasant dances in ballet came to the fore. As can be understood from the quotation above, Metin And's attitude on this issue is clear. He expressed that he looks forward to the festivals organised every year in Istanbul by the Turkish Folk Dances Preservation and Dissemination Facility chaired by Vedat Nedim Tör, and found it very valuable as it brings Anatolia to the feet of Istanbul.[31] However, the critic states that a folk dance troupe should be established as he believes that folk dances have a much higher potential. In his article dated December 26, 1964, And writes that this ensemble should be completely different from ballet. Metin And gives the example of classical ballet companies in Russia such as Bolshoi or Kirov, and folk dance companies such as Moisiyev or Bartozka. He also has concrete suggestions on how to achieve this.

> *Among the dancers who excel in folk dance festivals and who are good on the stage, those who wish to become professionals will be selected from different regions in a mixed group, and if necessary, young men and women who have the aptitude for this work will be selected from the physical, education and music departments of the Gazi Institute, our ballet and other places. They will be given a salary. In order to soften and train their bodies, the dancers of our ballet will give them lessons. In order to get them accustomed to the theatre and the stage, they will receive stage lessons from our theatre people, and since their work is all about music, they will also receive musical training. In the first stage, they will be able to dance the dances of all regions without disturbing their styles and lines. For this purpose, they will either go to the villages of local dancers, stay there for a while and learn on the spot, or local dancers will come and stay where they are. Peasant dances cannot be learned in an hour or two; what can be learned in an hour or two are the sketched steps and movements of the dance. The important thing is to be able to perform the dance in its own style, and this can only be achieved by getting to know the locals. This stage is the beginning of the work, i.e., the ability of our community to perform folk dances or sing folk songs together. After this comes the creative stage, that is, the adaptation of the dances to the stage, in other words, the work of the choreographer*[32]

Metin And's proposal, which he had carried in his column in the Ulus newspaper in 1964, was realised only eleven years later, in 1975. With the initiative of the then Ministry of Tourism and Promotion, the State Folk Dance Ensemble was officially established on March 17, 1975, after a long period of preparation.

In the second half of the sixties, the Ankara State Opera Ballet staged the ballets Swans Lake and Sylvia, in addition to short pieces. In his criticism of the stagings, Metin And, after briefly introducing the work, states the importance of these pieces in the staging of these works and mentions their difference from the works staged in the past. Then And discusses in detail what he sees on the stage. In addition to the music, choreography and décor, he mentions the individual dancers and evaluates their positive or negative developments. And's criticisms are not only aimed at the reader. He tries to contribute to the

[31] Metin And, "6. Halk Oyunları Bayramı," *Ulus*, July 12, 1962.
[32] Metin And, "Bir Köylü Dansları topluluğu kuralım", *Ulus*, December 26, 1964.

development of the art of ballet by giving all kinds of positive and negative feedback on the dancers' training, their opportunities to perform on stage and their performances on stage. In order for ballet, which had reached a certain level in a very short time with the efforts and support of Dame Ninette de Valois, to reach a much better level, And not only open-heartedly, but also persistently and repeatedly mentions every issue he deems problematic in his writings. In this respect, it is possible to say that Metin And is similar to Nurullah Ataç, whom he respected very much as a critic. Metin And, who states that Ataç made a significant contribution to raising the appreciation of the theatre in his time because he was a critic who constantly announced his presence in our world of art and literature, nudged it, and gave it a proper order, tries to do the same in ballet for both the audience and the practitioners.[33]

Until 1969, Metin And continued to write critical articles in his regular column "Sahne" (Stage) in the Ulus newspaper. Although a few articles were published in the State Opera and Ballet magazine in the early seventies, his interest shifted to other subjects. The fact that the problems in ballet education and the institutional structure could not be solved and that the ballet could not be separated from opera despite his repeated criticisms might have led And to believe that he could not further develop ballet in Türkiye with his criticisms. As an intellectual of the Republic, And, who regarded criticism as a phenomenon of crisis, and crisis can thus be experienced as a turning point that will bring about a decision. This shook the belief in influencing decision-makers with his criticism. The current situation shows this clearly. Many problems expressed by Metin And in his ballet criticism adventure continue fifty years later. Although there are tens of private ballet courses in Türkiye, only five universities offer ballet education. Opera and ballet continue to be under the same roof. These facts make it easy to see how far-sighted Metin And was.

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[33] Metin And, *Ataç Tiyatroda*, (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1982).

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Chapter 7

# Official Regulations on School Plays in the Early Republican Period

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## Abstract

This study examines the arrangements of school plays within the context of the education system. These arrangements were regarded by the founding cadres of the Turkish Republic as a pivotal instrument in the nation-building process, and, thus, attributed great importance. The primary sources of the study are the reports prepared by the authorities, relevant Regulations and articles published on the regulation of school plays. The leading methodologies of educational scientists who identified the pedagogical potential of school plays will be examined under the lights of the aforementioned documents. In parallel with the social and political atmosphere of the period, the legal regulations of the early Republican period raise a number of issues, including those related to the content of performances, the duration of their staging, methods of staging, and the choice of repertoire. In this context, this study considers how school plays were constructed as an ideological field, beyond their function of fostering appreciation for art in children and serving as an auxiliary tool in education.

**Keywords** school plays · education · theatre · Early Republican Era · müsamere

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The first comprehensive study on the quality and importance of the plays staged in schools is the regulation titled "Mektep Temsillerinin[1] Usul-ü Tedrisi", prepared by İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu in 1915.[2] This regulation, published by the Maarif-i Umumiyye Nezareti,[3] is the first of its kind and significantly impacted school performance development during the Early Republican Period. The first part of the programme, published in two parts, definitively addresses the relationship between theatre and education and training. The section begins with a clear definition of school plays. It then provides detailed information on the types of plays, their educational benefits, children's instinctive behaviours and their relationship with theatre, their effects on physical development, their impact on language and speech, and their emotional and social functions. All these titles have one thing in common: they aim to awaken feelings of nationality and homeland and to serve the educational policies that aim to develop around national morality and national ideals. The "genres" listed by İsmayıl Hakkı under the heading of types of school plays are of particular note in this context.

1. *Historical performances. These are famous past events from Ottoman history, which are useful to be performed and repeated in terms of moral sense and patriotism.*
2. *Dramas. Pieces such as Abdülhak Hamid's Eşber, Kemal Bey's Vatan, Tevfik Fikret's Verin Zavallılara (Give it to the poor people), which have exciting and effective plots and are considered to be of great patriotic, literary and national interest for children.*
3. *Moral and educational ceremonies and rituals, such as school festivals, school festivities, the implementation of which will create feelings of joy and happiness, hope and goal, nationality and homeland.*[4]

The categorisation is not based on a genre or thematic foundation. Rather, it is an attempt to delineate different contexts within which discussions of love for homeland and national interests can be situated. Indeed, in the section on the educational effects of school plays, Baltacıoğlu emphasises the function of school plays in reminding forgotten historical events and personalities. He states that "*these plays have a provocative task in perceiving geography and historical events in a clearer and more detailed way.*"[5] The evaluation under the heading of emotional impact aims to ensure that the learned history and remembered heroism trigger an emotional transformation. This transformation will undoubtedly manifest as a transformation in which national feelings are revealed. This emotion and excitement can only find expression in a collective structure.

Consequently, we encounter another element that İsmayıl Hakkı attached significant importance to, namely the function of plays. Plays also create an environment that makes it possible to act and work together.

[1] Translating the terminology of this study was a significant challenge, as two major concepts appeared frequently: temsil and müsamere. Baltacıoğlu frequently refers to the word 'temsil' in his works. Since this word is polysemic, finding a singular equivalent in English was not possible. According to the Turkish Language Association (Türk Dil Kurumu), temsil refers to the following as a theatre term. a) work of art, piece, or play written to be performed on stage or broadcast on the radio. b) presenting a play in front of an audience at the theater, a show. c) playing a work on stage. As it can be seen, 'temsil' sometimes refers to the play or piece itself, to the performance, or even the act of playing; in other words, acting. This multilayered meaning of the word is used in this study, sometimes as play (school plays), performance, or acting.

[2] Before this regulation, which is the first legal regulation, an unsigned article titled "*Mekteplerde Tarihi Temsiller ve Terbiye*" (Historical Plays in Schools and Education) published in 1913 in volume 1, issue 8 of the journal Talebe Defteri is important in terms of bringing theatre activities and their benefits to the agenda. Both the pedagogical tone of the article and the examples of historical performances at the Fındıklı Şemsülmekatip School are important clues that this article belongs to İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, one of the regular writers of the magazine. See. "Mekteplerde Tarihi Temsiller ve Terbiye", *Talebe Defteri* 1, no. 8, 1913.

[3] With the belief that the future of the state and the nation would be realised through the improvement of education, İsmayıl Hakkı tried to apply the knowledge and experience he acquired abroad at every opportunity. Therefore, he prepared similar programmes not only in theatre but also in painting and geography.

[4] İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, Tiyatro Nedir? (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 2006), 99.

[5] Baltacıoğlu, *Tiyatro Nedir?*, 102.

The initial section of the Regulation is primarily concerned with delineating the scope and purpose of the document. The second part presents a series of recommendations for implementation. In this section, entitled "Methods of Implementation of Plays", the primary emphasis is on the choice of subject matter. As indicated in the preceding section, the subject matter is diversified around historical events and heroism, in accordance with the scope and objectives set out in the first part. It is recommended that history books and similar sources be utilised. However, it should be noted that not every historical event can become the subject matter of a history plays. Furthermore, it is highlighted that a selection process should be made among historical events.

The following section, entitled "How Should Moral and Patriotic Plays Be?", posits that history books and narratives of national heroes can be utilised as a basis for selecting the subject matter of the plays. Subsequently, it delineates the types of moral events that should be conveyed to children. The subject matter of the plays is given as "*self-sacrifice, devotion to one's duty, cooperation, building unity, military life, farmer's life, etc.*"[6]. An examination of the subject examples reveals that they are all keywords for the construction of national unity. Consequently, theatre was solely a vehicle for expression and dissemination within the educational context. As a conduit and transmitter of national consciousness and nationalist discourses, it also played a pivotal role in establishing the foundations for the formation of school plays during the Early Republican Period.

The third category of İsmayıl Hakkı's genres includes school plays comprising all types of ceremonies, plays, games and entertaining activities to be held to celebrate any special days at the national, local and school-specific levels.[7] It seems reasonable to posit that these festivals were also organised with national sensitivities in mind. In terms of the staging of the performances, Baltacıoğlu proposes that this process should also be regarded as an integral aspect of the educational curriculum, with the involvement of teachers from other academic disciplines.

1. *The selection of furniture, dresses, tools, crowns, and other necessary items should be made from the resources available at the school or the children's homes.*
2. *If it is not feasible to provide historical turbans, historical dresses, or national-style furniture, these items should be looked for, designed, drawn, and produced by the students themselves under the supervision of the teachers. This process can be facilitated using slats, tree branches, drawing paper, and cardboard boxes in handicraft and painting classes.*
3. *In all these works, the sources, i.e. books and historical painting magazines, should be subjected to rigorous analysis, and the objects should be produced in accordance with their authentic and historical characteristics as much as possible.*
4. *These works should be carried out as if they were an application of history, arithmetic, geometry and handicraft lessons.*[8]

In the aforementioned evaluations of the regulation, it becomes evident that the subjects of school plays, which seek to instil national and patriotic sentiments and to foster tangible connections between children and their homeland, particularly in the context of agricultural and forestry initiatives, are approached with the gravity of an academic lesson. In this regard, İsmayıl Hakkı offers the following insights regarding the content and style of the school plays course:

[6] Baltacıoğlu, *Tiyatro Nedir?*, 106.
[7] The examples given by İsmayıl Hakkı include Wheat Day, Arbor Day.
[8] Baltacıoğlu, *Tiyatro Nedir?*, 108.

> *The content of the plays can be described as comprising lively and animated lessons in history and moral literature. Therefore, examples of poor moral standards such as intrigue, masquerade, farce, comedy, light-heartedness, and juggling, which are incompatible with the values of an educational establishment, are not the basis of plays. Plays serve as a moral lesson, a lesson in manners, and an exemplar. The most erroneous approach to plays is to view it as a mere tool for eliciting laughter and entertainment. As with any lesson, it is not detrimental, and may even be advantageous, to experience joy in plays. However, plays are inherently more serious and realistic than humour.*[9]

Similarly, the section titled "What do school plays mean?" places an emphasis on the educational nature of school plays. The objective of the drama course that is included in the primary school curriculum is to enable students to perform and observe historical, moral, and literary events, as well as patriotic thoughts. Even the slightest deviation from the conventional theatre genre, which is characterised by lightness and frivolity, has no place in this course.[10]

Despite the fact that this regulation, which was prepared and distributed to schools by the Ministry of Education,[11] was not implemented on a regular basis during the First World War, it can be inferred from various articles published in periodicals of the time and performances that theatrical activities continued in schools. It can be observed that the limited output of intellectual writers and education bureaucrats on school plays gradually diminished during the First World War. It is also noteworthy that, concurrently with the war, a group of individuals emerged who were opposed to all forms of theatre, whether educational or entertaining. Despite the fact that the magazines, the practices of educational scientists and the school performances had the objective of establishing a relationship between theatre and education that would result in the creation of a national pedagogy, the theatre was ultimately mentioned and permission was granted by the Ministry of Education for the practice of this art by children in schools. It is important to note that, in contrast to the views of intellectuals such as İsmayıl Hakkı, who advocated the use of theatre to instil patriotic sentiment, there was also a significant proportion of the population who perceived the introduction of Western-oriented reforms to the social and administrative structure as a contributing factor to this perceived weakness. The term "historical plays in schools" was used by İsmayıl Hakkı in opposition to the views of the Şeyhülislam[12], which demonstrates the existence of significant opposition to the introduction of school theatre. However, the pro-modernisation and pro-Republican intellectual cadres had already acknowledged the potential of theatre as a tool for influencing the conservative masses.

Following the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923, the role of schools as a vehicle for modernisation and nation-building remained a prominent feature of the political landscape. In the context of the functioning of the school theatre, it is another question whether the educational scientists, the officials of the Ministry of Education and the children were united around the same goals. Although we have not come across much data on the opinions of reactions of children, we can still obtain some information from magazine or newspaper articles that make a retrospective historical analysis of the period.

[9] Baltacıoğlu, *Tiyatro Nedir?*, 105.

[10] Baltacıoğlu, *Tiyatro Nedir?*, 99.

[11] In Reşat Nuri's article dated 1918, it is evident that the regulation was evaluated by the intellectuals concerned and subsequently implemented in schools: "Another indication of the growing recognition of the interconnection between theatre and morality among the general public is the introduction of "school performances" into the official school curriculum a few years ago. The Ministry of Education commissioned a treatise entitled "Usul-i Tedrisi" (Method of School Performances) on the subject of educational methodology, which was distributed to schools. Reşat Nuri Güntekin, *Tiyatro ile İlgili Makaleleri*, edited by Kemal Yavuz, (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1976), 274.

[12] "Furthermore, during that period, I advocated for this initiative within the primary education curriculum programme commission, of which I was a member, and introduced a theatre course within the official primary school curriculum, renaming it "historical performances" to circumvent potential objections from the Şeyhülislam." Baltacıoğlu, *Tiyatro Nedir?*, p.135.

In this context, the article titled "Mektep Müsamerelerine Dair Rapor" (Report on School Plays) published in the *Muallimler Birliği Dergisi* (Journal of the Union of Teachers) in December 1925 is important both in terms of presenting a brief but important history of school plays and providing serious data on practices and problems.

> *1- After the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy, when the ceremony of distribution of prizes was abolished, there were no more public ceremonies in schools and no more school play performances organised in conjunction with them. The t****[illegible word] organised in the schools at the end of the year was spontaneously extinguished during the World War, sports festivals were held from time to time, scouting, which was sometimes established and sometimes disbanded, showed a vague and indefinite existence, and after that, there was no trace of entertainment that did not entertain the body, mind and soul of the students in their free time. During the World War, some schools organised one or two school play performances, but since they corresponded to a very specific and important need in school life, these competitions became generalised and spread to every school. During the Armistice years, in the general activity programmes of the schools, the school plays occupied the school administration and teachers, but especially the students and this became an essential custom. However, in a short period of time, the drawbacks, defects, and excuses of these programmes, which were organised without any rules and procedures and with a purpose that was not properly understood, began to make those who were related to the schools think.*[13]

Before going into the details of the report, it is necessary to mention the activities meant by the term "müsamere" and the place of performances within this activity. The dictionary definition of müsamere, which is defined as "*entertainment presented by students in schools, which includes performances such as poems, plays, games, etc. in its programme, a meeting usually held in the evening, evening entertainment*"[14] , does not differ in terms of its use in the context of school activities, except for the temporal nature of the definition. We can see that *müsamere* does not only refer to the staging of a play as it is commonly used today. A *müsamere* refers to a programme that includes school performances, songs, poems and, in the later period following the Armistice and the proclamation of the Republic, dances. Sometimes all of these were included in the programmes, while sometimes one or more of them were omitted. While the diversity in the programme actually shows that the aim of entertainment is at the forefront, it is also related to the intense desire of children to be a part of the programme by taking on different tasks, to show themselves, and participating in the context of displaying a skill. Especially the devastating effect of the war on children can be considered as a dynamic that triggers this desire for participation. As can be seen in the above-quoted introduction to the report written by Bilal Bey on the transformation of school performances into an epidemic and the irregularities encountered in this endeavour, there was an "uncontrolled" increase in activities during the period of the Armistice, in other words, the Independence War. However, it would be necessary to wait for the proclamation of the Republic for some efforts to be made to correct these problems. Within the scope of the studies on the education system and its structuring, which the founding cadres of the Republic regarded as one of the most important tools in nation-building and paid attention to, the situation of school plays was addressed, albeit to a limited extent. The fact that the article published in the *Muallimler Birliği Dergisi* was prepared upon request in this context is understood both from the phrase "report" in the title and from a number of statements in the text. For example, the statement "*It is too much to say anything about the state of the programmes (müsamereler) that prompted the Ministry of Education*

[13] Hars Müfettişi Bilal, "Mektep Müsamerelerine Dair Rapor", *Muallimler Birliği Dergisi* 6, year 1 (1925): 267.
[14] "Müsamere," Türk Dil Kurumu Sözlükleri, accessed March 12, 2023, https://sozluk.gov.tr/?ara=müsamere.

*to examine the issue*"[15] proves that this report was requested by the Ministry of Education as a result of a necessity. What are the "circumstances" that prompted the Ministry of Education to have school programmes, including performances, examined? According to Bilal Bey, the problems in school plays are analysed on two axes: Firstly, the performance of programmes that were not suitable for the moral upbringing of children, and secondly, the disruptions in the functioning of education and training. As a matter of fact, these defects mentioned in the report on school performances, which we will list below, in a sense point to the qualities that are contrary to the national consciousness that the Republican revolution wanted to create and that are undesirable to be seen in the new generation and thus in the new citizen.

One of the most emphasised problems is "financial wastage". It is stated that the students, who could not provide for their school needs in any way, nevertheless made all kinds of expenditures to put on the plays and even rented theatre buildings and halls. It is criticised that the children compete in the preparation of the performances that they buy cakes and sweets from Tokatlıyan[16] for each performance, and that they engage in "wastefulness" that puts families in a difficult situation in the tightest times of "life and salary". Since saving was an issue that was at the centre of the education policies of the Early Republic, waste is the first negativity mentioned in this report written on the *müsameres*. Such a criticism, albeit indirectly, implies the development of thrift as a behavioural pattern in children.

Another important criticism is on the role of girls in the performances and the effect of the performances on them. Bilal Bey states that the most deplorable form of *müsamere* took place in girls' schools:

> *Some principals, who were not afraid to indulge every desire in their schools, made young girls belly-dance, twirl and dance in front of the guests, and welcomed their guests to an unrefined and vulgar environment (...)*[17]

It is emphasised that some activities in schools -as in this example, girls being part of a performance, dancing, acting, etc. - may be a necessity of modernism, but their limits should be determined. Another objectionable situation that occurs in girls' schools, albeit rarely, is the student's enthusiasm for theatre and her desire to leave her education and appear on the stage. It is noteworthy that Bilal Bey focuses on the socio-psychological effects of this situation rather than its traditional conservative social repercussions:

> *The fact that the spectators, who are not in a position to appreciate and appraise a work, never withhold their applause with the idea of performing a necessity of courtesy, has constantly occupied the minds of the young souls by making them think that they have a marvellous will, and finally, a new Raté has entered the society because they have not passed from strength to activity and there is no means to prepare them.*[18]

According to Bilal Bey, the audience's polite applause causes students to think that they are talented and to dream of becoming artists. Since there are no tools to prepare and train these aspirants, the author considers the failure of these dreams as a negative thing for society. Undoubtedly, it is possible to perceive "means" here as a conservatory that will train actors-artists.

[15] Hars Müfettişi Bilal, "Mektep Müsamerelerine Dair Rapor", 268.
[16] Tokatlıyan Hotel, founded by Mıgırdıç Tokatlıyan in 1894, was one of the popular haunts of the time with both its patisserie and restaurant.
[17] Bilal, "Mektep Müsamerelerine Dair Rapor", 267.
[18] Bilal, "Mektep Müsamerelerine Dair Rapor", 267-268.

Following the issues that affect children's character traits "badly", the author touches upon the damages that school plays cause to education. The most important point in this axis is that the *müsamere* interrupts education and that students and teachers spend all their time preparing the programme during the "*müsamere* season". On the other hand, it is mentioned that the staging of the plays in the programme, in which so much time and money is spent, turns into "playfulness and slovenliness" and distracts from the educational goals.

Despite all these negativities, it is argued that it is necessary to improve the organisation and management of staging in schools and to preserve their existence in schools. School plays, which improve the language skills and mindset of the students, enable the students to become capable of working "individually" and "collectively", and will become functional in terms of upbringing by enabling children to get used to social life.

Regarding the benefits of this educational tool in schools Bilal Bey states the following:

1. *The manifestation of the student's taste and expertise on the occasion of the selection of the work and the defence to be made for this work.*
2. *Provision of the means (achievement)*
3. *To be a motivation for education, to always stimulate the instincts, to stimulate the desire for representation and imitation.*
4. *To make the lessons digestible.*
5. *Serving to ensure social life in the school.*
6. *To modify the impressions of scholastic lessons and concrete classrooms.*[19]

The undoubtedly important point of the six-page report is that it makes pedagogical explanations that will ensure the continuation of the performances despite all the negativities. With references to educational scientists such as Harriet-Finlay Johnson and Le Play, including John Dewey, Bilal Bey defines school plays as the most important "assistant" of the education system in the context of "terbiye-yi ilmiye" (science education). Despite all the negativities observed, the report prepared with these constructive criticisms can undoubtedly be interpreted as a "progressive" step considering the social dynamics. However, it is also certain that theatre would find a place in schools to the extent that it was abstracted from its artistic qualities and served the Republic's policies of raising citizens. As a matter of fact, the 7th and 9th articles on school plays, which are among the rules that can be applied for the reform of the *müsameres* proposed by the author at the end of the report, are important in this context:

7. *It is forbidden to incur burdens as if the schools wanted to train theatre actors.*
*[...]*
9. *Plays to be selected:*

a) *Must be simple*
b) *Must be eunuch to order*
c) *Must be successful in our ideal. There should not be plays that ridicule and belittle democracy and social solidarity. For example, they should not make fun of the court and the election.*
d) *Preferably, some acts of plays translated from the classics by Vefik Paşa and Ali Bey should be performed. Plays by Reşat Nuri and Süleyman Şevket Bey should also be performed.*[20]

[19] Bilal, "Mektep Müsamerelerine Dair Rapor", 268-269.
[20] Bilal, "Mektep Müsamerelerine Dair Rapor", 271-272.

It can be argued that the recommendations of the Bilal Bey undoubtedly had a decisive role in determining the character of performances in the Early Republican Period, from the theatre activities in schools to the staging of People's House. Especially the fact that this report was ordered by the government and published in a journal for educators such as *Muallimler Birliği Dergisi* is remarkable in terms of showing that the importance of theatre in schools was realised.

Another significant factor that pushed Bilal Bey and the Ministry of Education to reform the school plays was the critical articles published in several journals with very influential public opinion.[21] Among these articles, perhaps the most important one is the article published in *Sebilürreşad*, within the framework of Islam, on 18 December 1919 with the title "Ahlaksızlık Propagandası: Türk-İslam Kızlarının Aktrist Teşviki Hakkında" (Propaganda of Immorality: About Encouragement of Turkish-Islamic Girls to become Actresses). The article was written in response to another article published in the newspaper *Türk Dünyası* under the signature Yusuf Ziya, supporting the girls participating in school play programmes. The controversial part of Yusuf Ziya's article contained comments on Reyhan Hanım the little Turkish child who played the role of Nezihe. Yusuf Ziya claimed that she has the potential of genius actress if not prevented from acting by those narrow-minded.[22]

In an article written upon a reader's complaint in *Sebilürreşat*, Yusuf Ziya's above-mentioned comments are considered propaganda to push Turkish women to the *"stage of debauchery and misfortune"*[23] . With the words *"If they continue to encourage Turkish girls to be actresses on the stage and to perform harmony in the hearths, there will be no more talk of honour or virtue in this country"*[24] , *Sebilürreşat* almost warned the newspaper *Türk Dünyası*. The article ends with the 11th verse of Surat al-Baqara.

In other words, the message conveyed by the journal, targeting the conservative readers, is that theatre and stage are elements that distract young girls from the path of morals. As a matter of fact, as Yusuf Ziya desired, those who are narrow-minded did not remain silent and, on the contrary, stood against the affirmation of these activities by referring to the sacred values of the society. In the article titled "Mekteplerde İlim İrfan Yerine Tiyatro Çalgı Oyun" (Theatre, Music, Games instead of Science and Knowledge in Schools) in the August 14, 1340 issue of the same journal, theatre is referred as a superficial indicator of Westernization, and it is emphasized that the theatre activities in schools took place in this context and could not go beyond a showoff. This point is conveyed in the article as follows:

> *Now, these have become the most important skills that the schools show. On any occasion, whether important or unimportant, it is announced in the newspapers with great pride that such and such a school has organised a performance, where instruments are played, songs are sung, plays are performed, and plays are staged. Especially when a European or an American guest arrives, theatre stages are immediately set up, parties are organised, men and women are prepared, and our most important skills are shown to the Franks. In this way, it is intended to show that we are on the road to civilisation, on the way to becoming more westernised. Poor young people see nothing but plays, instruments and theatre instead of progress and civilisation. They think that civilisation means to be civilised, that civilisation means to be westernised, that it consists of plays, instruments and theatre, and that everyone there is busy with these.*[25]

[21] "Ahlaksızlık Propagandası (Türk-İslam Kızlarının Aktrist Teşviki Hakkında)", *Sebilürreşad (Sırat-ı Mustakim)* 18, no. 452 (August 1924): 119-120.
[22] "Ahlaksızlık Propagandası", 120.
[23] "Ahlaksızlık Propagandası", 120
[24] "Ahlaksızlık Propagandası", 120.
[25] "Mekteplerde İlim İrfan Yerine Tiyatro Çalgı Oyun", Sebilürreşad (Sırat-ı Mustakim) 24, no. 612 (1924): 221-222.

This approach of *Sebilürreşad* journal and the report prepared by Bilal Bey basically address similar problems regarding school plays. They touch upon the frequency of the performances, their negative impact on the educational activities in schools, in short, the fact that they had become a fashion. Undoubtedly, while the first one demands the complete elimination of these activities and especially the removal of Turkish girls from this path, citing Islamic values as a reason, the second one suggests reformulating "performances mania" in a way to serve the "Republican Ideals". Surely, as in many other areas, we can say that the regulations envisaged by the state policy in the field of school plays were realised despite the opposition publications. As mentioned before, the encouragement of the activities of the theatre branches of the People's Houses, the school plays published by public institutions such as the Ministry of Education or the National Economy and Savings Institution, and moreover, the introduction of legal regulations for the establishment of "theatre schools" towards the end of the 1930s, beyond the idea of theatre in schools, appear as visible examples of the outcome of this conflict in favour of the founding ideologues and educators of the Republic.

The most important work on the purpose and scope of school plays in the Early Republican Era appears in *Toplu Tedris*, again by İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu. Undoubtedly, the environment of military conflict that ceased with the proclamation of the Republic and the endeavour to raise the new citizens of the Republic brought about a change in Baltacıoğlu's perspective on school plays. In these writings of the 1930s, Baltacıoğlu softened the militarist tone of the 1910s, and as Duygu Köksal puts it, *"he thought that the Turkish revolution, which was a revolution of life, could rise on a revolution of pedagogy."*[26] School plays were highly valued as a unit of practice in order for the child to become accustomed to the life of the community and become a part of the new social ideal of the Republic in a broad sense.

The pedagogical principles that constitute the understanding of the social school are important in terms of determining the instrumental nature of school theatre. Baltacıoğlu lists the five basic principles as follows:

1. *The aim of education is the formation of social personality. I call this the "principle of personality".*
2. *The environment of education is the real world (nature and society). I call this the "principle of environment".*
3. *The tool of education is social work. I call this the "principle of working".*
4. *The product of education is social productivity. I call this the "principle of efficiency".*
5. *Education is an exercise. I call this the "principle of practice".*[27]

Clearly, these principles are in parallel with the ideals that will realise the Republic's ideal citizen imagination. At this point, Duygu Köksal's observations on *"the pragmatism of the Republic's founding ideology in its view of the child"* are noteworthy:

> *The new nation-state embarks on a feverish development mobilisation. The keyword here is production and the key concept is utility. Production, on the other hand, is reserved only for adults; the child has no contribution to production. The child must be educated to become a productive adult and contribute to national development.*[28]

In the axis of education that aims to "raise the social and national personality" the theatre exists as a tool to create national unity in this micro-society, just as the school does in the society. In *Toplu Tedris,* Baltacıoğlu evaluates school theatre according to the principles of personality, environment,

[26] Duygu Köksal, "İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu İnkılap ve Terbiye: Ulusun "Çocukluğu", *Toplumsal Tarih* 40, (1997): 9.
[27] Baltacıoğlu, *Tiyatro Nedir?*, 149.
[28] Köksal, "İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu İnkılap ve Terbiye", 8.

working, efficiency and practice, and calls the activities to be carried out in line with these principles as "theatre of education" or "school theatre".

According to Baltacıoğlu, theatre in schools is the "unity of spirit" established between the actors who build the social environment and the audience, and the most important condition for theatre education cannot be fulfilled unless the actors and the audience are brought together. According to the working principle, theatre training aims at collectivism. Baltacıoğlu emphasises collectivism and working together in the production process by saying, *"Let them all look for a plot for a play, let them all assemble a set, let them all represent it as they understand it, let them all criticise it."*[29] On the other hand, while Baltacıoğlu states that the aim of school theatre can be to train actors directly (the principle of personality), he emphasises the necessity of these performances to be performed by people who desire to gain professional personality (the principle of practice), that is, students, in line with the principles. Undoubtedly, the concept of school theatre in *Toplu Tedris* differs when compared to the author's writings in 1913-1915. There is a change from teaching history or giving military training to training actors.

However, it is possible to see the traces of a search and the construction of a national culture under this change. Baltacıoğlu's book *Toplu Tedris* was prepared for teachers in order to apply the principles of the social school to the primary school curriculum. The idea inculcated in primary school teachers, who are the addressees of the book on school theatre, develops around a national theatre aesthetics that will be the source of the book *Tiyatro Nedir?* (What is Theatre?) that the author will write in 1941. Therefore, in the process of training soldiers to training actors, Baltacıoğlu aims to contribute to the cultural unity of the nation by constructing a national theatre as well as a national pedagogy.

This time, the school theatre ceases to be a means of expression of the curriculum courses and is handled as a part of the aim of establishing a national theatre in a formal sense. Baltacıoğlu, who sides against the existing theatre in the country and wished to create its alternative in schools with teachers, stated that school theatre could not take the City Theatre as an example by saying *"You see, these principles or rules are not the principles of a theatre committee like the City Theatre, which drags academic tendencies to their most extreme (individualistic) and sickest forms."*[30]

The school theatre, which is detailed in the book more than ever, from decor to make-up, sound effects, theatre genres, playwriting, and auditioning, at first glance arouses the thought that its artistic side gains weight. However, Baltacıoğlu's following remarks on Mınakyan and melodrama genres show that nationalist discourses manifest themselves not in the content carried this time, but in the form of the imagined "essential theatre".

> *Most of the children have seen only two kinds of theatre until they come to school. One is melodrama and the other is tuluat theatre. Melodrama was spread in our country by the actors of the Manakyan Company. This tradition has prevented the birth of a real theatre culture in Türkiye. Melodrama actors speak in a fancy language that is not natural. Manakyan had a melodrama called Less Accidents, More Trouble. In reality, there is no such relationship between charity and calamity in terms of scarcity, multiplicity and cause and effect. This claim is false. All melodramas are full of falsehoods like this one; they do not inform people about the life of the individual or the society, about the real world.*

[29] İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, *Toplu Tedris* (Istanbul: Sebat Basımevi, 1938), 98-99.
[30] Baltacıoğlu, *Toplu Tedris*, 99.

> *Melodrama is something that distorts the sense of reality. Explain that it was a disaster that melodrama theatre had captured our taste in our country as it had in Europe in the 19th century. Explain that it is a disaster that melodrama and Armenian actors - who do not speak Turkish well - have occupied our stage. Increase their knowledge about the essential theatre; tell them that the original theatre is not the art of contrived fabrication, but the art of the real man, the whole man.*[31]

This "outcry" of Baltacıoğlu is a unique example of the fictional dimension of nation-building processes. This way of thinking, which sees Mınakyan as an obstacle to the emergence of the original theatre culture in Türkiye, rejects the nearly one hundred years of Western theatre experience in Türkiye with all its actors. The "othering" nationalist tone in Baltacıoğlu's discourses also reveals the desire to create a homogenous audience and actor, similar to the uniformity of national identity construction.

An institutional adjustment of the state on school performances can be found in the secondary education programme of the Ministry of Education under the title "Mektep Temsilleri Hakkında Alınacak Tedbirlere Dair Talimatname" (Regulation on Measures to be taken about School Plays).[32] The 11-article regulation published on 28 Teşrinievvel 1930 is similar in many respects to Bilal Bey's report dated 1925, which we examined above. The common ideas about the following factors give the impression that this directive would have been regulated according to the report dated 1925: 1. Avoiding financial wastage in the preparation of the performances, 2. The presence of an instructor in charge during rehearsals and preparations, 3. The frequent changing of roles among various students and not having the same students play the same roles 4. The staging of school plays approved by the Ministry of Education 5. The prioritising of the works of Âli Bey and Ahmet Vefik Pasha.

The 1930 Regulation also prioritises the content of the school plays. After stating that the plays to be represented should be of national, patriotic, moral and finally artistic value, it is emphasised that they should "have the power to instil a sense of contentment in the students". It is underlined that "it should not be contrary to national and patriotic goals, Republican ideals, and should not contain such things that are contrary to customs and morals". Article 3 of the regulation concerns the language used in performances. This article, which reads, "It should be written in a (proper) Turkish language that is clean enough to be an example and suitable for staging", shows that, as mentioned earlier, school plays were accepted as a training ground for the use of the Turkish language. It is possible to see that the Regulation has the same aim as the report of 1925 prepared five years earlier in terms of the purpose of school plays.

> *Although short pieces of one or two acts written solely for schools can be performed verbatim, it is sufficient to perform one of the most noteworthy acts of plays with three, four or five acts, or one or two of the most important scenes in various acts. Since the purpose is not to train students to become actors but to make them benefit from the educational value of the staging, the staging of the most vivid act or one or two scenes of valuable work is sufficient to achieve the purpose. For example (...) the examination of the patient by the doctor in Zoraki Tabip (The in Spite of Himself). In Ayyar Hamza, the staging of the scenes in which Hamza Ağa extorts money from Zuhuri and Muhterem Efendi is sufficient. This way, the student will not spend more time than necessary to prepare for the staging and will benefit from the educational value of the school plays.*[33]

[31] Baltacıoğlu, *Toplu Tedris*, 111.
[32] Hasan-Âli Yücel, *Türkiye'de Orta Öğretim* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Milli Kütüphane Basımevi, 1994).
[33] Yücel, *Türkiye'de Orta Öğretim*, 361.

The brevity of the school plays would prevent the *müsamere* from becoming too long. The shortness of the plays, the didactic language, the single space and the one-dimensional creation of the characters would prevent the school plays from going beyond their "educational purpose" and they would not provoke the students to become actors. Moreover, in the "Regulation on School Plays" published on the same date, it seems that the necessary warning is given to students who harbour such ambitions. Article 2 of the Regulation states that it would not be permissible for students to take part in theatre or *müsamere* outside the school.

It is clear from the reports, books and regulations prepared on this subject that School Plays were perceived as an important propaganda field for the education authorities of the Republic. Although seemingly few in number, these studies on school plays are remarkable in that they found a place for themselves among the hundreds of issues that the newly established Republican regime had to discuss and regulate.[34] The conference titled *Pedagojik Temsiller* (Pedagogical Plays) given by Nurettin Sevin, one of the conference series of People's Houses, is an appropriate example in terms of the importance given to school plays. *Pedagojik Temsiller* were generally chosen or commissioned as the subject of conferences organised by the People's Houses, aiming to educate the public on the context of the Republican revolutions, in many fields ranging from civil law to sports, art, health, world literature, economy.

The text of the conference begins with a long criticism of the school plays staged during the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period, as in the report prepared by Bilal Bey. According to Sevin, school plays that have nothing to do with morals and the upbringing of students are improper. The Republican education system put a stop to this irregularity. He expresses the basic regulation made by the Republican education system as follows: "*Not all kinds of works can be performed in schools; the works to be performed in schools must go through Board of Education and Discipline*"[35]. Sevin recommends that school performances should be musical. Sevin's ideas on what should be the purpose of musical plays are in parallel with Baltacıoğlu's ideas.[36]

Sevin suggests that music helps children to develop ability to engage in a collective activity, a sense of discipline and responsibility, to act collectively, to correct the child's gestures and speech, and to strengthen the child's ability to express and speak in public. What differs Sevin's approach is related to the purpose of the musical plays. Sevin states that musical plays *"ensure that the taste for music and art, which has been neglected in our country, is instilled in children from the earliest age"*[37], thus emphasising an important function of the performances other than "national upbringing". We can see that this idea of the author is reflected in his view of school plays in Pedagojik Temsiller. For example, Sevin underlines that the purpose, content and application of the school plays should differ according to the level of the students. According to him, in kindergarten and the first grades of primary schools, theatre should be a tool to help young children open their inner worlds. However, this should never be done by writing and memorising plays, but by creating an environment that allows them to open their own worlds. This can be achieved by telling a story to the children and then letting them act it out, leaving them as free as possible in the process. With this method, which is a suggestion for improvisation practice, the child will engage his/her own creativity and get rid of the automatising effect of memorisation. According to Sevin, the aim of theatre in these classes of primary schools should be improving their ability to *"speak naturally and properly in natural movements without getting bored."*[38] When children who have gained practice in this way reach the last years of primary school, it is possible for them to act in front of other classes in a few simple sets with costumes and make-up.

[34] Nurettin Sevin, *Pedagojik Temsiller* (Ankara: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Yayını, 1938).
[35] Sevin, *Pedagojik Temsiller*, 12.
[36] Sevin, *Pedagojik Temsiller*, 14.
[37] Sevin, *Pedagojik Temsiller*, 14-15.
[38] Sevin, *Pedagojik Temsiller*, 16.

According to Sevin, children who have received drama training in this way in primary school and are able to express themselves spontaneously on stage, reach the level to express their concerns in writing in secondary school. The children are divided into groups of five or six, a writing group and a performing group, and the writing group can write a play around a subject using characters that the performing group can easily stage. Sevin emphasises that writing the plays as one-act comedies would facilitate both performing and writing, and states that the director of the play (teacher) should make the necessary reductions and additions in consideration of the children's feelings. Apart from these technical interventions, the vital task of the director is completing the Turkish language usage of the play.[39] What Sevin is pointing out here with Turkish is the observation of the logical dimensions of the relationship between words and character. It is noteworthy that *Pedagojik Temsiller* emphasise the search for a language that is far from vulgarity and meaninglessness and is suitable for the character. Sevin, while describing the skills that secondary school children will acquire through these activities, directly refers to theatre and theatre technique:

> *The skills that children are expected to acquire at this age are to learn the qualities of a theatre piece by writing it down (because we learn better what we do ourselves), and at the same time to gain the ability to write, especially to examine characters and types well. Children can make many mistakes in theatre techniques; this is not a big drawback. However, they should know how to analyse and keep the characters alive. The main purpose of these activities at school is to introduce people and to understand the treatment to be given to each person, to distinguish good from bad, to try not to resemble the bad and to remain good.*[40]

As we said at the beginning, what differs from Sevin's approach is his perception of these activities as an artistic activity and, more importantly, that these activities are organised in such a way that children gain artistic skills. Sevin's occasional references to the students as "young amateurs" can also be read as a manifestation of the idea that school theatre can train new professionals for theatre. The objectives of the school theatre Sevin envisages for high schools are to train children to assist the director, to encourage children who write plays and to enable them to stage these plays themselves.[41] As mentioned at the beginning, we can say that these objectives are the result of an approach that prioritises artistic sensitivity.

However, the fact that this conference titled *Pedagojik Temsiller* was held at the People's House and published by the Republican People's Party is ultimately an indication of the fact that ideology cannot be independent of Sevin's ideas on school plays. In the "theatre in higher education" section of the conference, Sevin points to the People's House as the only place where the theatre groups of these schools can operate.[42] Despite his "original" attitude on how theatre activities in schools should be, Sevin inevitably directs theatre to an area determined by ideology.

Consequently, we can say that the important, albeit limited, discussions or regulations on theatre activities in schools did not plan to build the school-children-theatre relationship on the axis of artistic taste, or even if they started with these intentions, they could not get rid of the determinations of ideology conjecturally. However, it is clear that the Republic supported these discussions and considered theatre in schools as a transmitter of revolutions. Another indication of this tendency can be seen in the increasing number of school plays written in the Early Republican Period. The institutional or independent criticisms/suggestions of the intellectuals/ideologists of the newborn Turkish Republic regarding theatre in schools brought dynamism to playwriting for school theatres. Not only the Ministry

[39] Sevin, *Pedagojik Temsiller*, 17.
[40] Sevin, *Pedagojik Temsiller*, 17-18.
[41] Sevin, *Pedagojik Temsiller*, 19.
[42] Sevin, *Pedagojik Temsiller*, 20-21.

of Education but also private publishing houses began to publish school plays. While school plays continued to be published in journals especially for educators and children, we see that series were prepared by reputable publishing houses of the time under titles such as *"Maarif Vekâleti Mektep Temsilleri", "Muallim Ahmet Halid Kitaphanesi Mektep Temsilleri Serisi", "Tefeyyüz Kitaphanesi Mektep Temsilleri", "Resimli Ay Matbaası Mektep Temsilleri Serisi", "İkbal Kütüphanesi Mektep ve Aile Temsilleri", "Kanaat Kütüphanesi Terbiye Kütüphanesi".* In addition, we see that there were also plays published in the journal. For example, the first edition of Reşat Nuri's school play İstiklal (Independence) is an addition to the *Varlık* journal.[43] All these published series were, of course, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Although the majority of these publications were copyrighted plays, it is also possible to come across adaptations from Western Literature from time to time. The fact that the publishers, including the Ministry of Education, refrained from using the word "theatre" when naming the series to camouflage theatre in schools. The efforts of educators and intellectuals to incorporate theatre in schools with expressions excluding the word "theatre", such as "tarihi temsiller" (history plays), "şarkılı ibret" (lesson with a song), "mektep temsili" (school plays), "müzikli oyunlar" (musical plays) etc., were decisive in the naming of the book series. The fact that the first examples of school plays theatre written in the late 1890s were published under the title "theatre for children" is important in terms of showing that these definitions were made within the framework of ideological determinations. The school plays and "theatre" are almost identical in form, they point to different things conceptually and functionally. Perhaps the most striking example of this fact can be seen in M. Cemal's words in the teacher's training school textbook regarding the locations where the kindergarten and primary schools will be established:

> *(...) the distance between the school and the child's residence should not be too great. The streets should be clean and there should be pedestrian pavements. In short, they should be able to go back and forth without endangering their lives. It should be away from crowded places such as factories, barracks, hospitals, prisons, coffee houses, taverns, theatres and stations.*[44]

[43] Türkan Poyraz, Muazzez Alpbek, *Reşat Nuri Güntekin Hayatı ve Eserlerinin Tam Listesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1957), 16.

[44] Necdet Sakaoğlu, *Osmanlıdan Günümüze Eğitim Tarihi* (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2003), 206.

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## Chapter 8

# Ethical Regime in the Early Republican Theatre

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## Abstract

Regime of arts is the term founded by Jacques Rancière to bring out the relationship between art and politics and to discuss the atmosphere that shapes artistic practises from the past to the present. The ethical regime is a category of the term, which means disregarding aesthetic values and taking moral and political judgments as a base for artistic practises. Artistic practises in Türkiye in the Early Republican era were considered as an element of the nation-building process and served to construct a national culture. These practises are discussed in relation to Rancière's definition of the ethical regime, focusing on the theatre practises of the Early Republican period. This study will mention an essential institution for the Early Republican theatre Darülbedayi, emphasising its repertoires to highlight how educational, moral and political judgments have shaped the art of theatre.

**Keywords** Darülbedayi · Muhsin Ertuğrul · Early Republican Theatre · Jacques Rancière · regimes of the arts

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## Introduction

To discuss artistic practises within the social and political conditions surrounding them, Jacques Rancière, a French philosopher, offers the term "regime of arts," which is a significant term to describe the relationship between a community's artistic practises and politics. In Rancière's words, the regime of the arts is "*To establish the edifice of art means to define a certain regime for the identification of art, that is to say a specific relationship between the practises, forms of visibility and modes of intelligibility that enable us to identify the products of these latter as belonging to art or to an art.*"[1] The regime of arts questions the relationship between social life and the artistic practises. Jean-Philippe Deranty stresses the political aspects of Rancière's regime of arts, mentioning that he handles artistic and social representations as a unity, and it is impossible to approach the regime of arts as a separate entity from the realities of social life.[2] The concept of the regime makes it possible for us to discover the underlying causes of the fractions in the history of art by illuminating the tie between art and politics.

Rancière mentions three regimes of arts: "ethical regime," "representative regime," and "aesthetic regime." They are not historical categories; various regimes can appear in the same period. They rather refer to three distinct artistic perspectives.[3] They do not refer to the arts created in different periods in contrast to one another, but they are "*three major regimes of identification.*"[4] They are artistic concepts that define the times and places of artistic practises, and their divergences.

To conceptualise the ethical regime, Rancière turns to Platon's perceptions of art. According to this regime, art and their practises are not evaluated based on aesthetic criteria. The essence of the artwork and the effects of social and individual existence leave images on the artwork. The evaluation is based on the coherence of those images.[5] Hence, art and life are not separated. The key elements of an artwork are its effect and function. Thus, in an ethical regime, artistic works and practises are evaluated based on the moral and political values they carry. According to Rancière, in an ethical regime, the purpose of art changes. In this regime, the aim of art is defined by the effects and benefits of certain images. As art is shaped according to social purposes and regarded by its beneficial function, talking about its specificity is not possible. Art can be called art only if it makes connections between normative moral judgements and societies and individuals. From this perspective, the identity of art is open for discussion. What determines the place of an artwork in the sensory dimension is the references it makes to the political and moral judgments of the legislators.

I will discuss how the artistic practises in the nation-building process of the Early Republic era ruled out the aesthetic criteria and served the national culture project. I will mention that the artistic regime of the period was an ethical regime, and artworks were produced through the framework of this regime. Finally, I will mention theatre practises as an inseparable part of the nation-building process within the scope of the ethical regime, and I will refer to the theatre practises of the era to demonstrate that moral and political judgements were determining factors for theatre instead of aesthetic criteria.

## Construction of a National Culture

The effects of the establishment of the nation states in Europe after the 18th century and the developments that occurred following the Industrial Revolution reached beyond the limits of continental Europe and spread worldwide. The Ottoman Empire was a state that felt the severe effects

[1] Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press, 2009), 28.
[2] Jean-Philippe Deranty, "Regimes of the arts," in *Jacques Rancière Key Concepts*, ed. Jean-Philippe Deranty (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2010), 117-118.
[3] Deranty, "Regimes of the arts".
[4] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 16.
[5] Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, 28.

of such developments. Imperial land was far and wide, and different nations were living together within the borders of the Empire. With the rise of the idea of the nation-state, these nation groups started to declare their independence. In addition to these unrests, developments in European industry were also beginning to cause economic and political problems. First, with the Tanzimat and Islahat Edicts, and then with the declaration of the constitution, the Ottoman Empire tried to resolve the problems.[6] The Westernisation movement, which started with the Tanzimat reforms, sped up after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the construction of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923. Mustafa Kemal and the founding fathers had the vision of a nation-state in compliance with Western norms.[7] This new regime would bring a great deal of changes to the economy, society, and politics. The new state was built under the Turkish/ness identity. The first step in constructing "modern" Türkiye was to build a new government and governing strategies, change economic policies, and invest in industry and culture. Mustafa Kemal, along with the founding fathers, began to work on these developments. They established the republican regime, closed the Islamic institutions, introduced a modern dress code, transitioned to the Gregorian calendar, changed the civil and penal law, and did many more. Transitioning to a multi-party system was attempted several times between 1924 and 1930. However, the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi), established by Mustafa Kemal, governed the Republic of Türkiye until 1946.[8] In the years following the 1930s, during the ongoing administration of the one-party government, People's Houses (Halkevleri) and Village Institutes (Köy Enstitüleri) were established for political socialisation. These institutions were crucial for constructing a social identity under the new regime, so they spread to every city in the country and actively contributed to social life. The founding fathers wanted to cultivate the idea of a proper citizen under the founding principles and rules of the new republic. In Füsun Üstel's words, they wanted to shape the "acceptable citizen."[9]

People's Houses were in a pivotal position to support the perceptions of the envisioned citizen profile. They were active in nine main branches: Branch of Language, History and Literature, Branch of Social Welfare, Branch of Fine Arts, Branch of Spectacle, Branch of Museums and Exhibitions, Branch of Sports, Branch of Peasantism, Branch of Library and Publications and Branch of Community Courses and Training Centres.[10] The founding fathers believed that accomplishments in cultural fields were the main indicators of a modernised state. For that reason, People's Houses were the key elements of modernisation. While some branches of the Houses were working towards social reformation, others were working towards the establishment of cultural and artistic spheres. Mobilisation for the new state was not only about the political and social life but also about the cultural and artistic fields.

In the Early Republic era, the theoretical ground of the art was based on the ideology of the national culture prospect. In the People's Houses' ordinance of progress, dated 1940, instruments such as the violin, oud, cümbüş, nay and qanun were banned while performing more Westernised genres was encouraged.[11] As Ferit Celal Güven mentions, during one of his visits to the Ankara People's Houses, Mustafa Kemal interrupted the song of a bard from Gaziantep, with a disapproval of his instrument, his saz. He wanted musicians who played Western instruments to compose national symphonies, operas, and so on.[12] Paintings were receiving a similar attitude as well. Ali Sami Boyar, a painter of the era, says "*We need paintings and drawings that would demonstrate the epics of our nation, identify our national glories and imprint our revolution into the history, before paintings of magnolias*

[6] For more information, see Erik Jan Zürcher, *Türkiye: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).
[7] See Şerif Mardin, *Türk Modernleşmesi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018).
[8] For a comprehensive discussion on Kemalizm, see *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce- Kemalizm* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002).
[9] Füsun Üstel, "*Makbul Vatandaş*"*ın Peşinde* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016).
[10] For more information see, Sefa Şimşek, *Bir İdeolojik Seferberlik Deneyimi Halkevleri 1932-1951* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2002).
[11] CHP, *Halkevleri Çalışma Talimatnamesi* (Ankara: Zerbamat, 1940).
[12] Ferit Celal Güven, *Halkevleri'nin Kuruluş Nedeni, Atatürk ve Halkevleri, Atatürkçü Düşünce Üzerine Denemeler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1974), 59.

*and chrysanthemums*,"[13] which summarises the treatment painting received during the Early Republic. Another example of the national culture ideology is the folklore dans. Mustafa Kemal appreciated teacher Selim Sırrı Tarcan's attempts to turn Zeybek into a ballroom dance. The attempt was later labelled as a "national dance" by Arzu Öztürkmen.[14]

As we can understand from the cases above, artistic practises during the Early Republic were tools to construct the national culture, both by the founding fathers of the republic and by the artists. Instead of talking about the quality of the artworks, their contributions to the national culture schemas were discussed. Since they were valuable only in their relation to politics, art was assessed by its political and moral statements. This exact situation highlights Rancière's ethical regime, which has been previously mentioned in detail. Ethical regime puts the aesthetic criteria aside and identifies the arts by the way they influence individuals. Exposing the public to regime-favouring art, and artistic practises was the setting for art during the Early Republic period. In this section, I have provided my analysis of the artistic regime of the period, looking at various research on different types of art. Now I will turn to the theatre practises of the era, the focus of this study, to demonstrate that just like the other fields of art, the theatre practises were within the limits of the ethical regime.

## Edges of the Regime of Arts in Theatre

As I explained in the previous chapter, art congregated around the national culture prospect during the Early Republic period, and theatre was under the same influence. Western theatre arrived in the Ottoman Empire for the first time in the Tanzimat period, and the followers of the Westernisation ideal considered it as an instrument in reaching the level of contemporary civilisations. In the Early Republic era, the government believed theatre was a vital tool in constructing the national culture, which increased the pressure on theatre. "*Our national stage will reflect the Turkish culture*" Celâl Bayar, the prime minister of the era, says, "*it will become an art that spreads the most beautiful pronunciation, the most eloquent expression of our lovely tongue. We will pay attention to using modern techniques for that.*"[15] about the importance of theatre while reading the government programme on November 8, 1937. His words emphasise the vitality of theatre practises once again. The theatre began to run in an institutional, systematic manner following the establishment of the People's Houses in 1932. Behçet Kemal, whose numerous plays were staged in the Houses, says "*Certain revolutions need to be distilled through art, need to be polished with art, only then they can find themselves in people's hearts.*"[16] Likewise, another playwright, Münir Hayri, says "*Theatre was among the tools that are in use to spread ideas that were born during the age of revolution. In fact, it was at the top of the list*,"[17] to describe what theatre means. These words of Behçet Kemal and Münir Hayri reflect many other playwrights' opinions on theatre. The new government had to spread the strict ideology behind its operations through art. For the Kemalist founders, the theatre was a pivotal tool to popularise their ideology among the masses. The Spectacle Branch of the People's Houses had an important responsibility in bringing people closer to the state's ideology. Integrating people into the state was an aim for the government, and the theatre had a strategic importance for this purpose as it could create national unity in the society. In 1935, the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) published a book that explains the works of the People's Houses. It says, "*It wasn't a coincidence that plays about certain national subjects were written and chosen at the beginning. It was an essential choice for our history to seep into people's*

[13] Ressam Ali Sami, "Sanat Varlığımızda Resmin Yeri," *Ülkü Halkevleri Mecmuası* 1, no. 5 (1933): Ankara, Hakimiyeti Milliye Matbaası, 399.
[14] Arzu Öztürkmen, *Türkiye'de Folklor ve Milliyetçilik* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1998), 228-229.
[15] Metin And, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1983), 15.
[16] Behçet Kemal, "Gönüllü Sanat," *Ülkü Halkevleri Mecmuası* 4, no. 23 (1935): Ankara, Ulus Matbaası, 336.
[17] Münür Hayri, "Bugünkü Manasiyle Tiyatro Nedir?," *Ülkü Halkevleri Mecmuası* 3, no. 18 (1934): Ankara, Hakimiyeti Milliye Matbaası, 434.

*hearts and to remind the thrill of our War of Independence once more."*[18] It was important to include the Turkishness ideology in plays, as it played a significant role in writing history for the one-party regime. The new regime was using theatre to leave out the history of the Ottoman Empire, to insert its glorious victories from Middle Asia, and to remind repeatedly of the Independence War success. Stories of symbolic characters in Turkish history like Mete or Atilla, heroised stories of War, or praising the reforms of the new regime were some of the common subjects for plays during that time.[19] For Modern Türkiye to sustain itself, it would need a history in which people can find pride and empowerment. Generating that history through theatre, thus re-creating the social memory, was one aim of the one-party regime. Sevda Şener stresses that the plays created in the People's Houses were based on facts shaped according to nationalistic values, instead of real-life experiences.[20] The main motivation of the theatre practises made under the Spectacle Branch was to build the desired society by narrating the reforms of the young nation-state.[21]

Another essential institution in the field of theatre, Darülbedayi-i Osmanî, was established in 1913 by the mayor of Istanbul, Cemil Topuzlu. It was set up in the Letafet Apartment in Şehzadebaşı and began to process as a conservatory headed by André Antoine. The institution, founded back in the Imperial period, had two departments, theatre and music. Reşat Rıdvan Bey was the head of the theatre department. "*Reading, pronunciation, tajweed; Declamation, declaration, aruz; History, literature, and history of literature; Hâile; Tragedy; Music; Dance, etiquette, fencing, mimic,*"[22] were the courses in the curriculum. Antoine gathered a committee that included theatre instructors along with the famous men of letters of the era. However, as the school was ready for teaching, World War I began, and Antoine returned to his country. Darülbedayi-i Osmanî served as a school for a short period, but after 1916, it turned into a professional theatre community.[23] Following the republic, it started staging plays regularly. In 1927 Muhsin Ertuğrul was assigned as the head of the institution, and Darülbedayi became an official institution of the Istanbul Municipality, whereas before it was only receiving benefits from the Municipality.[24]

After Muhsin Ertuğrul became the head of Darülbedayi, more space was spared for classical Western plays in the repertoire. Özdemir Nutku mentions that the new repertoire was heavily influenced by the plays of the foreign companies visiting Istanbul, the scripts of the boulevard theatre published in French *La Petite Illustration* magazine, and the plays actors saw in foreign countries.[25] While People's Houses worked with native writers serving the one-party ideology, Darülbedayi focused on the translations of Western writers. To add a new play to the repertoire, the play should fit the values of "idea play," "serious play," "real theatre." Translated or native, a play should carry those qualities to be included in the repertoire. For People's Houses, real theatre should serve to glorify the greatness of the new state, while in Darülbedayi, serious plays were concerned with introducing the classical plays of the West to the public. Idea plays composed in Western styles, and those plays would mark Türkiye's rise to the level of contemporary modern states. From this perspective, these two baselines drew the edges of the ethical regime in the Early Republican theatre. In either case, artistic practises should be busy with educating the public.

[18] CHP, *Halkevleri 1932-1935: 103 Halkevi Geçen Yıllarda Nasıl Çalıştı* (Ankara: 1935), 55-56.
[19] See, İstek Serhan Erbek, "Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Tiyatro Oyunlarında Köken ve Medeniyet Miti," *Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi/Journal of Theatre Criticism and Dramaturgy* 30 (2020), 17-34.
[20] Sevda Şener, *Cumhuriyet'in 75. Yılında Türk Tiyatrosu* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1999), 89.
[21] For more information see, Levent Boyacıoğlu, "Tek Parti Döneminde İnkılâp Temsilleri", *Tarih ve Toplum* 102 (June 1992):30-36; Nilgün Firidinoğlu, "*Tanzimat'tan Erken Cumhuriyet'e Tiyatro ve Eğitim İlişkisi: Mektep Temsilleri* (1896-1936)" (PhD diss., Istanbul University, 2015); Esra Dicle Başbuğ, *Resmi İdeoloji Sahnede* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013); Elif Çongur, *Ulusal Kimliği Tiyatro İle Kurmak- Türk Tiyatrosunun Kimlik İnşasındaki İşlevi* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2017).
[22] Refik Ahmet, *Yakın Çağlarda Türk Tiyatrosu* (Istanbul: Kanaat Kütüphanesi, 1934), 94.
[23] Metin And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu 1908-1923* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1971), 46.
[24] Levent Suner, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Tiyatroların Kurumlaşması," *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi* 12 (1995), 11-16.
[25] Özdemir Nutku, *Darülbedayi'den Şehir Tiyatrosu'na* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2015), 160-161.

Pre-Republican theatre institutions and their repertoires are heavily criticised for this lack of idea plays. Western-style institutions such as the Gedikpaşa Theatre or Darülbedayi were at the centre of these criticisms. One of Darülbedayi's actors, M. Kemal Küçük's following words are worth attention:

> *The biggest mistake Darülbedayi made in the past was always being open to the newest French plays, to plays that do not have joy, art or idea, while turning its back to the classics, to real plays. (...) However, I find it strange that people who have watched melodrama and tulûat for years after the demolition of the Bursa Theatre accepted this institution as a 'national theatre'.*[26]

Küçük criticises the pre-republican Darülbedayi for not including enough Western classics in its repertoire. In the artistic regime of the Early Republic era, there was no space for melodrama or tulûat. Since art that does not contribute to society or the wellbeing of the state had no value, Darülbedayi's pre-republican repertoire could not be considered as real theatre. In the same article I have quoted above, Küçük also criticises the privileges given to the Gedikpaşa Theatre.[27] He claims that it was a wrong decision for the sake of our national theatre as Gedikpaşa did not introduce serious plays to the public. Critic Nurullah Ataç makes a similar criticism about the repertoire of the pre-republican theatres. In 1933, Ataç wrote in a magazine that the previous Darülbedayi repertoire was full of meaningless vaudevilles.[28] Many other theatre artists voiced their disturbance against the vaudevilles and claimed that the theatre was not just a source of entertainment. After becoming the head of Darülbedayi, Muhsin Ertuğrul said, "*We don't know which one you prefer, laughing or having fun, but we prefer to cry.*"[29] about the public's disinterest in the new plays. Similarly to his contemporaries, Ertuğrul blames the pre-republican repertoire as well;

> *I believe we are paying the penance for the empty, meaningless plays we made people love. We played, and are still playing, those vaudevilles with such generosity, now we cannot find an audience to see a serious play. People don't want to hear or see an idea work on stage anymore.*[30]

As mentioned above, this was a common opinion among many actors close to Darülbedayi. They believed that plays with an idea/opinion should be staged, instead of the ones with comedy and humour. Ataç mentions that the issue was solved after Muhsin Ertuğrul became Darülbedayi's head;

> *(...) This year, Darülbedayi staged one of the finest examples of the performing arts, Hamlet; we don't know how it was performed, we did not see it. We may not be able to accept many elements of the performance; those will come second; playing Hamlet, even attempting to play it, is a service by itself. I guess Ibsen's Ghosts were staged and will be staged in the future. Luigi Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of An Author was staged... And all of this happened thanks to the efforts of Ertuğrul Muhsin Bey. The Darülbedayi literature committee could not understand a single word of Pirandello's plays. They could only accept erroneous translations of banal plays, meaningless adaptations, and vaudevilles, which are nothing more than a curtain over the beauty of French literature.*[31]

[26] M. Kemal, "Tiyatro Hakkında bir konferans," *Darülbedayi* 38 (1933), 4.
[27] In 1870, Grand Vizier Ali Pasha granted Agop Vartovyan the privilege of being the only theatre to perform plays in Turkish. For detailed information about Agop Vartovyan, see, Fırat Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar* (Istanbul: Bgst Yayınları, 2008).
[28] Nurullah Atâ, "Ertuğrul Muhsin," *Darülbedayi* 33 (1933), 5.
[29] Perdeci, "Dinlemeyi Öğrenmeliyiz," *Darülbedayi* 23 (1931), 1.
[30] Perdeci, "Bize yeni bir Muhit lâzım," *Darülbedayi* 24 (1932), 1.
[31] Nutku, *Darülbedayi'den Şehir* Tiyatrosu'na, 142.

Ataç is not interested in how the plays were performed. For him, adding Western plays such as Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Pirandello into the theatre repertoire was more important. Republican ideology drew the sharp edges of the ethical regime and left vaudevilles or adaptations out of these edges. Western plays became an important carrier of the republican ideology since educating the public was the primary duty of theatre practises. Ertuğrul, one of the most significant supporters of this claim, says, "*I don't wish to change the look of the heads, I want to change the minds completely from scratch and theatre is the one and only tool to make that happen.*"[32] Ertuğrul was a significant figure in Early Republican theatre, and he made a considerable effort to choose serious and ideal Western plays and add their translations into the repertoire. In the newspaper *Akşam*, Hüseyin Suat criticises Ertuğrul's views on theatre;

> *Muhsin is a diligent and valuable boy... (...) Yet, he has a weakness: to make a revolution in theatre and to make that seen. The past of the theatre never changes, if it does, it won't be theatre anymore, it will become something else. That is why the plays he made us watch, Six Characters in Search of an Author, The Magnificent Cuckold and Rossum's Universal Robots are not plays, but fantasies.*[33]

Suat is critical of Ertuğrul's leaning towards Western plays. He draws attention to the fact that the public was not interested in such plays and Ertuğrul's insistence on staging serious plays, exposing the theatre to the danger of losing its audience. Besides the articles of Hüseyin Suat, similar discussions about Ertuğrul appeared in various newspapers and magazines of the era. Not allowing enough native writers in the repertoire is another example of the criticisms Ertuğrul received during the time. Yaşar Nabi Nayır writes the following in the newspaper *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye:*

> *A few precious plays it gives us every year are not enough to cover the sad situation our theatre is in. However, the press and educated people seem to be in a consensus to keep the theatre filled with such works. Darülbedayi abstained from doing its duty in the Turkish cultural reform.*[34]

Critics of the era accused Ertuğrul of not paying enough attention to the Turkish revolution because he did not give enough space in the repertoire for the native playwrights. Some culture-makers of the era believed that the institutions should concentrate on the plays praising the power and the influence of the new state. However, Ertuğrul was following European theatres and built a repertoire with the European playwrights, instead of choosing propaganda plays of the republican ideology. Ertuğrul was, of course, aware of the importance of the theatre in the nation-building process. In one of his articles in the magazine Darülbedayi, he stresses the importance of theatre. He writes that the Bulgarians "*are ahead of us in building and raising the nation; they have built theatres before us to develop their nation; they managed to enlighten their people with the spiritual light, shining from the luminous stage.*"[35] In some of his articles, Ertuğrul harshly criticises the audience for the sake of his belief in educating the public using theatre. His articles sometimes include hard words, describing how the audience should behave in theatre. He wants the audience to give up their old habits and fashion the manner of a civilised audience. He wants to carry the reforms of the founding fathers to the theatre, as he believes the theatre holds such a power;

[32] Muhsin Ertuğrul, *Gerçeklerin Düşleri: Tiyatro Düşünceleri*, ed. Özdemir Nutku (Istanbul: Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı Vakfı Yayınları, 1993), 270.
[33] Nutku, *Darülbedayi'den Şehir Tiyatrosu'na*, 235.
[34] Ertuğrul, *Gerçeklerin Düşleri: Tiyatro Düşünceleri*, 280.
[35] Ertuğrul, *Gerçeklerin Düşleri: Tiyatro Düşünceleri*, 36.

> *If theatre would not people, 'let it go' we would say, 'let them write and play whatever they want'. Unfortunately, when a piece is written and staged, it poisons the public, not the ones who wrote and acted it. It corrupts the feelings and minds of the people, and then gives the impression that theatre is nothing more than a thrilling two-and-a-half-hour-long fallacy.*[36]

Ertuğrul strongly believed that theatre has a strong influence on people, thus everything put on the stage should carry an example. He constantly stresses that the theatre is not a place for entertainment and fun. His word shows the sacred quality he gives to the theatre;

> *Theatre is a sanctuary for old and new civilisations, and progress is inevitable there. We can receive its light only after we become a part of that progress. For nations stumbling over and over in the dark, like us, the theatre is like a lantern that leads the way. For many years, in the midst of storms, we have yearned for that light.*[37]

Muhsin Ertuğrul thought that theatre is a vital element of the Westernisation process by lighting the way up to the level of modern civilisations. In her article titled "*Theatre, The 'Sacred' Place of the National Unity*," Nilgün Firidinoğlu highlights the sanctitude Ertuğrul puts the theatre.[38] For him, the theatre is a sanctuary that would provide national unity. This sanctity indicates that the function of theatre practises are based on certain moral and political values. Within the edges of the ethical regime, what defines theatre as a form of art is this functionality. Although the plays Ertuğrul favoured over the years were thematically different from the ones produced in the People's Houses, he was still responding to the artistic regime of the era as he was choosing Western plays, and he was considering theatre as an instrument for public education.

Finally, I will talk about the interference made to the private theatres in the name of advice, to demonstrate the strict limits of the artistic regime of the era. As there was an increasing number of troupes performing around Anatolia in the 1930s, the Directorate-general for Publishing, connected to the Department of Home Affairs, ordered plays from the leading writers of the era. This operation can be summarised as;

> *Stage actors are the most important figures to spread and circulate the morals of the stage among the public in Türkiye. These devoted people reach beyond newspapers, books, and many other social tools to perform. They travel the country inch by inch, yet they have just a few plays to act. There are only a few plays that would raise the cultural level of society and introduce people to their new cause. Considering this lack, we found it appropriate to request works that would explain our national arguments from our well-known writers.*[39]

As the quote mentions, the main objective of the government was to use theatre as a tool to socialise Republican ideology. One of the writers involved in these operations was Reşat Nuri Güntekin, who had written numerous plays during the Ottoman and Republican eras and held positions in literary committees. The play *Hülleci* (The Hired Husband), being a play he wrote with such a purpose, can be described as;

[36] Ertuğrul, *Gerçeklerin Düşleri: Tiyatro Düşünceleri*, 34.
[37] Efdal Sevinçli, *Görüşleriyle Uygulamalarıyla Bir Tiyatro Adamı Olarak Muhsin Ertuğrul* (Istanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1990), 143.
[38] Nilgün Firidinoğlu, "Ulusal Birliğin 'Kutsal' Mekanı Olarak Tiyatro," in *Tiyatroda Zaman/Mekan*, ed. Kerem Karaboğa (Istanbul: Habitus Yayıncılık, 2018).
[39] Reşat Nuri Güntekin, "Hülleci," in *Reşat Nuri Güntekin'in Tiyatro İle İlgili Makaleleri*, ed. Kemal Yavuz (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1976), 599-600.

> *(...) an imam who seems not to take a step without basal yet commits to any kind of ill for the sake of money, and can easily relate any evil to the holy writ. The story of an illiterate and stupid madrasah student travels villages as a beggar. Furthermore, the story of a good-natured, unfortunate man falls into bad paths for his needs but becomes a good man again when he finds the chance.*[40]

Looking at the story, Reşat Nuri explains the importance of civil law and shows that sharia law-based hülle can be manipulated for money. The play has been written for troupes on tour in Anatolia, thus it shows that theatre is a tool to educate the public within the lines of the artistic regime defined by the state. Reşat Nuri expresses his motivation by saying;

> *I believe the play has a thought-provoking aspect, despite being written to entertain people a little. The family is the most important institution in a society. In this bitter-sweet comedy, we can see that people who abuse religion for their own benefit can also manipulate their families. Those people can also ravage their families as they wish.*[41]

Reşat Nuri's words clearly demonstrate that the play was meant to educate people about the new republican family profile and the importance of civil law in daily life. They are also stressing the didactical use of the theatre, along with the operations of the Directorate-general. Operations were aimed at the Tulûat troupes and the amateur theatre groups founded in Anatolia. The Tulûat troupes were a big hit, both in Anatolia and in bigger cities. Neither the founding fathers nor the culture-makers of the Republican ideology considered these groups as valid theatre companies. According to their perceptions, the companies were not performing serious or idea plays. They were only acting to entertain people and make money from it. Despite the prohibitions and accusations, Tulûat was a very popular genre among the people. Yet, they posed a treat to the artistic regime of the era, as they did not comply with the educational, didactical qualities. To achieve the prospected nation, the theatre, an indispensable instrument of the nation-building process, cannot simply be entertaining.

As we have seen in the example of Reşat Nuri, playwrights of the era constantly remind us of the pragmatic quality of theatre. Sevda Şener makes an important observation about the playwriting between 1924 and 1940, "*The weaknesses of our play-writing practises are, the lack of a formal perfection, inability to create characters with depth and working with stereotyped characters instead, and the over-emphasis on being didactical.*[42]" If we look at the theatre practises of the era, we can see that it was progressing with the concerns of being useful for the new state and contributing to the nation. The main concern was telling a true, morally proper story on the stage. When the founding fathers, culture-makers and theatre artists attributed such a mission to the theatre stage, they also defined the artistic regime of the period. The ethical regime based on thought and morality in works of art is also the regime of arts of the Early Republic theatre.

## Conclusion

Rancière emphasises the importance of when and where of the artistic practises. The criteria of an artwork is defined by the laws of the political regime in which it has been created. As I have explained with the examples above, the political and artistic spheres of the Early Republican era were shaped according to the national culture. The political regime considered all types of art as tools that would build the prospected nation and the prospected society. When the government instrumentalize

[40] Güntekin, "Hülleci," 603.
[41] Güntekin, "Hülleci," 604.
[42] Şener, *Cumhuriyet'in 75. Yılında Türk Tiyatrosu*, 92.

art, artistic practises started to comply with the moral and political values of the one-party regime. Therefore, we can say that the ethical regime was the regime of arts of the Early Republic era.

Artistic practises of theatre existed within the limits of the ethical regime during that period. It is possible to say that the founding fathers were more focused on theatre than any other art form. As theatre can reach a wider audience, it was crucial for establishing the envisioned nation. Theatre practises in the People's Houses were within the limits of the ethical regime, as they were concerned with strengthening the state-citizen bond and cultivating republican ideology. Despite the lack of propaganda plays in the repertoire, the plays in Darülbedayi were also within the limits of the ethical regime. The institution worked with Western plays that would fit the description of serious, ideal, real play, with an effort to create a Western-styled theatre tradition. This effort was to create the Western culture on which the Republican ideology is based. When we look at the articles of Muhsin Ertuğrul and other culture-makers of the era, we see theatre as an instrument that enlightens and educates people. Instead of fitting in any aesthetic criteria, an artwork should reflect the necessities of the society constructed by the political regime. Early Republican theatre was grounded completely in politics and produced art within the limitations of the ethical regime. For the political figures and culture-makers of the era, theatre is the foundation stone of an "intellectual" Western society. This perspective shows how the ethical regime has shaped artistic practises. Today, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the republican theatre, we must think about the mission assigned to the theatre during that period and question how much we have drifted away from that mission, intellectually and artistically. Even though we have tried various forms of theatre and written plays on different themes over the past hundred years, the way we engage with the ideas we see on stage shows that theatre still carries the same unremovable burden. I even think that carrying this burden has become a tradition in our theatre now.

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Chapter 9

# National Theatre Historiography in Türkiye and the Determining Factors for Historians' Choices (1923-1980)

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## Abstract

National theatre histories play a crucial role in consolidating the cultural identity of newly established countries and are pivotal in reshaping national narratives. This distinctive characteristic has led to the emergence of fresh perspectives within the field, particularly in the late twentieth century. Scholars like S. E. Wilmer, underscoring the significance of theatre historians' viewpoints, shed light on the variables influencing these perspectives. Wilmer argues that historiography demands intentional decisions regarding inclusion and exclusion, urging scrutiny through the lenses of language, ethnicity, geography, and aesthetics. This study assesses examples from national theatre history books in Türkiye (1923–1980) within the categories proposed by Wilmer. Throughout the article, an effort will be made to identify how the various parameters mentioned by Wilmer manifest in the development of national theatre history studies in our country through examples. This study initiates a discussion on whether the cited examples shape the character of our national theatre history. In this context, the categories of geography, language, ethnicity, and aesthetics proposed by Wilmer prove crucial for the analysis of theatre histories. In doing so, this study seeks to unveil the perspectives of theatre historians and discern the ideological and cultural forces shaping their narratives.

**Keywords** historiography of the Republic Era · theatre · theatre history · national theatre historiography · nation-state

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## National Theatre Historiography

The need to understand the past and to establish a connection between the present and the past gave rise to history, which was only recognised as a science in the 19th century. History, which became a scientific field through the work of Leopold Von Ranke, known as the "*father of historical science,*"[1] was not treated as a coherent discipline until the 19th century. The process of writing history, the factors considered when crafting historical texts, and the interpretation of historical facts all fall under the domain of historiography. It is carried out with a critical approach in this sense, and it writes the history of history.

The discipline of theatre historiography, examined under the title of historiography, developed in the 20th century with the emergence of a separate theatre history discipline distinct from literary history. At the end of the century, numerous panels and meetings were held in the West with the participation of theatre scholars. Theatre academics working towards the development of the discipline generated thoughts on how theatre histories should be written and aimed to develop methodologies specific to theatre history. S. E. Wilmer, a prominent theatre academic in this field, argues that "*writing history always involves decisions about what to include and what to exclude.*"[2] In his article titled "On Writing National Theatre Histories," he examines the problems that historians encounter through four important categories: geography, language, ethnicity, and aesthetics. Wilmer emphasises the importance of these categories for theatre historians and focuses on the problematic aspects of national theatre history through these categories. Factors such as societal structural changes, the redefinition of national boundaries, and ideological shifts in the country influence the choices made by those writing theatre history. The categories identified by Wilmer reveal the perspectives of history writing shaped by these changes.

National theatre history holds a significant place in theatre historiography. In fact, S. E. Wilmer defines national theatres as the "*flagship of theater culture*"[3]. The concept of the nation-state, which emerged in Europe in the 19th century and originated from nationalist thinking after the French Revolution, became influential in the 20th century, especially after World War I and World War II, covering Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the entire world. Erika Fisher-Lichte suggests that engagement with the past in the late 20th and 21st centuries arises from specific needs. According to Lichte, engaging with the past "*allowed, on the one hand, escape from an increasingly complex and depressing reality and satisfied, on the other hand, a deep-seated desire to find orientation and identity in a changing world.*"[4] Lichte's association of engagement with the past and the desire to find identity in a changing world can be read through the lens of historians' relationship with the concept of the nation. Theatre history, sometimes desired as a means to solidify the culture of a newly established nation and at other times viewed as an assisting element in rewriting the nation's history, serves as a testament to this dynamic.

In *Writing and Rewriting National Theatre Histories*, edited by S. E. Wilmer and published in 2004, articles on the theatre histories of countries such as India, Indonesia, Slovenia, Ireland, the United States, Mexico, South Africa, Russia, Sweden, Belgium, and Germany were compiled. In the introduction to this work, Wilmer mentions that national theatre histories remain an intriguing subject. He adds, "*National histories continue to be written and rewritten, and they continue to help construct, challenge, or reaffirm notions of identity.*"[5] S. E. Wilmer states that national theatre historians are similar to

[1] Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval & Modern* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 232.
[2] S. E. Wilmer, "On Writing National Theatre Histories," in *Writing and Rewriting National Theatre Histories*, ed. S. E. Wilmer (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), 17.
[3] S. E. Wilmer, "Introduction," in *National Theatres in Changing Europe*, ed. S. E. Wilmer (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 2.
[4] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *History of European Drama and Theatre*, trans. Jo Riley (Londra: Routledge, 2002), 231.
[5] S. E. Wilmer, "Introduction," in *Writing and Rewriting National Theatre Histories*, ed. S. E. Wilmer (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), x.

historians working in other fields in many ways. However, several different parameters influence historians' preferences because they write national theatre history:

> *National theatre historians often have to negotiate assumptions (their own and those of others) about national identity and national character. In addition, they have to decide what types of theatrical events to record, which artists to feature, and what method to use in telling the story. The personal interests of the historians in particular theatrical styles or in types of artists inevitably influence the choices that they make. Similarly, the social context, such as the redrawing of national boundaries and the ideological changes in the country, affect their choices.*[6]

Discovering the dilemma that historians face when making choices will evaluate past historical studies and making informed choices when writing new histories with a certain awareness. Because: "*National theatres and cultural organisations as well as national theatre historiography naturally continue to emphasise the product of the nation.*"[7] When considering national theatre historiography, it is important to remember that it naturally emphasises the productions of the nation. It should not be forgotten that current powers may influence the source of what the nation produces:

> *Throughout history, knowledge of the past, in the form of history, has been an area of interest for those in power who seek to legitimise themselves and the institutions they create from the past to the present. This is because those in power have believed that emphasising the antiquity of their roots, how ancient their history is, and highlighting their accomplishments and the institutions they have established would make it easier for them to be accepted as legitimate in people's minds. This utilitarian (pragmatic) way of thinking has manifested differently in each era and period.*[8]

When examined in the context of national theatre history, Ahmet Şimşek's emphasis on the historical pragmatism of power reveals that historiography can be used to support the nation-state ideology for utilitarian purposes. To understand the changes that have influenced the development of theatre historiography in our country and to examine the role of the nation-state ideology on it, it is necessary to reflect on the stages that historical discourse went through after the proclamation of the Republic.

## Environment in which Theatre Historiography Developed: Historiography in the Republican Era

With the proclamation of the Republic, Türkiye aimed to break free from the influence of the Ottoman Empire in the political, social, and cultural spheres, looking to the West as an example in these areas. In this context, shaping the history of the newly established nation-state and fulfilling the requirements of being a Westernised country became of great importance. However, merely rejecting the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire and advocating for views based on this rejection without emphasising scholarship would not lead to the creation of competent works in the field of history. Ahmet Şimşek addresses this situation within the framework of theory and methodology as follows:

[6] Wilmer, "Introduction," ix-x.
[7] S. E. Wilmer, "Finland," in *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History*, ed. David Wiles and Christine Dymkowski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 114.
[8] Ahmet Şimşek, Ali Satan, "Türkiye'de Milli Tarihin İnşası," in *Milli Tarihin İnşası (Makaleler)*, ed. Ahmet Şimşek and Ali Satan (Istanbul: Tarihçi Kitabevi, 2011), 11.

> *(...) in countries like Türkiye, where theory is not seen as a scientific necessity and where the absence of theory is not perceived as a deficiency, there is a tendency to rely on a "practical to theory" approach. In a sense, the history of such countries, influenced by romantic nationalist thought, has been primarily based on the transcription of "official documents." During this period, the type of historian that emerged was so firmly attached to the reliability of documents, especially official documents, that it hindered critical thinking about historical methodology for a long time when it came to conveying the reality of the past.*[9]

The excessive importance given to official documents and the lack of sufficient work on historical methodology stem from the reflex to urgently create the nation's history. The newly established state strives to solidify its credibility and ideology through history based on official documents. With this goal in mind, the establishment of the Turkish Historical Society in 1931 and the subsequent History Congresses played a significant role in shaping historiography during the Early Republic period. Sefa Şimşek, regarding the Turkish History Thesis established through these efforts, expresses the following about the Early Republic era's perspective on history:

> *The essence of the Turkish History Thesis is based on the idea of establishing a connection between the historical experiences of the Turks and the most positive and progressive events in human history. According to this thesis, inventions and revolutions such as the wheel, writing, and agriculture were first realised by the Turks. In other words, contemporary civilisation owes its existence to the splendour created by the Turks in ancient times.*[10]

The Turkish Historical Thesis, in this regard, reflects the importance of Turkish ethnicity in the ideology of the Republic. This approach, which endeavours to create a new future and aims to ground this future in a solid past, pragmatically addresses naturally occurring trends in the West within a specific timeframe. Simultaneously, it denies the Ottoman and Islamic periods, clinging to a romanticised understanding of the pre-Islamic and prehistoric eras.[11] Şerif Mardin, in his 1950 article "Recent Trends in Historical Writing," expressed that historical scholarship developed under the influence of the official historical thesis after the establishment of the Republic. He noted that apart from a few exceptions, very little was written about Ottoman history. Mardin stated: *"Moreover, several accomplished authors, of whom Fuat Köprülü (the present Foreign Minister), is an outstanding example, had a sufficiently secure and independent position of their own not to be forced to identify themselves with the "party line.""*[12] Mardin also argued that the ease with which research on Ottoman history began coincided with the 1940s, a period when the power of the single-party government waned, which happened after the death of Atatürk.[13] According to Büşra Ersanlı, this inclination to disregard the Ottoman period and cling to pre-Islamic history could be seen as a "*backward leap*"[14] and prevented the newly established Republic from having a perception of history based on solid foundations.

Between 1950 and 1960, under the rule of the Democrat Party, Türkiye underwent a series of changes following what Eric Jan Zürcher identifies as the "*the heyday of Kemalism*"[15] until 1945. The initiation of multi-party politics and the change in single-party government resulted in a gradual reduction in the influence of the Early Republican era ideology. As Türkiye entered a new era, it also increased its

[9] Ahmet Şimşek, "Giriş ya da Herodotos'tan Bugüne Tarihyazımına Kısa Bir Bakış," in *Türkiye'de Tarih Yazımı*, ed. Vahdettin Engin and Ahmet Şimşek (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2017), 3.
[10] Sefa Şimşek, *Bir İdeolojik Seferberlik Deneyimi: Halkevleri 1932-1951* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2002), 147.
[11] Büşra Ersanlı, *İktidar ve Tarih: Türkiye'de "Resmî Tarih" Tezinin Oluşumu (1923-1937)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 234.
[12] Sherif Mardin, "Recent Trends in Turkish Historical Writing," *Middle East Journal* 4, no. 3 (1950): 356.
[13] Mardin, "Recent Trends in Turkish Historical Writing," 357.
[14] Ersanlı, *İktidar ve Tarih: Türkiye'de "Resmî Tarih" Tezinin Oluşumu (1923-1937)*, 239.
[15] Eric Jan Zürcher, *Türkiye: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 4.

relations with the West after World War II. As a reflection of the growing relationship with the West, books on the methodology of history began to be translated in the 1950s, although the number of original works during this period remained limited. By 1960, a military coup interrupted democracy, followed by a relatively more liberal constitution that led to a return to democracy. This atmosphere of freedom was also reflected in the field of historiography with an increase in the number of original works. Moreover, the organisation of congresses and seminars on historical methodologies between 1970 and 1980 marked significant developments in the field.[16]

## Tendencies in Theatre Historiography in Türkiye (1923-1980)

The tendencies briefly outlined above, which emerged with the proclamation of the Republic when the new nation was writing its history, are likely to have also influenced the writing of national theatre history. According to Wilmer, national theatre tends to inevitably create its national character. In the public sphere and interacting with the public, theatre is considered an essential element in defining nations and their histories. The theatre history of a nation rewriting its history from scratch or redefining it is also written from scratch or aims to rewrite history in line with the nation-state ideology.

In this context, the examination of national theatre history books written between 1923 and 1980 in the later part of the article, utilising S. E. Wilmer's categories of language, ethnicity, geography, and aesthetics, serves to evaluate the development of theatre historiography in Türkiye and assess the influencing factors. This analysis aims to underscore the various approaches employed in constructing national theatre historiography. Notable historians like Refik Ahmet Sevengil, Metin And, Enver Behnan Şapolyo, and Niyazi Akı will be referenced for illustrative examples from their theatre history books.

## Language, Ethnicity, Geography and Aesthetics: An Evaluation

In his article "On Writing National Theatre Histories," Wilmer highlights the challenges of crafting national theatre histories in countries with multiple spoken languages, particularly when addressing the language category. In such countries, historians must choose the language or languages to focus on when examining theatrical events.[17] Therefore, language can serve as both a unifying and a divisive factor in national theatre history.

For instance, in the first volume of his book *Yakın Çağlarda Türk Tiyatrosu* (Turkish Theatre in Recent Times), written in 1934, Refik Ahmet Sevengil aimed to document the history of Western-style theatre development in Türkiye. In his book, when discussing the theatre scene of the 1860s, he particularly emphasised Turkish-language performances and mentioned the activities of Armenian artists: "*During this time, Armenians in Izmir also formed a theatre troupe. Local theatre movements were expanding, but Turkish-language representations were decreasing.*"[18] According to Sevengil, while depicting the intensity of theatre activities in Istanbul and Izmir, the decline of Turkish-language performances was seen as a negative development. When narrating the history and origins of the national theatre, he placed significant importance on representations in Turkish. As the first person to document the history of Western-style theatre considered suitable for the newly established republic, Sevengil framed the limitations of his work in line with the spirit of the era.

Language and ethnic origin are the two categories that are most significant and deeply intertwined in theatre histories. When writing national theatre history, the historian must decide which ethnic backgrounds of artists to consider when examining theatrical events. Should particular ethnic

[16] Muhittin Tuş, "Türkiye'de Tarih Metodolojisi Sorunu," in *Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye'de Tarihçilik ve Tarih Yayıncılığı Sempozyumu Bildiriler*, ed. Mehmet Öz (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011), 94-95.
[17] Wilmer, "On Writing National Theatre Histories," 20.
[18] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Yakın Çağlarda Türk Tiyatrosu Birinci Cilt* (Istanbul: Kanaat Kütüphanesi, 1934), 20.

backgrounds be prioritised? According to Wilmer, asking and answering such questions can be beneficial when analysing theatre histories and historians. The combination of language and ethnic origin is a recurring theme in our national theatre history. For example, in his 1961 book Tanzimat Tiyatrosu (Turkish Theatre in the Tanzimat Period), Refik Ahmet Sevengil, when discussing the activities of the Gedikpaşa Theatre, which he described as "*the first theatre company to perform in the Turkish language in our country consistently,*"[19] extensively mentions its founder and operator, Güllü Agop, or Hagop Vartovyan. Sevengil draws from various sources and discusses Vartovyan's many years of living a Muslim life and converting to Islam, with both of his wives also converting to Islam. Sevengil references Vasfi Rıza Zobu, who stated that Vartovyan's father and mother did not speak Armenian and that his relatives spoke Turkish.[20] Sevengil, describing Hagop Vartovyan as a "*Turkish Armenian from Kayseri*"[21] considers the fact that Vartovyan's family spoke Turkish instead of Armenian and his conversion to Islam as positive information. This approach can be seen as an attempt to distance Hagop Vartovyan, who holds great importance in theatre history, from his Armenian identity. Thus, his place in national theatre history gains more legitimacy.

S. E. Wilmer, who questions the use of historical methodology and the prevalent tendencies in written national theatre history, argues that evaluating the facts and how historians approach them is essential. When considering Sevengil's approach alongside Wilmer's views, one can question how the historian has chosen to interpret Vartovyan's existence in both his personal and artistic life. For example, when thinking about *Vartovyan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar* (Vartovyan's Troupe and the New Ottomans) by Fırat Güllü, which discusses his identity, after conveying the debates surrounding Hagop Vartovyan's identity, Güllü says:

> *Hagop Vartovyan, whether he is a pure Armenian, whether he has become assimilated into being a Turk over the centuries, or whether he later became a Muslim as a Christian, ultimately shows us through his practises that he is a product of the Armenian enlightenment in the 19th century. By conducting theatrical activities in Turkish, he has contributed to the dissemination of the enlightenment gains he acquired, reaching beyond the community. It is not a coincidence that many translated works by Turkish playwrights, which initially entered the Ottoman territory Armenian, were printed by Armenian printers. First, Hekimyan's Şark Tiyatrosu and then the Tiyatro-i Osmani Kumpanyası under Vartovyan's leadership began the process of transforming these Armenian plays into Turkish. In a period when not a single Muslim actor was on the stage, Vartovyan brought together Armenian actors and helped establish a troupe where Turkish-language plays could be performed. The first Muslim actors emerged from his troupe and took the stage. However, the Tiyatro-i Osmani Kumpanyası not only performed in Turkish but also, in line with the multicultural structure of the empire, staged numerous plays in Armenian and, to a lesser extent, in Bulgarian and Greek. Therefore, they also contributed to theatre activities conducted in these languages.*[22]

Fırat Güllü defines Vartovyan as a product of the Armenian enlightenment, while Sevengil interprets Vartovyan on the basis of his ability to speak Turkish and his conversion to Islam. From this, it can be understood how crucial the perspective of a theatre historian is and how historical facts can take on different shapes through the historian's viewpoint.

Sevengil's treatment of language and ethnic origin elements becomes apparent in his research on the first Turkish-language dramatic literary work. Sevengil mentions two plays written before "Şair

[19] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1968), 53.
[20] Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, 56.
[21] Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, 56.
[22] Fırat Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar* (Istanbul: Bgst Yayınları, 2008), 42-43.

Evlenmesi." One of them is a play titled "Pabuççu Ahmed'in Acib Vakaları ve Garip Hadiseleri," found by Prof. Fahir İz in the Vienna National Library. Sevengil shares information about the language of the play, as reported by Fahir İz:

> *Professor Fahir İz states that in the play manuscript found in the Vienna National Library, the name of the author is not mentioned, and it is stated that the work was transcribed by someone named İskerleç, who made mistakes in spelling and transcription. He points out that there are some characteristics of the Armenian dialect in some parts of the expression, which may give you an idea about the ethnicity of İskerleç, who transcribed it, and adds the words, 'In this regard, we must also remember the role of Armenians in the history of Turkish Theatre.' The interest of Turkish Armenians in Western-style theatre art in Türkiye began with an Armenian-language performance held by amateur young people in 1820 in Kuru Çeşme, İstanbul, in the mansion of a wealthy man named Düziyan. The first time the Armenians performed a Turkish-language play was, as mentioned above, in 1858. We do not find it possible to establish a connection between the role of the Armenians in Turkish theatre and a Turkish play written before 1809.*[23]

Sevengil argues in the later part of the text that the words Fahir İz identified as indicators of the Armenian dialect in the play were miswritten due to translation and spelling errors. Through examples, he suggests that the play was translated by a foreigner who was not proficient in the Turkish language. According to Sevengil, the person who wrote this play was a foreigner with close contact with Western theatre and had learned Turkish.[24] His effort to prove that an Armenian did not translate this play is remarkable. He appreciates Fahir İz's discovery but firmly asserts that there is no direct connection between this play and Armenian theatre artists. While rejecting the possibility of an Armenian author writing one of the first Turkish-language plays in this way, Sevengil suggests in his book *Şair Evlenmesi'nden Önceki İlk Türkçe Oyunlar* (The First Turkish Plays Before the Şair Evlenmesi), published in 1983, that the play "Pabuççu Ahmed'in Acib Vakaları ve Garip Hadiseleri" might have been written by a Turkish person who felt the need to conceal their identity.[25] However, when another version of the same play, signed as "Dombay" instead of "İskerleç", was discovered later, Sevengil proposed a different theory. He suggested that a Turkish instructor at the Doğu Dilleri Okulu (School of Eastern Languages) who taught Turkish to international students might have given this text to his students, and based on the common text, the students might have written these plays.[26] Here, two different approaches to the same event are evident. Sevengil's perspective stands out as an outright rejection.

In a similar vein, Sevengil, in his 1968 book *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu* (Turkish Theatre in the Era of Constitutional Period), evaluated the increase in the number of Turkish-origin artists during the Constitutional period, a time when theatre activity significantly increased, as a positive development for the formation of national theatre. He praised these artists as follows:

> *In summary, let us say this: In that era, young Turks who had embarked on stage life should be remembered with respect as art heroes for their devotion to elevating Turkish art, despite numerous difficulties; among them were those who showed great tolerance and success and educated themselves through their own efforts; these can be said to have laid the foundation for the development of the Republic era.*[27]

[23] Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, 50.
[24] Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, 50.
[25] Metin And, *Şair Evlenmesi'nden Önceki İlk Türkçe Oyunlar* (Istanbul: İnkılâp ve Aka Kitabevleri, 1983), 12.
[26] And, *Şair Evlenmesi'nden Önceki İlk Türkçe Oyunlar*, 14.
[27] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1968), I.

Sevengil's description of theatre practitioners as art heroes reflects the dominant understanding of theatre during the early Republican era, which continued to be influential in the 1960s. During the early Republican era, the theatre was considered a critical symbol of modernisation and was used to uplift the people to the level of contemporary civilisations. In this context, the emphasis on Turkish ethnicity as an essential element aligns with Sevengil's mission to elevate Turkish art through theatre. Turkish ethnicity is considered an important factor in the establishment of the national theatre. The relationship established between national theatre and ethnicity can also be illustrated in his preface:

> *The declaration of the Second Constitutional Period in 1908 meant a new path for Türkiye after a long period of oppressive rule. Turkish stage art began to flourish again amidst the atmosphere of constitutionalism and freedom; at that time, the Turkish youth, in particular, showed great interest in theatre acting and playwriting, which can be regarded as an important start for the development of this fine art in our country. Turkish women could not appear on stage without standing beside Turkish men. Important steps in this direction were taken during the Constitutional period.*[28]

In this quote from the preface of Sevengil's book *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*, it is evident that the concept of national identity is strengthened through ethnicity. Turkishness is emphasised as a quality that needs to be underscored. Sevengil does not mention that Armenian women were the only ones on the stage until that time, as he does in the book. Instead, he only refers to these activities as a stepping stone for establishing a national Turkish theatre. The section titled "Büyük Bir Yanlış" (A Great Mistake) supports these ideas. In this section, Sevengil criticises İbnürrefik Ahmet Nuri for stating that Armenians were the founders of the national theatre: "*We have stated in many of our writings that our Armenian citizens who performed representations in the Turkish language have served our theatre; but as we also said in our book Tanzimat Tiyatrosu, the honour of being pioneers belongs not to Armenians but to young Turks from the Palace Orchestra (Muzika-i Hümâyun) whose names, unfortunately, we do not know today.*"[29] He adds:

> *When İbnürrefik Ahmet Nuri's article about Mınakyan was published, there had been no research on Turkish Palace Theatre in our country, and information about theatre activities in our country was limited to what the Armenian actors who were still alive had heard and told. In this respect, the writers of that era can be excused. However, İbnürrefik Ahmet Nuri's wish for our Armenian citizens to continue the theatre in our country, even if it was expressed during a period of hopelessness, is the product of tragic negligence.*[30]

From this quote, it can be understood that Sevengil views Armenians solely as a nation that contributed to the development of the national theatre. In the "Sahnede İlk Türk Kadını" (The First Turkish Woman on Stage) section of the book, Sevengil discusses the Armenian theatre artist Eliza Binemeciyan's departure abroad and mentions Afife Jale's first appearance on stage in the play "Yamalar." He describes Binemeciyan as both a talented artist and someone who spoke Turkish so well that it was indistinguishable from how a Turkish woman would speak.[31] Sevengil's criteria for evaluating the artist are noteworthy. During the period under examination, one of the most common criticisms against Armenian theatre artists was that they spoke Turkish incorrectly. The author's approach shows the importance of a common language, which is inseparable from the concept of the nation in a newly established state. According to Sevengil, the founders of the emerging Turkish national theatre should

[28] Sevengil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*, I.
[29] Sevengil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*, 53.
[30] Sevengil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*, 53.
[31] Sevengil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*, 303.

be Turks. This approach simplifies the Ottoman Theatre, which housed different cultures, into a single culture. This attitude is closely related to the cultural policy of the Republic, which emphasised a single culture, gradually becoming established and replacing the term Ottoman Theatre with Turkish theatre. Consequently, the multicultural experience of the times when theatre flourished is inevitably forgotten.[32]

Wilmer argues that when writing theatre histories, the quest for origins and determining the beginning of national theatre is of great significance for historians. National theatre historians may, based on their objectives, date the origins of national theatre to different periods. An interesting example that Wilmer provides, using Greek national theatre history, illustrates this perspective:

> *Generally, national theatre historians look for the connections between different generations of national artists (rather than their transnational links) to show the continuity in national themes and discourse and the links with other national artistic work. As an extreme case, Greek national theatre history, following the strategy of nineteenth-century national historians who wished to assert a distinct Greek national identity for the new nation-state despite centuries of subjection to the Ottoman empire, has jumped over two thousand years of Byzantine and Ottoman history to emphasize the links between ancient and modern (nineteenth- and twentieth-century) Greek theatre.*[33]

Similar approaches have emerged in national theatre history books written in our country in different forms. For example, in his book *Eski Türklerde Dram Sanatı* (Dramatic Art in Ancient Turks), Sevengil attempts to prove that there was a form of theatre among the Turks before the 19th century. According to him, this area has not been studied sufficiently, so it would be incorrect to assume that there was no theatre among the Turks before the 19th century.[34] He argues that theatre may have emerged in Crete before Greek theatre and that the people who practised theatre there had Turkish origins: "*Studies of racial origins have shown that the Pelasgians, Eteocretans, and Kidons, who constituted the ancient Cretan civilisation, were kindred peoples with the Hittite Turks tribes who passed through Anatolia.*"[35] He goes even further to suggest that Dionysos may have been initially a Turkish god of Anatolia:

> *Accordingly, is Dionysos, who came to Greece from Crete, and to Crete from Asia Minor, from the Hittites, the ancient Turkish god who had been worshipped in Anatolia for many years and who is shown on the Hittite relief with a bunch of grapes in his hand? All of these suggest the possibility that Dionysian celebrations, which are entirely dramatic in nature, may have existed among the Hittite Turks in Anatolia before they were introduced to Greece in the 7th*
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> *century BC. This raises the idea that the Turks might have brought him from Central Asia to Anatolia. The degree of accuracy of this possibility will only be determined through future research by art historians.*[36]

Sevengil leaves the proof of these claims to future art historians, acknowledging that debates exist about whether the Sumerians and Hittites were Turkish.[37] However, he does not find this problematic, and even if these civilisations were not Turkish, he argues that the existence of Turkish theatre before

[32] Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar*, 29.
[33] Wilmer, "On Writing National Theatre Histories," 19.
[34] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Eski Türklerde Dram Sanatı* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1959), III.
[35] Sevengil, *Eski Türklerde Dram Sanatı*, 13.
[36] Sevengil, *Eski Türklerde Dram Sanatı*, 14-15.
[37] Sevengil, *Eski Türklerde Dram Sanatı*, 15.

the 19th century can be proven through the influence of Turks on Chinese theatre. He states: "*The first three dynasties that ruled in China were also Turkish. They ruled from 2202 BC to 250 BC. It can be seen that the first mention of theatre in China, which dates back to 1140 BC, belongs to the time of Turkish rule.*"[38] This reasoning is inconsistent, lacks sources, and does not reflect reality. The fact that theatre was first mentioned in China during the rule of the Turks does not prove that the founders of theatre there were Turks. Sevengil constructs his book based on interpretations and assumptions to achieve his goals. He extends boundaries both geographically and in terms of scope to establish the origins of the national theatre. Like Wilmer's Greek theatre example, Sevengil expands the boundaries to ensure continuity in national themes and narratives. This line of reasoning appears inconsistent and lacks credible sources, and its validity is questionable. The fact that the Turks came to power in China when theatre was first mentioned does not prove that the Turks were theatre's founders there. Sevengil constructs his book to achieve his purpose based on interpretations and assumptions. Expanding geographical boundaries to include rulers of Turkish origin in China is similar to Wilmer's example regarding Greek theatre. Sevengil, in pursuit of solidifying the origins of national theatre, extends the geographical boundaries on which he relies and, like Wilmer's illustration, does so to ensure continuity in national themes and narratives.

Similar to other fields of history, theatre history can also change because of evolving social developments and new methodologies. Wilmer describes the greatest challenge national theatre historians face in this regard: "*Recognize and understand the ideologies and assumptions that influence their choices and to clarify to their readers the reasons for these choices.*"[39] Explaining the reasons behind these choices means acknowledging that these choices were made consciously. "*Historical representations always involve constructions of identity, knowingly or unknowingly. Every historian who writes a 'history of Austria' or a 'history of Canada' constructs at the same time a historical identity.*"[40] In this context, naming history and attributing it to a nation can determine many things. Each new expression brings new meanings and discourses. The way traditional genres are addressed in our national theatre history provides rich data regarding identity constructions. In the work *Karagözün Tarihi* (History of Karagöz) written by historian Enver Behnan Şapolyo in 1946, which heavily reflects the early Republican era understanding of history, it is argued that Karagöz has its roots in ancient Turkish civilisations such as the Sumerians, Hittites, Göktürks, and Uyghurs. The basis for Şapolyo's argument is solely his own interpretations:

> *Karagöz is the name of the Turkish imaginary play of the Ottoman period. In the Seljuk Turks, the first Muslim Turkish states, and even before Islam in the Göktürk and Uyghur Turks, imaginary play certainly existed. We do not have written documents belonging to them, but the existence of imaginary play in Central Asian Turks is evident from the existence of imaginary play in China and among the Mongols. Because imaginary play in China is very simple. However, this imaginary play, which is called Karagöz and still exists in the Ottomans, is spirited.*[41]

Şapolyo, explaining the origin of Karagöz by its vivid and colourful nature in contrast to the "*lifeless manner with a certain number of black puppets*"[42] in Chinese shadow puppetry, firmly believes that this art cannot belong to the Chinese: "*Because the liveliest and most perfect form of this play is still*

[38] Sevengil, *Eski Türklerde Dram Sanatı*, 18-19.
[39] Wilmer, "On Writing National Theatre Histories," 26.
[40] Chris Lorenz, "You got your history, I got mine: Some reflections on truth and objectivity in history," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 10, no. 4 (1999): 582.
[41] Enver Behnan Şapolyo, *Karagöz'ün Tarihi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1946), 5-6.
[42] Şapolyo, *Karagöz'ün Tarihi*, 9.

*vigorously maintained in the traditions of the Turks*."[43] According to him, the fact that Karagöz still exists and is known in these lands proves that it was born here. Like Sevengil, who argues that theatre existed in Crete before Greek theatre and that its inhabitants had Turkish origins[44], Şapolyo, in his work, almost portrays the official historical understanding dominant at the time through the lens of theatre history. Wilmer argues that historians also need to make their first major restrictions based on the type of performance they are examining, considering that performance and dramatic literature are different fields. Given that performance and dramatic literature are considered distinct, researchers can initially impose their limitations between these two genres.[45] Şapolyo's treatment of Karagöz and traditional theatrical elements in his book brings to mind Wilmer's proposed aesthetic category for analysing national theatre. Attempts to date national theatre to the oldest possible genres are a significant reflection of historians' approaches, and as in this example, they can determine which genres historians will choose when writing theatre history. However, according to Wilmer, in countries with a strong desire to create national theatre, national heroes are often turned to bring people together under a common ideology. These heroes are usually from within the nation and are nourished by folk stories. The stories can be mythological or adapted from folk tales to fit the contemporary ideology of the time.[46] Wilmer illustrates this cultural nationalism as follows:

> *Cultural nationalists investigated and exploited folklore, myths, legends, and local history, and also romanticized the lives of the rural folk. Medieval epics such as the Nibelungenlied, the Nordic sagas and other legends were suddenly regarded as important and used as raw material for creating new works of art. In most European countries, the interest in folk culture did not start from scratch during this period, but had evolved over centuries. However, from the late eighteenth century, folklore and folk culture or ethnography (as well as philology) became important reservoirs for notions of national identity.*[47]

The trend that has its roots in the late eighteenth century becomes even more pronounced with the emergence of the nation-state concept. This aspect can also be considered in Şapolyo's treatment of Karagöz. The consideration of traditional theatre as an aesthetic genre, the use of folk culture in the formation of national theatre, and the inclusion of Karagöz, a popular performance form, seem to align with the trend mentioned by Wilmer.

Metin And, who has authored numerous books in the field of theatre history and researched national theatre history, clearly defines the limitations he imposes on language, geography, and time in his 1972 book titled *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu (1839-1908)* (Turkish Theatre in the Tanzimat and Autocracy Period 1839-1908): "*In short, our subject matter is Turkish theatre within the present-day borders of Türkiye (which are gathered in Istanbul); in terms of time, it covers the period between 1839 and 1908.*"[48] And's focus on theatre activities gathered in Istanbul aligns with Wilmer's observation that national theatre historians mostly concentrate on theatrical activities in the theatre capital.[49] Considering Wilmer's defined geography category, historians must decide whether to base their work on the current geographical boundaries or the geographical boundaries of the period they are studying. This becomes challenging for historians working on periods when nations gained independence and borders constantly changed. In his book *50 Yılın Türk Tiyatrosu* (Turkish Theatre of 50 Years), he mentions the choices he made in the geographical domain:

[43] Şapolyo, *Karagöz'ün Tarihi*, 6.
[44] *Şapolyo, Karagöz'ün Tarihi*, 26.
[45] Wilmer, "On Writing National Theatre Histories," 24.
[46] Wilmer, "On Writing National Theatre Histories," 26.
[47] S. E. Wilmer, "The Development of National Theatres in Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *National Theatres in Changing Europe*, ed. S. E. Wilmer (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 14.
[48] Metin And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu (1839-1908)* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1972), 73.
[49] Wilmer, "On Writing National Theatre Histories," 18.

> *In terms of location, the theatre life, and products within the definite boundaries of the Republic of Türkiye, as established by the Misak-ı Milli (National Pact) and various treaties, have been considered, and the theatre of Turkish communities outside these boundaries has been excluded. Although there are some with strong connections among them, such as the Turkish theatre in Skopje, we found this limitation necessary.*[50]

When writing national theatre history, we consider not only ethnic identity and language but also the country's official borders. In particular, And does not cover Turkish-language performances in Skopje[51] or other countries/cities, even if they involve Turkish actors. Despite fifty years having passed since the founding of the Republic, And's sense of necessity to specify these boundaries remains significant.

Metin And, in his work *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu (1908-1923)* (Turkish Theatre in the Era of Constitutional Period (1908-1923)) published in 1971, provides a lot of data that can be evaluated under the aesthetic category proposed by Wilmer:

> *In terms of the book's plan, we encountered the same challenge faced by every theatre historian, namely, the difficulty of maintaining a balanced approach between stage, theatrical practise, and dramatic literature. Taking inspiration from the plan of the six-volume work 'A History of English Drama' by the eminent scholar and our friend Professor Allardyce Nicoll, we divided our study into two main sections: I- Theatre and Acting during the Constitutional Period, and II- Dramatic Literature during the Constitutional Period. In the first section, we explored the audience, theatre concepts, theatre practitioners, acting, theatre companies, theatre venues, theatre management, and stage arrangements of the Constitutional era. In the second section, we discuss the authors, their influences, language and style, characterisation, and various genres. After providing a general overview, we analysed plays from this era in eight distinct categories, with a separate section dedicated*
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> *to adaptations. The book concludes with an alphabetical list of plays performed during this period. In preparing this study, we did not limit ourselves solely to the texts of the plays. Instead, we consulted historical books, memoirs, monographs, and periodicals such as newspapers, magazines, and annual publications. In addition, we examined theatre announcements and brochures from the era to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the time and its theatrical landscape.*[52]

Metin And, emphasising the importance of striking a balance between stage and theatre practise and dramatic literature, places greater emphasis on plays that have been staged rather than on dramatic literature itself. His choice to include an "Index of Performed Plays" at the end of his books, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu (1839-1908), Meşrutiyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu (1908-1923)* and *50 Yılın Türk Tiyatrosu*, clearly demonstrates this preference. Regarding the "Index of Performed Plays," And states the following:

[50] Metin And, *50 Yılın Türk Tiyatrosu* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1973), 24.

[51] For more information about the performances in the Turkish language in the 19th and 20th centuries in the old Ottoman city of Skopje and the Skopje Peoples' Theatre: Nilgün Firidinoğlu, "1950 SONRASINDA ÜSKÜP HALKLAR TİYATROSU VE KÜLTÜREL KİMLİĞİN İNŞASINDA TÜRKİYE TİYATROSU'NUN ETKİSİ/ Skopje (Üsküp) Theatre of Nationalities After 1950 and the Effect of Turkish Theater on Cultural Identity Formation", Üsküp-İstanbul Kentsel Kültürel Kimlikler: Uluslararası Sempozyum Bildiri Kitabı, ed. Maja Jakimovska-Tosic and Gönül Uzelli, 2020, 263-273.

[52] Metin And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu (1908-1923)* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1971), 14.

> *In this index, plays that were announced to be performed in newspapers, magazines, and advertisements but for which there is no confirmed record of actual staging have not been included. Since provincial newspapers were not surveyed, and in cases where no information about a play being staged was found in the surveyed newspapers, it was not possible to include them in the index.*[53]

In this regard, And takes an obvious stance that theatre must be staged and presented to the audience; otherwise, it cannot be considered theatre. Therefore, in his works, he consistently focuses on and examines plays that have been performed. In an interview, And expressed his view on the importance of staging dramatic literature and plays: "*Of course, now I am someone who thinks of theatre visually. I believe theatre has been misunderstood. It is considered a form of literature. The meaning of theatre is seen.*"[54] And's statement brings to mind the views developed by Max Hermann regarding the essence of theatre history. In 1923, Hermann founded the Theaterwissenschaft Institut (Institute of Theatre Studies) at Berlin University, taking the most significant step towards treating theatre history as a discipline separate from the history of dramatic literature. Hermann argued that examining theatre under the heading of dramatic literature led to the neglect of essential elements specific to theatre, such as the stage, set design, and actors.[55] Hermann's approach aligns closely with this perspective. Following his views on dramatic texts and staging, in his book *50 Yılın Türk Tiyatrosu*, And departs from his earlier works covering earlier periods and focuses exclusively on performed plays throughout the entire study.

Moreover, his choice as a theatre historian to focus on performed plays stands in contrast to the practise of many theatre history works, which concentrate on dramatic literature rather than performed plays. For instance, Niyazi Akı prefers to treat theatre as a literary genre and studies theatre history through written play texts. Analysing dramatic literary works and structuring the history of national theatre accordingly is different from examining performance. Akı's *XIX. Yüzyıl Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (History of the XIX$^{th}$ Century Turkish Theatre), written in 1963, is, in the words of Baha Dürder: "*It is a work that is limited by a scientist's view, even if it only deals with a specific subject other than plays and acting.*"[56]

Throughout his book, Akı categorises literary works written during the historical period and conducts analyses within these categories to identify the characteristics of the 19$^{th}$ century and its society. However, he sets sharp boundaries for his work, stating, "*The book titled 'XIX$^{th}$ Century Turkish Theatre History' is a history of a literary genre that developed within a specific era; it is absolutely not a history of theatregoing within the same period.*"[57] As a result, Akı excludes Meddah and Ortaoyunu, both forms of textless theatre, from his study, even stating that "*considering the meddah as a milestone on the path of the development of our literary theatre would be far-fetched; it is even challenging to consider it as theatre.*"[58] The primary reason for Akı's evaluation is the absence of written text in these forms. In theatre history, text-based theatre and theatre not based on a specific text have always been seen as opposing elements, leading to a choice between the two options. In the text–performance dichotomy, Akı decisively favours text-based theatre, intentionally shaping the content of his work. What influenced Akı's choice is that, unlike traditional theatre, Western-style theatre is text-based, and efforts to create national theatre in the Western style prioritise text-based theatre. In general,

[53] And, *50 Yılın Türk Tiyatrosu*, 643.
[54] Metin And, "Tiyatronun Dilleri Kullanılmıyor," in *Metin And'a Armağan*, ed. M. Sabri Koz (Istanbul: Publisher not specified, 2007), 86.
[55] Erika Fisher-Lichte, "From Text to Performance: The Rise of Theatre Studies as an Academic Discipline in Germany," *Theatre Research International* 24, no. 2 (1999): 170.
[56] Baha Dürder, "Tiyatro Tarihi Betikleri," *Türk Dili XV*, no. 178 (1966): 694.
[57] Niyazi Akı, *XIX. Yüzyıl Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (Erzurum: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1963), 7.
[58] Akı, *XIX. Yüzyıl Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, 9.

examining the approaches of Niyazi Akı and Metin And, which can be categorised under the aesthetic heading, reveals that the theatrical activities included in the history of national theatre revolve around whether they were staged, whether they had a text, and whether they were text-based.

## Conclusion

In the exploration of the discussed examples, it becomes evident that historians approach theatre history through diverse lenses, encompassing dramatic literature, performed plays, Western-style theatre, and traditional genres. During this spectrum, a pronounced emphasis and focus lie on the creation of a Western-style national theatre aligned with the principles of the nation-state ideology. The pervasive influence of the ideological backdrop on historians is unmistakeable in their work. Consequently, theatre history emerges as a pivotal element in the establishment and evolution of the national theatre within the newly founded Republic. This perspective necessitates a delicate balance between breaking ties with the past and oscillating between Western influences and the rootedness of ancient Turkish civilisations.

The trajectory of national theatre histories aligns with the transformative phases of the regime and the establishment of the nation-state ideology after the declaration of the Republic. Throughout this period, the predominant goal of fostering a national theatre took precedence in the written accounts of theatre histories. However, this emphasis sometimes led to insufficient source research, occasional transmission of unverified information, and the unintended consequence of studies focusing solely on the glorification of national qualities.

In conclusion, the crafting of any national theatre history inherently involves intricate choices related to geography, language, ethnic identity, and aesthetics. An examination of national theatre histories written in our country within these categorical frameworks not only illuminates the embedded traces of nation-state ideology in our theatre history but also fosters a critical perspective essential for the nuanced understanding of our theatrical heritage. This critical lens prompts us to reassess the choices made by historians, scrutinise the narratives they construct, and engage in a continuous dialogue that enriches our comprehension of the multifaceted layers inherent in the development of our national theatre.



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# Part III

## Genres and Repertoires

Chapter 10

# Shakespeare and Intertextuality in Turkish Theatre

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## Abstract

Intertextuality was revealed in the 1960s by Julia Kristeva and has been extensively used in postmodern texts. Techniques such as quotation, allusion, calque, plagiarism, translation, pastiche, parody etc. are used to make connections between the source and target texts. In the postmodern period, it is not possible any longer to speak of the originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object, because every artistic object is so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art. It is the period that is characterized by irony, the scepticism towards the grand narratives of modernism, and philosophical critiques of the concepts of universal truths and objective reality that is seen in novels, short stories and dramas. As in the world also in Turkish Theatre postdramatic examples are on the stage. It is ironic that although textuality is one of the biggest challenges of Turkish theatre after the Tanzimat period and its journey continues with it now it has to experience a wide range of postdramatic features. Furthermore, Shakespeare is one of the well-known figures whose plays are used as source texts among these postdramatic approaches in Türkiye. In this study, it is aimed to give a general idea about Shakespeare studies in Türkiye from the Tanzimat period and focus on studies of today and evaluate the plays that make connection with Shakespeare through intertextuality. In this sense, the plays of Müjdat Gezen's *Hamlet Efendi*, Başar Sabuncu's *Bir Ata Krallığım*, Serhat Yiğit's *II. Katil*, Müge Gürman's *Cadıların Machbeth'i*, Pınar Akkuzu and Gülden Arsal's *Şatonun Altında* are going to be discussed with the way of using intertextuality to have polyphonic narrative entities with the voice of 'the other' of the literary canon and to find out a ground on which issues of gender, identity, race, nature etc. are dealt with.

**Keywords** Shakespeare · intertextuality · Hamlet · Macbeth · King Lear

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## Postmodernism and Intertextuality

The term postmodernism began to be used among artists and critics in New York in the 1960s to criticise the universal knowledge and foundationalism. It is the decline of the Enlightenment idea that was created in the eighteenth century to develop objective science, universal morality, law and art and it is also the acceptance of the failure of modernity, which is based on deceptive views.[1] In this period, instead of production and consumption, concepts such as advertisement, media, information, images and communication networks are foregrounded. Baudrillard underlines the fact that people live in the hyper-reality with the ecstasy of communication.[2] As a result, in this period, because of gaining more information "*refusal of meaning is the only form of resistance in a society like ours which suffers from information overload*".[3]

In the postmodern period, the grand narratives of history, Marxism, humanism, canon literature etc. began to be questioned by being aware of the "*absence of centres*".[4] In postmodernism, there is no boundary between art and everyday life, there is no hierarchical distinction between the elite and popular culture. Thus, postmodernism brings a "*stylistic eclecticism, the mixing of codes*" and repetitive art.[5] It emphasises diversity, plurality, and complexity of cultures, and their "*shadow differences*" which are ignored in the grand narratives of modernism.[6] In this sense, women, gays and lesbians, people of colour, and colonised nations become the subject of postmodernism.[7] Postmodernist art undermines values such as order, meaning, control and identity, which are the basic values of modernism. In this art, there is no diachrony but synchrony, and coexistence is the most important element in a world where history has replaced the moment.[8] There is a shift "*of emphasis from content to form or style; a transformation of realty into images, the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents*" from knowledge to experience, from theory to practice, from mind to body.[9]

In this period, most of the writers used previous texts' themes, characters, etc. in their work; thus, intertextuality, rewriting, adaptation, etc. were common techniques among postmodernist writers. According to Pavis, the drama in this period denies the existence of its rules such as the hierarchy among the dramaturgical instruments, dialogue, character, music, accessories etc. It also does not follow the "*conversational dialogue from the stage as a relic of dramaturgy based on conflict and exchange.*"[10] This choice "*establishes the possibility of dissolving the logocentric hierarchy and assigning the dominant role to elements other than dramatic logos and language.*"[11] For Watt "the development of the monologue, the foregrounding of the body as a site of institutional oppression and subjugation" are chosen in the drama.[12] They use history as a critical networking and not a nostalgic return in their texts. Crimps says that; "*The fiction of the creating subject gives way to the frank confiscation, quotation, exceptation, accumulation and repetition of already existing images. Notions of originality, authenticity and presence... are undermined.* "[13]

[1] Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Etik* (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2020), 21.
[2] Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 130.
[3] John Fiske, Reading the Popular (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 180.
[4] Hans Bertens, "The Postmodern Weltancshauung and its Relation to Modernism: An Introduction Survey." *A Postmodern Reader*, ed. Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 64.
[5] Madan Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), 132.
[6] David Harvey, *Postmodernliğin Durumu* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2019), 134.
[7] Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, *A Postmodern Reader* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), x.
[8] Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernlik ve Hoşnutsuzlukları* (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2019), 148.
[9] Madan Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), 132.
[10] Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), 59.
[11] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karne Jürs-Munby, (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), 93.
[12] Stephen Watt, *Postmodern/Drama, Reading the Contemporary Stage* (The University of Michigan Press, 1998), 39.
[13] Douglas Crimp, "On the Museum's Ruins." *The Ante-aesthetic: Essay on Postmodern Culture*, ed. H. Foster (Washington: Bay Press, Port Townsend,1983), 53.

The term intertextuality used by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s first became a common term in the postmodern period. It is the interrelation between two or more texts that quote from another explicitly or inexplicitly using the source text's theme, character, etc. It is the relationship between a text and other texts taken as basic to the creation or the interpretation of the text, which suggests that there is a close connection between texts and that no text can be read or interpreted in isolation. In other words, "*books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.*"[14] The history of intertextuality is not so new that Greek drama took its sources from Greek mythology and reshaped these plots in different forms, and most Roman works also followed the Greek examples.

Genette defines intertextuality as a relationship between two texts or among several texts, and it is *"the actual presence of one text within another"*.[15] Morgan claims that through intertextuality "*there is a shift of focus from the triangle of author/work/tradition to the text/discourse/culture triad.*"[16] Each text is inherently intertextual. For Barthes, the citations, references, echoes, cultural languages, etc. are the most important dynamics of a text that "*... to try to find the 'sources', the 'influences' of a work is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet already read.*"[17] Also for the poststructuralist critic Culler, the writer is simultaneously the reader, at least a reader of a previous text.[18] In his essay, Barthes announces the death of the author in the traditional sense and foregrounds the scriptor in the place of author "*... the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing.*"[19]

Rewriting is defined as the process of dealing with the same or similar subjects studied by the earlier texts. During the writing process, the aim of the writers in using the source text brings different terms used interchangeably with rewritings such as intertextuality, reinterpretations, revisions, derivatives, adaptations, appropriations, echoes, etc.[20] For instance, for Genette, the term hypertext means the rewritten text that is derived from the earlier text through simple or indirect transformation.[21] Genette gives Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildernstern Are Dead* as an example to explain the term; the play is intertextual because it directly quotes from *Hamlet*; it is metatextual because it criticises hypotext, and it is also hypertextual because it uses the same structure as the hypotext.[22] Holderness regards rewriting as a "*deconstructive process*" because the writer or the historical background of the source text is ignored and a different text is created with a new perspective.[23]

According to the postmodern understanding, no text is accepted as the final complete product, because a new text can deal with different intentions, ideologies, etc. of the previous text. As Mazdon underlines, rewriting brings the death of originality and the untouchable situation of the earlier text, but at the same time it causes the afterlife of the text by using its character, plot etc. in the new text.[24]

[14] Umberto Eco, *Postscript to The Name of the Rose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 20.
[15] Graham Allen, (qtd. from) *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2000), 101.
[16] Thais Morgan, "The Space of Intertextuality." *Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction*, ed. Patrick O'Donell and Robert Con Davis (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 239.
[17] Allen, *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom*, 69.
[18] Jonathan Culler, "Literary Competence." *Reader-Response Criticism A Reader*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 104.
[19] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: Norton and Company, 2001), 1468.
[20] Adaptation is broadly defined as the transposing of a book, a text or a screen play to another context, while rewriting is just a practise of adaptation within literary texts. David Lane, *Contemporary British Drama.* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010), 157.
[21] Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln and London: Nebraska UP, 1982), 7.
[22] Thais Morgan, "The Space of Intertextuality." *Intertextuality and Contemporary American* Fiction, ed. Patrick O'Donell and Robert Con Davis (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 269.
[23] Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare Recycled* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 38.
[24] Lucy Mazdon, "Rewriting and Remakes: Questions of Originality and Authenticity." *Rodopi Perspectives on Modern Literature: On Translating French Literature and Film*, ed. Geoffrey T. Harris (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 60.

It is seen that some of the writers of the rewritten texts emphasise the importance of the source text and its writer, while some of the rewriters prefer to criticise it. In this sense, rewriting is sometimes regarded as a copy of the source text, sometimes a technique that highlights the source text and its author, sometimes a critical approach that reconsiders the ideologies of the source text and creates another text with a different point of view. Rewriting also raises the question of the authenticity of canonical works and "*their status as the best forms of literary art*" which are protected by the cultural and literary authority of their times.[25] In this regard, rewriting is against the god-like writer and the preeminent culture that praises and gives shape to that text. This challenging practise to the canonical works also shows that they are not flawless products of genuine creativity. Also, Allen confirms this idea that in postmodern works there is no originality or uniqueness, because "*...every artistic object is so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art.*"[26] From another aspect, rewriting the text also highlights the significance of the canonical text. Linda Hutcheon claims that "*[p]ostmodern intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context.* "[27] It is a challenging issue to use the same material through the lenses of two distinct historical times in rewritten texts.

The practise of rewriting can be the voice of "other" that is hidden in the source text that Widdowson underlines that through rewriting an idea, and identity silenced by the dominant values and ideologies of its time can find a new platform to be seen.[28] Thus, theories such as postcolonialism, feminism, cultural materialism, racism, etc. bring new understanding that through these theories the canonical text is rewritten to catch the new reader and this practice is called by Huthcheon as "*the politics of intertextuality*".[29]

## Shakespeare and Intertextuality

It is the fact that Shakespeare is one of the most important literary figures that his plays were re-written for different aims till 17. century to today, although his plays are not original in content, but he is good at dealing with already known subjects with a different style. He was influenced by myth, fairy tales, Ovid, Plutarch, Holinshed, Boccaccio, Thomas Kyd, etc. Regarding Shakespeare's works as adaptations of previous texts dislocates Shakespeare's cultural and literary superiority in the English canon. In this sense, there are two different approaches to Shakespeare, who admires his talent and discusses his place in literary history.

Shiner points out that Shakespeare's success depends on writing dramas in a dangerous political atmosphere where there are no actors to play every role, where he must please a socially complex audience.[30] In other words, he has the ability to analyse the needs of his time. For Coleridge, Shakespeare speaks not only to Renaissance but for every time, and he has a unique ability that his works "*...came out of the unfathomable depths of his own oceanic mind.*"[31] Johnson admires Shakespeare because of his portrayal of human nature. For him, Shakespeare creates his characters from the right perspective. In other words, he uses a "*faithful mirror of manners and of life*" in his plays, which makes his works original.[32] Stoppard also agrees with Johnson and underlines his ability

[25] Özlem Özmen, "Re-Writing Shakespeare in the Twentieth Century: Edward Bond's Lear, Arnold Wesker's The Merchant and Howard Barker's Gertrude -The Cry in Socio-Historical Content", (PhD diss., Hacettepe University, 2018), 5.
[26] Graham Allen, *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2000), 5.
[27] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 118.
[28] Peter Widdowson, "'Writing Back:' 'Contemporary Revisionary Fiction." *Textual Practice* 20, no. 3 (2006): 505-506.
[29] Paul Edwards, (qtd from) "Adaptation: Two Theories." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (2007): 373.
[30] Larry Shiner, *Sanatın İcadı* (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2020), 88.
[31] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Coleridge on Shakespeare." *The text of the lectures of 1811- 12*, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 301.
[32] Samuel Johnson, "Preface to the Plays of William Shakespeare." *Samuel Johnson, Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Brady and W. K. Wimsatt (Berkeley, CA: California UP, 1977), 558.

to observe everything around him with a clear mind. He also admires Shakespeare's ability to put into words his observations about life.[33] However, besides such praises towards Shakespeare, there are critics about him as well. For instance, Alexander Pope, Voltaire, Leo Tolstoy, George Bernard Shaw, Ludwig Wittgenstein and George Orwell criticised his works on the aspect of aesthetic quality and originality.[34]

Besides the different approaches to Shakespeare, Goodman points out the influence of Shakespeare on the literary life of England and adds that Shakespeare is also "*associated with the English countryside, theatre, social customs and entertainments... The Shakespeare phenomenon is often referred to as 'Bardolatry' –cultural worship of a writer who is said to embody the genius and values of a nation.*"[35] Bloom also agrees with Goodman that he regards Shakespeare and Dante as unique and canon writers by foregrounding their "cognitive acuity, linguistic energy, and power of invention".[36] It is the fact that "*the cultural agency of Shakespeare' has motivated many writers, film makers, directors, poets to create a new version of his works through 're-modelling.*"[37]

The content of Shakespeare's plays changes from history to politics, from love to death; thus, these elements are sources for rewritten texts. As Sanders says, it is possible to deal with the postmodern world's war or crisis through Shakepeare's historical plays.[38] Bickley and Stevens especially focus on the "*indeterminacy of Shakespeare's plays*" which is an important feature for rewriters who deconstruct the text.[39] At this point, they agree with Keats, who praises Shakespeare for his "*uncertainties, mysteries, doubts*".[40] The ambiguity of his works gives a chance for the writers to reshape it according to the needs of time.

Some of the critics regard rewritten texts of Shakespeare as a disloyalty to his literary heritage, and some of them claim that these texts make Shakespeare's popularity and validity still valid for the contemporary audience/reader. Lanier comments that Shakespeare speaks to "*the purposes, fantasies, and anxieties of various historical moments*".[41] While Lanier classifies rewritings of Shakespeare depending on the treatment of the source text in the new text[42] Cartelli classifies according to thematic appropriations under the six headings.[43]

Throughout the literary history, the content and style of Shakespeare's rewritings differ in each period. For instance, during the Restoration period, the rewriters foreground "love affair" theme with the emphasis on female roles because from this period actresses are on the stage. After the Restoration period, there was a decline in rewriting the texts of Shakespeare because Shakespeare is a cultural icon. It was during this period that his works were accepted as complete and perfect examples; thus, there was no need for rewriting. In the contemporary period, there were two different approaches to his

[33] Tom Stoppard, "Is It True What They Say About Shakespeare?" *International Shakespeare Association Occasional Paper*, no. 2 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982), 14.

[34] Erin Sullivan, "Anti-Bardolatry through the Ages – Or, Why Voltaire, Tolstoy, Shaw and Wittgenstein Didn't Like Shakespeare," *Opticon 1826* 2 (2007): 1.

[35] Lizbeth Goodman, "The Idea of the Canon." *Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and the Canon*, ed. W. R. Owens and Lizbeth Goodman (London: Routledge, 1996), 9.

[36] Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 46.

[37] Eda Dedebaş, "Shakespeare Re-Positioned: Intertextuality and the Demystification of the Canon in Contemporary Drama" (Master Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2007), 6.

[38] Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006), 48.

[39] Pamela Brickley and Jenn Stevens, *Essential Shakespeare: The Arden Guide to Text and Interpretation* (London: Bloomsbury Arden, 2013), 214.

[40] John Keats, *The Letters of John Keats: Volume 2*, ed. H. E. Rollins (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1958), 193-194.

[41] Douglas Lanier, "Shakespearean Rhizomatics: Adaptation, Ethics, Value." *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*, ed. Alexander Huang and Elizabeth Rivlin (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 21.

[42] Lanier's classification;1-extrapolated narrative, 2-interpolated narrative, 3-remotivated narrative, 4-revisionary narrative 5-reoriented narrative, 6-hybrid narrative. Douglas Lanier, "Shakespearean Rhizomatics: Adaptation, Ethics, Value." *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*, ed. Alexander Huang and Elizabeth Rivlin (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 83.

[43] Cartelli's classification;1-satiric appropriations, 2-confrontational appropriation, 3-confrontational appropriation, 4-transpositional appropriation, 5-proprietary appropriations, 6-dialogic appropriation. Thomas Cartelli, *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 88.

texts: resisting the Bard's dominance on the Western canon and accepting his greatness as an author. In this period, the writers dealt with Shakespeare's plays with ideological and political theories of the postmodern world such as feminism and cultural materialism. For instance, they foreground marginal groups of characters; in other words, they deal with the presentation of "the other" differently from Shakespeare.

Brickley and Stevens compare the different approaches of contemporary Shakespeare rewritings, and they say that during the Restoration period, the writers preferred to write according to public taste, while in the twentieth century the rewriters consciously "*unsettle the theatrical status quo.*"[44] Such studies show that Shakespeare's talent is not questioned and that his works should be regarded as a "*historical baseline that helps us to measure our difference.*"[45]

## Shakespeare and Intertextuality in Turkish Theatre

In Turkish theatre, Shakespeare was known until the Tanzimat period through Armenian actors and actresses.[46] During the constitutional period, Muhsin Ertuğrul who was an actor and the general art director of both the State Theatre and İstanbul City Theatre, gave importance to the plays of Shakespeare. He played Roderigo in *Othello, which* was staged by Sahne-i Milliye-i Osmaniye, and he played Laertes in *Hamlet*, which was directed by Papazyan. While he went to Paris in 1911 to receive a drama education, he had a chance to watch several plays.[47] Among these plays, Hamlet affected him so much that after he returned to İstanbul he forced the actors and actresses to stage Shakespeare's plays.[48] This is the turning point that Shakespeare became an indispensable part of the daily lives that all over the Türkiye different plays of Shakespeare played in classical form.[49]

It is seen that after the mid-1970s, different approaches to Shakespeare's plays began; Beklan Algan's *Hamlet 1970*, Talat Halman's *Kahramanlar ve Soytarılar: Shakespeare'in Dünyası*, Savaş Dinçel's *Gürültülü Patırtılı Bir Hikâye*, Semih Çelenk's *Hamlet Renkli Türkçe*, Ali İhsan Kaleci's *Gün Batımı etc.* are the examples for these studies. In these plays, the playwrights are sometimes loyal to the previous text, sometimes making connections between the past and present about the subjects of the period. In some rewritten texts, a narrator[50], a hand puppet or a grotesque clown[51] are used to foreground the aim of the playwright with different materials.

It is the fact that Shakespeare has been followed and studied by only educated people as a sign of modernisation.[52] However, during the Covid 19 pandemic period, because of sharings about Shakespeare on YouTube, Vimeo and other digital platforms 'ordinary people' had a chance to access Shakespeare.[53] These digitalisation works of Shakespeare show that regarding Shakespeare as an icon and a special topic for academic studies are challenged that anyone who has Wi-Fi can reach his works easily. However, it should be noted that in these digital works about the plays of Shakespeare, serious topics such as class distinction, rape, woman equality etc. are not dealt with because the aim is to earn

[44] Pamela Brickley and Jenny Stevens, *Essential Shakespeare: The Arden Guide to Text and Interpretation* (London: Bloomsbury Arden, 2013), 94.
[45] Peter Erickson, "Afterword: "Trying Not to Forget." *Cross-Cultural Performances: Differences in Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare*, ed. Marianne Novy (Urbano and Chicago, IL: Illinois UP, 1993), 164.
[46] Armenian actors Bedros Atamyan and Thomas Fasulyeciyan are well-known in Shakespeare's plays. Metin And, "Türkiye'de Shakespeare." *Devlet Tiyatrosu Aylık Sanat Dergisi* 21, (1964): 21.
[47] Özdemir Nutku, "Modern Türk Tiyatrosu'nun Ön Aşamaları- Giriş," in *Benden Sonra Tufan Olmasın: Anılar*, (Istanbul: Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı Vakfı, 1989), 35.
[48] Gökhan Akçura, *Muhsin Ertuğrul: Doğumunun Yüzüncü Yılına Armağan.* (Istanbul: Istanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 1992), 12.
[49] Metin And, "Türkiye'de Shakespeare," 25.
[50] Bülent Emin Yarar, "Hamlet;" accessed June 12, 2023, https://youtu.be/9jr6oioj87A
[51] Yiğit Sertdemir, "Kral (Soytarım) Lear;" accessed June 14, 2023, https://youtu.be/fKaYGWsCLGY
[52] İnci Enginün, *Türkçede Shakespeare* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2008), 10.
[53] For instance Zorlu Centre with İş Sanat prepares Fırtına for Youtube and it is seen that lots of people follow it. "Fırtına", accessed June 14, 2023, https://youtube.be/8nUc1WdloBM

money and not to approach the text critically. The Turkish Shakespeare Project, established in 2021, aims to organise all the digital documents about Shakespeare to prepare an archive, a cultural memory for the people who want to study Shakespeare in Türkiye.

## Method

Among the many rewritten texts of Shakespeare, Müge Gürman's *Cadıların Macbeth'i* (1986), Müjdat Gezen's *Hamlet Efendi* (1994), Başar Sabuncu's *Bir Ata Krallığım* (1996), Serhat Yiğit's *İkinci Katil* (2017), and Pınar Akkuzu and Gülden Arsal's *Şatonun Altında* (2016) are chosen to analyse in this paper just to give an idea about the innovative studies on the plays of Shakespeare. It is aimed to analyse these rewritten texts that make connections with Shakespeare through intertextuality and to determine the ground on which issues of power, identity etc. are dealt with.

## The Prediction of Witches to Humanity: *Cadıların Macbeth'i*

Müge Gürman in her play *Cadıların Macbeth'i* follows the trace of the source text's theme and characterisation. The dark and bloody atmosphere of *Macbeth* is also created in the rewritten text. Unlike the source text in the new one, the witches, in other words 'the others', are used to tell the story of Macbeth. She describes her approach as a transformation of the three witches of Macbeth into the protagonists of the new play; "*They are no longer Macbeth's witches. What is in question now is the Macbeth of the witches.*"[54] The playwright wants to show the dark side of Macbeth; thus, she forces the audience/reader to question the behaviour of Macbeth from a different perspective. To succeed in this thought, she uses a synchronous stage in which the witches function as the audience and actors/actresses at the same time. Like the narrator/storyteller of Traditional Turkish Theatre, they change their costume in front of the audience to perform the role of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, or they function as a public consciousness and criticise the behaviour of the major characters to foreground their political and personal power.[55]

[54] Müge Gürman, "Shakespeare-Macbeth ve Cadılar Macbeth'i Üzerine." *20. Yıl İstanbul Devlet Tiyatrosu: Bir Kentin Yaşamında Rol Almak*, ed. Şule Ateş, Selen Korad Birkiye and Yetkin Dikiciler (Istanbul: Wyeth, 1999), 109.
[55] Seda Mazanoğlu, "'All The World is a Stage' Shakesepare on the Turkish Stage." in *Shakespeare*, ed. Deniz Bozer, (Ankara: Bizim Büro, 2014), 127.

**Photo 1**
*https://tiyatrolar.com.tr/tiyatro/cadilar-macbethi*



The words of witches about Macbeth's future cause a big change on him, but these words are just a trigger. In the source text, the dark side of Macbeth is seen with the prophecy of witches, but Gürman portrays Macbeth as a character who acts consciously and takes responsibility for his behaviour. Furthermore, she prefers to give details to foreground the evil side of Macbeth. For instance, in both texts, the death of Macdonwald is given, but Gürman underlines the rightness of Macdonwald in his rebellion against Duncan, who gets his own land and income. The tragic point is that Macbeth does not show any intention to understand Macdonwald and does not hesitate to kill him. Macbeth, like in the source text, prefers to be on the powerful side and does his deeds as a loyal soldier. However, in the rewritten text, the playwright underlines Macbeth's determination for killing. As in the source text, while one murder follows the other the witches criticise Macbeth for selling his soul to evil. They blame him for the blood in the country and underline the fact that he is not innocent anymore.

The witches criticise not only Macbeth but also the greed and hypocrisy of human beings. Unlike the source text, the reaction of witches to the decay of humanity is so severe that they decide to punish the people who use religion, money, etc. to deceive the others. The last words of the rewritten text "*Poor Scotland, your flowers are so dark because of the badness in yourself*" imply that the history of civilisation is full of darkness and bloody stories.[56] Furthermore, it is the fact that the desire for power, passion, etc. does not belong to only a person but to humanity. In this sense, everyone can be a Macbeth if she/he cannot control her/his dark side.

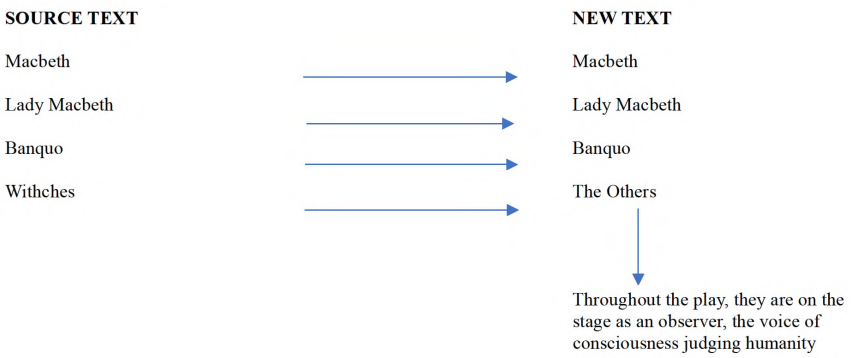
Gürman uses a red curtain as a paper for the letter scene that it will be a bed linen in the next scene. The choice of the colour "red" for the letter and linen symbolises the tragic events both the characters will experience. In this sense, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth share the same destiny. The playwright also adds a 'hell scene' in her play to show their inner conflict. For the first time, they question and evaluate their deeds, claiming that they are responsible for the death of peace, honour and innocence.

[56] Müge Gürman, *Cadıların Macbeth'i*, Unpublished Text, (1986), 32.

Throughout the rewritten text, the playwright follows the theme of the source text with a critical attitude to foreground the dark side of human nature. By foregrounding "the others", she follows one of the features of the postmodern period and underlines the fact that life can be analysed through the eyes of the minority without big words or promises of the majority. She just opens a window with witches to the situation of human beings.

**Figure 2**

*The plot and characters are the same in the new text, just a "Hell Scene" is added to underline the psychology of the major characters.*




## Play Within a Play: *Hamlet Efendi*

In the other rewritten text *Hamlet Efendi* the playwright, Müjdat Gezen, uses a play within a play technique to tell the history of Turkish Theatre with the change of socio-cultural values in the first years of the Turkish Republic. In the play, one of the theatre companies experiences the failure in their tour because their acting style, such as storytelling or improvisation, does not mean anything to the audience anymore. In fact, the actors/actresses know that something has changed in the society, their understanding of life and art. With the offer of an Armenian actor, they begin to study *Hamlet*. This is a different experience for the actors/actresses; for the first time they hear the name of Shakespeare, and they are forced to study the text with its dramaturgy. In this sense, the playwright uses the source text, *Hamlet*, without any change just to underline the difference between Western and Turkish drama. In traditional Turkish theatre, there is no written text for that reason the actors/actresses do not understand the necessity of memorising their role, of creating their character with his/her social, psychological and physical dimension. The playwright also focuses on the importance of using fluent language on the stage because it is ironic to hear the words of Hamlet from an Armenian actor with his accent.[57] During the rehearsal of *Hamlet*, the head of the company, Komik-i Şakir, a successful actor in improvisational acting, gives the role to the driver, to the tailor, etc. to save money. This attitude gives an idea about the approach to acting in those years. At the end of the play, it is seen that the performance is not successful. The members of the company admit that their understanding of drama does not reflect the changing socio-cultural life in Türkiye, and they decide to give up acting.

[57] Müjdat Gezen, *Hamlet Efendi*, Unpublished Text, (1994), 3.

**Photo 3**
*https://tiyatronline.com/oyunlar/hamlet-efendi-9056*



The theatre company begins to study Hamlet on the road while they are waiting for the repair of their tour bus. In fact the road symbolises the way of the Turkish Republic and Turkish drama, too. After the Ottoman period, a new country with its new values and understanding of lifestyle emerged. In this atmosphere, the old lifestyle is meaningless, like the plays of Komik-i Şakir's company. It is clear that in this new way/road Turkish theatre requires educated actors/actresses, directors, playwrights, etc. to follow the changes in the world drama. Hamlet is a well-known play for the contemporary audience, and the playwright consciously uses this play to catch the attention of the new generation to tell the history of Turkish Theatre. In this sense, there is a connection with the source text, that in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* play within a play technique is also used to tell the changing acting style like in the rewritten text.

**Figure 4**
*Nothing is added to the plot of the new text; in this sense, it is faithful to the source text. The play within a play technique is used to underline the intention of the playwright.*

| SOURCE TEXT | | NEW TEXT |
|---|---|---|
| Hamlet | → | Hamlet |
| Claudius | → | Claudius |
| Gertrude | → | Gertrude |

## "The Other" is On the Stage: *İkinci Katil*

The play, *İkinci Katil*, written by Serhat Yiğit, is the story of the second murderer of Banquo in Macbeth. Shakespeare does not need to name the murderer because Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are in the centre of the plot. In the rewritten text, the playwright follows the plot of the source text but underlines the fact that both a noble and ordinary person can share the same destiny, because eagerness, greed, hatred, etc. are the fault of all humanity.

In the rewritten text, the witches are used as master fortune tellers to imply not the witches, but Macbeth's ambition determines his future. At the beginning of the rewritten play, they talk to both Macbeth and Warden, the second murderer of Banquo, about their future. They tell Macbeth that he is going to be a king in the future and whisper to Warden in his inn; "*Greetings, tongs that take firewood, hello to the sword in the king's sheath, hello to you, the shoe of a nail and the horse of a shoe, the nail*

*in that story where the horse did not save the cavalry*".[58] After this encounter, Macbeth with the help of Lady Macbeth kills Duncan and gets the throne, as in the source text. At this point, the story of Warden begins with Macbeth coming to his inn in disguise with his servant Doley and wants Warden and his friend Evan to kill Banquo for the sake of the country. Macbeth uses the hatred of Warden and Evan towards Banquo's cousin, Lord Lowrey. Because Warden must give 100 golden as a punishment for the fight with Lord Lowrey in his inn and Evan lost everything in gambling again because of Lord Lowrey. Remembering the prediction of "The Others" Warden is ready what Macbeth wants from him. But in a short time like Macbeth in the source text Warden realizes the difficulties of murdering. At this moment, like Lady Macbeth, the wife of Warden, Mary, persuades her husband to kill Banquo.

In Shakespeare's play, Lady Macbeth is aware of her "*limited space that can be given to a woman in Macbeth's male world*" that in order to have a role in male's world she becomes a "master at conspiracy to overcome her weakness" and does not take any responsibility except for giving courage to Macbeth in his deed.[59] In the rewritten text, besides supporting Warden, Mary also takes action on their way to be "a man of king" thus she does not hesitate to kill Marlowe, one of the closest friend of Warden's father, because he understands their secret deeds; "*...He was staring for too long, I closed his eyes, he talked too much, I kept his tongue quiet. I did what you did to Banquo Warden, I killed Marlowe. He shed so much blood, I never thought that an old man would bleed very much.*"[60] She is equal to man in using violence, but her psychology is not very strong like Lady Macbeth. In the rewritten text, Lady Macbeth suffers after the death of Duncan and tries to clean the blood in her hand with water and a scrub brush, while Mary begins to see a ghost on the water in the basin when she is trying to get rid of the blood of Marlowe. Unlike the source text, in the new one, the playwright prefers to give Lady Macbeth and Macbeth as one person that they complete each other's utterance while questioning their victims.

At the end of the play, Mary is killed by one of the murderers of Banquo, and Warden is killed by Doyle, who is the servant of Macbeth and also of the new king Macduff. The witches tell Warden that no one who is not born from his mother would kill him, but it is understood that Doyle is a child from an incest relationship, and this situation shows that the interpretation of the prophecy of the witches is limited to the perception of the person.

**Photo 5**
*https://tiyatrolar.com.tr/tiyatro/ikinci-katil*



[58] Serhat Yiğit, *İkinci Katil*, Unpublished Text, (2017), 13.
[59] Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and The Nature of Women* (Macmillan Press Ltd. 1996), 282.
[60] Serhat Yiğit, *İkinci Katil*, Unpublished Text, (2017), 61.

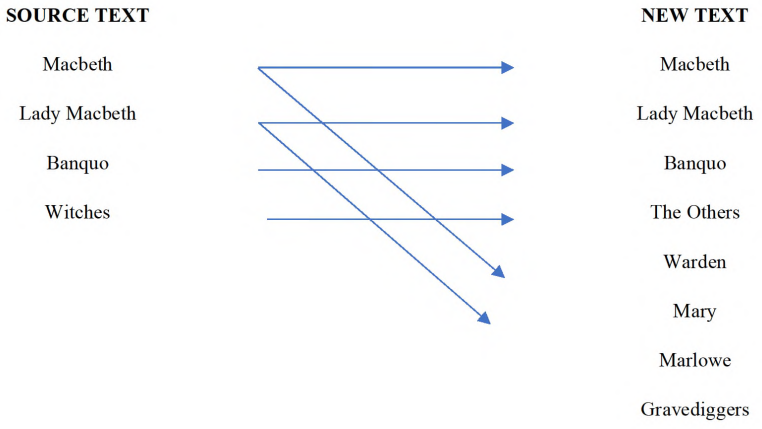
In the rewritten text, the playwright prefers to call the witches as "The Others" and portrays them as hermaphrodites, so it is not easy to guess their identity and gender. Throughout the play, they question the values of being good or bad, which are closely bounded to the intention of human being; "*It is good to steal fire from gods and give fire to humanity, it is bad to steal fire from gods and give fire to man.*"[61] They also criticises the ambition of a person to give shape to his/her destiny, in other words his/her desire to be a God; "*Whatever happened to you come from your ambitions Warden... You trusted yourself so much because you want to give shape to your destiny with your hands.*"[62]

The playwright uses Marlowe, one of the contemporary playwrights of Shakespeare, as a wise man who criticises the changing attitude of Warden after the visit of The Others; "*they tell what you want to hear... be careful, let your destiny determine your future, don't be impatient and try to show your own destiny... and the belief that one can draw one's own destiny is also a lie.* "[63] Throughout the play, he is on the side of goodness and advises Warden no to be eager to be "a man of king".

In the rewritten text Gravediggers from Hamlet, quotations from *Othello, King Lear, The Tempest* and his sonnets support the theme of the text. The playwright, through making references to the other plays of Shakespeare and his sonnets, and centralising "the other", follows the features of postmodern drama. He underlines the idea that anyone greedy can be a Macbeth. It is also tragic that it is not important whether you are male or female in this postmodern world, where everyone is very close to using violence.

**Figure 6**

*The eagerness and dark side of Macbeth is portrayed in the scene with Doyle. In the new text, Warden, Mary and The Others are the voice of "the others" who underline the features such as 'eagerness, power desire' to imply that these bad values belong to all humanity, in this sense social hierarchy or gender does not matter. Both the groups do not hesitate to use violence to reach their aim.*




## Wheeled Car: *Bir Ata Krallığım*

In the rewritten text, *Bir Ata Krallığım*, the playwright, Başar Sabuncu, gives the greed of power and eagerness through the plays of Shakespeare; *Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, III.Richard, Jullius Ceasare, IV. Henry, Troilos and Cressida, II.Richard, Cymbelinee, Antonious and Cleopatra, The Life of Timon of Athens, The Tempest, As You Like It,* and several scenes from his five sonnets; 55, 66, 94, 121, 129. sonnets.

[61] Serhat Yiğit, *İkinci Katil*, Unpublished Text, (2017), 4
[62] Serhat Yiğit, *İkinci Katil*, Unpublished Text, (2017), 54
[63] Serhat Yiğit, *İkinci Katil*, Unpublished Text, (2017), 22, 26, 43.

In the thirty parts of the rewritten text, the playwright is loyal to the theme of the source texts, but in most of the parts he changes the order of the scenes and the role of the characters. For instance, in the source text, Claudius talks with Rosentcrantz about Hamlet; in the rewritten text, it is Marcellus; and Hamlet shares what the ghost says with Horatio, although he does not talk to anyone about the ghost in the source text. The playwright chooses to foreground Hamlet's insanity while Shakespeare throughout the play creates a mystery about his madness.

It is Claudius, not Richard, who foreground the same attitude they portray. He also deals with class conflict through Coriolanus that the poor are hungry, live in poverty while kings are in their luxury. This scene is connected to the other part where III. Richard manipulates the folk with religion like Agrippe in the previous scene. In this way, the playwright puts forward the relation between the folk and ruling class and wants the audience to analyse justice, religion, etc. concepts from a different perspective. In the next part of the rewritten text, the playwright combines the play *Macbeth* with *III. Richard*, and it is seen that the murderers of Banquo this time kill the Duke of Clarence, which implies that the names are not important when the subject is violence.

In the next scene, not Cornwall but Polonius is the one who tortures not Gloucester but the clown. With this choice, Laertes has a chance to evaluate his father from a different perspective, and like Hamlet, he has an idea about injustice. Like in the source text Hamlet kills Polonius, but according to the scene order of the rewritten text, killing Polonius means killing villains and in this sense, it is the first step of change in taking action against badness. In the rest of the play, all the king murderers, Richard, Claudius, Brutus and Macbeth see nightmares, lose their control and cannot bear the judgement of their consciousness. Therties from *Trolius and Cressida* and *Falstaff* from *IV. Henry* does not hesitate criticise them ironically. In this sense, like in the source text, they function as the common sense. At the end, Brutus kills himself, Macbeth is killed by Macduff and Richard is killed by Richmond. In this catastrophic world, Fortrinbras is not the expected rescuer or the image of virtue but just the representative of the continuation of the understanding of the previous kings who want to get the throne through using violence. At the end, all the characters are on the island of Prospero from The Tempest, as if the place is a magical one and every character is under the influence of the magic of Prospero. The play ends with 55. sonnets of Shakespeare to underline the power of time. Like in the source text, this magic reveals the bad side of human beings and helps the audience to evaluate the results of living with a closed eye and hearth. In this sonnet, Shakespeare claims that his poem has the power to grant immortality, and it will travel from one generation to another. The playwright insists that like the sonnet, this rewritten text gains immortality against time and continues to open new doors to audience/reader.

The setting of the rewritten play also gives the dark and bloody atmosphere at the beginning;

> *Wheeless car parked on a sidewalk corner (perhaps witches' mount) and removed from the steering head, from outside to ceiling screwed a driver's seat (Throne of all kings!). Then a shabby crowd from all the streets; they are thrown into the wheelless car, fighting head-to-head...At the end of the ruthless race, one of them took the seat first of all, comes and settles in... and named himself the king!*[64]

Throughout the play, this place is the kingdom of the kings. The playwright questions the meaning of being human, noble, kind, fair, etc. through the setting, which is full of violence and implies that the only criteria is being powerful in this bloody world. Although the source texts' time and geography are different from each other, there is no special date or place in the rewritten text, which implies that the greed of power continues from the past till the end of the world.[65]

[64] Başar Sabuncu, *Bir Ata Krallığım* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 2014), 8.
[65] Devrim Özbek, "Türk Tiyatro Yazınında Başar Sabuncu" (MA diss., Hacettepe University, 2023), 250.

**Figure 7**

*In the rewritten play, the playwright consciously misuses the names of Cladius, Richard, Brutus and Macbeth to imply that the names are not so important because throughout the history of humanity, death, violence and blood are seen among the people who are eager to gain power.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Julius Caesar | → | Julius Caesar |
| IV. Henry | → | IV. Henry |
| Trolious and Cressidia | Claudius → | Trolius and Cressidia |
| II. Richard | Richard → | II. Richard |
| Cymbeline | Brutus → | Cymbeline |
| Antonius and Cleopatra | Macbeth → | Antonius and Cleopatra |
| The Life of Timon of Athens | → | The Life of Timon of Athens |
| The Tempest | → | The Tempest |
| As You Like It | → | As You Like It |

## Laundrywomen and Macbeth: *Şatonun Altında*

In the rewritten text *Şatonun Altında* the greed of power and the ambition of the patriarchal system are criticised by two laundrywomen. These two women are in fact "the others" who live in the basement of Macbeth's castle. With their costume, make-up, hair, etc. in grotesque style they ironically criticise the serious matters of the source text and this absurd situation creates humour. The playwrights prefer to try different acting styles in the performance such as Lecoq's style and physical movement.

The playwrights prefer to give peace and violence through colours. For instance, the white sheet turns red with Duncan's dead and is given to Macbeth as a symbol of the reign that is gained by blood. Also, Macbeth gives a speech to the folk with that red sheet in his hand, which implies that throughout his reign, the country will witness violence. The play also underlines the fact that nothing is going to change after the death of Macbeth, that using violence to gain power is a vicious circle that humanity has to experience.

**Photo 8**

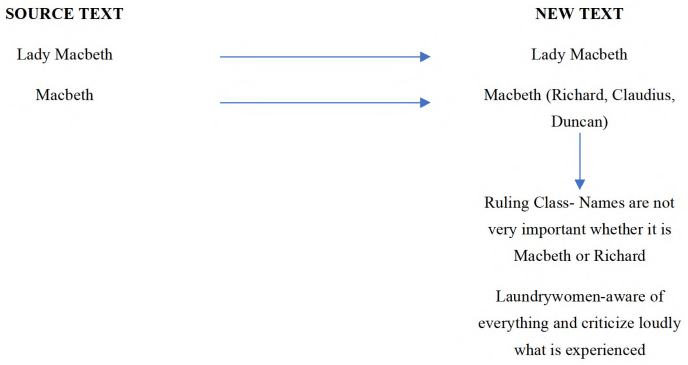
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The story of Macbeth is given through the eyes of the ruling class in the source text, but in the rewritten play beside Macbeth, the desire of the other kings such as Richard, Cladius, Duncan is given by "the others". The concepts such as lost-win, succeed-fail, war-peace, greed-humble, patriarchal-matriarchal, etc. are discussed by these two laundrywomen from a different perspective. The playwright consciously portrays these two women as figures beyond time to imply that the violence or eagerness they witness is the same throughout the history of human beings.

**Figure 9**

*The rewritten text foregrounds the ordinary people's point of view about the ruling class.*




## Conclusion

Postmodernism with its plurality, diversity, being the voice of the other, etc. features influences the literary canon. Not only Shakespeare's play but the other well-known playwrights, such as Chekhov, Brecht, Aristophanes, etc. – works are deconstructed or transformed into another genre to discuss current topics such as gender, identity, and race. Although intertextuality with most of its forms i.e. quotations, allusions, imitation, and parody, is much older than postmodernism, it is one of the most significant features of postmodernism. Furthermore, Shakespeare uses intertextuality in his plays to create his own artistic world. As in Türkiye, all over the world, postmodern playwrights make connections with the themes and characters of Shakespeare's plays through intertextuality. Because postmodernism allows a deconstructive hidden themes that are relevant to the contemporary world.

It is the fact that Shakespeare has an important place in Turkish drama. From the first years of the Turkish Republic, the with "*not only the playwright's work in its actual content, but multi-layered issues of locality, adaptation and authority/cultural hegemony as well.*"[66]

In this study, five of the rewritten texts of Shakespeare are analyzed to give an idea about the innovative approaches of playwrights. The common point among these texts is the attitude of noble people when the subject is power. In *Cadıların Macbeth'i, İkinci Katil* and *Şatonun Altında* playwrights use the play Macbeth as the source text and focus on the characters' eagerness for power. In Bir Ata Krallığım the subject is the same, but this time the playwright does not make a connection with only one play but prefers to use different plays of Shakespeare, which implies that Shakespeare also focuses on the relation between power and reign in most of his plays. In *Hamlet Efendi*, the playwright follows Hamlet's theme to deal with Turkish Theatre. However, he does not discuss the problematic situation of Hamlet, which is the main theme in the source text.

[66]Melis Günekan, "Shakespeare and Authority: The Intersection of Theatre, Locality and Politics in Türkiye" (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2021), 12.

It is seen that in these five rewritten texts, the playwrights use the source texts with a critical point of view. For instance, in Cadıların Macbeth'i, İkinci Katil and Şatonun Altında the playwrights foreground "the other" to underline the lack of the presentation of the minority in the source text. In classical texts, playwrights follow the established expectations of their time, thus generally the minority groups are ignored. Because of the "absence of centre" in postmodern world "the others" have words to say to humanity. In this sense, these three plays are the voices of "the others". In Hamlet Efendi the playwright criticises the understanding of acting in the Ottoman period and compares Western Drama and Turkish Drama. The playwright uses the source text to introduce the long way of contemporary Turkish drama to the new generation.

The settings of these plays also differ from each other. For instance, Gürman prefers to use a synchronous stage in *Cadıların Macbeth'i* to create an interactive atmosphere, and Akkuzu and Arsal use the basement of the castle in *Şatonun Altında* to underline their critical point of view on. Sabuncu puts a wheeled car in the middle of the stage in Bir *Ata Krallığım* to imply the loss of control of human beings because of the lack of virtues. Yiğit prefers to use the inn of Warden and Mary in *İkinci Katil* to imply the inn of their dark inner world. Gezen's theatre company in *Hamlet Efendi* is on the road like the Turkish Theatre, which is on the road of westernization.

Yiğit quotes from the other plays and sonnets of Shakespeare explicitly and adds Gravediggers, Marlowe as a character to his play, and Sabuncu makes many references to Shakespeare's several plays inexplicitly and changes the order of scenes and the role of the characters to make his play powerful. In these five plays, the greed of power is foregrounded, but in *Bir Ata Krallığım* the number of source texts shows that the names are not important, and the danger of the dark side of human being is the common point for every time. Gezen and Gürman generally follow the pattern of the source text; Gezen uses play within a play technique like Shakespeare to show the difference between Traditional Turkish Theatre and Western Drama and Gürman adds new scenes to give the inner conflict of the major characters. Akkuzu and Arsal prefer to use short utterances to criticise one of the features of a postmodern person who does not have a long time to talk to and listen to the other. Also, they foreground physical movement and visuality—cosplay, accessories, etc.—instead of words, which is on of the features of postmodern drama.

These five Turkish rewritten texts of Shakespeare show that Shakespeare is still a powerful source to deal with the issues and problems of the postmodern world. Through intertextuality, the playwrights strengthen the discourse of their texts, which have polyphonic narrative entities with the voice of "the other", and at the same time they open new ways for the contemporary audience to understand the value of Shakespeare. It is interesting to follow the adventure of the plays of Shakespeare from the Tanzimat period to the postmodern period in Turkish Theatre. At the end of 19. century studying Shakespeare in classical form was the most significant issue, but nowadays the Turkish playwrights made connections with his plays, sometimes regarding his statue in drama history, sometimes discussing the themes of his plays with the diversity and plurality features of the contemporary period. Shakespeare plays a rich and "*functional role as a common ground to discuss the problems in our age*".[67]

[67] Neslihan Çallı, "Shakespeare Retold: Contemporary Visions of The Bard', (PhD diss., Dokuz Eylül University, 2018), 18.



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Chapter 11

# Nationalist Affection in the Theatre Plays of the People's Houses Period (1932-1951)

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## Abstract

The 1930s was a period in which the modern and national character of the new republic was defined and spread in many areas through institutional structures such as public houses, the Turkish Historical Institution, the Turkish Language Institution, and universities. This period includes the redefinition of the community and their reproduction as citizens by the modern nation-state through severing them from their local and pre-national ties. Nationalist discourse attempts to make citizens aware of their self-identities and values that distinguish them from other nations. Accordingly, it is claimed that every nation has its own rules of etiquette, daily life practises, symbols and ceremonies, forms of art and crafts, and of course, different forms of affection. In her book titled *The Cultural Politics of the Emotions*, Sara Ahmed questions how some emotions become a "national attribute". She tries to understand the mechanism of the production and diffusion of emotions directed towards "us" and the "other". In contrast to the view that claims that emotions originate from the individual and spread to the mass and that they spread from the crowd and attract the individual, Ahmed states that emotions do not have a fixed place, they move between bodies and objects and cause changes in them. Therefore, emotions are performative. National identity is also built through these performances. Ahmed also talks about the emotionality of texts, expressing that it is necessary to think about the ways in which texts arouse and spread certain emotions and produce certain effects. In this article, I will explore how the theatre plays written during the People's Houses period (1932-1951) in which function as a very effective tool in the construction of national identity, present the emotional repertoire of Turkishness, how these plays create and spread this emotional repertoire, and how they benefit from the stage tools to do this.

**Keywords** theatre · emotions · modern nation state · People's Houses · nationalism

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## What We Do with Emotions, What Do Emotions Do to Us?

Important studies have been conducted, especially in the last twenty years, on the concept of emotion, which has a meaning and definition that continuously changes throughout history. Research in sociology, anthropology, history, economics, philosophy, and gender studies has begun to reveal the historical, cultural, and collective aspects and sources of emotions, rather than being purely individual. The study of emotions raises questions about what we do with emotions, what emotions do to us, and which emotions shape the production, circulation, and diffusion of historiography, political discourses, experiences of modernity, capitalism, collective identities, individual relationships, and self-construction. It is an interdisciplinary field that reflects on these questions, drawing upon findings from various disciplines. Studies in this field, which go beyond dichotomies such as body-mind, reason-emotion, and essentialism-historicism, provide a means to understand emotions. They also offer important insights into the diversity of how emotions are defined and the multifaceted nature of emotional experiences. Therefore, the field of emotion studies can develop in relation to art, acology, and literature, thereby affecting all disciplines.

In the Enlightenment period, which began to develop in the second half of the seventeenth century in Europe, the most important criterion was reason. During this period, unlike the Antient sophists, it is believed that reason possesses unlimited power. Particularly, Descartes' concept of "dualism" (mind-body, matter-spirit, nature-culture, etc.) and cartesian thought contributed to the establishment of a binary opposition between emotion and reason. According to that, emotion is associated with the individual, confined to the realm of the private, and positioned as secondary in the production and circulation of knowledge.

Despite the blinding of emotion studies and their neglection in the examination of the historical, social, and political aspects through Modernism, the seventeenth-century philosopher Spinoza, an important figure in Western philosophy, invalidates this structure with his teachings on emotions in his work Ethica. In this work, Spinoza invalidates the dualistic understanding by first demonstrating the unity of God and Nature. Within his pantheistic view, Spinoza brings together materialism and spiritualism, God and Nature, and various opposing modes of thought. In the third part of the book, he delves into the extensive history of emotions. He uses the word "affect" and defines it as follows: "*By affect, I understand affections*[1] *of the body by which the body's power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and the ideas of these affections.*"[2] According to this view, emotion is the idea of something that increases or decreases the body's power of action and affects the mind by either increasing or decreasing its thinking power. Thus, emotions constitute a network of transitions, changes, and transformations that manifest both in the capacity for action of our bodies and in the thinking power of our minds. Consequently, it is not a hierarchical or binary construct based on the body and mind, reason and emotion, but rather an idea of unity where these categories do not establish superiority over one another. In other words, emotions are closely related to our connections with others, different situations, or events.

Aksu Bora discusses a turning point in the humanities referred to as the "*affective turn*,"[3] which takes its name from the concept of "affect" in Spinoza, which was reintroduced into circulation

[1] According to Hilmi Ziya Ülken's translation of the book *Etika* published by Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, the word "affection" in French is rendered as "duygulanış" (or "duygulanım") in Turkish because this word, due to its connotation of movement, better captures the idea of an action. Ülken believes that in Turkish, this word refers solely to emotional life, whereas in French, "affection" encompasses any kind of impact or "effect" left on any material substance. Spinoza's understanding of emotion and the approach taken in contemporary studies of emotion that build upon Spinoza's ideas can be better explained through this usage. Spinoza, *Etika*, 4th edition, (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, 2011), 13.

[2] Spinoza, *Etika*, 131. In cases where no other indication is given, I did the translations of routes from Turkish sources.

[3] A. Bora, "Oyunbozan Feminist: Sara Ahmed," *Moment Dergi: Hacettepe Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Kültürel Çalışmalar Dergisi* 4, no. 1 (2017): 271-278.

by Deleuze and Guattari in the mid-1990s. This turning point emerges from the accumulation of interrelated studies and questions after a long ongoing process. Bora mentions that, on the one hand, the critical reemergence of the body as a significant area of inquiry in the humanities owes itself to feminist critique, while on the other hand, queer theories also contribute to the reexamination of emotions. In her writing, Bora extensively discusses the research in this field, the fundamental approaches of the studies, and their interrelationships.[4] Given that this article will engage in dialogue primarily with Sarah Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, I will briefly touch upon the conceptualisation of emotion in this text.

In her book, Sara Ahmed focuses on the discussions of gender, race, sexuality, nationalism, international terrorism, refugees, and migration, where the others become the object of emotions. In doing so, she draws on Marx's concept of surplus-value and Sigmund Freud's notion of the unconscious. Ahmed emphasises the relational dimension of emotions by reminding us that the word "emotion" is derived from the Latin term "emovere," which means "to move out" or "*to go outside*."[5] Ahmed talks about shifting the focus towards the movement of emotions rather than locating their centre within the internal realm of subjectivity or situating them in the external realm of collective identity:

> *Emotions shape the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through the repetition of actions over time, and through orientations towards and away from others. Indeed, attending to emotions might show us how all actions are reactions, in the sense that what we do is shaped by the contact we have with others. In Spinoza's terms, emotions shape what bodies can do, as 'the modification of the body by which the power of action on the body is increased or diminished (Spinoza 1959, s. 85).*[6]

Ahmed argues that emotions cannot be confined and controlled within the boundaries of the body or objects. Therefore, to understand emotions and affections, it is necessary to closely examine the open-ended relationships, encounters, and stickiness that occur between bodies, objects, and the external world.[7] Stickiness is an important concept for Ahmed in this discussion. According to Ahmed, as interpretive frameworks and signs are repeated, emotions become attached to specific objects. This invites us to contemplate the "sociality" of emotions,[8] as numerous studies demonstrate how social forms such as family, gender roles, nation, and even civilisation are outcomes of repetitions.[9] She asserts that the reason these norms appear as ways of life is that the work performed by repetitions is concealed. Feminist and queer researchers have demonstrated the importance of emotions in politics. "*Emotions reveal to us that the power shapes not only worlds but also the surfaces of bodies*."[10] Therefore, Ahmed's argument regarding the cultural politics of emotions is a critique of not only the reduction of emotions to the psychological realm and individual experience but also the disregard for the emotional intensities that underpin the establishment and functioning of social structures. "*Engaging with emotions allows us to seek answers to questions such as how individuals become so attached to specific structures that they feel like the living dead when they lose them*."[11]

Studies that take emotions beyond the biological and private realms and reveal their relational, cultural, and ideological nature also encourage thinking about the politicisation of emotions and the

[4] For another study that examines the development of research in this field with important evaluations see Şeyma Afacan, "Duygular Tarihi: Bir Ezber Bozma Alanı," in *Edebiyatın Duygu Haritası*, ed. Esra Dicle (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2022), 13-40.
[5] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2004), 11.
[6] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 4.
[7] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 11.
[8] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 9.
[9] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 12.
[10] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 12.
[11] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 12-13.

emotional nature of politics.[12] Sociology and political studies approach emotions as concepts that constitute and transform the link between social structure and its actors, at the centre of social interactions.[13] The number of studies investigating how political parties mobilise masses by generating or suppressing specific emotions to gain support has increased.[14] Sara Ahmed also discusses the role of emotions in both subjective and generalised forms in shaping norms and attempts to find answers to questions such as the role of emotions in constructing national identity and how they influence past, present, and future narratives.

## Construction of the Modern Nation-State and the People's Houses as the "Centre" of National Affection

After the declaration of the republic in Türkiye, history, language, mythology, religion, culture, law, education, economy, and other elements are utilised as important tools in the process of creating a new modern nation-state. An independent economy based on industrialisation, a national education system designed to train "acceptable" citizens, an intellectual class that disseminates the modernising ideology, a judicial system that establishes state authority, a nation that is superior to others and internally solidarist, and an official ideology, Kemalism, that organises and governs the nation as a whole, become the fundamental dynamics of the modern nation-state. The Kemalist discourse asserts that the republic and modernisation are compatible with the character of the Turkish nation, presenting the classless nature of the Turks and the single-party regime as a homogeneous structure. Therefore, Kemalism represents a new understanding of order that aims to rectify the consequences of the structural dislocations following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, while also proposing a modern and national order that seeks to create a new Turkish identity. This order is based on the representation of this identity as a homogeneous and harmonious unity.

In the first half of the 1930s, as a result of political, economic, and social changes, Kemalism began to emphasise the importance of organising its programme in a way that would find resonance in civil society. Institutionalisation became a path to establish dialog with the people and to ensure the popular acceptance of the revolutions. The most significant institutions of that period, such as the Turkish Language Institution, Turkish Historical Society, Faculty of Language and History-Geography, and People's Houses, were entrusted with working in parallel and in strong collaboration to shape the cultural and scientific basis of the reforms. These institutions played a significant role in the construction of individual and collective identity, as expressed in Rousseau's statement that national institutions are what give people their reason, character, tastes, and customs, enabling them to be themselves. The impact of the People's Houses, which reached a total of 478 establishments until their complete closure in 1951, simultaneously opened in 14 provinces on February 19, 1932, is also significant in the construction of a national identity. Atatürk expressed the purpose and function of the People's Houses as follows:

[12] Nagehan Tokdoğan's book is one of the most important studies focusing on the intricate relationship between politics and emotions in the context of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government in Türkiye. Nagehan Tokdoğan, *Yeni Osmanlıcılık-Hınç, Nostalji, Narsisizm* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018).

[13] Barbalet, J., "Introduction: Why Emotions are Crucial?" *Emotions and Sociology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2002), 1-9. As cited in Nagehan Tokdoğan, *Yeni Osmanlıcılık-Hınç, Nostalji, Narsisizm*, 28.

[14] Ost, D., "Politics as the Mobilisation of Anger: Emotions in Movements and in Power," *European Journal of Social Theory*, no. 7 (2004): 229-244. As cited in Nagehan Tokdoğan, *Yeni Osmanlıcılık-Hınç, Nostalji, Narsisizm*, 29.

> *The nation should be organised as an aware, understanding, loving, and ideologically committed mass of people. It is not enough to possess the most powerful educational tools or the most skilled teacher corps. We will not neglect the organisation of a separate endeavour to educate the people and transform them into a collective entity. The People's Houses will fulfil this task.*[15]

The People's Houses operated in nine different areas: the Department of Language, History, and Literature; the Department of Art; The Department of Theatre; the Department of Sports; the Department of Social Aid; the Department of Public Lectures and Courses; the Library and Publishing Department; the Department of Rural Development; and the Museum and Exhibition Department. Among these, the most significant activity area of the People's Houses was the Department of Theatre. Between 1932 and 1940 alone, a total of 12,350 theatre performances were organised in the People's Houses.[16] From 1932 to 1951, approximately 110 of the 386 different plays staged in the People's Houses were written specifically to promote the Kemalist ideology. These plays were commissioned by the People's Houses or encouraged through competitions.[17] These plays, in general, showcased patriotism and belief in national unity. Dr. Reşit Galip, the Minister of National Education at the time, described the qualities of the plays to be performed in the People's Houses as follows:

> *In the People's Houses stages, only plays that defend national theses are represented. Our subjects will draw from countless stages of the general Turkish history and the national struggle, each of which can be an eternal source of honour and pride for the nation. They will derive from the elements such as the noble character and virtues of the Turks and the limitless material and spiritual powers in the Turkish spirit.*[18]

As evident from the quotes, the nation is depicted as a performative body composed of individuals bound to each other by bonds of love, united around a sacred ideal, carrying within them a certain repertoire of emotions and high virtues that are transmitted as an unchanged national essence from the past to the future. One of the most significant tools to portray and impel this body is theatre, with its unique power of suggestion and education. In the continuation of the text, I will attempt to understand how the emotional repertoire of the nation was constructed in the plays written or staged in the People's Houses during that period. I will investigate how emotions transformed into political sentiments and nationalist feelings during the establishment of the modern nation-state, as well as how the political and theatrical aspects were intertwined. As I embark on a text-focused analysis, considering Sara Ahmed's notion of the "*affectivity of texts*"[19] and her proposition to understand how texts "move" and consequently produce effects will be valuable. I will explore how texts define different emotions, determine their subjects and objects, examine how words that describe emotions are interconnected, and investigate the circulation of emotions in texts. As Ahmed states, "*The feeling does not simply exist before the utterance, but becomes 'real' as an effect, shaping different kinds of actions and orientations.*"[20] Different words used to express emotions do entirely different things, thus "*emotions are performative.*"[21] I will inquire into how words that define emotions move and generate effects in texts. Additionally, I will keep in mind how the affectivity of texts, although often neglected by authors, can be aligned with the aesthetic means of the stage.

[15] Adem Kara, *Halkevleri* (Ankara: 24 Saat Yayıncılık, 2006), 35.
[16] Sefa Şimşek, *Bir İdeolojik Seferberlik Deneyimi, Halkevleri (1932-1951)* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2002), 61.
[17] Among other plays, we can mention translations of works by Shakespeare, Moliere, and Sophocles, adaptations of plays by Musahipzade Celal and Ahmet Vefik Pasha, French-style farces, tragicomedies, and melodramas.
[18] Şimşek, *Bir İdeolojik Seferberlik Deneyimi, Halkevleri (1932-1951)*, 190.
[19] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 23.
[20] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 13.
[21] Ahmed, Cultural Politics of Emotion, 13.

## "This Work Was Written for You, Taking Inspiration from You" / The Construction of Collectivity and Emotions

Sara Ahmed explores how emotions, such as tenderness, become qualities of constructed collectivities, such as a nation.[22] According to Ahmed, emotions are transformed into bodily attributes to establish and secure social hierarchies, serving as claims about subjects and the collectivities to which they belong. The power that produces meaning and value regarding the self and the other drives this transformation. On the one hand, power ensures the subject's participation in the collectivity, while on the other hand, it establishes norms regarding which emotions are deemed "*appropriate*"[23] for the collectivity and dictates how these emotions should be "expressed." Power manages the subject's expression or concealment of emotional experiences.

At this point, it can be useful to briefly examine how collectivity is constructed through emotions in texts. In his theatre play titled *İnkılap Yolu* Halit Bedi includes a preface when the publication of the play previously staged at the People's Houses is concerned. Addressing the "respectable reader" in the preface, Halit Bedi acknowledges the technical and aesthetic inadequacy of the play while emphasising the importance of its content and its "emotional power." He states: "*I see many, and I mean many, mistakes in this play I wrote during my vacation: there is the intensity of an eagle's wing and the speed of a blue lightning bolt in its 'forward' movement within me! Read or perform this play with this conviction!*"[24] With these words, the author aims to transfer and popularise the enthusiastic "forward" emotion instilled within, taking it from the realm of power and embedding it in the reader. The intended reader, addressed as "you" is meant to be integrated into the collective identity through the emotions produced and circulated via texts. Therefore, what matters in the play is not the characteristics of the theatrical genre, the construction of discourse, or the competence of the work, but rather how the text reflects the speed and enthusiasm of the social mobilisation conducted by power and how it creates an impact to ensure the participation of the masses in this mobilisation.

In plays, the defining value of this collective culture in which "you" are included is Turkish identity. The word "Turk" is frequently repeated in the texts, emphasising its descriptive significance: "*TÜRKAN: Long live Turkish Army / Turkishness, what greatness / Exist, great son of a Turk / Long live Anatolia!*"[25] Ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender, class, and any other form of distinction are melted within Turkishness. By constantly repeating the word "Turk" as a subject-noun in the texts, Turkishness is defined as an ontological source of self-confidence[26] and generates its own repertoire of emotions and performances. As Butler suggests, performativity encompasses repeatability; if a performative expression can be continuously repeated, it becomes "*successful*."[27] Due to its engagement with norms and traditions, the impact of the performance also has a historical quality. The performance carried out to shape the future does so by repeating past agreements.[28] The play Bozkurt, which narrates the victorious past of the Turks, aims to repeat and transmit past performances seamlessly to the present and future by defining the performances associated with the past. Presented with the dedication of "*This work was written for you, taking inspiration from you*,"[29] the play makes "you" both the protagonist and the recipient of the narrative, encompassing the identity in which "you" are included as an essence that remains unchanged from the past to the present and into the future, within an uninterrupted continuity. In the preface of *Kurtuluş*, the writer includes himself in the collective body by speaking in

[22] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 1.
[23] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 4.
[24] Halit Bedi, *İnkılap Yolu* (Balıkesir: Türk Dili Neşriyatı, 1934), 7.
[25] İbrahim Tarık Çakmak, *Bozkurt* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitaphanesi 1935), 118.
[26] Tanıl Bora, "İnşa Döneminde Türk Milli Kimliği," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 71 (1996): 168-193.
[27] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 93.
[28] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 93.
[29] Hakkı Günal, *Bozkurt* (Zonguldak: Bingöl Matbaası, 1941), 4.

the "we" discourse, revealing the implicit "we" in the address to "you": "*We are the descendants of a great nation that has filled its four-thousand-year history with tales of heroism, born in the bosom of a nation of warrior descendants. We have not only known how to fight at the boundaries of the external world stretching from the oceans to the Carpathians but also struggled and succeeded at the thresholds of our inner doors.*"[30]

One of the crucial stages in the structuring of nation-states is the construction of a deep-rooted past. This is because power must generate collective memory and emotions to form a collective identity. National consciousness is established through an emphasis on a shared past, homeland, and language. The members of the nation should take pride in their past, homeland, and deep-rooted language. To achieve this, linguistic and visual symbols are created and these symbols are constantly circulated through systematic repetitions in both the private and public spheres. Power brings the qualities of the nation into tangible form through tools such as myths, ceremonies, anthems, artworks, textbooks, and scientific theses. Emotions, in turn, circulate among power, institutions, society, and individuals, permeating everyday life practises. A naturalised and timeless physical force, along with military organisation becomes one of the important shared values of the Turkish identity. In addition to being the precursor of knowledge and science, spreading civilisation to the world through a genealogy that almost begins with existence, epic emotions commonly found in late nationalism such as fearlessness, independence, eternal nationalism, obedience to the state and authority also become significant common values of Turks.[31] In the plays, efforts are made to depict "*the genuine qualities inherent in the Turkish race: bravery, heroism, loyalty, love, and virtues*."[32] Therefore, all these emphases on a shared past and essence necessitate that every individual of the Turkish nation possesses the same qualities, develops a common behaviour aligned with the identity when necessary, and acts in harmony with collectivity.[33] The nation, composed of individuals who "*pulsate with the same nationality, the same identity, and the same pride*,"[34] must move as a unified body. Therefore, the texts are performative , creating a space for impact and action. Sometimes addressing the recipient as "you" and sometimes as "we," the intended audience is envisioned as a mass that is expected to embrace and perform the defined Turkish identity in all its qualities, emotional repertoire, and behavioural patterns, thereby creating the necessary foundation for the Kemalist development project.[35]

[30] Veysi Kısakürek, *Kurtuluş* (1951), 2.

[31] Bora, "İnşa Döneminde Türk Milli Kimliği," 168-193.

[32] Şükrü Dölen, *Tarih Bizim* (Çankırı: Çankırı V. Matbaası, 1943), 3.

[33] Esra Dicle Başbuğ, *Resmî İdeoloji Sahnede Kemalist İdeolojinin İnşasında Halkevleri Dönemi Tiyatro Oyunlarının Etkisi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013), 283.

[34] Celal Tuncer, *Devrim Yolcuları* (Ankara: CHP Gösterit Yayınları, 1937), 12.

[35] In this context, individuals become part of this mass by cancelling their individuality and becoming anonymous. In the play *Sönmeyen Ateş* written by Nahid Sırrı, Belkıs, who volunteers as a nurse in İzmir during the war, mentions "how she begins to see her own personality as small and faded" (Istanbul: İkbal Kitabevi, 1938, 40). In On Yılın Destanı Turgut, after composing a Symphony for the tenth anniversary of the Republic, requests that the epitaph on his tombstone read "an unknown Turkish artist." (Istanbul: Kanaat Kütüphanesi, 1933, 53). Belkıs's perception of her diminishing individuality and Turgut's desire to be recognised as an anonymous artist emphasise the sacrifice of personal recognition for the sake of the collective. It highlights the importance placed on the collective over individuality in the construction of the Turkish identity within these narratives.

## "Love your nation and make others love it."[36]

In the process of constructing the modern nation-state, the fundamental emotion of the Turkish nation is love. Love strengthens the connection among the elements that constitute collectivity, creates a network of specific emotions, and also requires certain displays, thus giving rise to particular performances. Primarily, the process of nation-building entails a strong education in love, providing explanations about the chain of responsibilities that individuals have towards the objects of love (such as the state, the nation, the leader, the homeland, the mainland, the village, the villagers, the fine arts, culture, science, etc.).

The central object of nationalist affection is the love of the homeland. In the plays, the emotion that binds all individuals—children, youth, elderly, women, men, rulers, public figures, soldiers, teachers, villagers, urban dwellers—across different times (over a four-thousand-year history) and spaces (the ancestral land in Central Asia and the mainland in Anatolia) is the love for the homeland: "*They call us Turks… The love for our homeland is superior to everything, it is great*."[37] It is easy to provide examples. In the play Atatürk Köyünde Uçak Günü, the Teacher says, "*a virtue I observe in this village is love for the homeland… They speak the truth and never deviate from justice*,"[38] romanticising the villagers' innate purity, righteousness, justice, and love for the homeland. In the play Bozkurt, it is said that "*A nation whose sons, daughters, youth, and elderly tremble with love for the homeland will overcome all obstacles*."[39] In Alp Aslan, it is expressed that "*A nation whose heart beats with love for the homeland does not die… We have faced storms and hurricanes until now. Thanks to God, we have all. In this war, we may lose many brave souls, we may suffer greatly, but we will be victorious once again; the Great Seljuk nation will stand tall*."[40] Gradually, the obligations brought by love and the sense of concern that nourishes love begin to be felt in these words. In the play *Atatürk Köyünde Uçak Günü*, this becomes clearer as love for the homeland is associated with the duty of sacrifice and the possibility that it may be required at any moment:

> *KUMANDAN: When they say our village, they mean our homeland… Just as centuries ago, when they referred to their tribe, their ancestral land, their heritage, their knowledge, and their homeland, they saw all of Asia and three-fourths of Europe as their own, now, when they say our village, they think of it in the same comprehensive sense, referring to this beautiful homeland; the twenty-thousand-year-old homeland of the Turks, our Anatolia… They would give everything, their possessions, their blood, their lives for their beloved homeland.*[41]

Patriotism and, therefore, being a good citizen entails tirelessly working in all fields for the development of the country, saving, using domestic products, paying taxes, engaging in sports, maintaining a healthy body, listening to Western music, enjoying the fine arts, embracing the guidance of scientific reasoning, merging one's individuality within the collective, knowing the village, loving the villagers, recognising friends and enemies, being loyal to the national leader, and remaining faithful to the national ideal, among a wide range of requirements. Most importantly, it involves participating in the defence of the homeland and being ready to sacrifice one's life when necessary. The most intense expression of love is the willingness to sacrifice one's life, and this is dependent on the existence of an enemy. The plays where love for the homeland is frequently emphasised are also the texts created

[36] This phrase appears on a banner prepared for the Tenth Year Celebrations of the Republic. N. Demirhan, "Türkiye'nin Onuncu Yıl Kutlamaları," www.atam.gov.tr/index.php?Pagedergi icerikler&icerikNo682 (the last access: 30 Haziran 2023).
[37] Avni Candar, *30 Ağustos* (Ankara: Ulusal Matbaa, 1940), 10.
[38] Vehbi Cem Aşkun, *Atatürk Köyünde Uçak Günü* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1936), 15.
[39] İsmail Hakkı Sunat, *Bozkurt* (Ülkü Kitap Yurdu, 1947), 11-12.
[40] Ali Kazanoğlu, *Alp Aslan* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1948), 18.
[41] Aşkun, *Atatürk Köyünde Uçak Günü*, 44.

that generate a state of vigilance, acknowledging that the enemy can manifest itself at any time, even if it is not a tangible presence.[42] The existence of love is contingent on the existence of others. These texts are fuelled by a constant concern[43] for the possibility of a new state of war and, consequently, a sense of protecting the homeland. İsmet İnonu, in his speech at the opening of the People's House in Ankara, addresses this issue as follows:

> *(...) However, no matter when or in what manner a storm arises, our main source of strength, resilience, and all forms of resistance, before any other means, is the strength we draw from relying on each other within the Turkish nation. (...) The most effective point, according to our belief, which surpasses the power of weapons and all kinds of physical force, is the unity, elevation, and strength that national life will achieve for the entire nation through institutions like People's Houses. Just as in the past, if we are compelled to face numerous difficult trials tomorrow—and we are ready to face these trials every day—our primary source of confidence on that day will be the strength demonstrated by the entire nation for the sake of the ideal.*[44]

The potential fragility and permeability inherent in this state of alertness, the existence of an enemy, the fear of occupation and fragmentation, as emphasised in the quotes by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü, are attempted to be overcome by organising the nation as a loving, solidarity-oriented, and ideologically committed mass of people. What brings together the "I" and "we" has ideals as an indicator of ideal subjectivity.[45] Love plays an important role in individuals' adaptation to collectives through identification with an ideal.[46] Having an ideal requires a performance that gives individuals or groups a "value" or "character," thus bodies adopt and move upon a nation. These movements serve as a way to "present ourselves," and this presentation is always addressed to others. Through the education of love, it is intended to ensure that the nation moves as a rigid, tight, single body and to eliminate the anxieties that a nation should not bear by showcasing this powerful body internally and externally.

Moving away from feelings of anxiety and fear allows for a focus on symbols of love and heroism. These symbols can also be observed in the staging and set designs of plays. Turning to a common symbol entails the repetition and display of "unity" indicators. The most significant symbol in plays is the flag. In the play *Kahraman*, similar to Hüseyin, who evades military service for the sake of love and suddenly realises that "*country, honour, and flag*" are above everything else,[47] flags encompass the stage and all private and public spaces, symbolising the entire country. On stage, flags, busts or large portraits of Atatürk and "*a lofty statue*"[48] are used in plays written after 1938, incorporating busts and portraits of İnönü. In *Atatürk Köyünde Uçak Günü*, the description of the first scene's set design is as follows: "*The stage is adorned with flags. On a tall table there is a model aeroplane, and on a cloth or paper, in the middle, Atatürk's head is seen in the form of a sun.*"[49] At the end of the play *Kızıl Çağlayan* when Nimet dies in defence of the country, the author depicts her as "*Turkish flags waving*

[42] Even in situations where there is no clear indication, the association of the subject with war and the enemy does not take long to emerge: "MUALLİM: So, if we go from Ankara to Sivas by train, we save 462 hours. But what do we gain? Tell me, Ahmet. / AHMET: Soldiers can reach the enemy faster. / MUALLİM: Well done, Ahmet, excellent." Vedat Nedim, 29 *Birinci Teşrin* (Ankara: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Maarif Vekaleti Yayınları, 1933), 19.

[43] In plays such as *Bozkurt, Kurtuluş, and Alp Aslan*, which were written during World War II, the presence of an actual war leads to a renewed sense of collapse. To counteract this feeling, emphasis is placed on the love of the country, national ideals, and tales of heroism. These themes are strengthened to alleviate the fear and anxiety associated with the disintegration caused by the war.

[44] *Kuruluşlarının Yıldönümünde Halkevleri*, ed. Tarhan Erdem, Selçuk Erez (Istanbul: CHP 11 Gençlik Kolu, 1963), 17.

[45] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 109.

[46] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 124.

[47] Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, *Kahraman* (Istanbul: İnkılap ve Aka Kitabevleri, 1965), 61.

[48] Saim Kerim Kalkan, *Vatan ve Vazife* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1938), 4.

[49] Aşkun, *Atatürk Köyünde Uçak Günü*, 3.

*like a true cascade, fluttering among red torches, flowing and foaming*."[50] However, the author also provides alternative staging suggestions for the final scene to make it as impactful, exhilarating, and striking as possible: "*Flags, bayonets, and a tableau depicting a Turkish soldier playing the bugle on top of a high hill. By suddenly opening the backdrop in complete darkness in the last minute of the play, a more powerful effect can be achieved…*"[51] The repeated use of the flag as a "*sticky signifier*,"[52] as defined by Sara Ahmed, generates both a sense of the nation's boundaries and a sense of love for the nation. Moreover, it also creates an obligation, as the absence of displaying flags can be interpreted as a sign of lacking unity and may harm the interconnected image of the nation.

Acting in the name of love necessitates believing in a shared ideal, displaying the required performances that come with it, and gaining acceptance from others to be included in the collective. As the subjects of love, the members of the nation turn towards the objects of love, such as the state, the nation, and the leader, with emotions like belief, pride, enthusiasm, love, loyalty, duty, and sacrifice. Emotions lead the subjects to form a collective body, enabling them to approach certain bodies while distancing themselves from others. For instance, love and related emotions are directed towards the leader who represents the whole nation. Similarly, the same collectivity produces feelings such as hatred, resentment, anger, and humiliation towards the "unlovable" ones. Sara Ahmed notes that the nation is "*an abstract effect of certain bodies moving towards or away from each other*,"[53] and this movement aids in creating boundaries between things and forming the image of national character. In the next chapters of the article, I will examine how collective bodies in theatre plays move towards the leader as the object of love and towards the "others" as the object of hatred.

## "He is from us, like us, loves us"[54]

In Sigmund Freud's book *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, where he discusses the importance of love in the formation of collective identities, he argues that love within a group is based on the transfer of love to the leader, thus creating the "common feature" of the group. In other words, groups are formed through a common inclination towards an object. To put it more precisely, groups are formed when "*…individuals have substituted one and the same object for their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego*."[55] Such a group-leader relationship is also applicable to state-nation-charismatic leader relationships in nationalist collectivities, and the feeling of love can be explanatory in understanding the dynamics of this relationship.

For a new state and social construction process to occur in unity and harmony, the leader is endowed with absolute and sacred sovereignty as the sole representative of the general will. In the process of structuring the nation-state of the new Turkish Republic, the state is defined as the "*nation gathered around its ancestor*"[56] in the documents of the Republican People's Party (CHP). Mustafa Kemal, in his speech Nutuk, emphasises the importance of the "leader" from the very beginning and states that nations need/will need a leader in extraordinary circumstances: "*Gentlemen, history has indisputably proven that an unshakable leader with extraordinary abilities and power is necessary for success in great causes*."[57] In Yaşar Nabi's play Beş Devir, the inability of the nation to escape the conditions it was in during the Ottoman period is attributed to the lack of a powerful leader who would

[50] Nihat Sami, *Kızıl Çağlayan* (Istanbul: İstanbul Devlet Matbaası, 1933), 48.
[51] Nihat Sami, *Kızıl Çağlayan*, 48.
[52] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 74.
[53] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 133.
[54] Vedat Nedim, *29 Birinci Teşrin*, 6.
[55] Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego*, trans. J. Strachey (London: The Interntional Psycho-Analytical Press, 1922), 80. As cited in Sara Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 130.
[56] Dicle Başbuğ, *Resmî İdeoloji Sahnede Kemalist İdeolojinin İnşasında Halkevleri Dönemi Tiyatro Oyunlarının Etkisi*, 145.
[57] Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk 1919-1927*, ed. Zeynep Korkmaz (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2004), 7.

guide and assist them: "*The nation is weeping without a leader*."[58] After the unquestioned acceptance of the need for a leader, the qualities of the leader are defined; the first quality that the leader must possess is love, the leader's "*heart must beat for Anatolia*."[59] The leader is a figure who emerges from within the nation, recognises it, knows the essence it carries, and activates its potential. During the War of Independence process and thereafter, the charismatic leader is the one who knows the nation, understands its needs, and determines and implements its goals and methods. In *Nutuk*, Mustafa Kemal speaks of the "*high character of the Turkish nation, its forgotten great civilised qualities*,"[60] referring to himself as an individual of the nation and as someone who recognises and sees the hidden potential within the Turks. In this way, the identification and unity between the leader and the nation are established: "*Those who love him, love themselves, for he represents the nation*."[61] To these qualities of the leader/chief/hero, metaphysical and mythological attributes are added throughout the struggle for liberation, the establishment of the republic, and the process of reforms:

*İHTİYAR: Reviving, giving life when destroyed*
*Your blood is of your blood.*
*Always intertwined with you.*
*His name is your name, Gazi Mustafa Kemal. (... )*
*Love Gazi greatly, my son, if you are alive today*
*You are a medium for him, believe this with all your heart.*[62]

With all these qualities, the leader becomes not only a figure who can establish ego identity as a part of the nation, provide national pride, and have symbolic value but also much more, understood as a hero-leader-prophet-god to whom the nation owes its existence. Thus, an unconditional and unquestioned relationship of love is established between the leader and the nation:

*AZİZ: This is not just love.*
*It is a tendency that surpasses worship!*
*He is the Sun... Like the Sun of the four seasons...*
*Possessing both the power to burn and the power to create*
*He is a vast sea... With both the measured and unmeasured qualities, Sometimes calm, then gradually overflowing*
*A claw for the enemy, a caressing hand for the friend...*[63]

Mustafa Kemal is portrayed in plays sometimes as a compassionate, guiding father figure, "Gazi Baba", sometimes as a mythological hero carrying Ares' sword, sometimes as a prophet wielding the sword of the Tengri, at times as a deity, sometimes as a soldier fighting alongside the nation on the frontlines, and at other times as a leader who brought freedom civilisation to the country. The nation, in turn, organises itself around its leader as a unified, integrated mass. Although the circulation of love entails reciprocity between the leader and the nation, and both are described as figures carrying the same essence, it is clear that the leader and the nation are not the "same thing". Within the emotional network directed towards the object of love, which is the leader, emotions such as love, gratitude, admiration, obedience and fear, as seen in the above quotes, are also present. The leader is approved

[58] Yaşar Nabi, *Beş Devir* (Ankara: CHF Kitabıumumiliği, 1933), 7.
[59] Yaşar Nabi, *Beş Devir*, 18.
[60] Taha Parla, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Kültürün Resmi Kaynakları I: Atatürk'ün Nutuk'u*, 2nd edition (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınlan, 1994), 169.
[61] Aka Gündüz, *Mavi Yıldırım* (Ankara: Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Temsil Neşriyatı, 1934), 44.
[62] Ali Zühtü, Müçteba Salahattin, *Tarih Utandı* (Istanbul: İstanbul Devlet Matbaası, 1933), 5.
[63] Çamlıbel, *Kahraman*, 13.

as a figure who saves, protects, establishes, nurtures, guides, and supervises.[64] Therefore, the "nation of the leader," approaching their leader as a single body, will distance themselves from the bodies that the leader points away from:

> *Regardless of the limits of the education we provide to our children and youth, we will teach them the following fundamentals: 1- To fight against those who are enemies of their nation, 2- To fight against those who are enemies of the Turkish state, and 3- To fight against those who are enemies of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Nations that are not equipped with the means and tools to fight do not have the right to survival.*[65]

## "Curse the sultans... Curse the puppets around them..."[66]

Sara Ahmed argues that emotions are not only about movement but also about attachments or what binds us to something or someone. What motivates us to act also keeps us in a certain place or provides us with a dwelling. Therefore, movement does not sever the ties between the body and the "place" it inhabits; rather, it connects bodies to other bodies. Movement can affect different individuals in different ways, and "*for some, emotions can even mean attributing fixed characteristics to others and being 'influenced' by them.*"[67] At this point, it becomes important to consider how emotions secure collectives through interpretations of others' bodies or how emotions bring some people closer while setting them against others.

The founding principle that built the Republic of Türkiye is the mission to develop and strengthen the state. This approach quickly turned into a defensive political stance with a concern for the preservation of the state at its core. To understand the source of this emotion, it is necessary to lighten not only the global political conditions but also the mental world in which the first generation of Kemalists were raised. The concern of a class that witnessed the collapse of the empire, many of whom were born and raised in these lost territories, will continue to have an impact for many years in the face of the danger of the state's disappearance. As mentioned in the previous section, this concern forms the fundamental emotion of Kemalism. Therefore, the main factor that nourishes the state of alert in Kemalism is not only the ideal of building a new state and a new society but also the elimination of the danger of the state's collapse.[68] This requires the identification and recognition of internal and external enemies. Because "*in communities formed with any ideological formation, the opposition between 'who we are' and 'who they are' determines the boundaries.*"[69]

The definition of external enemies is generally determined by pragmatism based on political requirements. Although the War of Independence was fought against Western countries, the Turkish national identity was formed including Western identity as well. The intensity of the fluctuations between love-hate and admiration-anger does not allow for the formation of a fixed "other" image regarding the West. Therefore, a concrete "other" image is created through an internal enemy definition rooted in the country's own history. This internal enemy is the Ottoman Empire, the ancient civilisation surrounded by a religious worldview. During the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the modern nation-state, the Republic of Türkiye established its historical identity with its distant Central Asian origins, while separating and antagonising the elements related to the Ottoman Empire within it. Placing its own past, its old identity as the "other" image of national identity, also means creating a

[64] Parla, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Kültürün Resmi Kaynakları I: Atatürk'ün Nutuk'u*, 165-168.
[65] *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, v. 1-2, (Ankara: Türk inkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1952), 17.
[66] Kısakürek, *Kurtuluş*, 18.
[67] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 4.
[68] Ahmet İnsel, "Giriş," *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce-Kemalizm*, in 2nd edition (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 17-29.
[69] Christopher G. Flood, *Political Myth* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 20-21.

new conception of the old identity. In this new conception of the old identity, the Ottoman Empire and all the material and spiritual elements it encompassed are perceived as a figure that suppresses the essence of the Turkish people and hinders their national development.[70]

This discourse is frequently produced in plays. Ottoman history and identity are detached from Turkish history and identity and Orientalised. They are narrated through superstitions, irrationality, occasional mockery, and frightening, violent, and dark stories.[71] In parallel with the two fundamental principles of the Kemalist reform movement, nationalism and civilisation, everything related to the Ottoman Empire is "ridiculed" as both a national and universal obstacle, even hindering religious values, as it is seen as necessary to join universal civilisation for national progress:

> *(Teacher draws a fez on the blackboard)*
> *MUALLİM: Children, let's see if you know what this is.*
> *MEHMET: A flowerpot.*
> *FATMA: A cutout pumpkin. (Children laugh)*
> *YUSUF: A kilogramme.*
> *MUALLİM: None of you assumed it correctly, and that's understandable. You have never seen this before. It's called a fez. (. ..) It's what the Turks used to wear on their heads in the past.*
> *A CHILD: Did Turks really wear this on their heads in the past?*
> *MUALLİM: Yes, my child, they used to wear it. Furthermore, do you know what colour it was? Red. (Children laugh). (Pointing to the tassel) And there was something like a leek moustache on top of it. (...) Would you like to wear something like this on your heads?*
> *CHILDREN, ALL TOGETHER: No... No...*
> *MUALLİM: That is right, my children. The sultans used to make us wear this strange thing (...) Our beloved leader of this tasselled trouble for us. Now, like all civilised nations, we wear hats. Wasn't that a good decision? CHILDREN: It was a superb decision, excellent.*[72]

Sara Ahmed argues that words are not detached from bodies or other signs of life. According to her, attaching signs to bodies is the work of emotions.[73] For example, when others are deemed inferior, acts of humiliation can be directed towards them. In many plays, old alphabets, old clothing items, and bodies adorned with them are pushed outside the system of national identity markers because they pose a threat to the image, or rather the "ideal" of the modern nation-state. Their visibility creates concern and unease, and as a result, they are sometimes defined as ridiculous and other times as provocative of hatred. In this quotation as well, first the teacher finds the fez ridiculous, then the children have fun with the fez.

In plays, the Ottoman Empire is not only used in the context of nationalist and civilizational policies but also in the creation of village politics. The hardships endured by the villagers under the arbitrary and unjust rule of the Ottomans, where they were subjected to taxation, conscription, violence, and humiliation, are frequently emphasised in order to understand their new position acquired with the Republic. In the village, the control of life lies in the hands of feudal lords and pashas, who have the support of the palace, and under these circumstances, the absence of justice is often highlighted. In

[70] Bora, "İnşa Döneminde Türk Milli Kimliği," 168-193.

[71] In the play *Destan*, the Ottoman dynasty is evaluated as "senile dervishes." Naşit Galip, Destan (Istanbul: İstanbul Devlet Matbaası, 1933), 11. In the play *Kurtuluş*, it i said that "there ara countless brother-killers, jesters who would throw money to fish or string pearls in their beards among Sultans (6). The Ottoman sultans who ruled the three continents, reaching the banks of the Tuna River and capturing Istanbul, are not depicted as heroic figures because they did not leave their comfortable palaces while brave soldiers fought on the battlefield. Fatih Sultan Mehmet, during the conquest of Istanbul, is portrayed as a "sovereign who enjoyed himself day and night in the shadiest spot of his imperial tent," Kanuni is described as a ruthless ruler with a conscience marked by the cries of his own son, and Yavuz Sultan Selim is depicted as a selfish leader who buried his own homeland's true sons in sandy deserts just to wear the caliphate turban (11-12).

[72] Vedat Nedim, 29; Birinci *Teşrin*, 17.

[73] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 6.

*Uzun Mehmet*, the representative of the state, the Ereğli Tax Collector, is described as wearing a "sable fur coat, gown, a sash around his waist, and a white, embroidered cap". In the first scene of the play, the tax collector is depicted hunting peasants with a rifle: "*MÜTESELLiM: Hey, servant... I've struck the Turk from his hoopoe... You see, right...*"[74] In plays, there is a portrayal of the peasantry as being insignificant and subordinate to sultans and pashas, although not always through such fantastical scenes: "*SATILMIŞ: (...) But in the past, let us recall, sultans used to only take money from us... They didn't regard us as humans... They didn't regard us as humans... We would be insulted for being barefoot Turks.*"[75] In Kurtuluş, it is narrated that the Ottoman Empire provided no services such as education, healthcare, or security to the villages from which it collected taxes: "*FATMA: Is my father dead? / SOLDIER: No, my girl. We sent him to the hospital. / FATMA (Innocently): What is a hospital? / SOLDIER: Cusrse the Sultans, curse the puppets around them. Curse the ruler who deems it too much for a true Turkish girl to learn about hospitals!*"[76]

This anger and humiliation is not only derived from being humiliated but also from the perception of the Ottoman Empire as a common identity of traitors who collaborated with external enemies during the War of Independence. The Ottoman Empire, including the sultan, pashas, and their supporters, is portrayed as a "*sly snake with vengeance / lays ambushes on the roads to strike from behind*"[77] and "*attacking all corners of the homeland, denying rights, knowing no mercy, burning, destroying, a pack of crazed hyaenas.*"[78] Therefore, the underlying emotions towards the Ottoman Empire stem from a strong sense of betrayal: "*Anzavur, Gavur İmam, Kara Hüseyin... They are leading the national existence to the abyss for the sake of religious fanaticism.*"[79] This discourse is also present in *Nutuk* as well.

> *(...) They constantly used all the ungrateful children of the country who were susceptible to evil and betrayal, inciting and arming them against the patriotic defenders who dedicated themselves to the national defence. They published false fatwas in the name of Islamic law, rewarded the Anzavurs with titles and honours, and unleashed material and spiritual poison and corrupt forces against the independence and defence of the homeland. Consequently, Anatolia had to fight for months against these destructive forces.*[80]

Anger and even hate develop towards a family member who cannot be completely disregarded, an intimate other. Sara Ahmed, quoting Gorden W. Allport, suggests that "*there is always a shared life and love relationship before hate*," and that "*hate cannot exist without a long-standing disappointment and anger.*"[81] Therefore, the other is kept close at hand, even to dismantle, negate, and defeat them. However, on the other hand, the impossibility of destruction, negation, and defeat (the indispensable member of the family, the past, the Ottoman Empire) creates concern, which is again attempted to be alleviated through anger and hate.

## Conclusion

Italian philosopher Brian Massumi argues that emotions are more important than the concept of ideology in understanding power, particularly state power in its narrow sense.[82] The effects of power shape our identities and mould us from within. It is an internal process that manifests through us, as

[74] Ahmet Naim, Celal Edip, *Uzun Mehmet* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1938), 8.
[75] Candar, *30 Ağustos*, 49-50.
[76] Kısakürek, *Kurtuluş*, 18.
[77] Naşit Galip, *Destan*, 21.
[78] Yusuf Sururi Eruluç, *Bir Gönül Masalı* (İstanbul: Ahmed İhsan Basımevi, 1937), 28.
[79] Aka Gündüz, *Yarım Osman* (Ankara: CHF Kitabıumumiliği, 1933), 7.
[80] Atatürk, *Nutuk 1919-1927*, 391.
[81] G. W. Allport, *The Nature o f Prejudice* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979), 219. As cited in Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 50.
[82] B. Massumi, *Duygu Politikası* (Istanbul: Otonom Yayıncılık, 2019), 47.

"*we enact it as it enacts us*."[83] Therefore, power cannot simply disregard emotions; instead, it mobilises them in a highly specific manner.

> *It is often believed that emotions produce illusions. However, the illusions created by emotions are extremely useful. They provide an enticing gap that allows rationality to hook onto. Emotion is the realm of "püre" feeling, indicating the vulnerability of the individual to larger social forces. The individual becomes ensnared by the hooks of power through emotions, and then power, by pulling the strings, leads the individual towards the role it deems appropriate, all while deceiving the individual into consenting*.[84]

During the early Republican era, the emotional education of the masses and the creation of a shared memory, emotional repertoire, and identity around a common ground were crucial. The emotional impact of theatre played a significant role in spreading nationalist-civilizational policies[85] and ensuring their adoption by various segments of society, including children, youth, adults, urbanites, villagers, women, and men. The goal of the theatre plays commissioned and encouraged by the government within the People's Houses was to create a mass audience in alignment with the ideals of the ruling power. This goal could be achieved through the manipulation of specific emotions: pride in the invented past, anger towards the rejected past, humiliation, mockery, disappointment, feelings of betrayal, concerns and vigilance regarding the possibility of a new war, love and devotion to the homeland and the Turkish nation, and an embodiment of these emotions in a charismatic leader, evoking feelings of love, loyalty, gratitude, and admiration. Therefore, these plays exalted certain emotions and the bodies associated with them, while diminishing others, bringing certain bodies closer together and driving others apart.

The plays generate and circulate emotions through the arrangement of both textual and stage elements. Emotions produced through words and repetitions are further strengthened by stage indicators such as marches, anthems, sculptures, flags, busts, lighting, sound, costumes, and set designs. Although frequently used within the plays, most of them also conclude with slogans or anthems. *Destan* ends with a tirade narrating the relentless battles of the Kemalist children on the path of progress. *Yaman* ends with the exclamation of "republic"; *Gavur İmam* ends with the villagers standing, holding weapons in their hands, their faces filled with hatred and revenge, shouting in unison, "Long live the Turkish nation"; *Tarih Utandı* concludes with the sounds of "Mustafa Kemal... Mustafa Kemal... Independence... Independence"; *Gazi Çocukları İçin* ends with the children singing together, "Turkish children joined hands; the path to prosperity and unity is ours. Together we achieved the Turkish ideal, and this is also the path to prosperity for us"; *29 Birinci Teşrin* concludes with the cries of "To us... to us... to us..." in response to the question "To whom did father Gazi entrust the reforms?"; and *Bozkurt* ends with the verse of the farewell song to the homeland, "Keep your strength without losing hope. "Do not fear even if the mountains collapse and death blocks your path." Therefore, the organisation of epic, lyrical, and romantic elements in the plays triggers national emotions and enthusiasm, allowing the reader/audience to experience catharsis and emotional purification, while the national discourse is reproduced.

Each of these plays "*shows us the very public nature of emotions, and the emotive nature of publics*."[86] These studies demonstrate not only how emotions persist in the present through the bodies of the past but also how history, along with the histories of colonialism, slavery, racism, and violence,

[83] Massumi, *Duygu Politikası*, 34.
[84] Massumi, *Duygu Politikası*, 99.
[85] For an important and in-depth study that explores this topic through the plays *Zengin Mutfağı and Seni Seviyorum Türkiye*, see Süreyya Karacabey, "Duygu Dramaturgisi: 'Yaralarım Benden Önce de Vardı,'" in *Edebiyatın Duygu Haritası*, ed. Esra Dicle (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2022), 197-226.
[86] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 24.

continues to exist and even "*opens up to the future through different orientations towards the Other*."[87] Therefore, it is crucial to recognise that politics does not solely operate through rational means but also engages and uses emotions. Therefore, it is of great importance for the number of studies that demonstrate how politics not only operates through rational means but also engages and utilises emotions, and how art aligns emotional production with political demands, to increase.



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[87] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 202.

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Chapter 12

# Between Forgetting and Remembering: The Memory of the 1990s in Turkish Playwriting

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## Abstract

Draaisma evaluates memory both internally and externally. Internal memory is the information stored in the human mind, and external memory is the writing of this information. The play texts have both internal and external memory characteristics. Following Halbwachs' idea of collective memory, Assman classifies memory as mimetic, objects, communicative and cultural. Memory that is evaluated "objectively" by reconstructing the past becomes "subjective" by the playwright's creation of the plot. Thus, this relationship between the objective and the subjective is external for the spectator who forgets or can forget and internal memory for the playwright as rememberer.

After the nineties, the rapidly advancing communication technology and the dominant culture of the media caused an intense memorylessness. While man becomes memoryless in global speed, the common aim of the plays written after 1990 in Turkish Theatre is to remind the forgotten. Therefore, in this study, the past reconstructed through playwrights in Turkish playwriting after 1990 is evaluated; memories of the plays written by Behiç Ak, Civan Canova, Coşkun Irmak, Cuma Boynukara, Memet Baydur, Özen Yula, Tuncer Cücenoğlu, Turgay Nar and Yılmaz Onay are analysed.

**Keywords** memory · forgetting · remembering · 1990s · Turkish playwriting

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## Introduction: Memory

*You know what you can recall.*[1]
Walter J. ONG

Every work of art that carries the trace of memory reconstructs the past in its narrative or interpretation. Within this reconstruction lie the remnants of individual and collective memory. Theatre emerges through the influence of both these forms of memory. The playwright's imagery moves from individual memory towards collective memory. The memory of the play also becomes a reflection of both. The play text, where individual and collective memory converge, carries the purpose of not letting the past be forgotten and of realising what exists in the 'now'. The memory of theatre does not conceal that it is a past formed within this moment. Bringing the past to the present or remembering it is evaluated as a new artistic construction through those who remember, and this act of remembrance, despite being approached from different angles by memory theorists, is essentially divided into two main branches: internal and external memory. Individual memory is regarded as internal/subjective, while collective memory is considered external/objective. Forgetting and remembering occur within these two memory systems, and the playwright's imagery becomes a sign of internal memory, while the written play text becomes a sign of external memory.

Memory is defined as "*your ability to remember things; the part of your mind in which you store things that you remember*".[2] The definitions of memory in philosophy are as follows: "*the retention of, or the capacity to retain, past experience or previously acquired information (...) occurrent memory consists in images of past experience (which have a special quality marking them as memory images) and that memory of facts is read off such image memory*".[3] In philosophy, memory is a function that provides cognition about events, facts, or objects that are not present here and now. This function serves both as a preserved repository in the mind and as a place to resort to between forgetting and remembering. In other words, philosophy determines the structure of memory through the remembering subject. Remembering involves creating an image in memory by mentally reviving past events. In Plato's famous Menon dialogue discussing the immortality of the soul, he introduced the concept of memory. According to Plato, the function of memory is logos. The pursuit or learning with logos is the process of remembrance. Remembering is seen as the reunion of the soul with a forgotten 'idea'. Following Plato, Aristotle also believes that memory is one of the three great faculties of the soul, alongside reason and will, and he elevates memory as an indispensable value within the triad of imagination, sensation, and reason for the formation of a society's collective memory.[4]

From Ancient Greece to the present day, memory, a fundamental topic of philosophers, remains one of the most frequently discussed concepts even in the 20th century. Douwe Draaisma, a contemporary theorist, regards the examination and interpretation of memory across eras as a metaphorical approach. His perspective itself becomes a metaphor among metaphors. The diverse categorisation of memory arises from the necessity of metaphorization within research. Every view on memory, ranging from Plato's wax tablets to modern computers, has expanded this metaphorical domain.[5] A common ground among various viewpoints on memory is the evaluation of memory as both internal and external. The views of Jan Assmann, who is mentioned in all studies concerning memory, also address the internal and external structure of memory. However, he goes beyond that and

[1] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor&Francis Group, 2002), 33.
[2] Oxford Dictionary, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/academic/memory?q=memory accessed April 10, 2023,
[3] Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 553-554.
[4] Ed. Alexandre Abensour, *Bellek (La Mémoire)*, trans. Gülçin Kaya Rocheman (Istanbul: Fol Yayınları, 2022), 13-15.
[5] Douwe Draaisma, *Metaphors of Memory: A History of Ideas About the Mind*, trans. Paul Vincent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 2000), 1-7.

categorises memory into types. These include "mimetic memory", which describes acquired behaviours through imitation; "objects memory", which establishes an associative field that recalls the past experiences of lived things; "communicative memory", which bridges the gap between consciousness and memory; and "cultural memory", which facilitates the transmission of meaning.[6] Social memory, cultural memory, and other types of memory diversified and classified under names such as collective memory entail a complex relationship that is difficult to distinguish. Mentioning any type of memory inherently forms a comprehensive meaning that includes the others. Regardless of the focus or categorisation in discussions about memory, two fundamental aspects are always addressed: forgetting and remembering. Therefore, an objective of this study, constructed within the context of internal and external memory, is to explore the boundaries of forgetting and remembering.

The 1990s stand out as a period when memory studies intensified, and there are several reasons for the academic focus on memory. One of the primary reasons for this intensification is the significance attributed to the memories of those who survived the world wars and the perceived loss of these memories due to the impact of the atomic bomb, both in individual and collective memory. Furthermore, the rapid advancement of technology and the widespread use of the internet have created an artificial memory outside the human mind. While the virtual space may appear to be an artificial memory where everything can be found, it is considered a threat from the perspective of oral history. The belief that everything can be easily accessed through search engines is not considered a sufficient method for the transmission of culture. In the context of these developments, the focus on forgetting in the 1990s centred around concerns about the loss of memory. During the same period, the concerns of forgetting or not remembering that emerged with the acceleration of globalisation also prompted a focus on memory in both science and art in Türkiye. The military coup on September 12, 1980, political pressures, the desire to emphasise local culture and identities within global culture, and the opening up of the questioning of recent history brought the confrontation with the past through memory to the forefront.[7] Memory, as a domain for confronting the past, also shapes the content of plays written in Turkish theatre during the 1990s. The common denominator of these plays is their assumption of the function of remembering in social memory. Therefore, in this study, the discourses of playwrights who were positioned as 'rememberer' towards the audience who were considered "forgetter" during the 1990s are examined. The evaluation focuses on how memory, situated between forgetting and remembering, is reflected in the plays of playwrights -Behiç Ak, Civan Canova, Coşkun Irmak, Cuma Boynukara, Memet Baydur, Özen Yula, Tuncer Cücenoğlu, Turgay Nar, and Yılmaz Onay- who imaginatively reconstruct the past.

## The Relationship of Memory as Forgetting and Remembering with Theatre

*Memory is like a dog that lies down where it pleases.*[8]
Cees Nooteboom

The place of forgetting and remembering is memory. For Draaisma, memory is "an inner place that is not a place". It is also the source of all memory metaphors. Because of the insecurity about the ability to remember what is stored in memory, "mnemotechnics" was developed in Ancient Greece in the 6th century BC. The birth of the technique is identified with the poet Simonides. The purpose is to convey important events to future generations, and one of the significant figures undertaking this transmission task is the poets.[9] According to Connerton, there is also a concealed remembrance

[6] Jan Assmann, *C_ultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-11.
[7] Leyla Neyzi, "Giriş," in *Nasıl Hatırlıyoruz? Türkiye'de Bellek Çalışmaları*, ed. Leyla Neyzi (Istanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları, 2014) 1-11.
[8] Draaisma, *Metaphors of Memory*, 11.
[9] Frances A. Yates, *Selected Works Volume III The Art of Memory* (London-New York: Routledge, Taylor&Francis Group, 1999), 1-5.

at every beginning, and the knowledge of the past can only be obtained from memory. The act of remembrance by an individual requires an awareness of the continuity of society. The memory of each individual is formed with the image of social continuity. "*Groups provide individuals with frameworks within which their memories are localised and memories are localised by a kind of mapping. We situate what we recollect within the mental spaces provided by the group*".[10] While individual memory provides an internal structure, it is also external in containing traces of collective memory. In other words, our relationships with others shape our memories. Without a memory, there can be no remembering. Remembering the past is a linguistic act. Social memory is formed through consensual relationships established in a common language. People living within a society create shared memories with shared words, and collective thought is shaped by collective memories. Each member of a society with collective memory turns the direction of their memories towards the evolving direction of collective memory.[11] Since memories can be formed with a narrative, when one moves away from the narrative, one also moves away from memory. This condition, known as memory loss, becomes a general problem for societies that remember less and less. According to Jacoby, today's enlightenment is a form of social memory loss. The wilful suppression of what is already known, the imposition of the idea that the past has already passed, is an excuse to save the day.

> *(...) memory driven out of mind by the social and economic dynamic of this society. (...) Reification in Marxism refers to an illusion that is objectively manufactured by society. This social illusion works to preserve the status quo by presenting the human and social relationships of society as natural -and unchangeable- relations between things. (...) The social loss of memory is a type of reification - better: it is the primal form of reification. "All reification is a forgetting."*[12]

Jacoby argues that commodification arises as a form of objectification driven by the demands of the economic system. In an era where the profit motive is intensified, the culture of disposability influences various aspects, including consumption, thinking, and even sexuality, by promoting new products and rendering the old ones unnecessary. All of these phenomena mask social memory. "*Inherent in Marxism is the notion that dead labour dominates living, things dominate activity, the past commands the present.*"[13] The only way to prevent the past from ruling unchallenged in the present is through remembrance. Social memory loss is the suppression of society's own past. Marcuse argues that the suppression of the past is political fiction. To suppress a society's history is to suppress its future. Remembrance serves as the intermediary of detachment from the suppressed past, and those in power are apprehensive of the power of remembrance.[14] The suppression and disregard of the past increase its impact on the present. In fact, the present, or the "now", becomes a product of the feared past. Historical consciousness begins to dull, and memory loss consumes even the memory itself.[15] Therefore, memory is always a strategic asset. It is a social phenomenon that gains value through remembering or forgetting. Remembering is one way to overcome the traumatic effects of the past. It is the act of remembering itself that initiates a public process of communication and enables the discussion of individual and collective identity issues. In addition, remembering is a struggle against individual and social indifference. Remembering, arising from the effects of forgetting, confronts not the past itself

[10] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 37.
[11] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1980), 51-65.
[12] Russell Jacoby, *Social Amnesia: A Critique of Conformist Psychology from Adler to Laing* (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2017), 4.
[13] Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*, 4-5.
[14] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2006), 80-82.
[15] Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 1995), 18-20.

but the repercussions of the past in the present. Because both forgetting and remembering exist in the "now", the purpose of remembering within this present moment is to transcend the influence of the past.[16]

Theatre, as a reflection of memory theories, recalls the forgotten through its representation in the "now" using mimetic memory. According to Augé, there are three figures of forgetting: "retrogression", "postponement", and "new beginning". Attempting to exclude past time occurs through retrogression. Postponement allows for the expression soon and aestheticization of the now. New beginnings represent the excitement of a fresh start. Overcoming the remembered through remembering carries the hope of a new birth. The theatre presents these three figures to its audience as the content of representation. Because within the play, the past reconstructs itself. The future emerges as a draft within the play.[17] The theatre interprets and reproduces reality through representation. The playwright's intention is to prevent the forgetting of the past. In theatre, the audience becomes a witness to the past. According to Sarlo, there cannot be experiential witnessing without narration. For the sharing of experience, it needs to be told. In other words, the narrated experience rescues events susceptible to being forgotten from the risk of oblivion and transforms them into a collective experience for everyone.[18] When considering the relationship between experience and remembering, it becomes clear that remembering does not always involve subjective witnessing alone. Secondary experiences or the details of external memory are also part of remembering. As a rememberer, the playwright opens up all aspects of memory through an imaginative approach. Because the issue at hand is not only the teller/actor but also the listener/viewer. The playwrights are not obligated to be memory conveyors responsible for remembering everything, but they write with the understanding that there is a hidden memory within every beginning.

Paul Ricoeur's views on narrative provide an explanatory framework for the relationship between theatrical narration and memory. Building upon Ricoeur's analyses of narrative time, questions arise about when the playwright remembers and which past is being remembered anew. If the playwright is a witness to the events being narrated, She/He is not merely a follower of external memory. In fact, the "now" in which the playwright exists influences the way the past is narrated.[19] In the narrative of the play, the hegemony of the present over the past is subject to the dictates of experience, and regarding witnessing, internal memory comes to the forefront. The remembered past is a condition for the discourse of the play, not a choice. "*Witnessing, fundamentally, is witnessing oneself*".[20] The playwright confronts all layers of memory based on their ability to remember the past, grasp the present, reach towards the future, and immerse oneself in the perspective of the characters in the play. This is because memory does not forget anything. Forgetting is the temporary exclusion of moments from access, and this realm is revisited through theatre. Ricoeur's triple mimesis transforms the workings of memory into the details of mimetic memory. Mimesis I is spontaneous mimesis, Mimesis II is the world where events are constructed, which is fiction, and Mimesis III is the encounter between the play and the audience.[21] Remembering is the architect of fiction. The play text places the forgotten within the flowing time by embedding the infinite "now", which is the true time of remembering. The past and the future blend into the "now" of the text. A text in the classical dramatic structure, with its completed form before being narrated to the audience, freezes time in the realm of imaginative memory. The time of

[16] Mithat Sancar, *Geçmişle Hesaplaşma* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016), 51-58.

[17] Marc Augé, *Unutma Biçimleri (Les Formes de L'oubli)*, trans. Mehmet Sert (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2022), 47-48.

[18] Beatriz Sarlo, *Geçmiş Zaman: Bellek Kültürü ve Özneye Dönüş Üzerine Bir Tartışma (Tempo Pasado: Cultura de la Memoria y Giro Subjetivo Una Discusion)*, trans. Peral Bayaz Charum, Deniz Ekinci (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2007), 19-23.

[19] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Volume 3*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 150-163.

[20] Ahmet Soysal, "Kendi (on Paul Ricoeur)," *Cogito*, no. 56 (Fall 2008): 204. *The quoted sentence translated by the author.

[21] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Volume 1*, trans. Kathleen Mclaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 27-55.

the performance is the reanimation of this frozen imaginative memory; in other words, the play is remembered again and again in each performance. With a tribute to Assmann, this situation can also be read as the past's reluctance to pass. Because individual or collective identity is a matter of memory and remembrance. Theatre by presenting the relationship between forgetting and remembering within a moment of encounter, contributes to the construction of social memory for identity formation.

For mimetic memory to find its counterpart in the theatre, the additional codifications in the intellectual and social dimensions of the play must also exist in the audience. Memory is revealed through the recollection of memories known by society. However, this partnership does not imply that the past will be remembered in the same way by the audience. The remembered past is perceived as a different event or experience according to the viewer's own memory processes. The playwright's interpretation of past events is also open to debate. If memory is reconstructed with the image of the rememberer, the potential for distortion in memory becomes inevitable. "*Memory is distortion since memory is invariably and inevitably selective. A way of seeing is a way of not seeing, a way of remembering is a way of forgetting, too. (...) memory is a process of encoding information, storing information, and strategically retrieving information, and there are social, psychological, and historical influences at each point.*"[22] The playwright creates their imaginative memory by selecting from what resides in her/his internal memory. The play written by the playwright becomes a convincing metaphor for the audience to remember what has been forgotten. The play intertwines with real-life experiences, memories, and the audience's own memory, while never ceasing to confront the past. While remembering is an individual effort, the play is social and belongs to the consciousness of society.

## Looking at the 1990s from the Memory of Plays

*All is in all in nature. So in the intellect all is in all.*
*And memory can memorize all in all.*[23]
Frances A. Yates

The 1990s were years in which memory loss was frequently discussed. The playwrights of that period try to remind society of what has been forgotten or suppressed in collective memory. This effort is also a confrontation and reckoning with the recent past. Despite the presence of many playwrights mentioned in the last decade of the 20th century, this study focuses on nine playwrights: Ak, Canova, Irmak, Boynukara, Baydur, Yula, Cücenoğlu, Nar, and Onay. When looking at the memory of their plays from the 1990s, the following titles emerge: Those who remember the effects of the military coup on September 12, 1980; changing identities in the memory of the city within urban transformation; memory loss caused by the influence of mass media culture; damaged relationships due to the deterioration of collective memory in urban life; and the others who, despite living in the city, are excluded from the city's collective memory.

[22] Michael Schudson, "Dynamics of Distortion in Collective Memory," in *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past*, ed. Daniel L. Schacter, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 348. https://sakai.unc.edu/access/content/group/0f5e2e05-ef2a-42e1-94e6-29c533cf563a/Course%20Readings/Sections%20on%20King%20and%20Memory%20Studies/Dynamics%20of%20Distortion%20in%20Collective%20Memory%2C%20Schudson.pdf, accessed August 29, 2023

[23] Simon Critchley, *Memory Theater* (New York: Other Press LLC., 2014), 22.

## Remembered from September 12th

In the plays of the 1990s, there is often a prominent theme related to the effects of the military coup that took place on September 12, 1980. One of the significant impacts of the period, which began with the Turkish Armed Forces seizing power, is silence. The common goals of these plays are to prevent depoliticised individuals from forgetting the recent past and to confront the past. Cuma Boynukara and Coşkun Irmak give voice to the memories of the mothers who were witnesses of that period. Both playwrights focus on individuals who lived in an atmosphere of unease during that period. Boynukara's play *Günaydınlara Uyanmak*[24] (1995)* tells the story of Cemile, a mother whose son is serving in the military and another son is a university student. Boynukara confronts the past by depicting a resistance born out of the silence of a society that has experienced memory loss. Cemile's individual resistance finds its social resonance in the "Saturday Mothers" movement. The "Saturday Mothers" were a group of mothers who protested and sought their missing and never found children, a movement that left its mark on the memory of the 1990s. Boynukara portrays the loss of trust in the state[25] by the oppressed individuals in a society where the rule of law is not emphasised, reminding the audience not to forget their experiences. Even though the play reflects the playwright's internal memory, it actually belongs to the external memory by carrying the traces of a shared past.

Irmak's play *Eylül Penceresinden İki Kozyatağı Manzarası*[26] (1998) consists of two different stories, but the mothers in both scenes, Münadiye and Samiye, are connected to each other. The tense social atmosphere caused by political differences has led to the banning of publications and the labelling of individuals based on the newspapers, magazines and books they read. The mothers are afraid of their children being anarchists.[27] The outside world is as unsafe as the inner world, which has become an unvisited void. The only refuge for the mothers is the past. The past is safer than the present and the future. In the lost meaning of the present, meaning is amplified through nostalgia. Although home in nostalgia is a smilingly remembered past, this recollection is not peaceful for what lies within the internal memory. The external memory of the 1990s has also dominated the internal memory. Nostalgia has turned into a longing for a community with collective memory,[28] but Irmak emphasises that an unaccounted past cannot have a future. In both scenes, the mothers have broken communication with their families, show no interest in social events, long for the past, and are lonely women. They did not get involved in the street conflicts of the period and remained spectators in their homes. The mothers, who represent the memory of homes, are the representatives of the silent and suppressed segment that respects legitimate authority.[29] In the memory of the plays, alongside the struggle of the youth for change, there is also the acceptance of silence and suppression by the previous generation with a protective approach. While the mothers long for the return of the past good days helplessly, the youth try to change the now. Because the remembered past is not the same for every generation. Adults deal with a more distant past, while the youth grapple with the recent past. Their common ground is their defeat in the now. Here, Ricoeur's questioning of the fidelity of memory and the truth of history comes to mind. According to him, the collective memory seeks consolation more than reality.[30] The partnership of Münadiye and Samiye is also experienced in this consolation. History is actually absent among the memories of the mothers. It is as if they long for the past of a different world. This situation, emerging

[24] Cuma Boynukara, *Günaydınlara Uyanmak, Toplu Oyunları 1* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 1997), 7-66. *The date in parentheses is the date the play was written.

[25] Ahmet İnsel, "Kaybolan Güven Duygusu Işığında Türkiye," *Birikim*, no. 152-153, (December-January 2001-2002): 20-27.

[26] Coşkun Irmak, *Eylül Penceresinden İki Kozyatağı Manzarası, Toplu Oyunları 1* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 1999), 117-190.

[27] Rıfat N. Bali, "80'li ve 90'lı Yılların Mirası," *Birikim*, no. 152-153, (December-January 2001-2002): 206-210.

[28] For a detailed analysis of the effects of nostalgia on individual and collective memory, please refer to: Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

[29] Şerif Mardin, *Türk Modernleşmesi* (Istanbul: İletişim Press, 1991), 251-260.

[30] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Belamey and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 68-86.

in relation to women, is also valid for the majority of society. As the distance between history and memory widens, anxiety arises. In both plays, the deceased cannot speak, but the playwrights become the spokesperson for the silence of those who remain.

The period of September 12, which left a lasting impact on the memory of the 1990s, caused the rapidly changing society to live with the trauma of the previous decade. What happened in the 80s can only be expressed in the 1990s. After September 12, individual and social fear increased due to human rights violations, arrests, torture or suspicious deaths, hunger strikes, the trial of journalists and writers as thought criminals, the banning and destruction of books and films, and the suppression of scientists and artists.[31] Suppression is also used as a policy of forgetting in the collective memory. "*Suppression is always a traumatic form of forgetting*."[32] This situation leads to the remembrance of the traumas of those who experienced torture before and after September 12 in the theatrical memory of the 1990s. The aim is to resist forgetting once again. Irmak's play *İtaat Deneyi*[33] focuses on scientist Nuri Sezgin, who struggles to prevent past events from being forgotten. The "Social Obedience Experiment" by Milgram, which Sezgin narrates to his students, becomes ironic as Sezgin himself turns into a subject undergoing torture after being detained. He, who argues that in a society that has suffered memory loss, remaining silent is equivalent to surrendering to obedience, believes that everything should be remembered in order to live. Irmak does not want an unresolved past to be forgotten. Through Sezgin, the play is also a criticism of the audience who forget and remain silent.

Boynukara's play, *Ölüm Uykudaydı*[34] (2000) also depicts torture and hunger strikes that gained attention.[35] It takes place in a Latin American country, exploring the dynamics between forgetting and remembering. The narrator, actor Mauricio Varella, is one of the numerous artists who have experienced torture. He is on stage to fulfil his promise to his tortured and deceased friends. He is the sole survivor and their spokesperson. His aim is to tell their story and prevent them from forgetting. Boynukara constructs the play through the witnessing structure of memory. Witnessing is not only about internal memory but also about external memory. The audience, as the carrier of collective memory, is also reminded of their role as a forgetter. Remembering is necessary to grasp the present and the future.

In the 1990s, the individuals who needed to be silenced primarily were intellectuals and scientists. Living with the illusion of a society that has an equal share in the collective memory of intellectuals rendered passive and insignificant in the social memory. Yılmaz Onay's play *Hücre İnsanı*[36] (1991-1992), focuses on how an intellectual transforms into a "cell person" after being detained. Onay summarises the play as "*humanity entering a self-imprisonment attitude, closing its own eyes*".[37] He places the responsibility for memory loss on the individual. The play is structured as a workshop, starting with the actor distributing blindfolds to the audience and inviting them to the workshop. The aim of the workshop is to collectively remember those forgotten during detentions by finding a common language. A common language means a shared memory. The blindfolds have two meanings: those whose eyes were forcibly closed during torture and those who choose to willingly close their eyes to events in the free external world. The real problem is choosing to ignore. Refusing to see is refusing memory. When society ceases to be the carrier of a shared memory, it loses its characteristic of being a society. The suppression of thought is the silencing of truth and history. The audience is criticised for being passive spectators of the events. The true prisoners are the silent ones on the outside. The external world,

[31] Bülent Tanör, Korkut Boratav, Sina Akşin, *Türkiye Tarihi 5, Bugünkü Türkiye 1980-2003* (Istanbul: Cem Yayınları, 2004), 95-96.
[32] Abensour, *Bellek (La Memoire)*, 227. *The quoted sentence translated by the author.
[33] Irmak, *İtaat Deneyi, Toplu Oyunları 1*, 21-116.
[34] Cuma Boynukara, *Ölüm Uykudaydı* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 2001).
[35] Hasan Ersel, Ahmet Kuyaş, Ahmet Oktay, Mete Tunçay, *Cumhuriyet Ansiklopedisi, 1981-2000*, vol. 4 (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2000), 512-515.
[36] Yılmaz Onay, *Hücre İnsanı, Toplu Oyunları 2* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 1994).
[37] Aslı Tanrıyar, *"Yılmaz Onay'la Söyleşi," Radikal*, October 20, 1998. *The quoted sentence translated by the author.

depicted as a world of owners and slaves, is another detention lived in fear. The cell person, who does not know why they were detained, also does not know why they were set free. What seemed meaningful in the prison cell now appears to be nothing but a vast emptiness. In the new order where even artists have blindfolds on, the dominant power is money. In the new order determined by capitalism, the identity of the intellectual has turned into a commodity that is exchanged for knowledge. In the new order, the new is the creation of the thought 'if you don't look, you won't see anything'. Memory loss begins by refusing to see. In the workshop, although a common language cannot be created, a common emotion is named. That is also fear.

Civan Canova, in *Kızıl Ötesi Aydınlık*[38] (1996), examines the distortions and suppressions of collective memory through the fearful memory of the Genç Adam who has confined himself to his home, reflecting the impact of the September 12 period on people. Individuals who live in constant fear of being detained gradually become silent and withdrawn. A past marred by crime and violence has turned individual and collective memory into trauma. Overcoming these traumas is necessary for the eradication of memory distortion. Crime and violence encompass actions that involve the violations of human rights. This situation, referred to as collective trauma in collective memory, cannot be overcome without confronting the past.[39] Like other playwrights, Canova does not want the events experienced during the September 12 period to be forgotten; however, he also attempts to show that collective trauma eliminates hope for the future. Those who live in fear in the present due to the past also build their future upon fear. Society must remember what they have ignored in external memory, confront them, and rebuild the future.

Canova's another play, *Sokağa Çıkma Yasağı*[40] (1997), invites the audience to remember the events of the coup night within the realm of fiction. The characters in the play are referred to by their room numbers as hotel guests. The hotel management represents the power, while the individuals referred to by room numbers represent those who have been reduced to objects of power. In fact, the entire play is a dream seen by Room 302. The hotel, where outsiders cannot see what's inside but those inside can see what's outside, emphasises the domination of collective memory by power. The power sees everything, while the individual who considers themselves as the subject can only see what is shown to them. In this chaotic environment, collective remembrance cannot be achieved. The characters in the play are depicted as individuals preoccupied with their own troubles. Although they are not devoid of collective memory, they lack the consciousness to act together. In the memory determined by invisible powers, the intellectual once again chooses silence and acceptance. According to Canova, the intellectual has fallen into a crisis of values and has become addicted to mocking everything.[41] Throughout the play, the hotel guests, criticised for being indifferent to events, are astonished at the end of the play when they encounter the only free person on the street, a Japanese tourist, despite the curfew. Domination and oppression are valid for those who are carriers of the collective/social/cultural/external memory. It is ironic that a person who does not possess this memory and is not even a citizen of this country can be free in the same time and space. Like other playwrights, Canova criticises the audience for remaining silent, forgetting, and being indifferent. The trauma that has turned into the social memory of September 12 cannot be overcome without social confrontation. The trauma of a country is like a fun memory where photos are taken for another country's people in the same world. The end of the nightmare and the revelation that everyone is engaged in different professions at the end of the play is an indicator of the rapidly changing urban and urban dweller profile of the 1990s.

[38] Civan Canova, *Kızıl Ötesi Aydınlık, Toplu Oyunları 1* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 2001).
[39] Sancar, *Geçmişle Hesaplaşma*, 148-160.
[40] Civan Canova, *Sokağa Çıkma Yasağı, Toplu Oyunları 2* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 2001).
[41] Atilla Özkırımlı, "*Değer Bunalımı ve Kimliksizleşme*," in *Türk Aydını ve Kimlik Sorunu*, ed. Sabahattin Şen (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 1995), 19-21.

## In the Memory of Plays: Urban and Urban Dwellers

In Türkiye, which is among the developing countries, many problems associated with underdeveloped urbanisation arise due to rapid urbanisation and the resulting phenomenon of shanty, such as migrants unable to find sufficient employment in cities and incompatibility arising from cultural differences. The migration towards the cities, driven by the dominance of the urban economy over the agriculture-based economy, defines individuals not by their rural community but by the identity they establish in the city. Being urban is a way of life, and urbanisation occurs when guided by the codes of this new cultural memory.[42] In the 1990s, as a result of social development, urban life and the urban individual, emphasised within the discourse of "metropolis", became the determining factor of the era. Consequently, the characters portrayed in plays were naturally selected from the urban dwellers who either resided in the city's memory or contributed to shaping the urban's memory. The play *Kamyon*[43] (1990), which does not take place in the city but discusses urbanisation in the memory of the rural, indicates the insidious spread of capitalism that shapes the urban memory and determines daily life. Memet Baydur's play portrays changing lifestyles resulting from rural-to-urban migration and individuals who cannot adapt to either side. A character in the play, Abuzer, experiences a complete memory turmoil. His inability to belong to the city leads him to seek refuge in his internal memory, but the past he nostalgically recalls has long gone. The past is like a utopia that can never be recaptured. The city, which was pursued for making money, has devoured the rural memories in the internal memory, leaving a void in their place. The play's setting, an isolated mountain peak under the shadow of a broken-down truck, symbolises the conflicted nature of memory. Abuzer, who represents those who cannot be classified as urban or rural, gives up everything he longed for in pursuit of money, but due to his inability to belong to the city, he returns to the non-existent rural. The internal memory, which loses its meaning within the changing values of the 1990s, cannot merge with the external memory manifested in the silhouette of the city. The shared social codes necessary for the formation of cultural memory are absent. Baydur also alludes to the divergence of these codes with the emergence of the new bourgeoisie class in the 1980s. The new wealthy urbanite types are criticised for their ignorance of values other than money and their lack of manners despite their wealth.[44]

The dominant colour in the memory of the urban is capitalism. The memory of Tuncer Cücenoğlu's play Boyacı[45] (1996) and Canova's play *Erkekler Tuvaleti*[46] (1999) encompasses the urban dwellers shaped by the direction of the capitalist economy. Since the 1980s, the memory of cities, rapidly growing in population, has become a memory shaped by capitalism. The primary goal of individuals conditioned by consumption is to earn more. The memory of the urban also encompasses the conflict arising from the self-centred attitude of competing individuals.[47] In Cücenoğlu's play, the contamination in the social memory is portrayed as an ordinary consequence brought about by the new world order. Kadir, who was a wall painter, is praised by Halit, the owner of a conglomerate, for successfully conforming to the established system by suddenly becoming a doctor while wearing his white doctor's coat. In this new world order, the hero has become money. Those who adapt to this system, entangled with the mafia, corruption, and illegal relationships, are considered successful. Cücenoğlu criticises the political and social structure that legitimises corruption as an achievement. Another interpretation of this criticism can be seen in *Erkekler Tuvaleti*, which occurs in different toilets belonging to different locations. The

[42] Oğuz Işık, "1980 Sonrası Türkiye'de Kent ve Kentleşme," in *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 13 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996), 794-798.
[43] Memet Baydur, *Kamyon, Toplu Oyunları 3* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 1994).
[44] Rıfat N. Bali, *Tarz-ı Hayattan Life Style'a* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 38-53.
[45] Tuncer Cücenoğlu, *Boyacı* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 1997).
[46] Canova, *Erkekler Tuvaleti, Toplu Oyunları 2* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 2001).
[47] Georg Simmel, *Modern Kültürde Çatışma (Der Konflikt der Modernen Kultur)*, trans. Tanıl Bora-Nazile Kayacı-Elçin Gen (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), 85-103.

play depicts men engaged in a struggle for power in a world dominated by money. Men who seek to make quick money are criticised within the confines of their intimate spaces. The ambition of men to gain wealth and power is likened to a card game. Regardless of the location, the same cards are dealt for the same ambitions. The cause of the corruption in social memory is attributed to the selfish functioning of men's memory.

Capitalist production relations create consumer culture. Cultural memory becomes the memory of habits brought about by consumer culture in the 1990s. Consumer habits turn into a measure that defines urban dwellers.[48] The memory of the urban shaped by consumer habits blends with the mass memory of popular culture. Mass memory also shapes individual memory, which is always ready for consumption in every moment and condition. Topics such as the allure of the entertainment world, addiction to advertisements, and captivity to the media have become the headlines of mass memory. In the memory of mass culture, people have abandoned thinking and have started living with what is presented to them. Therefore, urban dwellers whose memory is being lost also lose the ability to interpret the present as their connection with the past is severed.[49] During the 1990s, the situation observed in Baydur's play *Düdüklüde Kıymalı Bamya*[50] (1991) was transferred from imaginary memory to external memory. The playwright criticises the indifferent individuals of consumer society for their social insensitivity. The play a panorama of the period within a single day. The women who don't work, don't produce, and spend their days watching television are neither the skilled women of the past nor the women struggling in the business world of the 1990s. The routine of women dealing with the same trivial tasks every day is disrupted by the arrival of the elderly Fahrettin, who is entrusted with their daily affairs, but everything remains the same at the end of the play. Fahrettin, who represents both internal and external memory as a representative of the past, is now perceived as an elderly person left behind in the present. Fahrettin's warnings are seen as the ramblings of a senile old man by the women. The women have become desensitised if they cannot comprehend Fahrettin's death, and with his passing, cultural memory has also been damaged, but Baydur is still not without hope. Uğur, who changes within the play, will continue to keep alive what he learned from his grandfather. Among the indifferent urban women, villager Cemile, carrying both individual and social concerns, represents the hope Baydur has for rural people. According to Baydur, the lack of memory or memory loss belongs to the urban middle class.

In the 1990s, urban memory reflected the transformation of interpersonal relationships into synthetic relationships. Cultural imperialism, an extension of global capitalism, leads to a dissolution in the memory of urban dwellers. The expression "We", born out of social bonds, gives way to "I". Now, in the new urban order, those who can assert "I"are glorified. In the new urban order, those who can assert their individuality are glorified. Just as success is valued when achieved individually, fears and concerns are also seen as personal battles to be fought alone.[51] In other words, the urban inhabitants of the 1990s are portrayed as individuals isolated in the memory of plays. Özen Yula's play *İstanbul Beyaz Rakı Rengarenk*[52] (1997) is one of the best examples depicting urban memory. The play begins with the arrival of a pregnant girl in Istanbul to search for her beloved, narrating the Istanbulites present in the memory of the urban. Her arrival is just one among many arrivals. In Istanbul, which became the first destination for those escaping from PKK terrorism or pursuing dreams of wealth in the late eighties, everyone is wounded, everyone is lonely. Yula, metaphorically, takes the audience through the backstreets of Istanbul. Yula's Istanbul portrays an urbanisation without an urban essence.

[48] Jean Baudrillard, *Tüketim Toplumu (La Société de Consommation)*, trans. Hazal Deliceçaylı-Ferda Keskin (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2004), 143-160.
[49] Edibe Sözen, "Popüler Kültür Retoriği: Sahiplik İçinde Yokluk, Rağbette Olma ve Sağduyu Bilgisi," *Doğu Batı*, no. 15 (2001): 54-66.
[50] Memet Baydur, *Düdüklüde Kıymalı Bamya, Toplu Oyunları 2* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 1993).
[51] Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, (New York-London: W.W. Norton&Company, 1998), 83-114.
[52] Özen Yula, *İstanbul Beyaz Rakı Rengarenk, Toplu Oyunları 2* (Istanbul, Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 1998), 7-56.

The play, comprising individuals who have not benefited from the urban discourses of the nineties, showcases the ghettoisation resulting from urban growth, while the disappearance of the city leads to the annihilation of the self.[53] In fragmented memory, people are transient, while the city is permanent. The urban memory positions the hopeless, lonely, tired, and silenced individual as the other, yet the devouring power of the city cannot eradicate love. As long as love exists, the memory of both the city and its inhabitants carries the hope of reconciliation.

Yula's another play in *Kırmızı Yorgunları*[54] (1998), the relationship between the past and the present, complexified within an apartment, is examined through the interplay of fiction and reality. The sincerity of the 1960s and 1970s has been lost in the 1990s due to rapid changes. The memory of urban dwellers from the 1990s still belongs to the past. The cartoon characters in the play, such as Red Kit, Madonna, Tintin, Safinaz, and others, convey a different sense of time within the homes they inhabit compared to the time within the city. According to the playwright, the modernism of urban dwellers belongs to the 1970s, while the modernism of the city is postmodernism. The game of false identities initiated by Red Kit is unquestioningly accepted, leading to a community that believes in the fictional construct. Choosing fiction over reality is an act of evading remembrance and confrontation. In the realm of popular culture, guided by the media, evil receives more attention than goodness. Yula criticises those who glorify evil and silently submit to it. The collective memory remains captured in the films of the 1970s, yet there are no longer viewers who watch those films. The loss of individual memory leads to the disappearance of collective memory. The society, transformed into a silent mass, remains unhappy despite the games it constructs. According to Yula, as long as what resides in memory remains unremembered, society will remain a memory-less mass.

The constant repetition of the notion that individuals are free in the urban culture of the 1990s brings attention to deteriorating marriages. The new era of urban dwellers, who are detached from collective memory, is evaluated as the "*Age of the Self*"[55]. Not only does collective memory weaken, but family unity also deteriorates. Behiç Ak's *Ayrılık*[56] (1997) and Canova's *Düğün Şarkısı*[57] (1998-2002) are among the frequently performed plays that address these issues. *Ayrılık*, depicts the efforts of a couple who divorced a year ago to start their lives anew. The play begins with Adam's visit to his ex-wife's house one morning. Marriage is portrayed as an institution that hinders individual freedom and suppresses internal memory. When the memory of the Self is liberated from the domination of the Other, there is a chance to repair one's own past. However, in an ironic situation, individuals still seek different affiliations because they do not want to be alone. Although marriage is a personal choice, it homogenises individuals by turning their internal memory into a shared entity, preventing them from remembering their own essence. However, the problem lies not in the homogenisation of internal memory but in the inability to share what is remembered. According to Ak, collective memory is remembered as long as communication takes place, and this remembrance is already a confrontation and reconciliation. Individual memory is unique and valuable not in isolation but within the community. *Düğün Şarkısı* also involves a similar memory confusion. The play tells the story of Kadın who indulges in dreams in a hotel room. Throughout the play, the question of whether Kadın remembers her past or dreams of the future keeps the audience engaged. She, who married a writer twenty years her senior and gave up her acting career upon marriage, has entrusted her internal memory to Adam's hands and has almost begun to live in Adam's memory. She confronts her past in the hotel room where they spent

[53] Murray Bookchin, *Urbanization Without Cities: The Rise and Decline of Citizenship* (Montréal-New York: Black Rose Books, 1992), 1-15.
[54] Yula, *Kırmızı Yorgunları, Toplu Oyunları 2, 57-125.*
[55] Murat Belge, "Yeni İnsan Yeni Kültür," in *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996). *translated by the author.
[56] Behiç Ak, *Ayrılık* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 1997).
[57] Civan Canova, *Düğün Şarkısı, Toplu Oyunları 3* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 2002), 67-103.

their honeymoon, after Adam cheats on her and commits suicide. She wanders through the folds of her long-suspended internal memory and eventually takes the pills in her hand. Canova believes that silence is the enemy of marriage. He criticises choosing to ignore or remain silent instead of solving problems. The lack of communication in marriage not only affects individuals but also harms collective memory.

The play that stands outside the memory of the city but precisely reflects the dark memory of the 1990s cities is Turgay Nar's *Çöplük*[58] (1993). It tells the story of Haço, İsrafil, and Aymelek who live by collecting garbage outside the city, in a makeshift house on the edge of the dump. Nar attempts to demonstrate a hierarchical order wherever there are humans. In the hierarchy of the city, the characters of the play, who are the "others", struggle to exist desperately on the edge of the dump. According to Nar, just as God exists with humans, garbage exists with humans as well. The dump is also the garbage of urban memory. Metaphorically representing the place of the unwanted to be remembered, the dump is the unique place where humans can recognise God. A hidden urban life of decay resides in the memory of the dump. Nar argues that humans, who have been turned into objects of production, also turn their own internal memory into a dump as consumer waste. Wherever humans exist, they not only create the dump but also violence. The violence and bullying that sprout from all directions are used as an essential part of capitalism. It is now impossible to live in a humane world. Violence is not only beyond the memory of the city but also a reflection of the historical memory of humanity. According to Nar, humans have lost their human condition. The "corruption of humans" is also the corruption of cultural memory. People living in the waste of consumer society are, like the dump itself, useless and ignored waste. In other words, in the memory of the 1990s, humans are positioned not as subjects but as objects.

## Conclusion

Looking back from the memory of Turkish Playwriting to the 1990s, the primary theme remembered by the plays is the impact of the September 12 military coup from the memory of the previous decade. The past is remembered through the oppressions addressed in Boynukara's plays, Irmak, Onay, and Canova, where silenced individuals are brought to light. Violations of human rights and the imposition of living in fear within society are among the central topics addressed by Turkish playwrights of the 1990s. What lies within the playwrights' internal memories are, in fact, reflections of societal memory. The suppression of young activists fighting for their rights, their arrests, or disappearances were frequent occurrences in the 1980s, and these issues could only be expressed through plays written in the 1990s. The themes encompass various aspects of confronting oppressive regimes, authoritarian governments, and reckoning with the past and an indifferent society: On one side, there is the portrayal of an angry young generation and on the other, mothers grieving for their children, representing the consequences of oppression across different generations. In the memory of the plays from the 1990s, mothers are portrayed as characters who nostalgically recall the past, find the present insecure, and have lost hope for the future. Even though intellectuals may feel helpless, they serve as figures emphasising the importance of not remaining silent. The audience is criticised for being obedient if they do not confront the past and react to the events that have occurred. The right to reckon with the past through remembrance is portrayed as the right of characters who have suffered the most, particularly those who have endured torture. The oppression and tyranny within the power-individual relationship are not exclusive to Türkiye; they are depicted as a universal phenomenon. Political organisations operate with similar forms of domination in many parts of the world. The silence of the audience, as individuals who make up society, despite what is happening is a shared reflection of the playwrights' memory. The trauma caused by the past led to a constant fear of being detained among the people

[58] Turgay Nar, *Çöplük, Toplu Oyunları 1* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 1997), 21-63.

of the 1990s. Individuals who choose to depoliticise themselves and act as if everything is fine are criticised for succumbing to memory loss.

Another prominent theme in the memory of the plays is the increasingly self-centred urban dwellers. Within the changing urban life of the 1990s, relationships are remembered from various perspectives. The self-interest of individuals within the daily life dictated by capitalism is recalled as a unique characteristic of the 1990s in the memory of the plays. This situation, transferred to external memory, becomes a signifier of the evolving city in Yula's plays, Canova, Baydur, and Cücenoğlu. Playwrights such as Ak, Nar, Yula, Baydur, and Canova focus on the memory loss brought about by mass culture, the loneliness of urban individuals, and the breakdown of the institution of marriage. The common denominator in the memory of the plays this time is the selfishness and restlessness of urban individuals who have forgotten that they are part of society. The distance between internal and external memory leads to memory loss, which results in the unhappiness of individuals who have lost their sense of community and are reminded that they should be on their own. Viewing the past as better than the present is also a shared approach in the plays.

One of the themes in the memory of the plays is the disappointment of rural individuals who migrate from the east to the west within Türkiye and struggle to adapt to the city in which they arrive. The plays also address the issue of newly affluent individuals who have become slaves to money, as well as the growing economic imbalance. They portray a degenerate urban environment composed of individuals who know no value other than money and who do not consider anyone but themselves. The individual who has lost value within the capitalist economy is a reflection of a society that is losing its memory. Young people turn indifferent and become characters who only think of their own self-interest. Those who fight for their rights are marginalised by society, labelled as "mad", and, in fact, madness should be considered a form of memory illness. According to the playwrights, indifference is the primary cause of memory loss. Memory-less urban dwellers are criticised for distancing themselves from both nature and their own identity. Selfishness is seen as a factor that not only disrupts marriages but also breaks apart families, as the lack of common communication disrupts collective memory as well. Those who attempt to hold onto the memory of the city and those pushed to the outskirts of the city are remembered as objects within a city that cannot truly be a city.

Playwrights remember and bring forth what has been forgotten in the memory of the 1990s by selecting from their own internal memories of the past, and they carry it into the future. Remembering alleviates the traumatic effects of the past. Trying to make the past forget or not confronting past events is a greater burden on the succeeding generations. The victims of the past are being forgotten and victimised once again. Playwrights, through remembering, call upon the audience to be sensitive to injustices. Playwrights are positioned as rememberer, while the audience is seen as the forgetful ones. Theatre may not be able to solve societal problems, but it can remind its audience that they have the power to control social memory. The memory of theatre, standing between forgetting and remembering, does not hide that it is a reflection of life itself, and the hope of this study is to contribute to the efforts of playwrights to ensure that what has been experienced is not forgotten.

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Chapter 13

# Interventions of the Body on the Theatrical Stage

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## Abstract

One may argue that Türkiye's theatre "scene" has a dynamic diversity with various visions, notably in the previous 30 years. I concentrate this paper's attention on the physical theatre subgenre, where the body and movement are emphasised, as one of these varied fields with a distinctive vision of its own. I propose to examine the history of physical theatre in Türkiye primarily through two examples, both of which may not initially be identified as exact examples of the genre: *Canlanan Mekan* (Revitalised Space) and *Gergedanlaşma* (Rhinocerosization), both performed in the 90s, in Istanbul followed by other examples allowing to discuss contemporary dance and performative strategies connected to the theatrical lexicon. The goal is to look for possibilities of an alternative lane/approach/vision within the political language of theatre that has been geographically adopted from stages in its own West.

**Keywords** physical theatre · body · intervention · movement · space

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## Bodily Interventions in Theatrical Vocabulary

The concept of bodily intervention focuses on the body's strategies of seeing and being seen and deals with the question of whether a unique political language can be developed. The discussion, which is based on a few carefully chosen examples, aims to investigate the potential for a new direction, method, or perspective within the political vocabulary that this theatre, geographically speaking, received from the stages in its own West. Is it feasible to escape from the hierarchical techniques that are naively swallowed and the methods of "power" that pervade critical language? That is the question that would set off this journey.

Perhaps a statement like this clarifies the question above: "*A striking psychological definition of body once put forward by James Hillman in the context of theatre was that there is body wherever there is resistance. With provocative conciseness and elegance, it sums up Psyche's perspective on body, caught in the double bind of desire and resistance of her relationship with Eros.*"[1] In that regard, one could argue that physical actions and bodily interventions can interfere with our rational world and perceptions in unexpected ways.[2] We can think of the results of physical and non-textual theatrical exploration as an unanticipated detour, the destination of a sensation whose path is unknown, the projections of a voyage that body expressions cannot design verbally. As a result, we might view bodily interventions as a means of avoiding the hierarchical perception and power relations imposed by norm-based critical approaches as manifestations of specific ideologies. One may find this statement quite assertive, but we may argue that bodily interventions and physical research have the greatest potential to dismantle the accepted positions of power. Therefore, if we may discuss a different theatrical language developed in the name of the immediacy of the body and the strength of the image, it is unavoidable that we will focus on the body and its interventions to a large extent. However, we must first define the physical theatre field briefly.

## Physical Theatre Genre

As John Keefe and Simon Murray stated "*Like all such constructions, 'physical theatre' is value-laden, and our selections must in themselves reflect our own values; thus, the perspectives and prejudices we own up to…Hence the range of viewpoints that reflects the messy reality of what theatre is: an unavoidable hybrid of inherited, borrowed, stolen and invented practises and ideas*"[3]. They continue discussing the ongoing "*arguments with fellow practitioners and academics over many years about whether the plays of Beckett or Chekhov are 'physical theatre', the work of Littlewood or Brecht is 'physical theatre', the stage practises of Shakespeare or Aeschylus are 'physical theatre'.*"[4] They agree that they are. Hence "*the 'physical' in physical theatre is redundant excess since all theatrical performance is an embodied activity.*"[5] Although it is a compelling idea, we must acknowledge that there are variances in theatrical language about aesthetic choices in relation to the bodily being of the actor, text, performative action, and image.

As a result, there is variety, and a genre known as physical theatre. Ana Sanchez-Colberg states that "*the establishment of 'physical theatre' as a distinct genre began to take hold in the 1980s. In early writings, the terms 'physical theatre' and 'dance-theatre' were at times used interchangeably.*

[1] Enrique Pardo, "The Angel's Hideout: Between Dance and Theatre," in *Physical Theatres: A Critical Reader*, ed. John Keefe and Simon Murray (Routledge, 2007), 143.
[2] At least, this is the writer's lived experience, whose practical artistic work over the last 30 years contains evidence of similar possibilities.
[3] John Keefe and Simon Murray, eds., *Physical Theatres: A Critical Reader* (Routledge, 2007), 33.
[4] Keefe and Murray, *Physical Theatres*, 32.
[5] Keefe and Murray, *Physical Theatres*, 32.

*The stylistic and aesthetic links between the two productions were evident.*"[6] She adds that "*the term 'physical theatre' began to identify the production in two ways. 'Theatre' implied a connection with narrative development via action—as distinct from the conventional choreographic structures from which it was wanting to dissociate itself . . . However, the term 'physical' – separate from theatre—implied a particular approach to its movement . . . What was at first regarded as another development in the idiosyncratic movement style within dance soon was recognised as a distinct strategy of theatrical production which—as Tanztheater had done in the 1970s—existed in the intersection between theatre and dance.*"[7]

Another theoretician "*considers physical theatre 'not codifiable' (2001: 5) and to apply to such a diversity of practises that it is 'virtually undefinable'. Nevertheless, she attempts to isolate some key features: the importance of the actor as a creator rather than as an interpreter; collaborative and somatic working processes; the 'live-ness' of the theatre and an open 'stage-spectator relationship' (2001: 5). It's virtually indefinable, yet we know what it is.*"[8]

One could claim that until the 2000s, this type of distinct technique was not seen in Türkiye's theatre field. After 2005, the first examples that come to mind are *Bereze Tiyatro Topluluğu* (Bereze Theatre Company)[9] and *Fiziksel Tiyatro Araştırma ve Proje Topluluğu* (Physical Theatre Research)[10]. However, in the 1990s, companies such as *Yeşil Üzümler* (Green Grapes)[11] experimented with movement in a theatrical framework and established themselves as a movement theatre company. Other movement-based groups that emerged after the 2000s and are still producing, such as *TAL Dans* (TAL Dance)[12], *ÇAK-Çıplak Ayaklar Dans Topluluğu*- (Bare Feet Dance Company)[13], *Hareket Atölyesi* (Movement Atelier Company)[14], İlyas *Odman*[15] and *[laboratuar] Performance Arts Research Project Laboratory*[16], although the last one does not continue to perform, have constantly pushed the boundaries of dance and theatre, despite their main focus being movement.

One may argue that they have yet to be identified and recognised as "physical theatre" in the mainstream theatre profession. Arguably the reason is due to their origins lie with dance and movement, rather than theatre. For a short time (between 2002 and 2005), there was also *CRR Dans Tiyatrosu Topluluğu* (CRR Dance Theatre Company).[17] It was an intriguing endeavour nested within an institutional body such as Cemal Reşit Rey, a municipal artistic venue in Istanbul. Despite its brief existence, note that it was perhaps Türkiye's sole dance theatre group in the sense of the German expressive dance theatre genre.[18]

I would like to return to that time period and focus on numerous theatre groups that explored the physicality of the theatre in the 1990s and 2000s but were not classified as such, perhaps properly, because they were not in the sense of contemporary performance theory and critical perception.

[6] Ana Sánchez-Colberg, "Altered States and Subliminal Spaces- Charting the Road Towards A Physical Theatre," in *Physical Theatres: A Critical Reader*, ed. John Keefe and Simon Murray (Routledge, 2007), 50.
[7] Keefe and Murray, *Physical Theatres*, 54.
[8] Franc Chamberlain, "Gesturing Towards Post-physical Performance," in *Physical Theatres: A Critical Reader*, ed. John Keefe and Simon Murray (Routledge, 2007), 146.
[9] "Takdim ve Teşkilat," Tiyatro BeReZe, accessed July 3, 2023, http://tiyatrobereze.com/takdim.php.
[10] "Hakkında," Fiziksel Tiyatro Araştırmaları, accessed July 2, 2023, https://fizikseltiyatroarastirmalari.com/hakkinda/.
[11] "Türkiye Performans Araştırması 1984-1999," Salt Araştırma, accessed November 20, 2023, https://performansarsivi.org/.
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[16] *[laboratuar] Performans Sanatları Araştırma ve Proje Topluluğu/Performance Arts Research Project* Laboratory staged works between 2003 and 2010. Accessed Nov 20, 2023, http://www.havuz.de/5/0001-B-OZGECMISLER2007/safak-uysal.html.
[17] "İstanbul Dans Tiyatrosu," Wikipedia, accessed June 19, 2023, https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%B0stanbul_Dans_Tiyatrosu.
[18] "CRR Dans Tiyatrosu & İDT+," Tork Dance Art, accessed July 2, 2023, http://torkdans.com/TR/archieve/crr-idt#:~:text=CRR%20Dans%20Tiyatrosu%20Toplulu%C4%9Fu%2C%20o,dans%20sanat%C4%B1n%C4%B1n%20tan%C4%B1t%C4%B1m%C4%B1na%20katk%C4%B1da%20bulunmu%C5%9Ftur.

Nonetheless, one could argue that, within the same time period, they were able to release the theatrical language from the text's dominance due to their substantial connection with the contemporary dance scene and more interdisciplinary works.

## The Roots of Physical Theatre in Türkiye

Ali Yalgın, in his MA thesis, states that *""In Türkiye, after the pause following the 1980 coup d'état, there was a "search for a new language that accounts for social conditions" and he adds that "a study on movement theatres in Türkiye should be conducted and the interaction between text-oriented groups and movement-oriented groups should be examined"*[19]

One of the founders of the Kum-pan-ya[20] Theatre Company, Kerem Kurdoğlu points out the historical background of their theatrical search as follows: "*after September the 12th*[21], *a different search began in the art of theatre in Türkiye. While before that there were private theatres, city theatres, state theatres and leftist theatres such as Ankara Sanat, Dostlar Theatre, the political and cultural climate after September 12 was a period when people with different pursuits, yes, with political sensitivities, but who did not want to continue the old style of political theatre, started to do something new. The three important theatres of that period, namely Şahika's studio, Bilsak Theatre Workshop and Kum-Pan-Ya, all three of us made a choice to make theatre in places that were not built as theatre halls. The space we created in Manastır*[22] *space without a stage, without a stage elevation, a space that we could organise differently in each play, a space where we could establish the audience-play relationship differently. In other words, it was a new theatre architecture for Türkiye. Therefore, these spaces, namely the 3rd floor of Bilsak, Şahika's place at the bottom of Nişantaşı Valikonağı and the 1st floor of Manastır, have a meaning for us where this different understanding of theatre is realised*."[23] He emphasises the atypical choice of setting and therefore the possibility of realising a "different understanding of theatre" in accordance with Yalgın's analysis: "search for a new language that accounts for social conditions."

Kerem Kurdoğlu's partner in crime, Naz Erayda, has a background in design, so her approach to that theatrical language was always aligned towards a more special, image-based expression. As Dikmen Gürün states "*When Naz Erayda's works are examined, it is seen that the artist has a distant form of expression that focuses on associations, images and examines those states, those places, those times*

[19] "In the 1990s, ensembles such as Studio Players, BİLSAK, Kumpanya, and Tiyatro Oyunevi were followed by Emre Koyuncuoğlu Theatre and Ve Diğer Şeyler Topluluğu (VDŞT), Laboratuvar in the 2000s. Artists such as Aydın Teker, Green Grapes, Dans Fabrikası, TAL Dans, Şafak Uysal, Çıplak Ayaklar Kumpanyası and Hareket Atölyesi in the 2000s should not be forgotten... Note that the groups working on movement theatre in Türkiye in the 90s influenced the groups and directors working on text-based theatre. Groups such as Yeşil Üzümler and Dans Fabrikası, and names such as Zeynep Günsür Yüceil, Mustafa Kaplan, Şahika Tekand, Aydın Teker, Emre Koyuncuoğlu in particular, began to shake the text-oriented process criticised by Ayşın Candan. For example, Mustafa Avkıran, a director trained in classical theatre, became unthinkable without Övül Avkıran, who has a background in dance and movement. In the works of Kerem Kurdoğlu, Naz Erayda and Mahir Günşiray, movement has become one of the important focal points of the production. Therefore, although not included in this study, a study on movement theatres in Türkiye should be conducted and the interaction between text-oriented groups and movement-oriented groups should be examined." Ali Yalgın, "Alternatif Tiyatrolarda Yönetmenler," (MA Thesis, Kadir Has University, 2016), 38. Accessed June 19, 2023, http://academicrepository.khas.edu.tr/bitstream/handle/20.500.12469/2581/0097640AliYalgin.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

[20] The company was first named as Kumpanya and changed its name to Kum-pan-ya after 2010. For further information: Naz Erayda, ed., *Ne Bileyim Kafam Karıştı* (Istanbul: Boyut Pub., 2002) and Özlem Ovalı, "KUM,PAN,YA: "PARÇALARIN KENDİNE ÖZGÜ BÜTÜNLÜĞÜ", *Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi/ Journal of Theatre Criticism and Dramaturgy*, no. 11 (2007). https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/172572.

[21] The date of the military intervention of 1980.

[22] Located in Tarlabaşı, the Manastır [Istanbul Art Centre] played a decisive role in Istanbul's cultural life from 1988 to 2006, hosting artist workshops, dance and performance studios, theatre stages and well-known characters such as the Yeşilçam set supervisor "Godzilla Selahattin". The building, which operated as an Armenian-Catholic girls' school between 1843 and 1982, was brought to the screen in 1988 with the series "Cahide", filmed for TRT and based on the life of Cahide Sonku. The spaces in the building were opened to the use of artists and the film market with the initiatives of set decorator Adnan Vurdevir. The early years of the Manastır, which was renamed the Istanbul Art Centre in 1989, were a time when the boundaries of freedom were constantly expanding in terms of Istanbul's cultural and entertainment history, while the dynamism in the local creative sector was strongly felt.
"Manastır," accessed June 22, 2023, https://saltonline.org/projects/manastir/.

[23] Kerem Kurdoğlu, "Manastır: İstanbul Sanat Merkezi'ne Bugünden Bir Bakış," interview by Yağmur Yıldırım, *Manastır*, Açık Radyo, February 28, 2018, https://acikradyo.com.tr/manastir/manastirin-tiyatrolari.

*by watching it from the outside rather than entering into an event. (...) In Naz Erayda's works, the phenomenon of looking, seeing, hearing meets the phenomenon of time and space in silence.*"[24]

Stüdyo Oyuncuları (Studio Actors), founded in 1988 by Esat and Şahika Tekand, is another revolutionary theatre group that also houses a two-year acting school that teaches the "Performative Staging and Acting Method" devised by Şahika Tekand.[25] Tulû Ülgen claims that "*the company's approach is completely different from the realistic theatre which we mostly encounter in Türkiye" and that "in the Studio Actors stagings, the text is placed at the service of performance within the framework of design integrity, so that the story of performance becomes primary.*"[26]

When Şahika Tekand was interviewed by Burç İdem Dinçel in a recent publication, she provided her view on political theatre in Türkiye as follows: "*The political theatre experience in Türkiye in the 1960s and 1970s that you mentioned had a textual focus; blazing the trail for a 'new' form was not on the cards. It was more concerned with what was said than with what was done on stage...Whilst it is certainly true that artistically very good examples of this type of theatre were staged in Türkiye, tackling the question of meaning as an issue intrinsic to the 'form' itself was often perceived then, as nowadays, unnecessary.*"[27]

In this respect, I would first like to examine two works, one belongs to *Kum-pan-ya, Canlanan Mekan* (Revitalised Space) and the other *Stüdyo Oyuncuları, Gergedanlaşma* (Rhinocerosization), both performed in the 90s, in Istanbul. Neither was conceived as a physical theatre piece nor were they experimented with or approached by physical theatre tools belonging to contemporary techniques during the creation process, yet this paper argues that they were both heavily involved with physical action, movement and a style of communication other than wordily expressions as the foundation of the performance.

## *Canlanan Mekan* (Revitalised Space) as a Place of Residence for Creating Action and Relationship

*Canlanan Mekan* (Revitalised Space)[28], directed by Naz Erayda in 1994, was an attempt that prioritised space and the motion within space as a means of writing/creating a play. Erayda recalls the creation process as follows: "*I usually made my projects according to the space or based on the space and only for that space. This forced us a little bit, later when that play was invited to another place, I would object and say "no, I made this play for this space, it can't leave this space!" One of these plays was my first play. I was pregnant with my daughter Maya at the time and I made my first play. I have subtitled it 'Revitalised Space: The Theatrical Projection of a Long-Dying City'. At the time, there were two brothers, Andrea and Taki Morfiadis, who ran the garage on the opposite side of Eski Çeşme Street, there was Sündüz, who also lived on Eski Çeşme Street, and on the other side, Alis, who opened her jewellery stall in the street of the Association (Manastır) where the other door was. I later learned that Alis was a pseudonym. They would all congregate on our floor around Kum-Pan-Ya. Sündüz would bring her sewing machine, which was a special endeavour for us because the performance began with the organisation of the space without a text. I organised the space, it took a long time, then I invited the actors and asked them to recognise the space by closing their eyes. The play that started like this lasted 8 months with*

[24] D. Gürün, "Kumpanya ve Düşündürdükleri," in *Ne Bileyim Kafam Karıştı*, ed. Naz Erayda (Istanbul: Boyut Pub., 2002), XV.
[25] Şahika Tekand is the director, and her husband, Esat Tekand, is the designer of the plays.
[26] Tulû Ülgen, "Stüdyo Oyuncuları ve Oidipus Üçlemesi", *Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi/Journal of Theatre Criticism and Dramaturgy* 11, (2007):31, accessed June 22, 2023, https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/172573.
[27] Şahika Tekand and Burç İdem Dinçel, " 'What Could Be the Theatre of Contemporary Life?' A Conversation About the Work of Studio Oyuncuları, Istanbul, " trans. Verda Habif and Tulû Ülgen, in *The Edinburg Companian to Modernism in Contemporary Theatre*, ed. Adrian Curtin, Nicholas Johnson, Naomi Paxton and Claire Warden (Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 384.
[28] Cenk Telimen (@cenktelimen), "Canlanan Mekan", Youtube video, September 10, 2014, accessed June 21, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2ywtfDOPAg.

*improvisations. In the meantime, Kerem and I created the text, the improvisations were fixed, and the play finally came out. In the meantime, Taki, Andrea, Sündüz, Alis, everyone would come, they would bring something, they would bring me food, I would be there all day because it was about the space.*"[29]

As Erayda mentions in *Canlanan Mekan* (Revitalised Space), the performers improvised in that space for 8 months, and Kerem Kurdoğlu and Naz Erayda worked together to build the text while Naz Erayda directed the performance. They produced sequences that were subtly linked to one another, most likely in a dream sequence set in the city of Istanbul. As an audience member, I recall the words and actions making perfect sense, even though they were coming from alternate conscience/subconscious states. In his review, Atak emphasises this approach as "*a theatre liberated from literature.*"[30] The characters moving together with the features of space and relating to each other were the primary builders of the story thread, rather than the text. Text would have appeared throughout these actions and the collective gatherings of the actors.

İpşiroğlu mentions in her critic that "*this project, which goes beyond the usual understanding of theatre, is really striking. First: the venue is prepared after a long working process. After the venue is finished, the actors step in and start working, inspired by the venue. However, Naz Erayda does not tell them her thoughts about space and the theme of the play in order not to influence or direct them, she leaves them completely free.*"[31]

Emre Baykal notes that "*instead of a design that conveys meaning to the space on its own, Erayda approached it with a design that would emphasise its femininity, its workability, and offer material to other elements of the theatre, especially to the actor. In other words, she limited herself to creating emptiness for the actor to make sense of.*"[32]

In her own words, Erayda expresses the relation of the improvisations of the actors in the space to the theme as such "*...writing in a language like Turkish allows you to convey somewhat more exact meanings. When you write in the language of colours, textures, forms, touches, and other comparable aspects, you develop meanings that are far more susceptible to the perceiver's personal history and interpretation. We were especially seeking the richness and depth of meaning that such disparities in interpretation and sentiment would provide, but we were also concerned about the risk of deviating from the concept I had in mind. Nonetheless, we decided to take the chance, and we did not reveal the concept until the players arrived at the finished location and began to improvise. We hoped that the linkages created by space's own language would correspond to the notions in my head. It worked out as we hoped. We were all surprised and encouraged to learn the similar linkages with the improvisations that had been done when we unveiled the theme at the end of the second week.*"[33]

[29] N. Erayda, "Manastır: İstanbul Sanat Merkezi'ne Bugünden Bir Bakış", interview by Yağmur Yıldırım, *Manastır*, Açık Radyo, February 28, 2018, https://acikradyo.com.tr/manastir/manastirin-tiyatrolari.

[30] Mehmet Atak, *Nokta*, January 23-29, 1994.

[31] Nazan İpşiroğlu, "Canlanan Mekan üzerine eleştiri notları - Dinamik bir Devinim ve Söz Kolajı," *Milliyet Sanat Journal*, April 15, 1994.

[32] Emre Baykal, "Canlanan Mekan- Uzun süredir ölmekte olan bir kentin teatral izdüşümü," *Anons- Visual Arts Journal*, January 1994.

[33] Ayşe Ateş, "Mekandan Çıkan Oyun," in *Ne Bileyim Kafam Karıştı*, ed. Naz Erayda, Istanbul: Boyut Pub., 2002, 55-58.

**Figure 1**
*Canlanan Mekan (Revitalised Space) (poster)*




When asked about the piece's overall creation process, she says, "*... 'this time we started with the setting.' Of course, if this sentence was used to summarise our works, I would be the first to disagree. Kumpanya advocates theatre's inseparable oneness of all parts. When a holistic theatre language is desired, it is critical to create a deterministic relationship between the elements during the rehearsal time. Even in our works based on a text in the traditional sense, we have used the interaction of the elements as a foundation. An invention of one element might be a source of inspiration for another element at any stage of the process. Even in our works based on a text in the traditional sense, we have used the interaction of the elements as a foundation. An invention of one element might be a source of inspiration for another element at any stage of the process. For example, understanding lighting design may spark ideas that necessitate a partial rewrite of the play text.*"[34]

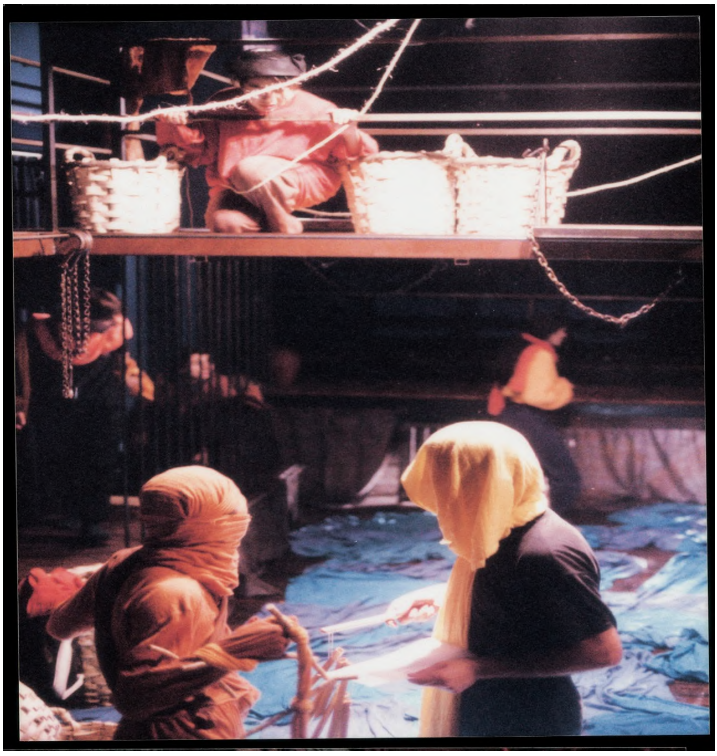
Certainly, such an approach places a great deal of responsibility on the performers. Their physical explorations construct the work because they create the scenes through improvisations and the performance text appears through their actions and relationships. "*Teamwork/Collective work is a point we really care about*," Erayda adds. "*Especially in theatre, each individual must own the work done from start to finish. An action on the performer that does not belong to him or her, that he or she does not adopt, is easily noted and detracts from the presentation. The personal understanding and experience of particular actors was especially crucial in this work.*"[35] Zeynep Oral expresses her feelings after experiencing the performance as follows: "*...in front of me there are bridges, platforms that rise and fall, chains, large and small cylinders, garbage, mud, railings, spiral pipes, masks, gloves, clothes and people...through six people, 'actors' in this material, we witness the coming to life of the space in front of us...In this work, the six actors provide a much stronger communication with the audience when they make use of their own personal experiences, knowledge, improvised 'scenes' and their own words.*"[36]

[34] Ateş, "Mekandan Çıkan Oyun", 55-58.
[35] Ateş, "Mekandan Çıkan Oyun", 55-58.
[36] Zeynep Oral, *Milliyet*, February 1, 1994.

Erayda attempts to build a meaningful space through the games and interactions produced by the actors' actions within it. "*In my head, I created the visual equivalent of a theme, and I created a volume that could hold various experiences." In doing so, I paid special attention to establishing a female milieu, one that is not a work worth watching on its own, but one that allows for the development of numerous dramatic moments. What I was attempting was quite challenging for me. I wanted to convey all of my emotional and intellectual baggage regarding the subject I was working on to space, while also seeking meanings that could only be completed through the acts of the actors.*"[37]

This approach was not common in the theatre scenes of big cities like Istanbul or Ankara, where the heart of the theatre resides, in the early 1990s. A play was constructed through actions; improvisations of the actors in an undetermined space over an 8-month period was quite an incredible experiment that went astonishingly well.[38] The audience experienced a physical text through a delicately crafted space in Manastır, Tarlabaşı district of Istanbul where all sorts of minority groups live.

**Figure 2**
*Canlanan Mekan (Revitalised Space) (photo)*



## *Gergedanlaşma* (Rhinocerosization) as an example of Physical Realness: The Liveliness as A Point of Resistance

Another example I would like to discuss is *Stüdyo Oyuncuları* (Studio Actors') work *Gergedanlaşma* (Rhinocerosization). Şahika and Esat Tekand started *Stüdyo Oyuncuları* (Studio Actors) in 1988 as the

[37] Dikmen Gürün, "İşte Mekan! Birer doğaçlama yapın," *Cumhuriyet*, December 9, 1993.
[38] For further discussion: Naz Erayda and Kerem Kurdoğlu, "90'lar ve Sonrasında Alternatif Tiyatro Hareketi," interview by Murat Daltaban, *Şeyler & Şeytanlar*, Medyascopetv, May 26, 2016. Video, 23:18. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b51AsxBamEc. Accessed June 29, 2023.

performance group of the Acting and Art Studio, and it became a professional company in 1990. According to Şahika Tekand, "*the theatre, which is live, which has to be live, and whose liveliness can by no means be translated into any other form of expression, has become for me a point of resistance, where I can intervene in life in the way I know best. It all started with the following questions: what could be the theatre of contemporary life? Would it be viable to create a contemporary, principled, skilful, artistically responsible 'game playing' and theatre that could reach out to the present- day audience, who are barely related to the old narrative theatre forms?*"[39]

"*I am not in favour of staging action on stage that is not real*," she asserts in her unpublished notes. "*I don't make the actor go from one location to another if he is only doing it to convey the story. It is credible that the actor stops and delivers his lines, but it is not believable that he pretends to go somewhere he is not going. For one thing, because of this technique, I use the actor as much as possible in a set action, not moving him/her unless absolutely required. In this way, the flow of music and light constitutes the essence of the action on stage. A performance that you would never believe becomes plausible, almost like a circus performance. This is what piques my attention.*" (Tekand, 1991:42).[40] She also declares, "*When I reread Beckett's plays, I realised there was only one reason we believed anything he said: it was only expressed here and now, and what was happening was happening in the moment. I began to study this very "here" and "now"...that the art itself is taking place right here and right now..*"[41]

She gives tremendous importance to text/language on stage but adds that "*theatre must recapture that unique language between thought and movement. This language can be completed by considering not the expressive possibilities of speech, but the dynamic expressive possibilities of space.*"[42]

When Tekand speaks of "*the expressive possibilities of space*," she is referring to the activities that occur in that performative space. "*Actions are designed to build a game in order to actualise the story's narrative.*" Thus, while the performance's story generates its own language, the action (picture, movement, and sound) by which the text is translated becomes the meaning itself. On a visual and vocal level, the goal is for the performance's story to be equivalent to the game. In this sense, the game is the substance of the game played in the theatrical performance; it is the medium of practise that generates the theatrical performance."[43]

Tekand asserts, "*I decided to act in such a way that it would make no sense when it was filmed. Then there was the direction and the text. Its essence is as follows: It has a framework that does not hide that it is a play. The performer is the sole essential component. Furthermore, whatever he does, he does it right away. He doesn't pretend to do it; he actually does it. I based the entire show on that moment's actuality. I'm putting together a game with certain rules, similar to chess, pişti, or soccer. I make every effort to convey these guidelines to the audience. Because knowing the offside makes watching soccer more pleasurable.*"[44]

Tulû Ülgen, a long-time actor, collaborator, and teacher in Studio Actors, wrote on Studio Players as follows: "*Let me bring together the succession, juxtaposition and intertwining of actions, the encounters that regulate the flow of time, the forms of relationship in such a way that in my surrender it changes me, both the actor and the audience, in the direction of that scene, that text, that fictional world. Giving an example to the three-space style: Studio Players stage and Performative cause: In weaving together*

[39] Tekand and İdem Dinçel, "What Could Be the Theatre of Contemporary Life?," 385.

[40] Şahika Tekand, "Performatif Oyunculuk ve Sahneleme Yöntemi" (unpublished notes, Istanbul, 2008). Müşerref Göksever, "2000'li yıllarda Türkiye'de Alternatif Tiyatro Hareketi ve Alternatif Tiyatro Mekanları" (MA Thesis, Dokuz Eylül University, 2019). https://acikbilim.yok.gov.tr/bitstream/handle/20.500.12812/574002/yokAcikBilim_10305060.pdf?sequence=-1

[41] Zeynep Günsür, "Portre: Şahika Tekand", *Gist* 003, (Jan-June 2009): 91.

[42] Sevda Şener, *Dünden Bugüne Tiyatro Düşüncesi* (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi, 1998), 247.

[43] Ayşegül Sünetçioğlu, "Şahika Tekand ve Stüdyo Oyuncuları (1989 –2009)" (MA Thesis, Dokuz Eylül University, 2012).

[44] Tekand, "Performatif Oyunculuk ve Sahneleme Yöntemi," as cited in Göksever, "2000'li yıllarda Türkiye'de Alternatif Tiyatro Hareketi ve Alternatif Tiyatro Mekanları".

*"game," meaning "play," which makes the performance visible, audible, felt, passed through, and theatre, meaning 'play', which realises a narrative, an effect in action, which opens the door to alterity, in bringing together "game player" and the actor, the actor who performs acting: inviting the player to a search for meaning that opens awareness to both the intensity of focus, a common rhythm, and what is being realised in this moment, here."*[45]

She adds, "*You can see the player moment by moment it opens both the body to the body and the environment to the environment. On the ground of addressing the spectator, the game is both a grammar, style, structure, a source of holistic aesthetic experience, pleasure, taste, and a source of self as a 'structure, a building block, a quality of relationship' that opens up to awareness, a common agent, a source of action.*"[46] and hence "*an appeal to the body, a listening in the body. Beauty. Fullness in emptiness. Theatre as an "effect.*"[47]

*Gergedanlaşma* (Rhinocerosization) was performed in 1996, written and directed by Şahika Tekand and the stage design by Esat Tekand. In the play, "*the playground and the small playgrounds within it, which are determined by the play devices placed on the stage (such as a cylinder to walk on, a wheel to run on, a hopscotch field to skip in, etc.), determine the same hierarchical spheres of existence. In front of all this, there is a presenter who introduces the game, opens it and practically directs the small plays in the game in accordance with the orders she receives from the chorus. The play takes place in a COMPETITION in which the players, whose basic motion is WALKING and who, as mentioned above, move on special apparatus reminiscent of children's games or circus performances, and in the process give a speech about what they are doing, compete to ACHIEVE and RECEIVE PRISES, the prise being flashy rhinoceros horns worn on their backs. Episodes are played out with an acting that is entirely oriented towards what can only exist when performed, stripped of the literal, based on the actor's design but requiring a physical capacity to realise everything that is conceived…The risks on the ground are all real… Players cannot leave the playground under any circumstances. Thus, the triad of SCENE/PLAY FIELD/ LIFE gains a real synchronicity and synonymousness during the DURATION the game is played. The stage turns into a simulation room.*"[48]

As mentioned in the brochure and the website, the text of the play includes excerpts from Ionesco's play "Rhinoceros" and some other texts such as Meydan Larousse, Encyclopaedia of Animals, Thourlby's "Ways to be Strong and Successful", etc. The spoken words were only a part of the overall structure of the play, albeit a minor one. The performance, or "the game," was built by the physical risks that the actors/ players took during the process. As a result, the idea of Ionesco's play "Rhinoceros" was performed rather than the written words spoken by the actors. The acts on the field were so urgent, including danger, reliant on physical capacity and thus physical strength and endurance, that the spectators had no time to think about anything other than observing the actions. As a young audience member, I recall my experience as an immediate reality watched breathlessly and thinking to myself that the experience

[45] Tulû Ülgen, *Kurmaca, Yanılsama, Oyunculuk, Deneyim, Hakikat Arasında* (Sub Yayınları, 2018), 130. Since the text is quite complex to grasp, I would add the Turkish version here: "Eylemlerin ardı ardına, yan yana, iç içe gelişlerini, zaman akışını düzenleyen karşılaşmaları, ilişki biçimlerini öyle bir araya getireyim ki teslimiyetimde beni, hem oyuncuyu hem seyirciyi, o sahne, o metin, o kurmaca dünya yönünde değiştirsin. Üç mekanlı üsluba misalen: Studio Oyuncuları sahnesi ve Performative neden: … Performansa dair olanı görülür, işitilir, hissedilir, içinden geçilir kılan 'game', anlamında oyun oynamak ile eylemde bir anlatıyı, etkiyi gerçekleştiren, başkalığa kapı aralayan, 'play', oyun anlamımda tiyatroyu bir arada örmede, 'oyun oynayıcı; game player' ile oyunculuk gerçekleştirmekte olan oyuncuyu, aktörü bir araya getirmede: oynayanı, hem odak yoğunluğuna, hem bir ortak ritme, hem bu anda, burada gerçekleştirmekte olana farkındalığı açan bir anlam arayışına davet etmekte",

[46] Ülgen, *Kurmaca, Yanılsama, Oyunculuk, Deneyim, Hakikat Arasında*, 131. "Oyuncuyu an be an hem bedende bedene, hem etrafta etraf ile ilişkiye açmakta. Seyredene hitabın zemininde, oyun (game), hem bir gramer, üslup, yapı, hem bütünlüklü estetik deneyimin, keyfin, tadın kaynağı, hem de kendini farkedilirliğe açan bir 'yapı, yapıtaşı, ilişki niteliği' olarak, ortada bir ortak fail, eylem kaynağı."

[47] Ülgen, *Kurmaca, Yanılsama, Oyunculuk, Deneyim, Hakikat Arasında*, 131. "Bedene bir hitap, bedende bir dinleme. Güzellik. Boşlukta dolu. Bir 'etki' olarak tiyatroya dair olan."

[48] "Gergedanlaşma," Oyunlar, Studio Oyuncuları, accessed July 1, 2023, https://studiooyunculari.com/oyunlar/gergedanlasma/.

of a theatrical moment should be like this: there should be no time to think about anything other than the reality of that theatrical moment.

Tekand states "*the hallmark of theatre that cannot be matched with any other form of expression is its 'liveliness'. Concordantly, its prime determinant is what happens in the 'present', in a limited time and space. The here-and-now of the performance, and how it is realised, generates both the form and the story of the performance. What acquires a decisive role is not so much the dramatic textual narrative as the story of the performance and how it is made visible, audible and acted. Simply put: the 'how' is crucial, not the 'what'. In my opinion, one can speak of artistic creativity only when the 'what' is embedded in the 'how'.*"[49]

*Gergedanlaşma* (Rhinocerosization) was not defined as a physical theatre piece in 1996, but it may have been classified as one in Türkiye in the 2020s. That, however, is not our concern. What is intriguing and thrilling to consider is that through these two instances, we can imagine the creation of a branch of theatre in Türkiye that goes beyond the supremacy of the text and places a premium on physicality and space, therefore kinaesthetic and visual components.

**Figure 3**
*Gergedanlaşma (Rhinocerosization) (photo from the website)*



## Contemporary Dance or Physical Explorations in Theatrical Vocabulary

Among other contemporary dance companies and artists, I would first like to name *Çıplak Ayaklar* (Bare Feet Dance Company), which was created in 2003. They are a community of creators whose emphasis on continuity and research has never wavered until today. In their own words, *"it aspires to form a multifaceted structure through dance, theatre, music, video, and so on." It is 'a dream-land' as*

[49] Tekand and İdem Dinçel, "What Could Be the Theatre of Contemporary Life?," 386.

*referred to by İlhan Berk in his poem "Bare Foot," or is in pursuit of such a 'dream-land.'"*[50] Their fifth performance, Kalon Kakon, was performed in 2005 "*This show was created by Dutch choreographers Elhout / Handeler in close collaboration with the Bare Feet Company is a show that uses a combination of movement, dance, and theatre elements to question certain taboos based on personal experiences...They investigated the area between the traditional and the modern, reimagining the gender conflict based on personal observations and Türkiye's social and political challenges. In Kalon Kakon, they physically and theatrically challenge established rules and preconceptions. Pandora's Box is used as a starting point and a metaphor for civilisation.*"[51]

**Figure 4**
*Kalon Kakon (photo)*



In 2006, they performed *Mehmet Barış'ı Seviyor* (Mehmet Loves Peace), a concept and choreography by Mihran Tomasyan. "*Mehmet Loves Peace is a work influenced by Mehmet Tarhan*".[52] He was Türkiye's first known conscientious objector to military service. "*It is intended to remind us not only of Tarhan's tale, but also of the militarism, violence, surveillance, profiling, and loss of life in this geography's wars, as well as the "dying for what, for whom?" and "killing whom for what" issues that surround us. The grandmother on stage represents the women who are lost, die, or are killed, and she wants to know how many more moms in this geography, and all geographies around the world, will have to send their children to an unjust death. In these days of growing nationalism and violence, Mehmet's words ring true: "One does not easily die..."*[53]

**Figure 5**
*Mehmet Barışı Seviyor/Mehmet Loves Peace (photo)*

[50] "Manifest," Who We Are, Çıplak Ayaklar Kumpanyası, accessed July 1, 2023, https://ciplakayaklar.com/en/who-we-are/#manifest.
[51] "Kalon Kakon," Gösteriler, Çıplak Ayaklar Kumpanyası, accessed July 2, 2023, https://ciplakayaklar.com/gosteriler/kalon-kakon/.
[52] "Mehmet Barış'ı Seviyor," Gösteriler, Çıplak Ayaklar Kumpanyası, accessed July 3, 2023, https://ciplakayaklar.com/gosteriler/mehmet-barisi-seviyor/.
[53] "Mehmet Barış'ı Seviyor," Gösteriler, Çıplak Ayaklar Kumpanyası, accessed July 3, 2023, https://ciplakayaklar.com/gosteriler/mehmet-barisi-seviyor/.



In their published materials, they frequently use the term "dance movement theatre" to categorise their works, indicating that they do not wish to define themselves in a single genre. Their work on the relationship between movement, image, and spoken words has multiple layers of significance, and their approach to performing space varies depending on the subject. They can work with musicians to create sound and movement environments. They can travel and perform in civilian homes, in their own studio, or at any other stage, inside or outside. Along with *Çıplak Ayaklar* (Bare Feet Dance Company), one may claim that there are other companies and artists whose bodily explorations and relationships to image, sound, and movement have had an unnoticed influence on the theatre language in Türkiye.[54] In reality, a distinct study of these works, especially from interdisciplinary fields and contemporary dance, should be conducted in Türkiye from the early 1990s to the present.

"*The 1990s were a time when interdisciplinary works and groups in the field of theatre and dance, as well as interdisciplinary works and groups that emerged from the need to express themselves in a different way, actually flourished*," I said in an interview, "*and I see Manastır as providing a space for this. We all came from diverse fields such as literature, sociology, law, and engineering, but we were all interested in the body and movement.*"[55] A member of the Green Grapes Company, Emre Koyuncuoğlu continued her theatrical explorations both in the institutional theatre framework and in an interdisciplinary approach of her own.[56] One of her works, *African Dance*, is a performance, video installation, and exhibition project based on a short story written by the avantgarde woman writer Sevim Burak. It is sited on her website as a multi-disciplinary, site-specific, autobiographic work and was staged in one of the contemporary art institutions, Salt, in 2014.[57]

[54] The reader may view Ali Yalgın's MA thesis to familiarise with the names of the artists, although the thesis is not directly about them.

[55] Z. Günsür, "Manastır: İstanbul Sanat Merkezi'ne Bugünden Bir Bakış," interview by Yağmur Yıldırım, *Manastır*, Açık Radyo, February 28, 2018, https://acikradyo.com.tr/manastir/manastirin-tiyatrolari.

[56] Emre Koyuncuoğlu Projects, accessed July 2, 2023, https://emrekoyuncuogluprojects.com/.

[57] "Afrika Dansı," Emre Koyuncuoğlu, video, accessed July 2, 2023, https://vimeo.com/29988487?login=true#_=_ and "Afrika Dansı," Salt Beyoğlu, accessed July 2, 2023, https://saltonline.org/tr/832/afrika-dansi.

**Figure 6**
*Afrika Dansı (African Dance) (photo)*



*The Taldans* (Taldance Company)[58] has been performing since 2003 and was established by Mustafa Kaplan and Filiz Sızanlı.[59] The partners met each other and worked on their first project in 1996 at *Tal-Tiyatro Araştırma Laboratuvarı* (Theatre Research Laboratory)[60]. The engineering education of Kaplan and the architectural background of Sızanlı influenced them to create a specific common language. "*Does maintaining the body as an exploration site imply a detachment from the body or is it the body's most self-assertive state?" they ask in Solum, two different solos performed in 2005. "What are our motivations for asking such questions? Are they 'embodied' in our bodies? These are still open for discussion by the audience*."[61] Their research on movement can be categorised as contemporary dance, yet their approach to motion, space and sound has a rich and layered expression touching different disciplines.

**Figure 7**
*Solum (photo)*



[58] The TAL archive was donated to Kadir Has University/Theatre Department in 2024, and work on it is currently underway with the support of Tübitak 1001.
[59] "About," Taldans, accessed July 2, 2023, https://taldans.com/about-2/.
[60] Founded in 1988 by Beklan Algan, Ayla Algan, Haluk Şevket Ataseven and Erol Keskin in the framework of the Municipal Theatre of İstanbul. http://www.tal.org.tr/ is not functioning yet, accessed July 3, 2023. For further information: Lütfü Ufuk Gönüllü, "Nicolai Hartmann'ın Yeni Ontolojisi Işığında Tiyatro Araştırma Laboratuvarı ve Denemeleri" (unpublished thesis, Kocaeli University, 2016).
[61] "Solum-2005," Taldans, accessed July 2, 2023, https://taldans.com/repertory/solum/.

*Hareket Atölyesi Topluluğu* (Movement Atelier Company), *founded* in 1999, continued to perform stage works until 2019.[62] It is a group of people from various backgrounds, with various bodies and ages. The encounter of space-architecture/sound-music/movement-dance/text-literature/film-media is experimented on numerous levels in their works. *Ruhiye* (Mrs. Spirit), was performed in 2018. It combines live performance with pre-recorded video imagery. It is "*a montage of moving images, pictures, and sound sentences depicting a female tribe dreaming together*."[63] They defined this work as a combination of performative installation, video art and movement with spoken text of their own.

**Figure 8**
*Ruhiye (Mrs. Spirit) (photo by Volkan Erkan)*



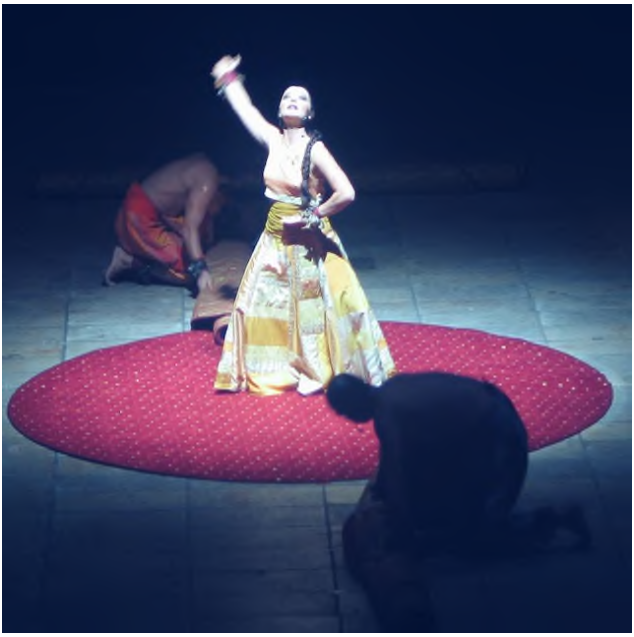
*Laboratuar -performans sanatlari arastirma ve proje laboratuarı-* (Laborotory- performing arts research and project laboratory) was based in Ankara and was a continuation of a group of friends from *ODTÜ Çağdaş Dans Topluluğu* (METU Contemporary Dance Company). The company staged works between 2003 and 2010. Their last work *Şehr'ü Evlad'üz Ziyan: Kayıp Çocuklar Şehri* (City of Lost Children), was written by Beliz Güçbilmez and directed by Şafak Uysal. It was a play about the times they live in, about dreams, nightmares, and realities that merge as one sleeps and awakens. It was based on the Ankara experiences of a generation raised in the 1980s and its aftermath. In the text of the brochure of the work, they define their research as "*to seek an experimental stage language in which multiple modes of expression shred each other in each piece, drawing inspiration from sources such as miniature art, radio theatre, and stop-motion animation*."[64] One can claim that their research on the interaction between dance and theatre, sound and image, and text and movement has established a field that will feed the future generations of physical theatre.

[62] The company stopped performing live during the pandemic. In 2022, Zeynep Günsür Yüceil began to perform a solo work called *Solo*, which continues to be performed under the label of Hareket Atölyesi Topluluğu/ Movement Atelier Company, accessed July 2, 2023, http://hareketatolyesitoplulugu.com/en/home/.

[63] "Mrs. Spirit," Hareket Atölyesi Topluluğu, accessed July 2, 2023, http://hareketatolyesitoplulugu.com/en/works/mrs-spirit/.

[64] Beliz Güçbilmez, "Şehr'ü Evlad'üz-ziyan: Kayıp Çocuklar Şehri," *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi* 33, (2012): 4, https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/118138.

**Figure 9**
*Dumrul ile Azrail (Dumrul and Azrael) (photo)*



Moving away from contemporary dance and towards more theatrical forms, we come across *5.Sokak Tiyatrosu* (5th Street Theatre), which started to stage plays with a strong emphasis on movement when Övül Avkıran, coming from a dance background and educated as an actor, joined in 1995.[65] According to Hemiş, this togetherness leads to a new dimension of meaning in the *5th Street Theatre*; from then on, voice, body and word will be shaped through choreography.[66] In *Dumrul ile Azrail* (Dumrul and Azrael), which was staged in 2000, "*She develops a body and movement dramaturgy that addresses the problems of who the movement is transmitted from, to whom, how, and why it is conveyed. In a way, the movement's genealogy and its own text are formed. This movement, which may overlap or contradict the words, adds a fresh layer of meaning to it.*"[67]

Although not all of their works can be identified as physical theatre, *Şermola Performans' Disco No:5* was another example of a piece that emerged from considerable physical research.[68] It was directed by Berfin Zenderlioğlu, written and performed by Mirza Metin and staged in 2011 in İstanbul. The performance was based on real stories of Diyarbakir Prison No. 5, which took place between 1981 and 1984 after the military intervention in 1980. We follow a narrative conveyed through the physicality of a spiderized body as a metaphor for the prison's systematic torture.

As a final example of field intertwining, I would like to mention the works of İlyas Odman[69]. Although his movement compositions in partnership with other theatre companies, as well as his mostly solo- or duet works, are typically classified as choreography, when viewed closely, these pieces can easily be categorised as physical theatre works. Among many performance pieces, *Dertsiz Oyun* (The Carefree

[65] Övül Avkıran, "After returning from Vienna, Mustafa Avkran had already turned his emphasis to dance and music in the plays he directed at the State Theatre," interview by Zeynep Günsür Yüceil, July 2, 2023. (Övül Avkıran shared her opinion on this matter via mail messages)
[66] Özlem Hemiş (Öztürk), "5. Street Theatre's Road Adventure," *Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi/Journal of Theatre Criticism and Dramaturgy* 11, (2007): 52-71, accessed July 3, 2023, https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/172574.
[67] Hemiş (Öztürk), "5. Street Theatre," 66.
[68] "Disco Nr.5," Projects, Şermola Performans, accessed August 3, 2023, https://sermola.com/en/show/disko-5-nolu/.
[69] "Disco Nr.5," Projects, Şermola Performans, accessed August 3, 2023, https://sermola.com/en/show/disko-5-nolu/.

Game) is a completely wordless play by *Kumbaracı 50/ 6'dan Sonra Theatre Company*, directed by Yiğit Sertdemir and "choreographed" by İlyas Odman in 2012. Even though they think that this creation was not separated into direction and choreography but was in fact a collaboration of two creative forces, İlyas Odman received the "Friends of Ekin Yazınlar Theatre Awards"/2013 for his "choreography". Although it was not envisioned as such at the time, it is possible to suggest that the piece was a physical theatre piece.

Today, physical theatre companies define themselves more specifically, such as *Fiziksel Tiyatro Araştırmaları* (Physical Theatre Research), which "*was founded with the goal of staging works in which different physical theatre techniques such as mask acting, physical storytelling, grotesque acting, clown, buffoon meet classical texts and researching these techniques on stage*."[70] Their play, Under the Castle, was adapted from William Shakespeare's Macbeth, but the performance was constructed through the "Buffoon" technique of Lecoq pedagogy. "*In addition to this technique, clown, physical storytelling, mask acting, and grotesque acting were among the techniques used*."[71]

*Tiyatro Bereze* (Theatre Bereze), in their own words, defines their approach as such "*with its staff who have received academic training in different disciplines such as writing, acting, puppetry, physical theatre, storytelling, dramaturgy, theatre history; provides trainings for children, adults and professional actors at various universities, academies and theatre schools; continues to explore the possibilities of theatre and discover new and unique forms of expression through regular studies*."[72] In another interpretation of *Machbeth, İki Kişilik Kabus* (Nightmare for Two), they tell and play the story of Macbeth "*through different styles ranging from mime to storytelling, from buffoon to object theatre, from clown to dance theatre; on a plane where tragedy and comedy, everyday reality and grotesque reality intertwine*."[73]

Because the focus and extent of this paper is on the historical manifestations of physical theatre in Türkiye and the early examples that can be used as sources, looking at new examples that developed after 2015 is a topic for another study. As a result, I would refrain from reading the works of *Fiziksel Tiyatro Araştırmaları* (Physical Theatre Research) and *Tiyatro Bereze* (Theatre Bereze). Hopefully, the fascinating works of these two companies will be thoroughly reviewed soon.

## Epilogue

In the context of a heavily mixed genre of contemporary theatre, it is burdensome to conclude the point given at the beginning of this paper. Nonetheless, I endeavoured to focus and highlight certain techniques relating to bodily interventions and components in the framework of theatrical terminology in Türkiye. Even though the physical theatre genre in its current incarnation originated here later than in Europe, it is quite possible to indicate that ambiguous definitions of physical theatre remain prevalent in European countries. As mentioned at the outset of this paper, corporeal/bodily research may provide an alternative perception to standardised aesthetic of power and unconsciously internalised standards that pervade the critical gaze. As I attempted to demonstrate in the *Canlanan Mekan* (Revitalised Space) example, the moments at which the discourse produced by a "living and action space" based on the influence of the space on the actors and therefore reaches the cultural, political, and social unconscious may not be premeditated. In the same way, in *Gergedanlaşma* (Rhinocerosization), the impact of the artists' live effort, as well as their subordination, resistance, and endurance throughout live action, may

[70] "Hakkında," Fiziksel Tiyatro Araştırmaları, accessed July 2, 2023, https://fizikseltiyatroarastirmalari.com/hakkinda/,
[71] "Hakkında," Fiziksel Tiyatro Araştırmaları, accessed July 2, 2023, https://fizikseltiyatroarastirmalari.com/hakkinda/,
[72] "Takdim," Tiyatro BeReZe, accessed July 3, 2023, http://tiyatrobereze.com/takdim.php.
[73] "Macbeth: İki Kişilik Kabus," Mamuller, Tiyatro BeReZe, accessed July 3, 2023, http://tiyatrobereze.com/mamul_display.php?oyun_id=14.

be conveyed to the audience far more vigorously than a thousand and one words about the political existence of the body.

There is undoubtedly much more to be said in this context regarding other examples of contemporary dance and movement works covered in this article, as well as those that we cannot mention in full due to space limitations[74]. I would like to emphasise once more that, unlike designs in which the mind is vocally involved, the modes of being that emerge as a result of the body's thinking process through physical acts and movement maps have the potential to transport us to worlds we cannot rationally imagine.

Furthermore, as Barba points out, "*the 'acculturated' performer manifests a quality and an energetic radiation which is presence ready to be transformed into dance or theatre according to convention or tradition…also leads to rich variations and shades of daily behaviour, to an essential quality of the vocal action of language, to a flux of tensions, to sudden changes of rhythms and intensities which give life to a 'theatre which dances'… The acculturation path activates the pre-expressive level: presence ready to re-present.*"[75]

As a result, the "wish" may be to arrive at a state of "theatre that performs its own original dance," and in doing so, it is always benignant to follow the unseen trails of the past, those that escape the habitual sight, or the conventional view dominated by the spoken word.

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[74] In the contemporary dance scene, there are many examples that can be related to and impact the extensive physical research in theatre in Türkiye. The extent of this paper cannot reach to all but to name the few: Aydın Teker's extensive movement research on metaphoric language, public space and conceptual tools; Tuğçe Tuna's several choreographic works with an extensive space exploration done in abandoned prisons, schools and factories; Ayşe Orhon's many works including *Can You Repeat?* and *Folk*; Özlem Alkış' *Reverbs* and *Dust Devil*; Ayrin Ersöz' *To Dance Or…* ; Aslı Bostancı's ritualistic choreographies using various spaces including roofs, Bedirhan Dehmen's *Biz, Balerin* and *Angelus*; Melih Kıraç's *Sunset Melodrama*, Aslı Öztürk's *Kontrol* and *On Air*.
[75] Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, "Pre-Expressivity," in *Physical Theatres: A Critical Reader*, ed. Keefe and Murray, 287.

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# Part IV

## Tradition and Transition

Chapter 14

# Metadrama in Turkish Theatre: Self-Consciousness, Embarrassment and the Hijab

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## Abstract

L. Abel uses the word metatheatre for self-reflexive theatre in his work published in 1963. Metatheatre (or metadrama) is an attempt to think through the possibilities and nature of theatre (drama) itself, especially the origin of mimetic activity and play. After Abel's work, the definition of metatheatre has been expanded by other theorists to include many qualities. Many features of the art of theatre, such as play within play, disguise and role-playing, the interruption of the illusion or narrative, and the elimination of the boundaries between the spectator's space and the playground, have been discussed as metatheatrical features. The self-reflection of Western drama can be seen in many examples such as Euripides' Bacchae, Shakespeare's Hamlet, Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author, Beckett's Endgame and Crouch's The Author.

In my opinion, plays with metadramatic features tend to increase in moments of ontological crisis (or periods of change) when the art of drama questions its existence. Since the 19th century, Turkish drama has been radically oriented towards Western dramatic conventions, while at the same time searching for a "national theatrical aesthetic." These contradictory aspirations have created an ontological crisis. This study aims to trace this "ontological crisis" in Turkish theatre.

Turkish theatre, like the performing arts of other Islamic societies, has its own unique "point of view" or perspective. There is always a question related to the gaze. It seems to be crucial for theatre as an art form rooted in seeing and perception. A consequence of this difference in seeing and perceiving is that Turkish theatre can be considered a "hijab [curtain, barrier] theatre." I believe that the general character of Turkish theatre (including traditional forms such as orta oyunu, karagöz - shadow play -, puppetry, storytelling -maddah-, and village plays, as well as post-westernisation theatre) revolves around the notions of "hijab" and "embarrassment." Using the term "metadrama" as a critical term that encompasses both consciousness and hijab, I will attempt to discuss the dominant tendency of Turkish performing arts as metadramatic / meta-theatricality and argue that the main reason for this tendency is rooted in the hijab (curtain).

**Keywords** metadrama · metatheater · hijab · embarrassment · gaze

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## Introduction

It was the early 2000s. I was working as a dramaturg at Dostlar Tiyatrosu, one of the oldest companies in Türkiye. The play was a comedy called "Competition: Sex, Scams, and Culture" (Sex, Magouilles et Culture Générale) by Laurent Baffie, which satirised the intrigues for ratings in the television world. A few days before the premiere, we had an open rehearsal (preview) with the audience, and at the end of the play, we asked the audience for feedback. One response stood out to me, and I have never forgotten it. A woman who identified herself as a retired teacher said she did not like the play and felt very uncomfortable. The whole team was surprised. She mentioned that it made her angry to see an actor like Genco Erkal playing such a "villainous character" because she thought it would set a bad example for young people. For a while, no one knew what to say. The team tried to defend the play by mentioning concepts like satire, imitation, irony and representation, and some audience members seemed to support us. But I remember that the retired teacher remained unconvinced that night.

Years later, after completing my education, I began to teach at various universities. I concentrated mainly on play analysis, dramaturgy, and playwriting. In one of my playwriting classes, we were discussing a student's text that attempted to focus on a villain and a particularly "depraved" character. After class, the student approached me and expressed hesitation about continuing with the play. She explained her hesitation in this way: "I'm worried about what my parents, relatives and friends will think of me after the play is published or performed."

These two incidents were not exceptional examples; I have often encountered similar situations. In these cases, there was always a recurring pattern of "understandable idiosyncrasy". The imitator and the imitated could not be distinguished; they were seen as identical. If someone admired for their everyday behaviour portrayed a "malevolent" character, it was believed that either malevolence had contaminated them or that the pre-existing evil in them had been revealed. Whatever the level of realism, it could not be approached with an "aesthetic distance" to imitation. This can be attributed to the historical dynamics of the performing arts in Türkiye, an Islamic understanding of aesthetics shaped by Platonic interpretations, and aniconic mentality that can be traced back to Islamic practices.[1] Although the Qur'an does not directly mention the prohibition of images and imitation, many verses negatively judge "idols" (statues and images) as a precaution against pagan culture. In addition, many hadiths view the act of imitation as ominous, negative and associated with polytheism, and famous thinkers such as Al-Ghazali, who greatly influenced Islamic thought, popularised the Platonic concept of mimesis. Considering these factors, it is easy to speak of the extreme iconoclastic tendencies and the aniconism and prohibition of representation found in contemporary Wahhabi belief. As a result of these influences, a "mentality and culture" emerged, giving rise to its distinctive art and aesthetics.[2]

[1] Perhaps the reasons for this situation include the proto-Turk traditions and beliefs (such as shamanism) that the Turks brought with them from Central Asia and the influence of Anatolian-Byzantine cultures.

[2] Some argue that Islam does not prohibit depiction, on the contrary, it has its own cosmology and point of view, and therefore its art should be evaluated accordingly. For a comprehensive discussion of this issue, see Leaman and Oliver. Introduction to Islamic Aesthetics. However, the attempts of writers such as Leaman to interpret the word "prohibition" in favour of Islam are questionable. While it is to some extent understandable that they are operating from a defensive position, they sometimes seem to be basing their arguments on the hypothetical and fictional concepts of Islam that have no connection with reality. The Claim that there is no written and definitive "prohibition" becomes comical despite the prevailing perception of a prohibition that affects an entire culture. Moreover, it is well known that some injunctions in the Quran have been expanded upon by hadiths, and hadiths have a greater influence on the masses than the Quran itself. There are many popular "restraining" hadiths regarding pictures and imitation. For example, according to Ibn Umar, the Prophet said: "Those who make these images (pictures and statues) will be punished on the Day of Resurrection, and they will be told, "Bring to life what you have created!" According to a narration by Abdullah bin Abbas, the Prophet said: "Whoever creates an image in this world will be obliged to breathe life into it, but he will not be able to do so," or in another narration, "Whoever creates an image, Allah will punish them until He breathes life into it." Nevevi states: "Making an image of an animal is a severe prohibition and one of the greatest sins... because it is a competition with Allah's creation." Ibn Battal's Commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari (10/554), Nevevi's Commentary on Sahih Muslim (14/81), and Menaru'l-Kari (3/291) provide further information. See: https://hadeethenc.com/tr/browse/hadith/8947. In addition, the Quran's view of poets is also negative: "as for the poets, the unbelievers follow them. Do you not see that they wander aimlessly in every valley, and that they say what they do not do?" (26:224-225). From the beginning, both the Quran and

Some believe that this distinctive art and aesthetics is based on a different perception of time and space and therefore a different way of seeing; for example, an inclination to understand the world through a miniature-based perspective rather than concepts such as perspective, light-shadow, depth and dimension.

Consequently, even today, no Turkish painter or playwright considers depicting "the Prophet" and no actor considers playing the role of Muhammad. But when you ask them why, they don't say that they are afraid of religious pressure; they just don't think about it at all. The signs of confusion that appear on their faces when they begin to think about the question prove how sincere they are and show how different their "mentality" is, although they have acquired aesthetic concepts from the West.

A discussion of the reasons for these differences is beyond the scope of this article. However, one can examine thought-provoking studies that deal with the specific qualities of the performing arts in Türkiye and explicitly reflect on the factors that contribute to these differences.[3] The common emphasis in these studies is on how the differences in mindset change the way we perceive, construct and organise the world. Turkish theatre has a unique "perspective." It seems to be crucial for theatre as an art form rooted in seeing and perception.

## Hijab as a Metadrama

A consequence of this difference in view and perception is that Turkish theatre can be seen as a hijab [curtain, barrier] theatre. I believe that the general character of Turkish theatre (including traditional forms such as ortaoyunu, karagöz -shadow play-, puppetry, storytelling -maddah-, and village plays, as well as western style theatre that began after the Tanzimat period) revolves around the notions of "hijab" and "embarrassment."

At first, it may seem surprising to connect the concept of hijab and theatre, given that the hijab is associated with covering, veiling and concealing. Derived from the root Hacb, which means to hinder, cover and hide, hijab is used to mean "*curtain", "obstacle placed between two objects*" or "*covering*".[4] The other meaning of hijab, "*embarrassment*", is closely related to the notions of veiling, covering, and concealing.[5] However, I will interpret the term "embarrassment" as both "*concern about how others perceive you*" and as "*self-awareness*" and "*self-consciousness*".[6] Embarrassment requires awareness but does not necessarily imply a fully conscious state. I mean, embarrassment is not always the product of a conscious process. The culture in which we are born and raised instils certain boundaries and limitations without we are being fully aware of them. Embarrassment is a sudden reminder of what has been instilled in us. Therefore, embarrassment is related to hijab in the sense of awareness, self-knowledge and intuition of boundaries.

I will try to use the term "metadrama" as a critical term that includes both awareness and hijab to discuss the dominant tendency of Turkish performing arts as metadramatics / metatheatricality and argue that the main reason for this tendency is rooted in the hijab (curtain).

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the Hadith has been the basis for forbidden practices, which is natural. However, it is important to note that the unique position of "imitation" and "representation" in Islamic cultures is a phenomenon that should be examined beyond efforts to prohibit or declare them "haram".

[3] See. Beliz Güçbilmez, *Zaman / Zemin / Zuhur: Gerçekçi Türk Tiyatrosunda Minyatür Kurgusu*, (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, 2016.); Özlem Hemiş, *Gözün Menzili: İslami Coğrafyada Bakışın Serüveni*, 1. Baskı, (Istanbul: vb. Yayınları, 2020); Beşir Ayvazoğlu, *Aşk Estetiği: İslam Sanatlarının Estetiği Üzerine Bir Deneme*. (Istanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2002).; Aslıhan Ünlü, *Merkeze Dönmek: Türk Tiyatrosunda Zaman*. Istanbul: Mitos Boyut, 2009.

[4] İlyas Çelebi, "Hicab," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/hicab#1, accessed 18.06.2023.

[5] The term is commonly used today to refer to the covering of women. However, it is actually related to the concept of covering and veiling, which comes from the word "setr." See. Murtaza Mutaharri, *Hicab: Örtünmenin Felsefesi*, çev. Mucteba Mir, (Istanbul: Ağaç Kitabevi, 2009), 50-51. However, here I use the term "hijab" to mean self-restraint or self-limitation due to embarrassment.

[6] One of the meanings of "self-conscious" in the Oxford American Writers' Thesaurus is "embarrassed". C. A. Lindberg, *The Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2004, 813.

Metadrama corresponds to a state of "self-awareness" and can be seen as the equivalent of the "state of embarrassing." To be embarrassed is to be aware of what one is doing. When I suggest that Turkish theatre has a tendency based on hijab (curtain) / embarrassment, I am also emphasising its connection to the Platonic regime of understanding imitation (mimesis) within the Islamic tradition in this region. This situation is related to the value/importance of observation, spectacle and the concept of gaze (nazar) in thought and tradition. On the other hand, because of the relationship established with the idea of mimesis, it produces an aesthetic that tends to be "self-conscious" and not to cross the boundary/curtain in this region.

## Metadrama

Metadrama, or metatheatre, was first used and defined by Lionel Abel in his book "Metatheater: A New View of Dramatic Form" published in 1963. According to Abel, metatheatre is a phenomenon related to the "self-awareness" of the characters in a play. He argued that metadrama could not be explained by the technique of "play within a play". The "Play within a play" was merely a dramatic device, but it had no explanatory power of the form itself. Abel described the form: "*...all of them are theatre pieces about life seen as already theatricalised... I call them meta-plays, works of meta-theatre*."[7] According to Abel, the emergence of self-consciousness in characters paved the way for metatheater. In this context, Abel cites Hamlet as the first example of metadrama. In Hamlet, there is self-consciousness. Through this self-conscious character, the audience can participate in the world of the play without losing their faith.[8] According to Abel, the reason for the emergence of metadrama is related to the "questioning of life and reality". The idea that life and the world are a stage or a dream, as seen in the works of Shakespeare and Calderon, forms the basic concept of the metadramatic form.[9] Just as we are aware that life is like a play and we play the role of an actor or director, the characters we see on stage also participate in their dramatic / theatrical worlds in this way.

Abel's definition of metadrama is limited considering later works on the subject. However, there is an exciting aspect to Abel's claim: According to him, the Renaissance was a period in which life began to be seen as a "dream or play". This may explain why metadrama regained popularity in the 2th century. Metadrama/metatheater tends to emerge more prominently in periods when reality is questioned and fiction, illusion, dream and life are intertwined. This may be why concepts such as metadrama and metafiction are often associated with postmodernism. It is said that metadrama reveals the nature of fiction by exposing the nature of reality.[10] For this reason, phenomena such as metadrama or metafiction harmonise with the postmodern mindset, which sees reality as a construct.

> *Western metafiction arguably peaked in the 1950s to 1980s. These were decades in which socio-ideological conditions imbued a hyper-awareness of the self and her/his relation to reality and the other, a crisis of faith in enlightenment systems of rationalisation and totalisation, scepticism of histories and master-narratives, anxiety over the mediating role of consciousness and philosophical questioning of the possibility of communication and a shared "reality". Metafiction is arguably the quintessential expression of postmodernism.*[11]

The belief that reality is an illusion and that this world is transitory and impermanent is an important element of the Turkish-Islamic culture/mindset. The Qur'an contains many verses about the deceptive nature of the world. It emphasises that the possessions and pleasures acquired in this

[7] Lionel Abel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963), 60-61.
[8] Abel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*, 77.
[9] Abel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*, 78, 79
[10] Andrea Macrae, *Discourse Deixis in Metafiction: The Language of Metanarration Metalepsis and Disnarration* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 2.
[11] Macrae, *Discourse Deixis in Metafiction: The Language of Metanarration Metalepsis and Disnarration*, 5-6.

world are not permanent (Qur'an, Al-Imran, 14), that the world appears ornate and beautiful to the disbelievers in a deceptive manner (Qur'an, Al-Baqarah, 212), that the goodness of this world is short-lived (Qur'an, An-Nisa, 77), and that while the hereafter possesses valuable and eternal blessings, the worldly life is short, worthless, and transient (Qur'an, Ar-Rad, 26; Qur'an, Qaf, 60; Qur'an, Al-Mumin, 39; Qur'an, Az-Zukhruf, 32).

> *Know that this worldly life is no more than play, amusement, luxury, mutual boasting, and competition for wealth and children. This is like rain that causes plants to grow, to the delight of the planters. But later, the plants dry up, and you see them wither, then they are reduced to chaff. And in the Hereafter, there will be either severe punishment or forgiveness and pleasure of Allah, whereas the life of this world is no more than the delusion of enjoyment. (Quran, Hadid, 20.)*

The idea in the Qur'an that "*this worldly life is no more than play and amusement*" and that it's almost a theatre (Muhammad, 36.; Ankebut, 64.; En'am, 32.) is repeated in hundreds of hadiths. These expressions remind us of the metaphor quoted by Abel from Shakespeare: "*All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players; / They have their exits and their entrances*." (Shakespeare. *As You Like It*, II. 7). Macbeth makes the same analogy in a tragic tone: "*Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more: it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, /Signifying nothing.*." (Shakespeare. Macbeth, V. 5). Similarly, the idea that "life is a dream," influenced by Calderón, appears as a frequently used metaphor in Islamic philosophy and among artists:

> *If we were to imagine that the figures in a miniature suddenly came to life for a moment; their movements would be schematic and would inevitably have a comic effect. Indeed, this kind of movement is achieved in puppetry and shadow theatre. However, the comedy that we expect from the figures in the miniatures does not come from a lack of nobility, flaws or the imitation of certain inferior characters, as Aristotle understood it. Rather, it stems from the lack of freedom that inevitably binds man to the world. However, if we delve deeper into this concept, we will see that it conceals a profound drama. The "grotesque" movements of the shadows and puppets on the stage and their often "absurd" dialogues imply the absurdity of this world. As noted earlier, Ghazali states that just as we realise the absurdity of dreams that seemed logical while we were asleep when we awake up, so the world—this so-called life—can appear similarly absurd when we awaken from this slumber. In short, the intriguing correspondence between the "absurd" achieved in shadow theatre and the claims of Sufis that they perceive everything differently in ecstatic states is crucial to understanding the nature of Islamic art.*[12]

Karagöz (shadow play) is based on this idea. Like the shadows in Plato's allegory of the cave, we need to understand the true "illusion", the real puppeteer and the meaning behind the screen by looking at the flickering reflections of a dim light on the curtain. We should not be deceived by the fleeting appearances of the world; the truth is hidden behind the images. Almost all of Karagöz's "curtain ghazels" emphasise this concept:

[12] Beşir Ayvazoğlu, *Aşk Estetiği: İslam Sanatlarının Estetiği Üzerine Bir Deneme* (Istanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2002), 145.

*Look at the shadow of the visible illusion on the curtain and think about the painter who depicts it.*[13]

*What body you take refuge in will not disappear? You should try to see the Master who has put up and moved this curtain of conversation (try seeing the Creator behind everything).*[14]

The motif of "life is a dream" is presented as a pattern both in karagöz (in the dream dialogue section -rüya muhavaresi-) and the orta oyunu (in the dialogue section -tekerleme-). In the karagöz plays, karagöz recounts an extraordinary event as if it had happened to him, and his partners listen in amazement as if it were true. At the end, it is revealed that the whole story is a dream.[15]

## Characteristics of the Metadrama

Since Abel, a great deal of work has been done on metadrama. The meaning of the term has evolved and many features or techniques have been classified under the umbrella of metadrama.[16] Although no definitive and comprehensive definition of metadrama has been established, these studies generally highlight the following characteristics:

1. Play within a play,
2. Imitation or role-playing within a role
3. The tendency towards improvisation,[17]
4. Literary, theatrical or real-life references,
5. Alienation; breaking the illusion; interaction with the audience,
6. Ontological metadrama: Self-referential as drama/theatre. Being its allegory. A drama that discusses the existence of drama (theatre).

These categories are not separate, isolated techniques but manifestations of an open-form, non-illusionistic presentational theatre. For example, a play within a play can exist as a separate category, but it can also be used within a main play where a character plays a role other than their own. These techniques can be used for alienation or, in the terminology of traditional theatre, for "oyun bozma" (breaking the fourth wall; getting out of character; breaking the illusion; breaking the hype etc.).

Choral dances, songs, dances, extended storytelling or messenger speeches can be considered in the category of "play within a play." A full realisation of a play within a play, where characters observe and intervene, such as "The Mousetrap" in *Hamlet* or an epic piece such as the Wounded Captain's speech in Macbeth, can also be seen as examples of "play within a play". However, according to R. Hornby, a distinction needs to be made:

[13] *Nakşeden kimdir tefekkür eyle gel nakkaşını / Seyr* edip zıll-i hâyal-ı rû-numâyı perdede. Cevdet Kudret, *Karagöz III* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1970), 12.

[14] Hangi zılla ilticâ etsen fenâ bulmaz aceb/Oynatan üstâdı gör kurmuş muhabbet perdesi. Cevdet Kudret, *Karagöz I* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1992), 172.

[15] See. Cevdet Kudret, *Ortaoyunu I* (Istanbul: YKY, 2007), 61; S. E. Siyavuşgil, *Karagöz*, (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1941), 94.

[16] The following works can be consulted in the field of metadrama and metatheater: Abel, op.cit.; James L. Calderwood, *Shakespearean Metadrama; the Argument of the Play in Titus Andronicus Love's Labour's Lost Romeo and Juliet a Midsummer Night's Dream and Richard II* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.), 1971; Robert Egan, *Drama Within Drama Shakespeare's Sense of His Art in King Lear the Winter's Tale and the Tempest* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1975).; Sidney. Homan, *When the Theater Turns to Itself: The Aesthetic Metaphor in Shakespeare* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press. 1981).; Robert James Nelson, *Play Within a Play: The Dramatist's Conception of His Art: Shakespeare to Anouilh* (New Haven Paris: Yale University Press, 1958).; June Schlueter, *Metafictional Characters in Modern Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).; Richard Hornby, *Drama Metadrama and Perception* (London: Bucknell University Press, 1986)

[17] Decrease in the playwright's control over the play, absence of text or the presence of text as a canvas.

> *... for a play within the play of either the inset or framed type to be fully metadramatic requires that the outer play have characters and plot (although these may both be very sketchy); that these, in turn must acknowledge the existence of the inner play; and that they acknowledge it as a performance. In other words, there must be two sharply distinguishable layers of performance.*[18]

According to Hornby, the characters in the outer play must perceive the inner play as a performance. I think that if metadrama provides a means of emphasising that the audience is "watching a drama," there may be no need for such "rigid" distinctions.

Hornby, like Abel, believes that the technique of "play within a play" has become more widespread at times when the concept of life as a "play" has intensified:

> *Whenever the play within the play is used, it is both reflective and expressive of its society's deep cynicism about life. When the prevalent view is that the world is in some way illusory or false, then the play within the play becomes a metaphor for life itself. The fact that the inner play is an obvious illusion (since we see other characters watching it) reminds us that the play we are watching is also an illusion, despite its vividness and excitement; by extension, the world in which we live, which also seems to be so vivid, is in the end a sham. We watch a play, within which there is another play—ultimately, all is a play. In other words, the play within the play is projected onto life itself and becomes a means for gauging it.*[19]

The reason for the widespread use of the "play within a play" technique in Turkish theatre is undoubtedly closely related to the mindset that perceives life as deception, illusion, and a play.[20] On the other hand, "play within a play" is also used as a tool to eliminate any dangerous thoughts that could lead to deception. In traditional performing arts, the "play within a play" technique is often used. Examples can be found in karagöz, where a smaller karagöz puppetry is set up within the main puppetry (e.g., Sünnet Oyunu[21] -the Circumcision Play-), or in performances with jugglers, comedians, orta oyunu, köçek[22] dances, çengi[23] dances and curcunabaz[24] -jester shows. Similar situations can be found in the orta oyunu and storytelling. Techniques such as "story within a story" or "tale within a tale" used by meddahs (storytellers) can be found in works such as *One Thousand and One Nights or Tutiname*. They embed small stories that may be related to the main story. In addition, traditional and contemporary Turkish theatre often uses the motif of dreams.

In karagöz (shadow play) and orta oyunu, the rüya muhaveresi (dream dialog) sections tell extraordinary stories that are later revealed to be dreams.

Similarly, meddah stories often contain narratives that are later revealed to be dreams.[25] The basic tendency of Turkish theatre to be presentational and to give primary importance to the didactic aspect of the performance, emphasising the moral advice ("kıssadan hisse" = morality of the story) extracted from the narrative, is another reason for using the "play within a play" technique. The purpose of using the "play within a play" technique is to ensure a correct understanding of the main message of

[18] Hornby, *Drama Metadrama and Perception*, 35.
[19] Hornby, *Drama Metadrama and Perception*, 44.
[20] "The play within play" can also be used to emphasise the idea of the play, traditionally known as the "moral of the story," (kıssadan hisse) and to engage the audience.
[21] Kudret. *Karagöz III*, 83-125.
[22] Dancer man in feminine attire.
[23] Women who dance professionally.
[24] "*Generally speaking, this form of dance was called curcuna, which more or less means "drunken revel", and the performers were called curcunabaz*", Metin And, *Drama at the crossroads: Turkish performing arts link past and present, East and West* (Istanbul: The Isis Press) 1991, 101.
[25] And, *Drama at the crossroads: Turkish performing arts link past and present, East and West*, 93.

the play. The "parable," the story to be learnt, is mainly for the sake of a "share," i.e. the moral share that the spectator will receive. The desire to ensure the alienation of the spectator is also achieved through the technique of "role-playing or imitation within the role". It allows the audience to maintain a dual perspective on the play when characters play a role that they are not in reality (such as Hamlet's madness act or Iago's honesty act). The idea that "if life is a play, we are actors playing certain roles" remains vivid. In traditional Turkish theatre, the emphasis on imitation comes from the open form rather than the intention to deceive other characters. For example, Kavuklu and Pişekar perform a play about riding a tram:

> *PİŞEKÂR: Look, brother, the tram has arrived. Let's walk a little faster and catch it. (Pulls him along.) Ah! We caught it. Jump on, brother, jump on! (Leaps.) Hop on! Come on, brother, what are you waiting for? Jump on! - Oh, Mr. Conductor, please don't whistle. - Hop! (imitates jumping onto the tram.) - Come on, we're on, blow the whistle and let's go! (Imitates blowing a whistle.) - Come on, son, move! Excuse me, sister! - Give us two tickets to Sehremini. (Holding Kavuklu's hand.) - No! I won't let you pay! You are my guest, (Holds his hand.) I won't let you spend a penny. - Come on, son, don't mind him, give us two tickets. Take this money too. (They continue to spin around.)*
> *KAVUKLU: İsmail, the tram shakes me too much. I'll get off. (Letting go of Pişekâr's hand.) - Hop! (Pretends to jump off the tram and sits down.) Oh!.. Oh!.*
> *PİŞEKÂR: Oh, brother, we're only two steps away. Look, we've here, get up and let's go.*
> *KAVUKLU: İsmail, this tram is tiring because I've never been in one before. You go ahead, and I'll rest a bit. I'll catch up with you anyway because you have nowhere to go. I'll catch up with you.*
> *PİŞEKÂR: My dear, look, we've arrived here. Come on, get up. (Helps him up.)*
> *KAVUKLU: Come on Ismail, get out of here and I'll find a safe way, otherwise they'll take us both away.*
> *PİŞEKEKAR: My dear, how dare they! Where are they taking us?*
> *KAVUKLU: To the madhouse, my son, to the madhouse! We've been going round and round for an hour, we haven't moved an inch from where we started. Are you going crazy or having fun? (From the play "Hodja The Magician").*[26]

Other metadramatic techniques such as improvisation, alienation, breaking the fourth wall, getting out of character, breaking the illusion, breaking the hype ("oyun bozma"), and interaction with the audience are fundamental to traditional Turkish performing arts, as are plays within plays or roles within roles. Genres such as meddah, karagöz, and orta oyunu may have their specific characteristics, but they are created through improvisation and often use the technique of breaking the fourth wall. Even Ta'ziye plays use improvisation.[27] In contemporary theatre, improvisation has a special place, especially in comedy performances. Especially, in the Devekuşu Kabare Topluluğu (Ostrich Cabaret Theatre), which was originally founded by Haldun Taner in 1967 and later led by Zeki Alasya and Metin Akpınar under the same name, the moments when the actors improvised were often the audience's favourite moments. As is the custom with orta oyunu, they improvised a 7-minute scene and performed for 45 minutes, expanding on the improvised material.[28] Ferhan Şensoy's one-man play *Ferhangi Şeyler*, which he first performed in 1987, has achieved record-breaking success by dealing with current affairs

[26] Kudret, *Orta Oyunu I*, 210-211.

[27] Jamshid Malekpour, *The Islamic Drama* (London: Frank Cass Publihers, 2004), 58-75.

[28] A. D., Karabul. "Metin Akpınar ile Söyleşi: 'Zeki'yle Olmak Bir Mutluluktur'," *Kafa Bi Dünya Dergisi*, no. 27, 2016, 37. Especially in the 1980s and early 1990s, Devekuşu Kabare attracted extraordinary public interest. The 1000-1500-seat theatres proved to be inadequate and tickets were sold on the black market during their Anatolian tours. In the 1990s, Devekuşu Kabare's plays reached almost every household in Türkiye via audio and video cassettes. No other group in Türkiye has reached such a large audience in popular theatre.

based on newspaper headlines, incorporating improvisation, and interacting with the audience. It was staged more than 2400 times until his death. Many of Ferhan Şensoy's plays also use alienation, breaking the fourth wall, improvisation and audience interaction in a similar way. *Komedi Dükkanı* (Comedy Shop), which can be seen as a contemporary adaptation of the orta oyunu tradition and features Tolga Çevik and Salih Kalyoncu, is another show that relies entirely on improvisation, breaking the fourth wall and audience interaction, and has broken attendance records.[29] Today, a number of improvisation-based theatre companies, such as Mahşer-i Cümbüş and İstanbulimpro, have been enthusiastically embraced by the audiences.

Another metadramatic feature is the text's references or allusions to literature, theatre, or real-life events. This can be seen in forms such as direct quotation, allegory, adaptation and, at its extreme, parody. Oktay Arayıcı's direct reference to orta oyunu can be an example. In the play *Rumuz Goncagül*, the character İnsaf opens the play with the phrase "*The elders, storytellers and narrators, tell and recount as follows...*"[30] which is a common expression used by meddahs. This mirrors the opening of orta oyunu, where the "fasıl" (main part of the play) is announced. This is a reference to the conventions of role-playing and breaking the fourth wall characteristic of orta oyunu:

> *İNSAF: [They're walking in a circle.]...Anyway, we're almost there; the house is right there.*
> *GÜLSÜN: The house may be right there, but we're just walking around it.*
> *İNSAF: I'm quite happy to spin around like a carousel horse. But tell that to pseudo-author Oktay Arayıcı and our charlatan director... (Gives the director's name). He is supposed to say that it will be a modern "orta oyun." We're supposed to do it that way. Oh, damn your style... We're supposed to be presentational. Well, we became just that, mere claptrap...*[31]

The quotation we made from Oktay Arayıcı can also be seen as an example of a role within a role.

In fact, allegorical references are quite common in our dramatic literature. In particular, allegorical references made through character names aim to convey the intellectual intention of the text to the reader or audience. For example, in Namık Kemal's play *Vatan* (The Homeland), the name of the main character is Islam Bey. It is almost as if the play suggests that "Islamism" will save the homeland.[32] In Haldun Taner's play *...Ve Değirmen Dönerdi* (...And the Windmill Kept Turning), there is a reference to Don Quixote's windmills. The name of the main character in the play, Küşat, also resembles Don Quixote.[33] The characters openly discuss this connection in the play:

> *KÜŞAT: What was in my shadow?*
> *SERAP: Nothing.*
> *KÜŞAT: Come on, tell me, what was there?*
> *SERAP: The scenery behind you. Windmill, willows and your shadow.*
> *KÜŞAT: So what?*
> *SERAP: It reminded me of Don Quixote.*
> *KÜŞAT: Don Quixote?*
> *SERAP: Yes, Küşat. (The similarity of the names gets stranger and stranger.) Look, your name is quite similar too. Forgive me, I cannot help it. (Taner, 1991).*[34]

[29] The format of the show "Komedi Dükkanı" was broadcast between 2007 and 2011. After this period, the format continued with different actors in various ways.
[30] "eskiler râviyanı ahbâr, nâkilan-ı âsâr şöyle rivâyet ve hikâyet ederler ki..."
[31] Oktay Arayıcı, *Rumuz Goncagül* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut, 1996), p. 178.
[32] Namık Kemal, *Vatan Yahut Silistre* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2020).
[33] Don Quixote is commonly pronounced as "Don Kishot" in Turkish.
[34] Haldun Taner, *...Ve Değirmen Dönerdi - Lütfen Dokunmayın* (Istanbul: YKY, 2014), 48.

Haldun Taner's play *Vatan Kurtaran Şaban* (Şaban the Saviour of the Homeland) makes direct reference to the works of Turkish and foreign writers, painters, sculptors, and everyday life.[35]

These techniques are metadramatic qualities that have been abundant in Turkish theatre from the traditional to the contemporary. If we look at plays that have been widely performed and enjoyed by audiences (such as *Kanlı Nigar, Yedi Kocalı Hürmüz, Hisseli Harikalar Kumpanyası, Lüküs Hayat, Keşanlı Ali Destanı, Yaşar Ne Yaşar Ne Yaşamaz, Ferhangi Şeyler, Cibali Karakolu, Sersem Kocanın Kurnaz Karısı*, etc.), we can see that they all have these characteristics.

There can be different reasons for resorting to metadramatic techniques, which vary from culture to culture. In Turkish theatre, I believe one of the main reasons is the influence of the hijab culture, which is inspired by Islamic, Byzantine and Anatolian cultures. As mentioned earlier, hijab culture emphasises the awareness of mimetic activities from moment to moment. Turkish theatre seems to seek reconciliation with a Platonic understanding of mimesis: maintaining a dual perspective without falling into charlatanism or sanctimony[36] (both perceived as mimetic acts with dangerous consequences).

The hijab and consciousness enable the performer to establish an equal relationship with the audience. However, it is not always easy to achieve this balance. The performer should always be aware of the audience and, if necessary, remind them of the "artifice" of the performance:

> *In Istanbul, in the Fethiye district of Fatih, there was a person called Hasan Efendi. Names resemble names, faces resemble faces and neighbourhoods resemble neighbourhoods. Our ancestors say that this story is said to have happened in the past, and it does not matter whether it is a lie or the truth; it is just to pass the time.*[37]

Despite the use of cautionary, alienating or illusion-breaking patterns, there are many instances where the audience is drawn into the performance. In the story of Bedi' and Kasım, narrated by a meddah, some audience members supported Bedi' while others supported Kasım. They expressed their enthusiasm and cheered when their favourite character was mentioned. However, when the situation escalated, one of the audience members stabbed the others.[38] Sometimes there are cases where audience members, angered by the stories being told, attack the meddahs. The problem of the audience's inability to distinguish between fiction and reality persists to the present day. In the Turkish film and television industry, it is common for actors who portray villainous characters to be physically assaulted or subjected to insults and harassment daily life.

In his short article on the concept of masks in Islam, Chems Nadir attributes the inability to distinguish between fiction and reality to Islam's cosmology:

[35] Haldun Taner, *Vatan Kurtaran Şaban* (Istanbul: YKY, 2016).

[36] Plato discusses the origin of performance art in the *Ion*. Socrates invites the Ion (rhapsode) to choose between the two: Adikos (unjust) and Theios (divine). According to Plato (Socrates), there is no *techne* and *episteme* at the source of Ion's art. Ion can perform by aspiration , i.e. with the guidance of the Muses. Therefore, he must be a divine (theios), as one into whom a divine power (muse) enters. Otherwise, he is a charlatan (adikos). See. Platon. *İon*, trans. İhsan Bozkurt (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1997).

[37] One of the standard phrases used in meddah stories.

[38] Özdemir Nutku, *Meddah ve Meddah Hikayeleri* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, 1997), 73.

*Islamic cultures are acquainted with masks, but veils (al-Hijab) are usually worn. During its festivals of Dionysian possession and of magical practices tinged with traces of paganism, Islam reluctantly allows masks, preferably zoomorphic, to be worn.*

*The aspect of masks which Islamics find the most offensive is their power of simulation. In Mali, when a particular peasant puts on his Dogon mask, or when an Italian actor in good social standing goes out on the boards with his face covered by a Commedia Dell' arte mask, a double process takes place.*

*For a while, the Dogon peasant and the Italian actor efface their personalities and their everyday identities to assume, with the help of masks, different personalities, and other potential identities which they retain for the duration of the ritual or the performance. In keeping with the requirements of the festival or the presentation, they become Others, ready, at the end of the ceremony, to become themselves again and to resume their normal appearance by the simple gesture of removing their masks.*

*This ubiquity and dissociation are not at all compatible with the Muslim concept of the universe. In its mystical accounts, the central concern is to find the One and the Indivisible, the faceless god who sits enthroned behind his veils at the crown of the Seven Skies.*

*In Islam, the mystical will is concentrated on one unique desire—to efface the Being— not to become Other but to attain the void of Non-Being, the state which renders the ardent, trembling individual most receptive to divine penetration. Going toward the light, the mystic must completely shed his sense of self. He cannot exchange his presence for one or several other presences just as transitory but must make his presence an absence of presence. He must clothe himself in the mantle of nothingness, wrap around his head the turban of inexistence, cover his face with the veil of invisibility to be in a state fit to receive the divine spirit. This is why, in delicate Iranian miniatures, the faces of saints and martyrs are covered with a white cloth, as if to set a value on the holy place, as if to designate a space of saintliness.*[39]

If the culture in which we are immersed functions like a pair of glasses that are difficult to remove, we perceive and see the whole world through its lens as it wishes. Furthermore, we shape the world as we see it. It is obvious that Islam has deeply influenced the cultures of many nations. It cannot be said that Islam is completely the same in Türkiye, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan or Arabia, but it is one of the main factors contributing to the common aspects of cultures in many areas.

*Whatever the nation, one sees in nearly every country the persistent presence of a few particular performance forms: al-hakawati solo storytelling, khayal al-zhil shadow theater, various picture performance techniques (tamathil in Egypt, sanduq al-ajaib in Arabia, parda-zan in Iran), and numerous versions of puppet theater (Aragoz in Egypt, for example, or the Abderrazak marionette theater of Tunisia).*

[39] Nadir Chems, "Mask and Non-Mask in İslam," *The Drama Review: TDR* 26, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 79-81.

> *How do Westerners understand these genres, and how might such understandings affect our general sense of performance in Islamic societies? In the modern Western studies of South, Southeast, and East Asian genres (in Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, and other religious contexts) an essential element has been an understanding of particular aesthetic codes: rasa for Sanskrit drama; yugen and liana for Noh drama; alus and kazar for wayang; or the sense of "literal time," "representational time," and "non-time" which William O. Beeman has articulated in terms of ta'ziyeh.*[40]

I believe that the key term "hijab" can be used to understand the art of dramatic writing and acting, at least in Türkiye. Because one of the main reasons for the tendency towards metadramatic/metatheatrical elements, open forms and comedy[41] in Türkiye is the hijab.[42] The popular performer in Türkiye is not focused on being the "other," as C. Nadir emphasises in the above quote, but rather comes from a culture that seeks to erase existence. To be curious about the other and to grasp their knowledge through imitation is the limit of the hijab. Imitating others, copying them (taqlid), has always been a problem in Islamic history, considered unacceptable (mekruh), often forbidden, and those who engage in such acts have been cursed.[43] Although mimesis and simile are generally accepted in the rhetorical arts, especially in poetry, when it comes to representing Allah, any form of comparison is considered futile. For "*there is nothing like Him*" (Ash-Shura, 42/11). The God of Islam is not like the gods of pagan cultures, who have a specific form and can also appear in the appearance of anything or be represented in a sculpture. God is behind a curtain (hijab). He is not visible. Although His creations are visible, God Himself should remain hidden. Hijab is the knowledge of this boundary. Therefore, it is impossible to capture the invisible through representation in the visible or to reach the invisible on the basis of the visible. In other words, it is an a priori impossible endeavour.

[40] John Bell, "Islamic Performance and the Problem of Drama," *The Drama Review* 49, no. 4, Special Issue on Ta'ziyeh (Winter, 2005): 5-10.

[41] Comedy is generally considered inherently metadramatic. However, it can be observed that tragedy, including the ancient Greek tragedies, also possesses metadramatic qualities. (see Anton Bierl, "New Thoughts on Metatheatre in Attic Drama: Self-Referentiality, Ritual and Performativity as Total Theatre," in *Theatre and Metatheatre: Definitions, Problems, Limits*, vol. 11, ed. E. Paillard and S. S. Milanezi, De Gruyter, 2021, 110). Turkish theatre, especially traditional performing arts such as orta oyunu, most meddah performances, karagöz, puppetry, and village performances, tends to lean towards comedy, humour, and farce. In the early attempts at Western theatre, we observe a greater reception and appreciation of comedies, improvisations (tulûat), and adaptations of comedy playwrights like Moliere, rather than serious dramas or tragedies.

[42] In addition to **the hijab**, other important concepts in Islamic culture such as **haya** (modesty), **ihlas** (sincerity), and **sıdk** (truthfulness) should also be considered. **Haya**, which literally means "shyness" or "bashfulness", is ethically explained as "*the soul that is uncomfortable with and abstains from immoral behaviour.*" Some argue that the word should not be understood in the sense of "embarrassment or shame," which represent human emotions, but as "*not considering oneself worthy of engaging in evil and ugly deeds and consistently choosing to do what is good*". **Haya** is a faculty that enables one to find the right course of action through reflection and judgement. **Sıdk** is used as a verb meaning "*to tell the truth, provide accurate information, be honest and trustworthy, and be faithful to one's promises*," and as a noun meaning "*speech that expresses truth, integrity, honesty, and reliability*". The objective reality of something is referred to as "**hak**," while its truthful expression is represented by the concept of "**sıdk**". **Sıdk** is also defined as "*the conformity of speech to both objective truth and the knowledge in the mind of the speaker*". **İhlas**, derived from the root **hulûs/halâs**, which means "*to purify, cleanse, and liberate*," refers "*to purify and cleanse something of other elements that have mixed with it and diminished its value*". As a term, it specifically means "*to perform acts of worship and goodness solely for the sake of Allah, free from ostentation or seeking personal gain*". In Islamic literature, **ihlas** has a broader scope, including purifying the heart from association (shirk) and ostentation, eliminating false beliefs, negative emotions, personal interests, and, in general, the desire to show off. **Riyā**, which means "*superficiality*," "*not what it seems*," or "*hypocrisy*," can be seen as a negative term in this context. The opposite of **riyā** is **ihlas** (sincerity). (see. TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi).

[43] The hadith "*Whoever imitates (tasabbaha) a people becomes one of them*," which is well known in Islamic countries, especially in Türkiye, seems to have had a significant impact on the formation of a negative perception about imitation, even though it was not specifically intended as a prohibition on performing arts. For discussions of *tasabbuh*, see. Youshaa Patel, "The Islamic Treatises against Imitation (Tasabbuh)," *Arabica*, Brill, 2018, T. 65, Fasc. 5/6 (2018), 597-639 [https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/27073524]

> *When God is positioned as an absolute and radical alienation, the effort to make Him visible by carrying Him from the meta-universe of invisible ideas through the carrier property of "pherein" [metaphora] does not come into play in the Islamic realm. It does not embark on a journey from the invisible to the visible. Therefore, the image does not seek to represent its image; on the contrary, it seeks to leave existence alone with its specific and silent language, renouncing the representation of its image.*[44]

Because God is exempt from resemblance (teşbih), Islamic art tends towards abstraction and variation, avoiding the perspective that organises objects according to the retina. In many Christian denominations, Jesus is depicted in sculptures or icons. However, no depiction or statue is made of the Prophet Muhammad,[45] and even the imitation of him by an actor is considered a derogatory act in this context. Representation and imitation involve the reproduction (re-presentation) of something that already exists. Islamic culture sees this act as a form of arrogance, an extreme desire to remove the hijab (curtain).

> *On the other hand, it is clear that representation is inevitably linked to the "gaze": The representative authority can only represent what it sees because of the hierarchical superiority of vision. While implying that the entity it represents cannot represent itself, it also asserts its gaze as dominant. In other words, the eye ceases to be an organ of perception; it is transformed into a carrier of the gaze and seeks to represent the object it sees by removing the veil of the hijab covering it. To narrate, one must diminish oneself and withdraw the gaze, or as the term used in the thirtieth verse of the Quran [Surah An-Nur] indicates, one must "reduce" the gaze – "gad/yeguddu." It means to lower the eyelids with humility and prevents the dominance of the gaze.*[46]

Therefore, the gaze should be equipped with a hijab, which means embarrassment and a curtain. Instead of attempting to represent and imitate the ephemeral surface, appearance and form of things, one refrains from giving eternity to the ephemeral and approaches the essence/meaning behind things through the curtain of the hijab. According to Tanpınar, one of the obstacles to the development of the art of the novel, especially within Muslim culture, is that individuals do not "*possess real life in faith*." Since everything is transitory, Tanpınar argues that there is also a lack of "*psychological curiosity*" (tecessüs)[47], which involves seeing, learning and understanding everything, even those things that do not concern you.[48] The absence of this curiosity is also a veil that prevent imitation. Massignon explains this as follows:

> *Allah pulls the strings as in a puppet show. That is why Muslims have no drama. For Westerners, drama lies in the heart and in the freedom of the individual. For Muslims, freedom is limited by divine will. Humans are instruments of divine will. Of course, Muslims also have drama. However, this drama is simple and yet profound, like a puppet show.*[49]

[44] Zeynep Sayın, *Mithat Şen ve Beden Yazısı I* (Istanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2003), 10.
[45] Figures of the Prophet Muhammad are found only in miniatures.
[46] Zeynep Sayın, "Batı'da ve Doğu'da Bedenin Temsilinde Haysiyet ve Zillet," *Defter*, no. 40 (2000): 203.
[47] The term "tecessüs" in the dictionary is derived from the root "cess", which means "*to examine, to look carefully*". It refers to observing, investigating, or thoroughly learning about something. As an ethical term, it refers to the conduct of secret research without the knowledge and consent of an individual in order to discover and learn about his or her private situation. A person who uncovers and reveals the secrets of an enemy is called a "casus" [spy]. Although the term "tecessüs" encompasses all kinds of efforts to acquire hidden knowledge, sources note that it is used primarily in connection with malicious investigations. See. Mustafa Çağrıcı, "Tecessüs," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/tecessus (25.06.2023).
[48] A. H. Tanpınar, *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Istanbul: YKY, 2007), 43.
[49] Louis Massignon, "İslam Sanatlarının Felsefesi," in *Din ve Sanat*, ed. Burhan Toprak (Istanbul: Hece Yayınları, 2004), 15.

An artist who has grown up in this culture, whether mystic or secular, seems to have internalised the allegory of the 7th book of Plato's Republic. They feel as if they live in a "cave of shadows," aware that beyond the cave lies the Truth, the Ultimate Good (the Sun -God-), but just as one cannot look directly at the sun, they also know that they cannot "look" at the Truth. This knowledge is the knowledge of the hijab. This situation is expressed in one of the curtain ghazels of the karagöz shadow play.:

> *Sheikh Küşteri[50] has created this curtain by comparing it to the world and has compared the "tasvir"[51] to various beings. How remarkable is this.*
>
> *To see it is a joy for those who seek purity and a lesson for those who perceive the truth.*
>
> *What lies behind the curtain is unknown, but this is the reality: it is the story of the state of the world conveyed through the language of its condition.*
>
> *If you pay attention to Karagöz and Hacivat, it becomes a different state for mature individuals who understand their meaning.*
>
> *Look, there are many meanings underneath; it is a display of subtlety for those who understand wit.*
>
> *When the candle is extinguished, the individuals depicted disappear, signifying the impermanence of the world*.[52]

The cosmological thought and mindset of the hijab in Islam has led to a distant relationship with the concept of "imitation." George Jacob attributes the inability to produce a Western-style drama in Islam to this mentality. Tanpınar also emphasises that according to Sunni belief and Sufism, human beings lead a "*transient life that is a shadow play in the Platonic sense*."[53] This transition is the boundary drawn by the hijab or the curtain. People know that the truth lies behind the curtain, but they understand that it is impossible to reach the truth through individual desire and "tecessüs" (curiosity); only by negating their individuality and even their existence can they reach it. This knowledge is the awareness of the hijab, the understanding of oneself and one's limits. "*The East is constantly challenging the boundaries it has drawn but it cannot go beyond them*," says Tanpınar.[54] The sense of embarrassment in the hijab is the inner realisation of this insurmountable boundary.

Traditional and contemporary theatre examples can trace the traces of this hijab mentality; it is as if the influence of the traditional hijab mentality mixes with the traces of miniatures in the narrative structure and character development. The author's voice can be heard in the characters' dialog, and as in shadow puppetry, the authors reveal their presence behind the text. As a result, characters are often constructed as puppets that serve as intermediaries/spokespeople for an idea rather than gaining an independent existence. In Turkish theatre, very few fictional characters are named after themselves, such as Hamlet, Oedipus, Harpagon, Treplev, or Faust. Instead, plays are remembered and categorised according to the ideas they convey because the essence lies in "learning from story" (kıssadan hisse). That is why everything that serves the idea is included in the construction of the narrative. The idea is repeated and varied several times to ensure correct understanding. Each character exists to crystallise this idea and appears on stage to fulfil this purpose and then often disappears. Like the curtain of the karagöz.

[50] Karagöz performers consider Sheikh Küşteri to be the founder of their art.
[51] The meaning of *tasvir* (the depiction) here is a shadow puppet.
[52] Kudret, *Karagöz I*, 65-66.
[53] Tanpınar, *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 40.
[54] Tanpınar, *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 44.

G. Jacob expresses it as follows:

> *The way of thinking [of Islam] is also "epic." It is resistant to rapid developments. In its view, the accumulation and repetition of the same motif is never considered tedious or evidence of bad art; on the contrary, it is accepted as the most effective principle of art. Quick action in the development of a series of dramatic events is not an attractive feature for Arabs. They tell everything with an "epic" breath, and when it is necessary to return to an earlier event, they do not hesitate to start from the beginning and tell it to the point of weariness. Tension in the sequence of events is something unfamiliar to them. Once they find a topic, they work on it and create variations until they are exhausted.*
>
> *These characteristics are most evident in Arabic music. The constant repetition of the same melodic sequences, listening to endless variations of the same melody in a dozen notes for half an hour, creates a sense of despair and boredom in the ears of Europeans. People from the East, however, never tire of listening to it.*[55]

The qualities that G. Jacob described, somewhat pejoratively, as an important part of the fundamental metadramatic orientation of Turkish theatre. Jacob's emphasis on variation is particularly significant. As mentioned earlier, this is one of the reasons for the improvisational tendency in plays. The same topic is played and narrated over and over again, but with constant variations. The idea of a fixed composition with a beginning, middle, and end is strange.

Twenty-eight Çelebi Mehmed Efendi recounts an opera experience he had while serving as an ambassador in Paris. After mentioning that all the stories in the play were "*printed in a book*," he expresses his astonishment by saying, "*They performed each story every night as if it were being played for the first time*." What surprises Mehmed Efendi is not only the effort to perform the same play every night. He is also struck by the imitation and representation of the places where the story unfolds. The stage changes from a palace to a garden full of fruit trees, then to a church; there is a battle scene with horsemen and infantry, and "*people descend and ascend from the heaven to earth*." Mehmed Efendi describes these things as astonishingly "*strange*."[56]

Imitation, in the sense of replication or imitation, was a concept that the Ottomans did not understand. It was not simply a result of ignorance or prohibition, but rather a difference in the value or significance given to imitation, similar to Plato's concept of mimesis. In Borges' story "Avrroes' Search," he focuses on how Ibn Rushd struggled to provide commentary on Aristotle's Poetics and how he was unsure how to translate terms like tragedy and comedy. Indeed, in Ibn Rushd's work *Telhisu Kitabi'sh-Shi'r* (Summary of the Book of Poetry), it is clear that he had difficulty understanding Greek theatrical terminology. He concludes that terms such as tragedy, comedy and opsis (spectacle) are specific to Greek society. According to him, most of the terms in the *Poetics* are either laws specific to Greek poetry and customs and have no equivalent in the Arabic language.[57]

In the same story, Borges describes a play in China witnessed by a character called Abulcasim. Masked actors, some 15 to 20 of them, are depicted as suffering in a prison, although there is no real prison; they ride horses and fight, although there are no real horses, and their swords are made of bamboo; those who die in battle rise again and go on. A listener, a character called Farach, thinks that these people are mad:

[55] Georg Jacob, Geschichte des Schattentheaters, cited by Metin And, "İslam, Din Adamları ve Tiyatro," *Türk Dili Dergisi*, no. 189 (1967): 691.
[56] Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmet Efendi, *Paris Sefaretnamesi*, ed. Abdullah Uçman (Istanbul: Tercüman Yayınları, 1975), 89-90.
[57] İbn Rüşd, *Telhisu Kitabi'ş-Şi'r (Poetika Orta Şerhi)*, trans. Ali Tekin (Istanbul: Endülüs Yayınları, 2019), 90.

*"The acts of madmen," said Farach, "exceed the previsions of the sane."*

*"These were no madmen," Abulcasim had to explain. "They were representing a story, a merchant told me."*

*No one understood, no one seemed to want to understand. Abulcasim..... said: "Let us imagine that someone performs a story instead of telling it. Let that story be the one about the sleepers of Ephesus.*]

*We see them retire into the cavern, we see them pray and sleep, we see them sleep with their eyes open, we see them grow as they sleep, we see them awaken after three hundred and nine years, we see them give the merchant an ancient coin, we see them awaken in Paradise, we see them awaken with the dog. Something like this was shown to us that afternoon by the people on the terrace."*

*"Did those people speak?" asked Farach.*

*"Of course, they spoke," said Abulcasim, now becoming the apologist of a performance, he scarcely remembered, and which had annoyed him quite a bit. "They spoke and sang and perorated."*

*"In that case," said Farach, "twenty persons are unnecessary. One single speaker can tell anything, no matter how complicated it might be."*

*Everyone approved this dictum.*[58]

Borges' story, although fictional, is an excellent example for us to grasp the issue at hand. The cultures we live in organise the world for us; they determine what is important, worthless, painful or humorous. An object or behaviour may have great value in one culture, but not in another. This is because the culture in which we live determines not only what we see but also how we perceive it.

A similar "difference in perspective" occurs in a conversation about theatre between the historian Ubicini and his Turkish friends in Istanbul in the late 19th century. Ubicini finds the Turkish karagöz rather indecent. Indeed, shadow puppet plays could contain puns with vulgar language, profanity and sexual references, as well as depictions of unveiled and partially exposed women or phallic imagery, which seemed contrary to conservative Ottoman norms. Ubicini is astonished by the Turks' inability to comprehend this vulgarity. His Turkish friends, in turn, asked him how they tolerated men and women sharing the same stage, sitting next to each other, holding hands, and being watched by women and girls in European theatres. When Ubicini says, "*Why are you surprised? What happens in Karagöz is even more shameless and obscene*," the Turks reply: "*Yes, but they are lifeless puppets*."[59]

When a double perspective is provided by a veil, even the most indecent and obscene topics can be brought into view.

## Conclusion

I tried to discuss the metadramatic/metatheatrical tendency in Turkish theatre that can be observed to the present day. Although I could not deal with the concept in all its aspects, I claimed that the tendency towards metadrama in this geography may have originated from the concept of "hijab". Trying to explain and explore Turkish theatre through the concept of the hijab is a speculative endeavour that ignores many differences, nuances, exceptional cases and facts. If new ideas and discussions on the subject are initiated, my article can be considered to have fulfilled its purpose.

[58] Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, ed. D. A. Yates & J. E. Irby (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1964), 150-151.
[59] Daryo Mizrahi, "Osmanlı'da Karagöz Oyunları," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 181 (2009): 54.

I mentioned six characteristics associated with metadrama. I said that we find examples of the first five techniques in both traditional theatre practises and contemporary Western-style plays, and that there is a greater tendency towards metadramatic plays. I should also say a few words about the sixth technique (ontological metadrama). I believe that our artists, who are constantly debating the existence and originality of theatrical art and striving to establish a theatrical identity and a national canon, should make more efforts to create works in the field of what we call the sixth technique of metadrama. Developments in Western dramatic literature have always been possible through the criticism of previous works. Euripides used the dramatic techniques of Aeschylus but criticised most of them before incorporating them into his plays.[60] Ibsen did not write in a language completely separate from the dramatic traditions of his time. He differentiated himself within that tradition and revealed his style. Chekhov built on the melodramatic tradition and presented his critique through metadramatic techniques. The same can be said of Beckett. Beckett shows an awareness of how he built his plays on a dramatic convention. Almost all of his plays open up a discussion about the nature of dramatic technique, playwriting and theatre performance.[61] In this sense, metadramatic plays are a critique of previous plays; they are, in a general sense, the metaphysics of drama. They criticise the tradition they are in and realise it by presenting a new work; they both interpret and deconstruct the tradition. The technique of ontological metadrama means that a play discusses its existence as a play. Why do we play? What does it mean to be somebody else? Why do we watch? What is the nature of seeing and being seen? Why do we believe in fiction? What is the relationship between appearance and reality? This allows us to generate fundamental ontological questions about theatre and drama.

Although there are many examples of the first five techniques of metadrama in Turkish dramatic literature, there seems to be less interest in the technique of ontological metadrama.[62] Could this lack of interest be because "ontology" is precisely the "limit" of the hijab? In other words, does the opening up of ontological discussion in artistic production also touch on the boundary that hinders the discussion of theology, philosophy and metaphysics in Islam?[63] Tanpınar attributed the inability to produce novels to a lack of critique. Is this the reason why the technique of ontological metadrama, which means criticising while creating, is not given enough attention by our playwrights? Why does a society that does not even think of imitating its prophet show interest in the arts of mimicry? Why don't we question and discuss the necessity or arbitrariness of this interest through the art of imitation itself? I think these are some questions that playwrights should reflect on today.

[60] In Elektra, for example, Euripides sarcastically reminds us of Aeschylus' techniques of recognition-anagnorisis. While adhering to tradition, he develops it in a metadramatic manner.

[61] "*Chekhov seemed revolutionary, but he actually wrote traditional melodramas turned inside out, with the central action (a suicide, a duel, an auction for the family estate) placed offstage. Beckett seems revolutionary, but, as Albert Bermel has ably demonstrated, he actually places traditional characters in plots and situations that parody those of traditional drama.*" Hornby. op. cit., 24)

[62] N. F. Kısakürek's play "Bir Adam Yaratmak" and Şamil Yılmaz's "Dansöz" are among the rare examples of ontological metadrama that come to mind. In "Bir Adam Yaratmak,' Necip Fazıl Kısakürek discusses the sensitivity of the Islamic hijab in the context of "creating fiction." In "Dansöz" Şamil Yılmaz opens a discussion on the Eastern perception of seeing and being seen through the story of a performing artist, a dancer. The play poses a metadramatic question from a different perspective, echoing the question posed by the god Dionysus in Euripides' The Bacchae: "Why do you want to look at something that causes you pain?"

[63] "*Sufism and the Sunni creed... stood between man and the tragic sense of life. They were, in fact, its complete denial. Among all these shortcomings, the most important was undoubtedly the cessation of the theological science of Kalam, which would naturally give rise to philosophical movements and concerns. Like any other religion, Islam, in addition to the satisfaction it brought, naturally aroused a lot of restlessness and raised a myriad of questions. Sufi philosophy rejected this restlessness with a yearning for absolute existence. Massignon explains the absence of tragedy and tragic sentiment in Muslim art by the fact that Islam recognises no existence other than Allah and reduces life to a shadow play, which is to some extent true. However, such occurrences can be found in almost every religion. No matter how much it seems to be denied in the Sunni creed, there is still a place for the human being in life. The questions of fate and destiny naturally produced many doubts and responsibilities. Sufism eliminated these concerns or, more precisely, redirected them to other aspects. In a world where the same Absolute Existence has different and temporary manifestations that will ultimately return to itself, there would naturally be no tragedy.*" Tanpınar, *op. cit.*, 39

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Chapter 15

# Islam and Performance: Theatricality of Post-Tariqa Sufi Creativity

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## Abstract

This book chapter is about the transformation of the performative Sufi culture and the theatrical elements of an Islamic cultural event. To examine the theatrical processes in contemporary Turkish Sufi culture, this chapter will focus on a specific case study: a group of Romani teenage semazens' embodiment of theatricality in an Armenian church in Çanakkale. These are individuals who transform an Islamic tradition and embrace what this chapter examines as post-tariqa Sufi creativity, one that revolves around the performative and theatrical expressions of mystical union. With this in mind, this chapter moves beyond the idea of Islamic performance as a tool for promoting the conservative Islamist vision. This chapter will argue that, in current-day Türkiye, there are independent artists, who, with their expressive and transformative theatrical acts, challenge general perceptions about performance and Islam in contemporary Türkiye.[1] These artists use their embodied acts to create alternative social imaginaries and inspire individuals to move beyond conventional artistic expressions and boundaries.

**Keywords** Sufism · theatricality · performance · ritual · Turkish Romans

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## Islam and Performance: Moving Beyond Text-Based Actors' Theatre

This book chapter is about the transformation of the performative Sufi culture and the theatricality of a post-tariqa Sufi cultural event. As scholars such as Marvin Carlson, Azam Torab, Kamal Salhi, Timothy Daniels and many others note, globally, the notions of Islam and performance appear to exist side by side, encompassing a wide range of theatrical events that display religious and/or artistic expressions.[2] To examine the theatrical processes in contemporary Turkish Sufi culture, this chapter will focus on a specific case study: a group of Roman *semazens'* (whirling dervishes) embodiment of theatricality in an Armenian church in Çanakkale. These are individuals who transform an Islamic tradition and embrace what this chapter examines as post-tariqa Sufi creativity, one that revolves around the performative and theatrical expressions of mystical union. With this in mind, this chapter moves beyond the idea of Islamic performance as a tool for promoting the conservative Islamist vision. In current-day Türkiye, there are independent artists, who, with their expressive and transformative theatrical acts, challenge general perceptions about performance and Islam in contemporary Türkiye.[3] These artists use their embodied acts to create alternative social imaginaries and inspire individuals to move beyond conventional artistic expressions and boundaries.

The nature of this topic requires a multifaceted look into theatre history and theory. John Bell, in his TDR article, Islamic Performance and the Problem of Drama, attempts to draw the reader's attention to Raif Karam, who, like many other theatre academics and practitioners in the Middle East, "*frames his first-person account of experimental drama in Beirut by re-invoking a maxim of Western thought.*"[4] According to Karam "*Modern theatre… was introduced to Lebanon, as it was to most Arab countries, in the late 19th century.*"[5] Bell argues, "*Although Karam is technically correct, his quiet typical approach to Arab theatre is infused with a pervasive cultural and political ideology. Namely, the Western origin of 'modern theatre' in Arabic and Islamic cultures is a crippling social failure, which always already defines Islamic and Arabic performance as traditions of absence.*"[6] Unfortunately, what Bell points to as "*traditions of absence*" is present not only in the West or other parts of the Middle East. Most theatre institutions in Türkiye might have agreed with Karam's consideration. Islam and performance do not necessarily appear side by side in modern Turkish theatre unless the production is a Western mode of realistic, text-based actors' theatre.[7] It is necessary to refer back to Bell's question: "*How might Westerners [and Turkish academics and artists] pursue… [certain] leads in order to enlarge their sense of [theatrical] performance in both specific and broader cultural contexts of Islam…?*"[8] Bell's analysis might appeal to readers who somehow are aware of the "big problem standing in the way," which according to Bell "*is the Drama in its generally accepted Western mode as realistic, text-based actors' theatre.*"[9]

Examining the modern theatre, globally recognised theatre historians Oscar Brockett and Franklin Hildy assumed that the main obstacle for the advancement in the Islamic world was the prohibition of

[2]Marvin Carlson, *Theatre & Islam* (UK: Macmillan, 2019); Azam Torba, *Performing Islam: Gender and Ritual in Iran* (Brill, 2006); Kamal Salhi, *Music, Culture and Identity in the Muslim World: Performance, Politics and Piety* (London: Routledge, 2013); Timothy Daniels, ed., *Performance, Popular Culture, and Piety in Muslim Southeast Asia* (New York: Palgrave, 2013).

[3]Diamond, "Darkening Clouds over Istanbul: Turkish Theatre in a Changing Climate," 334-350.

[4]John Bell, "Islamic Performance and the Problem of Drama," *The Drama Review* 49, no. 4, Special Issue on Ta'ziyeh (Winter, 2005): 6.

[5]Raif Karam, "Theatre in Lebanon," *The Drama Review* 47, no. 4 (2003): 129.

[6]Bell, "Islamic Performance and the Problem of Drama," 6.

[7]I have not come across many books and articles about Islamic ritual and performance in Türkiye other than the seminal works of Metin And's *A Pictorial History of Turkish Dancing: From Folk Dancing to Whirling Dervishes, Belly Dancing to Ballet*, Istanbul: Dost Yayınları, 1976 and Talat Sait Halman and Metin And's *Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi and The Whirling Dervishes*, Istanbul: Dost Yayinlari, 2005. There are also recordings of Nurhan Karadağ's theatre productions that focus on the Alevi semah ritual. I am grateful to these precious sources that inspired me to start researching Mevlevi *Sema* in 2010.

[8]Bell, "Islamic Performance and the Problem of Drama," 6.

[9]Bell, "Islamic Performance and the Problem of Drama," 6.

"*images of living things*."[10] Bell states, "*despite the existence of such forms as ta'ziyeh in Iran and the commedia-like ortaoyunu in Türkiye, actor-based drama in a dialogic mode rarely developed in Middle Eastern and Arabic countries until the introduction of Western theatre in the 19th century*."[11] Brocket and Hilda followed Albert Hourani's supposed analysis that *"although the depiction of living forms was not explicitly forbidden by the Qur'an, most jurists, basing themselves on the Hadith [traditional understandings of what the Prophet said and did], held that this was an infringement of the sole power of God to create life*."[12] However, Bell writes "*the situation of theatrical performance in Islamic societies is much more complicated […], Islamic cultures […] have their own strong mimetic forms of art and performance, despite the challenge of Hadith traditions*."[13] Bell further explains that "the essential problem here is the rhetorical slippage between "*drama*" and "*theatre*."[14] According to him, "*A recognition of the historical absence of The Drama (text-based actor-centred, dialogic, ultimately Aristotelian theatre in a realistic vein) become a denunciation*" of Islamic cultural practises (considered for the most part to be Islam as lacking artistic and social achievements).

Unfortunately, historical data lack careful analysis. In other words, Brockett and Hildy's perception of theatre in Islamic societies "*is the idea that those societies are now and will forever be missing an essential cultural achievement*."[15] This thinking, which persists in mainstream American culture and in college curricula despite the continuing developmental scholarship in the field of Islamic performance studies, is a real and ultimately debilitating problem.[16] Moving beyond such superficial analysis, in his *Theatre & Islam*, Marvin Carlson attempts to explode the falseness of the commonly held idea that Islam and theatre are opposing traditions.[17] Carlson explores the complexity of their relationship, contemplating the social, political and historical developments that altered theatrical practises across the Islamic world. To argue against the unfortunate considerations of Islam and theatre, Carlson argues that the origin of such misconceptions is based on the Islamic hadith rather than the Quran itself.

In line with Bell's discussion, Erika Fischer-Lichte states that she complies with the German literary historian Max Herrmann's words as part of a discussion with a theatre critic in 1918. Herrmann states, "'*Theatre and drama are, I believe, … originally such extreme opposites that their symptoms will always reveal themselves; the drama is a linguistic-artistic creation by an individual; the theatre is something achieved by the audience and its servants*.'"[18] Herrmann further highlights his point, explaining that "*unlike the theatre critic, that it is not the drama which makes theatre into an art, but only the performance; that it is the performativity of theatre which fundamentally differentiates it from literature or the fine arts*."[19] This insight, according to Lichte, "*is not threatened by the suggestion that in European theatre, as Herrmann himself explained, drama and performance often belong closely together, that the drama – according to one's perspective – is the pattern or material of any performance*."[20] Therefore, at this point, it is perhaps useful to remind us that drama is not the material for every theatrical performance.

As many naive theatre students might have perceived Brockett and Hildy's theatre history book as the ultimate truth about the nature of theatre, as a young theatre student, I used to think that modern theatre almost always requires the marriage of a well-written text and the performances of

[10] Brockett, Oscar G., and Franklin J. Hildy, *History of the Theatre (9th ed.)* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003), 69.
[11] Bell, 7.
[12] Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 56.
[13] Bell, 8.
[14] Bell, 8.
[15] Bell, 8.
[16] Bell, 8.
[17] Marvin Carlson, *Theatre & Islam* (London: Red Globe Press, 2019).
[18] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *History of European Drama and Theatre*, trans. Jo Riley (London: Routledge, 2002), 5; Max Herrmann, 'Bühne und Drama', Vossische Zeitung (1918).
[19] Lichte, *History*, 5.
[20] Lichte, *History*, 5.

trained actors as primary and indispensable tools for theatrical creation. Perhaps, even to this day, to many theatre practitioners, whether theatre is performed on a proscenium stage or on a street, a well-written text performed by trained actors is a vital component for their creation process. I believe that there is an urgent need to update our curriculums to challenge our students and feed their curiosity about the nature and function of theatricality in various cases of theatrical performances that are not text-based, actor-centred and dialogic. I find it useful to share an anecdote that inspired me to write about the theatricality of specific cultural performances. A while ago, a student of mine asked, "*Why so many popular theatre institutions such as Yapı Kredi Afife Theatre Awards comprise only conventional theatre practises?*"[21] I will hopefully return to this question at the end of my chapter to share how my student and I questioned new areas, categories and names for non-conventional theatre that is excluded in many theatre institutions. My student was aware that everyday cultural, touristic and/or ritual performances may be "theatrical" and, at times, the idea of theatre may be more encompassing than Schechner's idea of performance as an umbrella term for all embodied action.

## Islamic Performance as a Theatre

Since the founding of the Republic, very few scholars have covered Islamic ritual and performance in their studies.[22] Most of these studies focus on Islam and music rather than on how performers transform and re-interpret traditional Mevlevi performative forms. In Türkiye, the most comprehensive study that focuses on the performative aspects of the Mevlevi ritual was Talat Sait Halman and Metin And's *Mevlana Celaleddin'i Rumi and the Whirling Dervishes*.[23] This book provides descriptions of Western ethnographers who travelled to Türkiye to research Sufi rituals. Although most tended to have orientalist views about Sufi culture, they provided snippets of their theatrical nature. Based on his readings, Metin And discusses Mevlevi whirling as follows:

[21] Personal conversation with a student.

[22] To focus on the multilayered performative nature of the post-tariqa Sufi ritual practise, I chose to exclude research that could not go beyond the idea of tradition as a relic of the past. Although some attempt to compare the traditional Mevlevi Ayin-i Şerif with what they see in today's commodified Mevlevi whirling performances, their focus could not shift from representation as a shallow imitation to representation as creativity. Such research lacks a performance studies lens that allows the researcher to perceive what Joseph Roach identifies as "successful substitutions," Diana Taylor as "performatic shift and doubling," Richard Schechner as "restored behaviour," and Margaret Thompson Drewal as "representation as tranformation." For more on performance and transformation, please refer to: Joseph R. Roach, Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 2; Taylor, Archive and the Repertoire, 174-175; Diana Taylor, Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), xviii; Margaret Thompson Drewal, "The State of Research on Performance in Africa." African Studies Review 34, no. 3 (1991), 2, 3, 19. Today's Mevlevi rituals should be analysed considering performance theory to capture the performers' multilayered relationship to the commodified rituals.
For some sources that deal with the traditional aspects of the Mevlevi sema, please refer to Gür, Hande, Contemporary Mevleviye in Türkiye from the Perspective of New Religious Movements: 'New Mevlevis' of Istanbul And Konya. Middle East Technical University, The Graduate School of Social Sciences, Unpublished Master Thesis (Ankara: 2018); Uzun, Hülya, Gelenek ve Günümüzdeki Sema Pratiklerinin Karşılaştırmalı Analizi. Günümüzde Yurtiçi Mevlevihanelerinin Durum ve Konumları: Bildiriler - Sunumlar (Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi Mevlana Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yayınları, 2017), pp. 121-158; Uzun, Hülya, Günümüzde Performans Etkinliği Olarak Mevlevi Semâsı, 9. Milletlerarası Türk Halk Kültürü Kongresi: Gelenek Görenek ve İnançlar (Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2018), pp. 369-380.

[23] Talat Sait Halman, Metin And, *Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi and The Whirling Dervishes* (Istanbul: Dost Yayınları, 2005).

> *The rituals were open to public view—an aspect that helped disarm the orthodox Moslem. The Mevlevi, known in Europe as 'The Whirling Dervishes," and the Rufai [Rifai dervishes] attracted the greatest attention. The rituals were the most sought after. Their dancing can be considered a public spectacle and exhibition [...] An interesting 16th Century miniature depicting the 1582 festival in Istanbul shows the Sultan watching a dervish whirling next to a dancing boy in the old Byzantine Hippodrome, each with his own musical accompaniment. Obviously, the Mevlevi dervish did not seem to mind at all performing in the open air before a vast audience of more than ten thousand, or performing next to a dancing boy, a member of a profession reputed to have unsavoury connotations, including extreme lasciviousness.*[24]

The adaptability of the Mevlevi ritual and the open mindedness of the practitioners are not qualities that can be attributed to today's Türkiye. Such knowledge goes back to the 16th century, or perhaps earlier periods of the Ottoman Empire. Throughout, And analyses the links between shaman dancing and dervish rituals projecting the universality of the whirling as a performative human experience that exceeds the doctrine-oriented, the strict comprehension of Islamic worship. Due to the adaptability and universality of the Mevlevi dervish rituals, the analysis of the relationship between theatrical performance and Islam in Türkiye can be based on the expressive rituals of the Mevlevis. Although many would classify the Mevlevi whirling rituals as tourist attractions or worship, I choose to cite And's elucidation of the Mevlevi ritual as "an act and drama of faith" and examine the enactments as a theatrical performance.[25]

These forms of performance carry the basic qualities of theatrical performance as offered by Marvin Carlson: "*occasion and reflexivity*."[26] In fact, most whirling rituals have a plot (story of experiencing unity), characters (*semazens* seeking self-transformation), themes (God, unity, peace and love), chorus (groups of musicians and singers reciting sections from Mesnevi and Quran), music (religious hymns), decor (the accessories and the costumes of the *semazens* functioning as decor including the sheep skin post of the spiritual master) and spectacle (embodied acts of the *semazens*). Therefore, the only aspect of conventional theatre that is not dominant in the Mevlevi ritual performance is the use of dialog and actor-based theatrical elements. More importantly, a more thorough look into the artistic vision of the twentieth century provides a lens through which most of us as theatre practitioners come to acknowledge how theatre is a medium used by human beings to exist, to enlighten, to communicate messages, ideas and feelings. Furthermore, there is no limit or rule as long as the performers can create focus. People today create and transfer identity and fight wars through various theatrical embodied actions. Human beings constantly create their theatrical sites or theatre stages (sites of focus) as they need to be listened or recognised. Teachers' and lawyers' everyday performances are clearly the most vivid examples of the theatricality of everyday life in Türkiye. Perceptions about the theatricality of everyday life continue to evolve in today's Türkiye as in most parts of the world.

Looking into the notion of cultural performance also informs how whirling ritual performances are "*organised program[s]of [theatrical] activity" as in text oriented theatre*."[27] There are many cultural performances in Türkiye that are promoted simultaneously as tourist attractions and worship, but all have a basic organisation to deliver their stories, ideas and messages. These embodied practises are a significant part of the Turkish people's history. South Asians, and perhaps all peoples, as American anthropologist Milton Singer argued, thought of their culture as encapsulated in discrete events, "*cultural performances*," which could be exhibited to themselves and others and which provided the

[24] Halman and And, *Mevlana*, 86.
[25] Halman and And, *Mevlana*, 34.
[26] Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2016), 179.
[27] Carlson, *Performance*, 20.

"*most concrete observable units of the cultural structure*."[28] As Carlson argues, if one would substitute "*a script*" for Singer's "*organised programme of activity*," then these unique attributes of cultural performance could as easily be relating to the traditional concept of theatre, and "*Singer's approach and his influence has unquestionably contributed significantly to the convergence of anthropological and theatrical theory in the area of performance from the early 1970s onward*."[29]

Carlson suggests, "*The study of traditional 'artistic' performance such as theatre and dance has taken on new dimensions and begun to explore newly observed relationships between these and other cultural and social activities…*" while the social sciences have found theatre and performance "*of great use in exploring particular kinds of human activities within their own fields of study*."[30] Although whirling dervishes would not classify their rituals as theatre or as theatrical performance due to the existing antitheatrical prejudice towards theatre arts as a lower form of expression than a religious ritual, I find the analysis of such practises helpful in realising the potential of Mevlevi performance as an artistic tool for creating connection between different social groups in Türkiye. The need to open the borders of theatrical performance is urgent in today's Türkiye, and perhaps it is one of the few tools that has the potential to lead artists to create performative spaces that may lead to overcoming Turkish society's escalating polarisations.

Another aspect that inspires most post-tariqa Sufi groups to adapt their performance traditions is that the practitioners grasp the idea of "*tradition as change*" rather than a fixed entity.[31] When analysing these performances, it is crucial to identify the transformation of traditional performative culture and the re-interpretation of traditional performative forms. For many practitioners of whirling performance, there is a constant revival of time, space and audience. The length of the performance, the generation of spaces and the relationship between the audience and the performers are transformed according to the needs of each social group. *Semazens* do not follow the full structure of the Mevlevi *ayin* (ritual)[32] as generated by Sultan Veled and his grandson Adel Çelebi.[33] Instead, they are keen on adapting and revising all Mevlevi cultural forms to stay in harmony with their specific environment, as in the case of the Turkish Roman community in Çanakkale.

Another aspect is how some Mevlevi and Rifai practitioners are aware of the theatricality of their rituals. Especially those who are interested in acquiring new knowledge throughout reading and travelling have witnessed how the Mevlevi ritual has a broader role globally, one that exceeds the teachings of conservative Islamist circles. The potential of the Mevlevi ritual becomes more obvious in David Mason's analysis of the phenomenology of theatre and the phenomenology of religion. Mason perceives "*religion and theatre [as] conflatable*."[34] Mason's examination of the phenomenology of religion and the phenomenology of theatre reveal how both are basic human needs through which individuals make sense of their place in society and recreate their social positions. Similar ideas inspire the post-tariqa Sufi groups' relationship to the Mevlevi ritual. Most desire to seek wisdom through the act of whirling and share their beliefs and values with their friends and families. The desire to know oneself and others and the desire to experience self-transformation inspires Mevlevi practitioners to transform their structured rituals into versatile theatrical performances.

[28] Milton Singer, *Traditional India: Structure and Change* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1959), xii-xiii.
[29] Singer, *Traditional India*, xii-xiii.
[30] Carlson, *Performance*, 20.
[31] Personal conversation with a semen.
[32] Mevlevis refer to their ritual as Ayin-i Şerif or Sema acini, referring to the full structure of the ceremony as discussed by Metin And. Please refer: Metin And, *A Pictorial History of Turkish Dancing: From Folk Dancing to Whirling Dervishes, Belly Dancing to Ballet* (Istanbul: Dost Yayınları, 1976).
[33] Mevlevi sema, stylised by Rumi's son Sultan Veled, took its final form with the organisation of the ritual by Sultan Veled's grandson, pir Adel Çelebi.
[34] David V. Mason, *The Performative Ground of Religion and Theatre (1st ed.)* (Routledge, 2018), 7-12. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315202709.

## Historical Evolution of the Post-Tariqa Sufi Enactments

Post-tariqa Sufi activities began to emerge after the Turkish revolution due to the closure of the dervish lodges in 1925. During the revolution, some of those who did not want to resist Atatürk's closure of dervish lodges supported the War of Independence and chose to practise their beliefs and values privately at home. Some groups opposed the new system and the closure of their worship centres and sought ways to flee abroad. Hülya Küçük, a Turkish mystic scholar, has discussed the struggles of Sufi sheikhs and dervishes who supported Atatürk's reforms, but found ways to channel their energies into socially productive activities such as teaching Sufi arts and music. Halveti sheikh Mehmed Şemseddin *Efendi* (master), known as a scholar among those who supported modernisation during the years of revolution, expressed the opinion that there is no need for a lodge to enact *zikir* ritual (dhikr — remembrance of God). Another mystic, Kenan Rifai, whose ideas on Islam's modernity have survived, also believed in the change caused by the Kemalist reforms. In order to present to the press that he approved the closure of the dervish lodges, he declared that "*only a few of the approximately 300 people in Istanbul were 'in the service of knowledge'*" and that the tariqa had completed their duties in this world.[35] Kenan Rifai believed that this change was Allah's will. In the twentieth century, many Mevlevis adopted a new vision: a post-tariqa Sufi worship, one that was in harmony with the secular vision of Atatürk.[36]

The letters and oral historical records in the government archives show that despite the problems with the government and the police, many Sufi groups were still able to organise religious gatherings in their private homes. For a long time, perhaps until the 1950s, Sufi groups resumed their religious practises by studying Sufi texts. Journalist and scholar Hakan Yavuz points to the necessity of a text-centred life of worship during the years of the revolution. Yavuz highlights: "*Government pressure in the 1920s and 1930s forced the tariqa to shift from a tekke-centred understanding of Islam to a text-centred understanding of Islam*."[37] It was not allowed to live together as in Ottoman Sufi lodges, but it was safe to turn their homes into temporary workspaces to study Sufi texts.

Then, unexpected changes began to occur when the Turkish government wanted to revive the Mevlevi Sema ceremony in the 1950s as a commodification of Turkish culture (this was a public demonstration). Mevlevi ritual became visible for the first time in 1953 when the ambassadors from the United States visited Konya (the city recognised as the birthplace of the Mevlevi Sufi culture) as part of the European Improvement Programme.

At the time, the government ensured that the Mevlevi ritual had no recognition other than a folk performance. To emphasise the problem with the term "folklore," folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that "*The term 'folklore' refers to the transformation of errors into archaism and their reassessment once they are safe for collection, preservation, display, study, and even nostalgia and revival*."[38] Clearly, the Turkish government rejected the Mevlevi whirling as a religious ceremony and aimed to bring the ritual into existence by transforming it into a folk performance they deemed safe.

Conditions for Mevlevis continued to change when in 1973, the government, in cooperation with UNESCO, celebrated the seven hundredth anniversary of Mevlana's death as the year of Mevlana. This celebration was an effort to promote Türkiye as an attractive tourist destination. With this appointment, the government also supported the whirling dervishes to travel to London, Paris and the United States

[35] Hülya Küçük, "Sufi Reactions After Türkiye's National Struggle," in *The State and The Subaltern: Modernisation, Society and the State in Türkiye and Iran*, ed. Touraj Atabaki (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 139.
[36] The historical data available in this section is based on my Ph. D. thesis titled "Performing Sufi Living in Contemporary Türkiye," University of Roehampton, 2015.
[37] Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Türkiye* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 218.
[38] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 161.

to share Mevlana's poetry and Mevlevi rituals. Mevlevi's visibility abroad was a brilliant opportunity to publicise the strength of democracy and the moderate nature of Islam in Türkiye. With the declaration of the Mevlevi *Sema* Ceremony (the whirling ritual), which was also held in cooperation with the government by UNESCO in 2005, as the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, the ceremony once again assumed the role of promoting Türkiye. Two years later, in honour of Mevlana's eight-hundredth birthday, UNESCO declared 2007 the Year of Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi and Tolerance. Türkiye's relationship with moderate Islam has also gained greater recognition, as the designation of the whirling ritual as a cultural heritage and the popularity of Mevlana once again increased the visibility of Sufism and Sufi rituals as commodities of secular Turkish culture.

This act of commodification also created an opportunity for the Mevlevis to engage with brand new spaces for both worship and sharing their cultural values. The Mevlevis came together and started to prepare ritual gatherings and events. They succeeded in sharing Mevlana's teachings with different groups. Some Mevlevi practitioners organised tours to travel and perform abroad, organised workshops and taught Mevlana's moderate understanding of Islam. The Mevlevi rite has become a symbol of salvation for some individuals who expressed their desire to preserve the secular values of the Turkish State while portraying the religion of Islam. It was a way for them to comment on the opposition between Islam and secularism. Among them, there were many followers of the Mevlevi teachings who believed that the state must be secular for people to adopt a true Mevlevi practise.

## Performing a Post-Tariqa Whirling Ritual in Çanakkale

In the beginning of autumn 2021, I came across a Roman group that practised the Mevlevi whirling ritual in an old Armenian Church in Çanakkale. The event was very crowded with participants of different ages (including a seven years old *semazen* and sixty years old musician). The age range reminded me of the San Francisco Mime Troupe's and Bread and Puppet's performances that hosted a variety of people including teenage lovers and grandparents attending with their grandchildren. The church space was filled with university students, staff, and participants from the Çanakkale Roman community (Çanakkale Romanları), including children of all ages and mothers attending with their strollers. The performers included Roman musicians and *semazens* and university students coming to study in Çanakkale from various cities in Türkiye. In the church, some of the participants whirled, some gave concerts that comprised both Roman and Sufi music, some read the Qur'an, while others discussed their beliefs and values.

Today, all around Türkiye, it is possible to witness such post-tariqa Mevlevi communities that comprise people from different ethnic groups and religions, who together organise performance events where Mevlevi poems, music and sema are practised. This performance-focused Mevlevi event is a case study that examines the multicultural Mevlevi community composed of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University students and academic staff and Çanakkale Romans (Çanakkale Romanları). In the analysis of this Sufi event, I focus on how the Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Sufi community transformed an old Armenian church (the Surp Kevork Armenian Church built in 1669 in the Fevzipaşa neighbourhood) into a Sufi performance centre.

To understand the Mevlevi practise in today's Türkiye, it is also beneficial to look at the commodified performances of Mevlevi rituals, the daily life actions and interactions of the Mevlevi practitioners, the diversity of Mevlevi tourist attractions, cultural Mevlevi performances, ritual meetings, post-tariqa Mevlevi venues and the connections between these different Mevlevi formations. In a 2016 interview with a newspaper, the academic advisor of the Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Sufi Community (Tasavvuf Topluluğu), Halit Kuşku, explained that the church is located in one of the complex neighbourhoods of Çanakkale (in terms of cultural variety and polarisation) and stated that the spiritual transformation

carried out in whirling classes reflected positively on the community. Halit Kuşku explained that while there were few participants in the ritual gatherings in the early days, they now formed a community of "*200*."[39] The group, which started their whirling classes with four university student *semazens* later continued their trainings with twenty more *semazens* due to the participation of individuals from the Roman community. He states that apart from the church building, they also perform whirling at the Mevlevihane (Mevlevi lodge) located in Gelibolu (a touristic town in Çanakkale) once a month. The desire to transmit Mevlevi beliefs and values through the performance of the whirling ritual clearly affected the expansion of the community.

As a researcher focusing on post-tariqa Sufi rituals since 2011, when I learned that there were whirling dervish shows in this Armenian church, right next to the Roman quarter, in the heart of the city, I was very excited and set off to participate in the event. When I first attended, I had my colleagues from the Theatre Department because together we were working on a performance project about Yunus Emre. When we arrived at the church, there were children running around with musical instruments in the garden. At the entrance of the church, we met a member who welcomed us inside the church. From his demeanour and modesty, from the soft tone of his voice, he was content with his membership. The people attending enjoyed talking to one another before the performance began. There was a festive environment in the garden of the church with some children running around, some ladies laughing out loud and others humming songs, swinging softly or cracking sunflower seeds.

I remember thinking that performance had already begun in the garden, which Schechner would perhaps examine as "*the public performance phase*" based on his theory of "*performance processes*."[40] The embodied acts of the performers were evocative of Schechner's notion of the performance as a whole, the sequence consisting of "*proto-performance, public performance, and aftermath*."[41] Schechner's theory of proto-performance (training, workshop, rehearsal) and the performance phase (warm-up, public performance, larger contexts, cooldown) shed light on how the participant's embodied acts were reflective of the nature of this theatrical event. There were many areas of focus in the garden generated by the performers. In one corner, they were rehearsing with their instruments, while in another spot, other were exchanging jokes with their ensemble members to warm-up. All the phases simultaneously occurred in the intimate environment of the church garden in front of the arriving audience members. The entire space of the church, including the entrance, was their performance space.

The event that day started with a concert on the small stage of the church. Throughout the performance, including the concert and the whirling ritual, the words of Mevlana were projected onto the wall. Musicians played both Sufi hymns and various Turkish songs that were popular among the Turkish Roman communities. The relationship that the musician children and teenagers on the stage established with their instruments conveyed a sense of ownership and confidence. While non-Roman musicians had less eye contact with the audience, Roman musicians did not hesitate to interact with the audience. They smiled, spoke and, at times, slightly moved their bodies to accompany the rhythm. While non-Roman performances reflected an introverted attitude, Roman musicians were transmitting their excitement with their fast-paced movements while playing the songs. During the concert, the introverted meditation state and the celebratory spirit occurring side by side on stage were reminiscent of the multicultural nature of this Mevlevi event.

After a while, the concert was over and the musicians remained on the stage to perform the religious tunes during the whirling ritual. The whirling dervishes entered the stage one by one in their sacred costumes. One of the *semazens* placed the sheep skin post (representing the position of the spiritual

[39] "Ortodoks Kilisesinde "Tasavvuf Rüzgarı." 25.05.2016. https://www.comu.edu.tr/haber-14906.html.
[40] R. Schechner, "Performance Processes," in *Performance Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 39.
[41] Schechner, "Performance Processes," 38-39.

master) in place and the whirling began. Although a more thorough examination of the full *Sema* ceremony is available in Metin And's 1976 article, "*A Pictorial History of Turkish Dancing*," for the sake of this performance analysis, I should point out that the whirling dervish ritual space was round shaped and located in the middle of the audience as in the original semahanes (sema halls) of the Mevlevi lodges (available for sightseeing in renovated lodges such as Galata Mevlevi lodge and Yenikapı Mevlevi lodge).[42] As whirling dervishes, there were performers from different age groups including a seven-year-old and a fifty-year-old *semazens*. Throughout the performance, the whirling dervishes swung their long white skirts back and forth repeatedly. Because of their proximity to the seating area, their footsteps and breathing were noticeable. The concentration formed in their bodies and minds was also discernible. A sense of dedication dominated their performances. They whirled repeatedly in a trance-like state, conveying a sense of peace and a soft awareness of their surroundings. Witnessing their act of whirling, it was possible to engage with their meditative state.

As a researcher, I no longer find it right to ask questions to whirling dervishes about their spiritual experiences to respect their privacy. When I started researching Sufi rituals in 2010, this was a question I directed towards whirling dervishes, who were interested in sharing their experiences. Among them were those who introduced themselves as a Mevlevi or a Sufi student without being a member of any religion. Although the definition of each *semazen* was different, it was possible to find a general idea about their practise. Some of those experiences were "*a state of peace," "quiet mind," "a sense of restfulness*."[43] I knew from the workshops I attended between 2005 and 2015 as a performer, including Ziya Azazi's whirling workshops and Kameron Steel's Suzuki training workshops, that without any religion-oriented goal, through intense and dedicated physical exercise, one can claim to have had similar meditative experiences by capturing the integrity of the body and mind. Actors and dancers who dedicate themselves to such devoted physical exercise often discuss that they can have similar experiences as long as they have a higher motivation, which is to control and train the mind and body.

In this performance, it clearly didn't matter where and under what conditions the *semazens* whirled. It did not matter that the performance did not occur in a Mevlevi lodge. According to Metin And, whirling could be practised "*anytime and anyplace*" in Mevlana's time.[44] This historical information continues to inspire more and more young artists and whirling practitioners to embody the multilayered experiences of the Mevlevi ritual. For many more, it may become simultaneously a ritual, a tourist attraction, a cultural performance and a theatrical performance.

## The Theatricality of the Ritual Event

To research the theatricality of this Mevlevi event, I would like to refer to Carlson's identification of theatrical performance as "*specific blending of occasion and reflexivity*."[45] In comparing the quality of cultural performance and theatrical performance, Carlson states that cultural performance may lack such qualities because "*neither performers nor spectators can be primarily characterised as consciously seeking out cultural performance as metacommentary on their culture*."[46] In his comparison, he points out that in theatrical performance, "*performers and audience alike accept that a primary function of this activity is precisely cultural and social metacommentary, the exploration of self and other, of the world as experienced, and of alternative possibilities*."[47] According to Carlson's analysis, the whirling performance in the Armenian church is not a cultural, but a theatrical performance since the musicians

[42] Metin And, *A Pictorial History of Turkish Dancing: From Folk Dancing to Whirling Dervishes, Belly Dancing to Ballet* (Istanbul: Dost Yayınları, 1976).
[43] Personal conversations with semens.
[44] Halman and And, *Mevlana*, 34.
[45] Carlson, *Performance*, 179.
[46] Carlson, *Performance*, 179.
[47] Carlson, *Performance*, 179.

and the *semazens* practise these performance gatherings to shape and question "*the perceptions*" of themselves and their culture. In this event, it is definitely a conscious choice and a well-thought metacommentary to bring together university students, university professors and Roman people to sing and dance together. In this community, the participants are free to bring together different cultural attitudes, styles, teachings, and songs to create their own version of a performance. This sense of freedom inspires the generation of a multi-cultural space in which one can explore the self and the other without the pressure of any dogmatic value.

Furthermore, as Carslon identifies, it is true that "*mirror and shaping function has always been more specifically associated with theatre than with most other cultural performance, and moreover that this aspect of traditional theatre has become even more prominent in the development of modern performance art*."[48] Theatrical performances are laboratories for "*cultural negotiations, a function of paramount importance in the plurifocal and rapidly changing contemporary world*."[49] This analysis is especially vital when these performances are discussed in relation to the Islamist and secularist divide in Turkish society. Through these performances, performers and spectators alike reinvent new identities, compare cultural codes and create new values that suit both their Roman and Sufi lifestyles. It is exactly for this reason that the performers play both Roman music and Sufi *ilahis*. All this merging is not unconscious, at least for the adult members.

The mirroring and shaping also occurs before and after the whirling ritual performance when the performers interact in the beautiful garden of the church. Roman participants are aware that it is their ability to dance effectively since childhood that inspires them to quickly adapt to the whirling practise. Although the act of whirling requires discipline, whirling, as they comprehend, suits their way of life. It is perhaps another way of learning to live more carefree than the capitalist society requires. Or perhaps, it is a reminder to stop the enslavement of consumerism.[50] Roman people often discussed how they forget about everyday problems when they sing and dance. It is a way to discharge negative feelings, the whirling practise is another effective tool for many, "*who desire a more quiet and calm dance practise*."[51] In such conversations, it is possible to witness how they mirror and shape their perceptions of cultural norms.

Spectators' experiences, however, differed when compared to a conventional theatre audience, who often watches and observes the play and avoids any level of interaction. Jill Dolan, who discusses the theatrical experience of the spectators as "*engage in*" rather than "*observe*" or "*contemplate*."[52] This input informs how people attending these Mevlevi events tended to be more interested in engaging in meditative qualities. In the case of this whirling event, spectators did not arrive to observe, but to witness and experience the ritual "communitas," as if they were part of the performance. The idea that "we are all in this together" becomes obvious when some spectators conveyed a high level of concentration. Some explained this as participating in a prayer, not knowing the words, but participating. Some audience members also seemed to be in a state of meditation as they engaged in the performances of the dervishes. It is as if they were aware of Mevlana's search for unity as the multiplicity or manyness of reality.[53] People attending tended to be audiences seeking to learn about Mevlana's teachings; therefore, they attended with the notion that "*we are experiencing this spiritual meaning together*."[54]

[48] Carlson, *Performance*, 179.
[49] Carlson, *Performance*, 180.
[50] Personal conversations with semens.
[51] Personal conversation with a semen.
[52] Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), 44.
[53] W. C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1989), 24-25.
[54] Personal conversation with the audience.

Erika Fischer Lichte's discussion of interweaving performances also highlights the strong identification made by the Roman musicians, semazens and their audiences. Lichte argues, "*the fundamental conditions of the very existence of theatre are to be found in the conditio humana, [...] the desire to create oneself as another and to act out the other, the ability to act, to represent, to play*."[55] Therefore, the nature of theatrical performance is always about the creation of identity and changing identities. Regardless of what actions are involved, it is always a matter of certain aspects and factors that allow someone to say "I," *"which provide him with an awareness of his self and in this sense, a self-consciousness*."[56] In this regard, cultural performance almost always is theatrical and theatrical performance is almost always a cultural performance since both constantly seek to challenge the human condition and the notion of identity. When American anthropologist Milton Singer introduced the term "cultural performance" in the 1950s to examine a variety of cultural acts such as weddings, festivals, recitations, plays, dances and musical concerts, he also discussed the strong relationship between cultural performance and cultural identity. Lichte refers to Milton's idea of cultural performance as "*a place where a culture could articulate its image of itself and its self-understanding and display this image before its own members and members of other cultures*."[57] As Lichte identifies, both seek to represent the concept of humana. Although differences do exist, for instance, theatrical performance is perhaps more competitive and affective in creating new identities that might rigorously question existing social positions, it is fare enough to state that performances (whether theatrical performance or cultural performance) in different cultures recognise and fulfil this mission in very distinct ways.[58] Therefore, it might be valuable to move beyond such limiting categorisations.

Another aspect that informs our case is the idea of liminality that informs the practise of both ritual and artistic performance. Lichte writes that anthropologist Victor Turner "*was already well aware of this similarity*."[59] Artistic performance is *"liminal" insofar as it presupposes a phase of separation in which the participating subjects leave behind their daily contexts, as is also the case with rituals. The participants undergo a liminal phase [...] in which they are transferred into an extraordinary state that allows for new and potentially disturbing experiences*."[60] This analysis highlights the transformative potential of artistic performances.[61] As in ritual, in artistic performance, transformation occurs through the experience of catharsis. Lichte states, although "*Catharsis, the term [Aristotle] introduced to define the goal of tragedy as the cleansing of these affects, points to many different contexts" including the experience of "purging in healing rituals*."[62] More specifically, "*While the excitement of affects transfers the spectator/reader into a liminal state, catharsis causes the actual transformation. That is to say, the experience of catharsis constitutes a liminal and transformative experience*."[63] In the performance of the whirling ritual, the *semazens'* release of unwanted thoughts is perhaps cathartic, leading to a transformation, "a state of peace" that cannot be achieved in ordinary life.

These transformations occur on many levels, including *"quieting the mind," "experiencing restfulness," "experiencing a sense of freedom from religious rules," "improving confidence about who I am in relation to other," "experience of hope," "release of aggression" etc.*[64] Due to many semazens' mirroring and shaping, the performance of the whirling ritual represents an understanding of belief beyond dogmas today. It may seem wrong to conservative Muslims who perceive the Mevlevi ritual

[55] Jill Dolan, "Geographies of Learning: Theatre Studies, Performance, and the 'Performative,'" Theatre Journal, no. 45 (1993): 432.
[56] Fisher-Lichte, *History*, 2.
[57] Fisher-Lichte, *History*, 3.
[58] Fisher-Lichte, *History*, 2.
[59] Erika Fischer Liche and Benjamin Wischuz, *Transformative Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 2.
[60] Fisher-Lichte, *Transformative Aesthetics*, 2.
[61] Fisher-Lichte, *Transformative Aesthetics*, 2.
[62] Fisher-Lichte, *Transformative Aesthetics*, 3.
[63] Fisher-Lichte, *Transformative Aesthetics*, 3.
[64] Personal conversations with semens.

as belonging only to Muslims. However, historical data show that the whirling practise is widespread among dancers and theatre practitioners globally. Different understandings of Islam and Sufism have carried the Mevlevi praxis to a trans-religious point. In today's libertarian conditions, anyone can learn and practise the whirling ritual "*anytime and anyplace*."[65] It is precisely for this reason that a more inclusive and multicultural understanding has been adopted in many Mevlevi communities. Mevlevi groups adopting both secular and religious values transform churches, theatres and cultural centres with the teachings and rituals of Mevlana. The fact that individuals from different cultures and religions come together to transform the whirling ritual gathering by bringing in Roman cultural music is a great example of the need for the coexistence of secularism and Islam in today's Türkiye.

The theatrical quality of the Mevlevi whirling performance depends on one's ability to develop an understanding that is beyond theatrical canons. In Troubling Traditions, Lindsey Mantoan, Matthew Moore, and Angela Farr Schiller also discuss the problem of text as a canon. They explain how "*Canons occupy a privileged place in the Western imaginary. After all, who doesn't love a greatest hit list? But there is no formal list, no concrete, agreed-upon compendium of plays that qualify as canonical.*"[66] To them, "'*the canon' (to whatever extent it really exists) is the product of authoritative discourse masquerading as natural processes.*"[67] To remind many of us, who work in or in relation to theatre, how we participate in the act of making canons, they rigorously examine the dynamics of canon making:

> *For many, canonical works are those that have 'stood the test of time.' Perhaps, but time's test is rigged, and the purely aesthetic criteria that presume to govern canonisation are mired in the realities of social inequity, textocentrism and hegemonic control of the means of cultural production. Despite its ephemerality, the concept of a known theatrical canon circulates; it enters discourse, classrooms, publishing meetings, and season selection debates with surprising force. 'The canon,' as a unified and closed system, signifies an abstract tradition, a history of aesthetic production, and a set of ideals. It promises to confer a sense of continuance, a known centre, and access to cultural capital. 'Canons,' however, proliferate —they are lived, gathered, reshaped, cross-pollinated, and evolved over time as they inhabit bodies. Canons can be located, personal, and rooted in familiarity and affinity rather than authority. And to the extent that it is very likely that we have all, in some way, as educators, artists, publishers, students, and even audiences, participated in the act of making canons, it is essential that we consider their consequences, politics, and relative value—and history.*[68]

This idea of moving beyond canons is perhaps a productive way of inspiring artists to move beyond the limitations of conventional thinking. Theatricality exists in children's imaginative play, the act of imitation, mockery (caricature, parody) and storytelling. I would like to show how, with the desire to move beyond the limitations of the western model of drama when defining theatre, many of us, as theatre practitioners and academics, could inspire more people to integrate theatrical performance into their everyday lives. This is possible only if we stop projecting our perception of theatre onto different cultures. In a land rich with a cultural history shaped with many theatrical performance forms such as puppet theatre and Islamic ritual performances, I believe such inspirational formulations are vital for creating new perspectives about Turkish theatre that is more inclusive and affects every stratum of our society.

[65] Halman and And, *Mevlana*, 34.
[66] Lindsey Mantoan, Matthew Moore and Angela Farr Schiller, *Troubling Traditions, Canonicity, Theatre and Performance in the US* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 2.
[67] Mantoan, Moore, and Farr Schiller, *Troubling Traditions*, 2.
[68] Mantoan, Moore, and Farr Schiller, *Troubling Traditions*, 2.

## Conclusion

On a final note, I want to remind once again of the basic instinct to create boundaries between different artistic or cultural mediums. As Allison Oddey writes, "*I am in an art gallery; therefore, this must be art. I am in a theatre; therefore, this must be a performance. I am sitting on the bus; therefore, this must be real life. For artists, however, art and life are the same. There are no boundaries.*"[69] This new perspective on theatre may inspire us to question the previous chronological historiography on modern Turkish Theatre and provide a critical approach to the topics and themes based on these studies. Is there a rule for the Afife Jale Theatre Awards jurists to only deal with conventional theatre arts? In fact, some of the Afife Jale jurists are interested in interweaving performances that are simultaneously a theatrical performance, religious ritual performance, cultural performance and tourist attraction. However, there is no category devoted to such performances. Along with my students, who question such canons, we ask how can this be changed? Can new categories be added? What would the names of these categories be? Multi-layered performance? Cultural performance? Ritual performance? Tourist performance? Interweaving performance? What good would such a change do? Would it not be effective in highlighting theatrical cultural forms in Türkiye? Or wouldn't it be instrumental in expanding and deepening the curricula not only in the Afife Jale Theatre Awards as one of the leading institutions in Turkish theatre but also at the theatre departments of Turkish universities? Some universities have already expanded their curricula to broaden the perceptions of their students. Thanks to this expansion, some theatre students find more courage in realising their creative processes in a more free artistic environment. Seeing this, I often remind myself that *"We can no longer teach or even study theatre as we have in the past. Those of us in theatre production programmes will find ourselves increasingly marginalised or isolated in our institutions if we do not include in very fundamental ways the new population (students of colour and others) constituting our student bodies."*[70] As this chapter seeks to offer, today's Turkish theatre (and performance) is ready to move beyond the current theatrical canonisation.

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[69] Oddey, A., *Reframing the Theatrical: Interdisciplinary Landscapes for Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), x.
[70] Jill Dolan, "Geographies of Learning: Theatre Studies, Performance and 'The Performative'" Theatre Journal 45, no. 4 (1993): 417. https://doi.org/10.2307/3209014.

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Chapter 16

# The Struggle of the Modern Armenian Theatre for Existence on the Threshold of the Centenary

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## Abstract

This study aims to provide an overview of the Republican Era theatre practises of Armenians who were the founders of the modern theatre in the Ottoman Empire by means of schools and alumni associations. The Ottoman Armenians laid the foundation of the modern theatre through the theatre practises in educational institutions. The young Armenian schoolers carried out the theatre experiences that they gained from institutions to the public sphere and professionalised in the Ottoman Empire. They formed a basis not only for Armenian theatre but also for the establishment of Turkish theatre. Especially beginning from the second half of the 19th century, a theatre ground that Armenians and Muslim/Turks were in interaction with came into existence. However, the visibility of Armenians in theatre throughout the transition from the empire to the nation-state drastically decreased. Nevertheless, they struggled to maintain their theatre traditions in the alumni associations established within the Armenian schools. Throughout its historical trajectory, this study seeks to illustrate the challenges faced by Armenian theatre in maintaining its presence amidst the ongoing debates surrounding the national theatre and the efforts to establish a modern theatrical tradition in Turkish. In doing so, it aims to centre on the incremental process of the "created absence" of the Armenian theatre artists and workers on stage and within the theatre historiography in Türkiye. It argues that the historical narrative of the nationalist theatre affords room for various forms of domination and violence, as figured in the act of erasure, expungement and denial.

**Keywords** Armenian theatre · Ottoman theatre · nationalisation · Armenian school and alumni theatres · theatre historiography

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## Introduction

On February 1, 1920 a contest was organised under the name "Our Competition" in the 19th edition of one of the theatre magazines of the period named "Temaşa" (Spectacle), and two questions were addressed to the readers. The first inquired about the theatre person who had made the most significant contributions to theatres over the preceding fifty years. The results were unveiled in the 20th edition of the magazine, published on March 1, 1920. According to the readers' responses, Mınakyan emerged as the top choice with 73 votes, securing a decisive majority. Cemil Pasha and Ahmet Fehim followed with 51 and 32 votes, respectively, while Ali Pasha garnered 2 votes. The second question sought to determine the foremost actor or actress in the Ottoman spectacle scene. According to the responses, Eliza Binemeciyan received 76 votes, surpassing Muhsin Ertuğrul with 38 votes, Nurettin Şefkati with 15 votes, Şadi with 12 votes, and Madam Kınar with 11 votes.[1]

What transpired in the trajectory of Armenian theatre pioneers, such as Mınakyan, Eliza Binemeciyan, and Madam Kınar, who laid the foundations of modern theatre, who took a principal role in the institutionalisation of the theatre and were the essential actors of the stage on Ottoman territory? What became of the tradition that was handed down by Armenian theatre figures into the Republican Period? Despite the bilingual development of modern theatre in the Ottoman Empire, as emphasised by existing research, encompassing both Armenian and Turkish, how often are Armenian plays now heard on today's stages? If tasked with naming contemporary Armenian actors, how many could be listed from the Turkish stage?

This study hinges on a fundamental inquiry: What became of the modern theatre tradition established by Armenian theatre luminaries in this region during the Republican Era? Guided by this question, the study endeavours to trace the course of Armenian theatre during the Republican Era, primarily by examining the Armenian schools that laid the groundwork for this theatre and the alumni associations that emerged around these schools. It tries to determine what sort of a struggle for existence the Armenian theatre made while national theatre debates and efforts to establish a modern theatre tradition in Turkish continued during the Republican Era.

## What Happened to the Modern Armenian Theatre?

The encounter of the Armenian community with the modern theatre and the activities carried out in this field go back to a quite early time. The first registered play in Armenian is known to be the play entitled *Mardirosutyun Sırpuyn Hripsimeyi* (The Martyrdom of Saint Hripsime) presented by the students of the School of Teatinians founded by a Catholic clerical in Lvov in 1668.[2] After this first presentation and the theatrical activities that are assumed to be carried out in Lvov, the Mekhitarist Monastery in San Lazzaro in İtaly became, in fact, the place where the foundations of the Armenian theatre were laid and the Armenian theatre gained continuity.

According to the records of the San Lazzaro Monastery, the theatrical presentations there began in the 1730s. Furthermore, again, in the light of the information drawn from the records, we find out that the plays were presented every year during the Carnival Feast. The monastery students were cast for the important roles in these plays. From this date, the theatrical activities of the Armenians in Italy intensified and spread.[3]

[1] Metin And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu: (1908-1923)* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1971), 32.
[2] Boğos Levon Zekiyan, *Venedik'ten İstanbul'a Modern Ermeni Tiyatrosu'nun İlk Adımları: Ermeni Rönesansı ve Mıkhitarist Tiyatro Faaliyetleri*, trans. Boğos Çalgıcıoğlu (Istanbul: bgst Yayınları, March 2013), 18.
[3] Zekiyan, *Venedik'ten İstanbul'a*, 22.

> *The same intensity of the activities had been experienced in Moorat College [Murat] in Padua and in Raphael College in Venice from the first years after their establishment. The first-generation students of these two colleges that were founded, respectively, in 1834 and 1836 familiarised the Armenian people with the theatre and popularised the theatre.*[4]

The educational activities of the Armenians in Europe were not limited to several Italian cities; schools founded mostly by the Mekhitarists existed as well in Paris and Vienna.[5] The Mekhistarists carried out schooling activities that became widespread not only in Europe but also in Ottoman territory, and intense theatrical practises were encountered in these schools. While the schooling movement carried out by the Mekhitarists in several Ottoman cities such as İstanbul, Trabzon, İzmir, Aydın, Erzurum, Muş, Harput, Mardin is considered as part of the gains of the secularisation period expressed as "Zartonk"[6] in the cultural history of Armenians, it is known that the Armenian schools within the Ottoman Empire had more than two hundred thousand students at the end of the 19th century and that the Armenian, Ottoman Turkish and French education was included in the curriculum.[7] The theatrical activities carried out in Armenian schools evolved to include several fields of the theatre from translation practises to writing original works, from stage design to acting and were mostly fulfilled as a part of the language and culture education.

Pointing at the fact that the theatrical activities started as well in the Apostolic Armenian schools right along with the Mekhitarist schools, Manok writes that theatre practises were carried out at Bezciyan School in Istanbul in the first place and at Mesropyan School in İzmir later on.[8] However, he emphasised that Moorat Raphael College in Venice had the greatest impact on the cultural life of the Ottoman Armenian community: "*A great majority of the students of these schools would come from the East. After completing their studies in this school, the students would go back to their country and work actively within the Armenian community carrying with them the new thoughts to the places they would go to.*"[9] Upon the foundation of the college in 1836, theatrical presentations began to occur there. The students taking part in these presentations took on important tasks at several institutions in the Armenian community and the Ottoman society. People such as Mıgırdiç Beşiktaşlıyan, Sırabyon Hekimyan, Tovmas Terziyan, and Vahram Papazyan who took part in the establishment of the modern theatre in the Ottoman territory and had a great impact on the social transformation graduated from Moorat Raphael College.[10]

Specifying that the return of Hekimyan and Beşiktaşlıyan to Istanbul could be marked as a milestone for the Armenian theatre, that many actors and many theatre workers were raised, that the translation of many theatre scripts was carried out and that the original plays were written in several theatre companies founded until the obtaining of the 10 years monopoly of theatrical performances by Hagop Vartovyan in 1870, Mehmet Fatih Uslu points out that all these developments constituted a basis for the professionalisation and popularisation of the Armenian theatre in the Ottoman territory.[11]

Stating that the Armenian theatre started in 1810, in Istanbul, under the leadership of Pıjışkyan, circa 50 years before its professionalisation and popularisation with Hekimyan and Beşiktaşlıyan, Metin

[4] Boğos Levon Zekiyan, *Ermeniler ve Modernite: Gelenek ve Yenileşme/Özgüllük ve Evrensellik Arasında Ermeni Kimliği*, trans. Altuğ Yılmaz (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, July 2002), 76.
[5] Yervant Baret Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında San Lazzaro Sahnesi: Ermeni Mıkhitarist Manastırı ve İlk Türkçe Tiyatro Oyunları*, trans. Mehmet Fatih Uslu, Ed. Mehmet Fatih Uslu and Fırat Güllü (İstanbul: bgst Yayınları, January 2013), 27-28.
[6] For further information, see Zekiyan, *Ermeniler ve Modernite*, 89-103.
[7] Zekiyan, *Ermeniler ve Modernite*, 92.
[8] Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında*, 50.
[9] Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında*, 49.
[10] Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında*, 49.
[11] Mehmet Fatih Uslu, *Çatışma ve Müzakere: Osmanlı'da Türkçe ve Ermenice Dramatik Edebiyat*, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015), 51-52.

And indicates that the tragedy entitled "Ardaşes" and written by Pıjışkyan in 1815 was enacted by the Mekhitarist students.[12] And Fırat Güllü relates further by reference to Pars Tuğlacı's work entitled *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri* (Western Armenians throughout the History) and specifies that the play was dated 1810. Accordingly, a school under the direction of Minas Pıjışkyan, one of the priests affiliated to the Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice, was launched in 1808 in Pera and another one under the direction of Sukias Sanalyan was launched in Galata. He stated that Pıjişkyan represented the play entitled *Arşavir Takavori Gyankı* (The Life of King Arşavir) at the school of which he was the director in 1810.[13] Hekimyan and Beşiktaşlıyan carried out as well theatrical activities in Armenian schools for a while after they got back to Istanbul. They wrote and staged plays enacted by the students on the school stages in Ortaköy, Kuzguncuk and Hasköy. Another one who staged plays in Hasköy was Karekin Çaprasdcıyan. Mardiros Mınakyan, who obtained important success in the field of theatre in the following years, was a figure among the students and the players of Çaprasdcıyan who was teaching French at the Narsesyan School.

Another important development that occurred during the same years was the theatre activities carried out by Hekimyan in Pera. Hekimyan began to stage plays by bringing together Bedros Mağakyan, Hovannes Acemyan, Bedros Çuhacıyan, Abraham Narinyan, Avedis İdareciyan, Tomas Terziyan, Serovpe Bengliyan, Harutyun Çamaşırcıyan, Ağavni Hamoyan, Ağavni Terziyan, Takuhi Giranyan, K. Baltayan, and Arusyak Papazyan in 1856. This company was the company that would constitute Şark Theatre/Aravelyan Theatre (The Orient Theatre) in the following years. Hekimyan, who would write plays and publish these plays as books, began later to stage plays in Armenian as well, while in the beginning he would stage plays in Turkish and in Italian. Sponsors of the theatre in Hasköy, the Altundurri brothers took the lead in the establishment of the Şark Theatre.[14]

Thus, in the middle of the 19th century, Sırabyon Hekimyan, Beşiktaşlıyan and Çaprasdcıyan became the pioneers, enabling the Armenian theatre that sprouted in the schools to go beyond the school stages and come in contact with large masses respectively in Pera, Ortaköy and Hasköy.

When the attempt of Şark Theatre, which was important in every aspect, ended in 1859, İstepan Eksiyan as well as a large cast of players including Hagop Vartovyan and Mardiros Mınakyan headed for İzmir. This company staged plays in Armenian, French, Turkish, and Italian between 1862 and 1864, under the name of Vaspuragan Theatre, under the guidance of Ekşiyan. The players went back to İstanbul in 1864 when the company broke up. While the Vaspuragan Company was in İzmir, Bedros Mağakyan established a new company. On the other hand, theatre activities went on in Ortaköy and Hasköy. Some players from Şark Theatre were transfered to these latters and another theatre named "Şark Theatre" was founded with the support of both the court and Altındürri brothers.[15] While plays in Armenian as well as plays in Turkish were staged in this period, Armenian playwrighting made an important progress with the topic chosen from the public's daily life in the play which was written by Sıvacıyan in 1867, not published and did not reach the present day and the era of realistic plays began in the Armenian theatre. However, the court entourage kept distance from the company in time[16] and the Şark Theatre was shut down on the grounds of the political attitude adopted during the ceremony of the Armenian writer Mikael Nalbantyan's death anniversary.[17]

[12] Metin And, *100 Soruda Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (Istanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi, November 1970), 90.
[13] Quoted by Fırat Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar: Osmanlıya Has Çokkültürlü Bir Politik Tiyatro Girişimi* (Istanbul: bgst Yayınları, October 2008), 34.
[14] Metin And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 2nd. ed (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi, February 1999), 41-42.
[15] And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 43-44.
[16] And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 44.
[17] And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 44-45.

> *According to Hrant Asadur, we see three companies after the shutting down of the Şark Theatre in 1867: The first one was the Armenian Artists Company, which was kind of a successor of the Şark Company; the second one was Asya Kumpanyası (Asian Company) led by Güllü Agop; this one would play in Gedikpaşa and at Aziziye Theatre in Üsküdar and would cooperate with the first one. Furthermore, the third company was a company consisting of Acemyan, Aruzyak, Zarikyan, Ş. Mirinciyan and a few recently raised artists. The most alive of these three companies that made its presence felt was the Asian Company.*[18]

The name leading the Asian Company of which the name would become in 1869 "Ottoman Theatre Company" was Hagop Vartovyan (Güllü Agop) raised in Armenian schools. The Asian Company, which would stage plays in the beginning at Naum Theatre in Beyoğlu moved later to Gedikpaşa. The Ottoman Theatre Company led by Vartovyan carried out its activities there for many years.[19] The company that staged plays in Armenian and Turkish, has a crucial place in the institutionalisation and popularisation of the theatre in the Ottoman Empire. The foundations of this institutionalisation and this popularisation were laid by the monopoly of performing theatrical performances in Turkish in İstanbul conferred to Vartovyan in 1870 by Grand Vizier Ali Pasha, which would last for ten years.

In this way, the task of rendering the theatre widespread, development and popularisation of the theatre and performing plays in Turkish was entrusted to the Ottoman Theatre Company. Indicating that this privilege coincided with a period where the theatre started to become an ordinary entertainment for the public, Uslu stated that the Ottoman Theatre Company gained the quality of concentrating in itself the whole theatre experience in İstanbul.[20]

İzrail indicates that Ottoman Theatre Company did not contribute considerably to the Armenian enlightenment, that it rather grew on it, that, however, the Turkish playwrights gave works drawing their subject from daily life, narrating the national facts and that these works were put on stage by Armenian players with great devotion.[21] Therefore, one might say that the Ottoman Theatre Company led rather to the development of the theatre in Turkish despite the fact that it was a theatre established essentially by the Armenians.

Taking into consideration the analysis carried out by Güllü on the Ottoman Theatre Company repertory by comparing the list of plays enumerated by And in his book entitled *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu* and the information on play announcements included in Pars Tuğlacı's book entitled *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri* (Western Armenians throughout History), one may see that his assessment matches İzrail's. According to Güllü's examinations, one can see that "*the number of the plays in Armenian decreases dramatically while the number of the original plays in Turkish included in the company's repertory increases between 1868-1880*"[22]. Ebüzziya Tevfik, Namık Kemal, Ahmet Mithat, Âli Bey are Muslim/Turkish writers whose plays were represented at the Ottoman Theatre Company. These names were at the same time among the names constituting the Young Ottomans Society. Consequently, one might say that the Ottoman Theatre Company led by Vartovyan and the Young Ottomans Society consisting of opposing intellectuals, against the Ottoman governance, were in cooperation in this period. Güllü states that this cooperation was in question essentially during the season 1872-1873, that it gained a corporate identity with the establishment of a literary committee within the theatre and that it paved the way for the writing of Ebüzziya Tevfik's play entitled *Ecel-i Kaza*

[18] And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 45.
[19] And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 46.
[20] Mehmet Fatih Uslu, "İstanbul'da Modern Tiyatronun Doğuşu ve Gelişimi", *Antik Çağ'dan XXI. Yüzyıla Büyük İstanbul Tarihi, Edebiyat, Kültür ve Sanat*, Vol. 7 (2015): 531, accessed June 23, 2023, https://istanbultarihi.ist/assets/uploads/pdf/285.pdf.
[21] Nesim Ovadya İzrail, *Tanzimat, İstibdat ve Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosunda Mardiros Mınakyan -Türk Devlet Tiyatrosu Darülbedayi-* (Istanbul: Kor Kitap, July 2023) 53-54.
[22] Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası*, 52.

and Namık Kemal's plays entitled *Vatan yahut Silistre* and *Gülnihal*.[23] And indicates that the newspaper "La Turquie" announced "*in 1873 that the Gedikpaşa Theatre would reorganise, that a council consisting of Raşit Pasha (Governor of Syria), Kemal Bey (Namık Kemal), Halet Bey, Ali Bey and Güllü Agop started the works*"[24]. And indicates that the reason why such a council was established was the desire to correct the poor pronunciation of the Armenian artists mentioned often as well by the press of the period. Furthermore, Güllü enumerates the goals of the council as follows:

> *i) Resolving the pronunciation issue of the Armenian players considered as the most important issue of the theatre in Turkish at that time; ii) Enriching the theatre literature by way of works translated from European languages; iii) Improvement of the translations and the adaptations carried out carelessly in the past iv) Development of the national dramatic literature by writing original works as much as possible*[25]

One can apprehend that the main goal of the council was a direct intervention in the actual functioning of the field despite the fact that motives such as the development and the consolidation of the national theatre and the national dramatic literature by making them competent were alleged. The quality of this intervention was determined by the social structure one wished to reshape.

Uslu interprets the establishment process of the Literary Committee as the fact of going out on the field, intervening in the theatre by way of "education" and "correction" by the Muslim intellectual and the fact that the experience of the Armenian actors was subjected to sharing and negotiation.[26]

The plan of the "national theatre" that the Muslim intellectuals tried to establish via the experience and the acquisitions of the Armenian theatre failed due to the political impact created by the representation of Namık Kemal's play entitled *Vatan yahut Silistre* on April 1, 1873 and the arrestation and the exile of Namık Kemal, Ahmet Mithat Efendi, Ebüzziya Tevfik, Nuri Bey and Hakkı Bey because of the manifestations against Sultan Abdulaziz that took place after the representation and the interruption of the activities of the theatre.[27] Nevertheless, this situation did not last long, and the representations in Turkish and Armenian continued during the season 1874-1875. Not only Ottoman Theatre but also various companies in İstanbul and out of İstanbul continued to perform and concurrent names against Vartovyan emerged. Among them were Fasulyeciyan, Mağakyan and Çuhacıyan.[28] Furthermore, from 1876-77 the Ottoman Theatre Company began to decline. The very reason of this decline was the political circumstances in which the Ottoman State was. The outbreak of the Turkish-Russian War, the fact that the Ottoman Empire lost an important part of its territory in the Balkans with the Treaty of Berlin and the necessity of realising some reforms meant for the Ottoman Armenians which were likely to enable the intervention of Europe within the framework of this treaty, the rise of the national movements and the fact that the Armenians were considered as a threat which needed to be suppressed made the Ottoman Theatre Company approach its end.

The monopoly conferred to Vartovyan expired in 1880. In 1881, the municipality forbade the representation of the plays in languages other than Turkish in the districts of Üsküdar and Kadıköy; these districts were the ones densely inhabited by the Armenians. In 1881, Vartovyan moved to Direklerarası. Furthermore, in 1882, Sultan Abdulhamid took him into his service in the court. In 1884, the theatre in Gedikpaşa, where the Ottoman Theatre Company had staged performances for years, was torn down. The justifications given for the demolishment of the theatre were the denouncement to the

[23] Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası*, 82.
[24] And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 67.
[25] Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası*, 96.
[26] Uslu, *Çatışma ve Müzakere*, 61.
[27] And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 70.
[28] And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 80.

court of Ahmet Mithat's plays entitled *Çengi* and *Çerkes Özdenleri* included in theatre's repertory and the investigation started by the order of the Sultan.[29]

Mardiros Mınakyan, who took over the direction of the theatre in 1880 in place of Vartovyan, established the Ottoman Drama Company with Armenian actors in 1885 and continued his theatrical activities.

The company that would perform in Turkish nearly only the translated/adapted works of European writers in the beginning, in the censorship atmosphere under Abdulhamid, with the Armenian actors, obtained in 1893 the permission of Yıldız Palace for representations in Armenian.[30] Nesim Ovadya İzrail describes how this permission was obtained as follows:

> *Prominent intellectuals such as Krikor Zohrab, Levon Paşalyan, and Arpiar Arpiaryan wished for representations in Armenian. Krikor Zohrab, who made use of his relationships with Yıldız Palace, obtained the privilege of performing in Armenian at the beginning of 1893.*[31]

İzrail relates the importance of the possibility of performing in Armenian for Krikor Zohrab, who was one of the intellectuals who were arrested and massacred in 1915, with regard to the Armenian language and culture, with a quotation taken from the article written by Zohrab in 1892, entitled "The Decline of the Armenian Theatre", for Hayrenik, one of the important periodical publications of the period.In this article, Zohrab states that the Armenian theatre was going through a hard time, that it faced an important decline after a fast rise, and that unqualified imitations of the works of the European literature were staged. In his articles where he speaks of the plays in Armenian represented after the abolition of the prohibition on the performances in Armenian, the importance of the Armenian spoken on the stage and the impact of these plays on the Armenian community, he makes use of quite positive statements.[32] Although the representation of plays in Armenian was allowed in this period, Abdulhamid's oppressive policies and practises of censorship towards the theatre were maintained. On the other hand, the years 1894-1896 are the years marked by the rise of the pressure against the Ottoman Armenians and where massacres occurred. The governments intervened in the protests that occurred in İstanbul against the incidents in Anatolia, and a great deal of Armenians lost their lives on account of these interventions. In this political environment, it was not quite possible for the Armenian actors to continue their activities as before, and the artists quit İstanbul. In his memoirs entitled *Sahnede Elli Sene (Fifty Years on the Stage)*, Ahmet Fehim writes as follows:

> *Due to the Armenian incidents in 1895 and 1896, the Armenian actors, like the other Armenians, withdrew into their shells and remained fearful and doubtful. Binemeciyan would constantly bring up this subject and complain to me about it. At the end, she said that some day they would head for İzmir.*[33]

The theatre artists of the era stretched away to İzmir, Samsun, Thessaloniki, and the Caucasians and could only get back to the stages in Istanbul in 1897, when the political environment partially subsided. However, the theatrical activities remained limited due to the pressure and censorship that would last until the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908.

As stated by Mete Tunçay "The second Constitutional Monarchy period which could be summarised with the fact that Abdulhamid II had the legislations of the parliament and the senate carried out

[29] Quoted by Kerem Karaboğa, *Geleceğe Perde Açan Gelenek: Geçmişten Günümüze İstanbul Tiyatroları I (Suriçi İstanbul'u, Bakırköy ve Çevresi)* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, January 2011), 32.
[30] And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 33.
[31] Quoted by İzrail, *Tanzimat, İstibdat ve Meşrutiyet*, 139-140.
[32] İzrail, *Tanzimat, İstibdat ve Meşrutiyet*, 138-146.
[33] Ahmet Fehim, *Sahnede Elli Sene, Fehim Efendi'nin Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Tercüman, 1001 Temel Eser, 1977), 84-87.

by reinstating the Constitution of 1876 under the pressure of the army that rioted in Roumelia after thirty years of despotism, the repression of the reactionist riot of 31 March that took place in İstanbul 9 months after these events by the Action Army, the deposition of the sultan by the parliament and the enthronement of Sultan Reşad"[34] led the way for a quite strong cultural, social and political activity. The counterpart of the revival encountered in the cultural area was the boom in playwriting and play representations.

On one hand, the plays written before the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy were meeting again their audience, on the other hand, plays narrating Abdulhamid's period were written. These plays treated of in general Abdulhamid's political policies and their impacts. Furthermore, the obstacles to performing plays in Armenian for the Armenian artists were removed for a while with the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy.

According to the news published in Püzantiyon, a periodical publication in Armenian, the "Armenian artists appeared before the audience at Tepe Theatre in Üsküdar, with the play entitled *Tarpinneru kordzatulı* (The Strike of the Ironworkers) consisting of tirades in Armenian, produced from a poem of "François Coppée", a week after the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, on August 1, 1908. This was the first staged performance after the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy[]. Aşot Madatyan, Yevonk Şahen, Yetvart Çaprasd, Armen Ajderyan, Şahen Hovhannesyan, Eliza Binemeciyan, Maryam Çaprasd and K. Şamdancıyan were on stag[e]."[35] These names performed later plays under the name Azad Tadron (Free Theatre). During this period, Mınakyan continued his duties as the director of the Ottoman Drama Company and performed on stage. In 1911, a literary committee consisting of İbnürrefik Ahmet Nuri, Eksercizade Osep, Celal Esat, Cenap Şahabettin, Hüseyin Suat, Sami Said, Şahabettin Süleyman, Salah Cimcoz, Asım, Müfit Ratip, Nigâr Münir was established. A new theatre company named "New Theatre" was founded under the auspices of this association, and the direction of the theatre was taken in charge by Mınakyan.[36]

İbnürrefik Ahmet Nuri and Şahabettin Süleyman, members of the New Theatre Association, figured among the names who wrote on the 50th year jubilee of Mınakyan who completed 50 years on the stage in 1912. Şahabettin Süleyman's article was published in the magazine "Rübab" and İbnürrefik Ahmet Nuri's article was published in the magazine "Zekâ".

Refik Ahmet Sevengil tackles these two articles under the chapter entitled "A Big Mistake" in the fifth volume of his book entitled *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (History of the Turkish Theatre) and attempts to refute the idea that the Armenians were the founders of the theatre in Ottoman Empire, which is the common point in both articles:

> *In many articles, we indicated as well that our Armenian citizens performing representations in the Turkish language served our theatre however as we stated in our book entitled "Tanzimat Theatre" the honour of being a pioneer belongs not to the Armenians but to the Turkish youth, members of the court band, whose names are unfortunately unknown to us.*[37]

Consequently, Sevengil does not attribute the honour of being a "pioneer" to the Armenians. Furthermore, he qualifies as a "sad blindness" İbnürrefik Ahmet Nuri's following words in his article:

[34] Mete Tunçay, "En Uzun Yıl", *II. Meşrutiyet'in İlk Yılı 23 Temmuz 1908-23 Temmuz 1909*, ed. Tamer Erdoğan (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, January 2018), 9.
[35] Quoted by Nesim Ovadya İzrail, *Düşler Sahnesinde* (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, Istanbul, September, 2022), 17.
[36] Quoted by İzrail, *Tanzimat, İstibdat ve Meşrutiyet*, 295.
[37] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi: Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu* (Istanbul: Devlet Konservatuarı, 1968, 5. c), 52-53.

> *In our country, the theatre was founded by our Armenian fellow citizens, and they should be the ones who should help maintain it! Unless the Ministry of Education and the Municipality of Istanbul hinder it...*" He continues, "*A while after the writing and the publication of these words, the Turkish artists have shown their talent, ability and power on the stage striving by pure love of the country and the art and working without getting any help from the government.*"[38]

Two years after these words written by Sevengil in 1912, Cemil Topuzlu, mayor of Istanbul, which was pointed at by İbnürrefik Ahmet Nuri in his article as the source of his worry about the maintenance of the theatrical activities by the Armenians, became the founder of Darülbedayi. Karaboğa, describes the establishment of Darülbedayi as follows:

Cemil Topuzlu invited André Antoine to Istanbul in order to establish a conservatory and theatre in French style. Antoine arrived in Istanbul on June 28, 1914. He took on the general direction of the school. Student selection exams and teacher selection exams were conducted for the lessons that would occur at the Letafet Building in Şehzadebaşı. A total of 197 candidates, of which 8 were women, applied and 63 candidates were deemed successful. One month after Antoine started the foundation activities of Darülbedayi in Istanbul, the First World War broke out. Antoine, who was French, had to leave Istanbul due to the fact that the Ottoman Empire fought against France. The inauguration of Darülbedayi occurred on October 27, 1914. Furthermore, the Theatre Department performed its first performance on January 13, 1915 on the Tatbikat Stage at the Letafet Building. Darülbedayi was restructured after the replacement of Cemil Topuzlu by İsmet Bey. Thus, Darülbedayi began the rehearsals of the play entitled *Çürük Temel (Rotten Foundation)*, adapted by Hüseyin Suar from the French writer Emile Fahre's work, on August 30, 1915 and the play was staged at Tepebaşı Winter Theatre, on January 20, 1916.[39]

Darülbedayi can be seen as a stop on the way of the modernisation, the nationalisation and the professionalisation of the theatre started with the Ottoman Theatre founded by Vartovyan and continued with the Ottoman Drama Company directed by Mınakyan. However, while owning the experience accumulated and transferred by the Armenian theatre people, these Armenians were gradually excluded from the stage. Darülbedayi was, at the same time, the porter of theatre's political functionality and the educational mission attributed to the theatre with regard to the continuity of the settlement, interiorisation and modernisation process of the regime in the determined direction. This also means a homogenous audience creation practise and it is the indicator of the synchronicity of the state of being an acceptable theatre audience and the state of being acceptable citizens of the Republic.[40]

The fact that only Onnik Binemeciyan was a non-Muslim among the male candidates deemed successful, the absence of Muslim/Turkish women among the female candidates due to the prohibition on the performance of the Muslim women on the stage and the fact that the only Armenian recruited in the teaching staff was Mınakyan at the end of the exam carried out by Darübedayi cannot be considered as a coincidence. This situation also shows the transition from a theatre model where Ottomanism became prominent as one of the most important steps of the project of Turkification of the theatre in progress for long years, to a turkist, nationalist theatre form. This change on the stage takes shape in parallel with the political atmosphere of the era.

Until 1912, the idea of Ottomanism remained predominant, but this idea was abandoned by the Committee of Union and Progress on account of the great losses along with the Balkan Wars. "*The*

[38] Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, 52-53.
[39] Karaboğa, *Geleceğe Perde Açan Gelenek*, 60-67.
[40] Nilgün Firidinoğlu, "*Tanzimat'tan Erken Cumhuriyet'e Tiyatro ve Eğitim İlişkisi: Mektep Temsilleri (1896-1936)*" (PhD diss., Istanbul University, 2015), 80-81, vi.

*abandonment of the Ottomanism policy meant the favouritism towards the Muslims and especially towards the Turks among them and the decision of discharging the non-Muslims from the country with several methods.*"[41] And as the counterpart of this policy, massacres, exiles that began with the arrestation of the Armenian intellectuals in April 1915, that erased the presence of the Armenian community in Anatolia and that was qualified by the Armenian community as *Catastrophe*, took place.

Güllü emphasises that the condition to perform for the Armenians was the obligation of compromising with the political power under this political tension. He states that both Vartovyan and Mınakyan could maintain their companies while remaining in consensus with the political power. Güllü says that the Armenian artists who could not establish a relationship similar to the one Mınakyan had with the political power had either quit the stages or could continue their theatrical life in other places, not being able to keep up with the political developments that took place in the Ottoman Empire and abandoning the Ottoman territory.[42]

Between 1914-1918 where the First World War was ongoing, the theatre performances continued to be carried out in invaded Istanbul, although their number decreased dramatically. The project of turkification of the theatre was pursued with the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye after the termination of the First World War.[43]

In a short while after the proclamation of the Republic and the foundation of the Republican People's Party, the Prime Minister İsmet İnönü uttered the following words during the speech he gave in 1925 at the General Assembly of the Turkish Hearths:

> *Our duty is to turkify the people living in the Turkish country no matter what. We will cut off the elements opposing the Turks and the Turkism. The qualities we will look for in people who would serve the country are, in the first place, that these people be Turks and Turkists.*[44]

İnönü's words remind of Benedict Anderson's famous book about the construction of the nation and the national identity, entitled *Imagined Communities:Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. As stated in this book by Anderson, "*[the nation] is an imagined political community-and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign*"[45] and some basic policies carried out in the construction of this imagined community are in question: "*This is why so often in the 'nation-building' policies of the new states one sees both a genuine, popular nationalist enthusiasm and a systematic, even Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations, and so forth.*"[46] The generalisation project of the nationalist ideology mentioned by Anderson is encountered in various ways in Türkiye during the period that transitioned from the empire to the nation-state.

One of the most important instruments of this effort carried out was the theatre. Specifically, the projections of the history theses and language theories that marked the 1930s and that were alleged to create the Turkish national identity are seen in the theatre as well.

[41] Barış Ünlü, Türklük Sözleşmesi (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2018), 121.

[42] Fırat Güllü, "Geç Osmanlı ve Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Ermenilerin Türkçe Tiyatro Faaliyetlerinden Tasfiyesi" in *Yok Edilen Medeniyet: Geç Osmanlı ve Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemlerinde Gayrimüslim Varlığı*, ed. Ararat Şekeryan and Nvart Taşçı (Istanbul: Hrant Dink Vakfı Yayınları, November 2017), 294-298.

[43] The information written so far is based on the first chapter of the dissertation titled "*1895-1915 Arası Ermenice Yazılmış Oyunlar Üzerine Bir İnceleme: Tılgadintsi, Levon Şant, Zabel Asadur'un Oyunları*", see Reha Keskin "*1895-1915 Arası Ermenice Yazılmış Oyunlar Üzerine Bir İnceleme: Tılgadintsi, Levon Şant, Zabel Asadur'un Oyunları*" (PhD diss., Istanbul University, 2024), s. 20-38.

[44] Quoted by Füsun Üstel, *İmparatorluktan Ulus Devlete Türk Milliyetçiliği: Türk Ocakları (1912-1931)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 173.

[45] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

[46] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 129.

> *The historical studies started under the guidance of Mustafa Kemal produced some results, and some of these were written in the form of notes and printed. However, the breakthrough at the corporate level took place along with the establishment of the Turkish Historical Committee within the Turkish Hearths (Türk Ocağı Türk Tarih Heyeti) affiliated to the hearths during the sixth general assembly of the Turkish Hearths, a few months before they were shut down. [...] A year after the shutdown and the melting of the Turkish Hearths in the Republican People's Party in June 1930, the Association for the Study of Turkish History was founded by the founders of the Turkish Historical Committee again in the month of April. The aim of the Association for the Study of Turkish History was to determine a different line compared to the Ottoman History Association and to rewrite Turkish history.*[47]

This association, which would be renamed as the Turkish Historical Society in 1935, wrote a book entitled *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları* (The Outlines of Turkish History). The aim of this book, where Turkish history was rewritten, is to create a national identity in the students based on the Turkish History Thesis, according to which the Ottoman era was nearly ignored and the Turks had their origines in Central Asia.[48]

The spread of the Turkish History Thesis until the most remote areas of Anatolia and its popularisation were entrusted to People's Houses that replaced the Turkish Hearths that were shut down.

In her book entitled *Resmi İdeoloji Sahnede: Kemalist İdeolojinin İnşasında Halkevleri Dönemi Tiyatro Oyunlarının Etkisi*[49] (The Official Ideology on the Stage: The Effect of the Theatre Plays on the Construction of Kemalist Ideology at the Era of People's Houses), where she examines the People's Houses in the construction of Kemalist ideology and the plays written during the era of the People's Houses, Esra Dicle explains the purpose of the People's Houses as follows with reference to Kemal Karpat:

> *The People's Houses were established as an education organisation to have the public adopt the reforms. Divers organisations/institutions established in order to realise political and ideological education of the people in line with Atatürk's reforms aimed to spread the nationalism supported by the populism to the masses as an ideology. Besides their function as centres allowing the intellectuals to study and learn about the popular culture, the People's Houses would work as mass organisations enabling the spread of the populist and nationalist ideology of the Kemalist staff to Anatolia.*[50]

Again, as related by Esra Dicle, 14 People's Houses were inaugurated in 14 provinces on February 19, 1932. The number of the People's Houses having several branches from the Language-History-Literature Branch to the Sports Branch, from the Social Assistance Branch to the Museums and Expositions Branch rose to 55 in 1933, to 379 in 1940, to 438 in 1945, and to 478 in 1950. From 1932 until 1940, 23.750 conferences, 9.050 concerts, 7.850 film screenings, 970 expositions and 12.350 theatre performances were held in People's Houses.[51]

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[47] Büşra Ersanlı, *İktidar ve Tarih: Türkiye'de "Resmi Tarih" Tezinin Oluşumu (1929-1937)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015), 111-112.
[48] Ersanlı, *İktidar ve Tarih*, 119-138.
[49] Esra Dicle's book comprises the narratological analysis of the plays written during this period from the school presentations to the 10th year anniversary celebrations, from the plays about Turkish Historical Thesis to the plays about village life and includes detailed analyses about the plays written in the mentioned period and their effects. Therefore, many information and evaluations, from the names of the plays to the subjects of the plays that are not included in this article can be found in this book.
[50] Quoted by Esra Dicle Başbuğ, *Resmi İdeoloji Sahnede: Kemalist İdeolojinin İnşasında Halkevleri Dönemi Tiyatro Oyunlarının Etkisi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013), 42.
[51] Quoted by Başbuğ, *Resmi İdeoloji Sahnede*, 43-44.

Metin And enumerates the prominent topics of the plays of the period and the effects of the theatre performances of the People's Houses as follows:

> *The Republican People's Party's six main principles, namely, Republicanism-Laicism-Etatism-Populism-Nationalism-Revolutionism- were adopted as the second article of the Constitution in 1937 again during the Single Party period. Each of these principles has found application areas both in the theatre works and in diverse aspects of the theatre. The Turkish nation's virtues, ideals, and values have been indicated with quotations drawn from ancient history. The protection and the praise of the revolutions had been carried out through various plays. [...] Plays that treated the conflict between internal and external enemies but specifically the internal enemies, the remainders of the Ottoman Empire and the idealist generation had been written. [...] Indeed, these plays and the presentations of the People's Houses contributed greatly to the emergence of a new soul.*[52]

In the field of education, which was one of the crucial pillars of the project of raising nationalist citizens, the theatre would function as a propaganda instrument by way of "school stage plays". In her doctoral thesis entitled "The Relationship between the Theatre and Education from Tanzimat to Early Republican Era: School Stage Plays (1896-1936)" Nilgün Firidinoğlu describes in detail with examples how the "school stage plays" of which the first examples were carried out at the end of the 19th century were used by the Single Party government as a propaganda instrument, how the new individual of the new regime was rehearsed on the stage through these performances, and how the new construction of the identity was presented through the performances during the classes such as Turkish, history, and geography.[53]

The pedagogue İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, one of the first names coming to mind concerning the school stage plays, prepared in 1915 a regulation entitled "Mektep Temsillerinin Usul-ü Tedrisi"(The Teaching Method of the School Stage Plays). Before this first legal regulation, he wrote about the school stage plays, Baltacıoğlu published in 1913 his article entitled "Mekteplerde Tarihi Temsiller ve Terbiye" (Historical Performances and Education in Schools), where he discusses the benefits of the theatrical activities in the first volume, 8th edition of the magazine "Talebe Defteri" (Student's Notebook), without his signature.[54] In this article, stating that the students of the Greeks of Türkiye and Armenian schools benefited from the advantages of the ongoing theatrical activities, he accentuates that the absence of such activities in the schools frequented by Muslim Ottoman students was a deficiency.[55]

In the chapter on the school theatre in his work entitled *Toplu Tedris* (Collective Teaching), published in 1938, Baltacıoğlu considers the school theatre as serving the goal of establishing a proper/national theatre. And he expresses this idea by criticising Mınakyan's Company and stating that the presence of the Armenian actors on the stage was an obstacle to the national theatre and a "disaster" for the national theatre:

[52] Metin And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e Türk Tiyatro Tarihi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), 156.
[53] Firidinoğlu, "Tanzimat'tan Erken Cumhuriyet'e".
[54] Firidinoğlu, "Tanzimat'tan Erken Cumhuriyet'e", 159.
[55] Quoted by Firidinoğlu, Firidinoğlu, "Tanzimat'tan Erken Cumhuriyet'e", 160.

> *Most of the children have seen only two kinds of theatre until they start school. One is melodrama and the other is improvisational theatre. In our country, the melodrama was generalised by the actors of the Manakyan's Company. This tradition has hindered the rise of the real theatre culture in Türkiye [...] The melodrama spoils the sense of truth, the sense of reality. You should tell that it was disastrous that our taste was beset by the melodrama theatre. You should tell that it is disastrous that our stages are invaded by the melodrama and the Armenian actors who cannot speak Turkish well.*[56]

Twenty three years went by since the *Catastrophe* the Armenians went through by 1938 when Baltacıoğlu uttered these words and the effects of the *Catastrophe* still continued. The Deportation Law took effect on May 27, 1915, and the Armenians were exiled from their homelands. According to the ordinance enacted on June 10, 1915, "The right of usage of all buildings and goods remaining from the Armenians and related to the education such as schools and monasteries was confered to the Educational Administration []."[57] Thus, one tried to erase the values created by the Armenians in Anatolia so far in the cultural area and the ownership of the spaces where these values were created was transferred to the Muslims/Turks. Furthermore, the "Mekatib-i Hususiye Talimatnamesi" (Regulation on the Private Schools) was carried into effect on September 2, 1915. Sina Akşin Somel writes as follows on the articles of this regulation published in Takvim-i Vekayi (Ottoman Official Gazette) and its effects:

> *The legal framework brought by the regulation was such as to pave the way for reducing the number of community schools to the level of the minority schools by marginalising them. [...] According to the third article, the schools opened by the Ottoman communities could only be situated in the neighbourhoods of the villages inhabited by the population belonging to the community in question. Besides, the size and the structure of these schools needed to be proportional to the need and they needed to be built at such a distance so as to not be heard by the other schools and the community sanctuaries because of the noise they would make . Except the kindergartens, it was forbidden to open mixed boarding schools (Article 5). According to the regulation, the classes of Turkish language, Ottoman history and geography would be taught mandatorily in Turkish in the community schools providing education in another language than the official language (Article 6). Article 8 forbade the recruitment of the foreign director, directress or teacher unless an official permit was obtained from the Ministry of Education in the schools that would be opened by the Ottoman non-Muslims; Article 10 subjected the community schools to the control and supervision of the highest rank civil officers and the education directors and inspectors as well as the health inspector in the localities where they were situated. Furthermore, the community elementary schools could be inspected by local council members in accordance with the Law on Primary Education. [...]*[58]

Taking a look at the ever-lengthening articles of the regulation, it can be seen that the Armenian schools out of İstanbul could not maintain their presence any longer and that the schools faced heavy control and pressure. Somel indicates that this pressure loosened on account of the political atmosphere that emerged during the period of Armistice and a relief occurred in the schools. However, the violence and the pressure rose again during the War of Independence and the Armenian community was stuck in Istanbul by 1922. With the treaty of Lausanne, the Armenians and the other non-Muslim communities were officially reduced to the minority status and that the education rights of these

[56] Quoted by Firidinoğlu, Firidinoğlu, "Tanzimat'tan Erken Cumhuriyet'e", 194.
[57] Taner Akçam, Ümit Kurt, *Kanunların Ruhu: Emval-i Metruke Kanunlarında Soykırımın İzini Sürmek* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 35-36, https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=G5uaDwAAQBAJ.
[58] Selçuk Akşin Somel, "Ermeni Eğitim Kurumları, Siyasallaşma ve Osmanlı Yönetimi, 1878-1923" in *1915 Siyaset, Tehcir, Soykırım*, ed. Fikret Adanır and Oktay Özel (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2015), 80-81.

communities remained limited to the places where their population was dense. He emphasises that for this reason, the Armenian schools could from that time on provide education only in İstanbul.[59]

Not only their artistic activities in schools were interrupted on account of the political developments that took place but the Armenian artists had to separate from the big stages and large spectator masses as well in the following years. During the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic, especially after the foundation of Darülbedayi and when the Republican period was reached with the introduction of the Muslim male actors in the theatre, the Turkish stage was nearly entirely consisting of Muslim male actors and a limited number of Armenian actresses. It is said that after the Darülbedayi players took to the stage in İzmir on July 16, 1923, Atatürk, who watched the performance, received the artists before him[60] and that he emphasised that "*the Turkish theatre cannot improve as long as the Turkish women do not take to the stage*"[61] This event that was interpreted as the lifting of the obstacles that prevented Turkish women from taking to the stage was also going to mean the abandonment of the stage by the Armenian actresses and their replacement by the Muslim/Turkish actresses.[62] And interprets the lifting of the obstacles preventing the Turkish women from taking to the stage with these words of Atatürk as the "*resolution of one of the crucial problems of the Turkish theatre []*"[63].

Essentially, the issue here is more the presence of the Armenian women on the stage with their "poor Turkish" as an issue frequently mentioned rather than the absence of the Turkish women on the stage. Having rather a symbolic function during and after the processes of the nation-state, the women fulfilled their duties within the limits of the house and the family. The public life and the political processes were tried to be shaped among the community of men and by men. The inclusion of women into the public sphere occurred via a utility relation. Furthermore, this utility was established on the fulfilment of the nation's interests rather than the women's interests. Although gender equality was accentuated in the decisions and the reports issued with regard to the theatrical activities carried out specifically by the People's Houses, one can see play scripts and role distributions where gender-based discrimination was reproduced by examining the plays staged in this period.[64] Indicating that there were two approaches concerning the relationship of the Muslim/Turkish theatre players with the Armenian artists after the foundation of the Republic, İzrail explains this situation as follows:

> *[…] One can say that there are two tendencies among the Turkish theatre artists. On one hand, a group gathering around Darülbedayi and the Municipal Theatre, following a more contemporary theatre conception and on the other hand, another group performing plays in a more traditional manner and presenting performances to the public through private theatres. […] It can be said that the people performing theatre activities in a traditional way such as Naşit Bey, Cevdet Bey, Şevki Bey, Dümbüllü İsmail had tighter relationships and worked more often with the Armenian theatre artists. Certainly, this concise finding requires a more detailed explanation, comment and research.*[65]

[59] Somel, "Ermeni Eğitim Kurumları", 83.
[60] And, *Atatürk ve Tiyatro*, 28.
[61] And, *Atatürk ve Tiyatro*, 31.
[62] It is known that the Muslim/Turkish women struggled with various prohibitions and obstacles in the field of theatre as well as in many other areas in order to be present and the fact that the Muslim/Turkish women could get on the stage points certainly to an important acquisition for women. However, it is often accentuated that the fact that the Muslim/Turkish women could perform on the stage was considered as a step regarding the turkification of the theatre and it was wished for them to replace the Armenian actresses on the stage and not to share the stage with them.
[63] And, *Atatürk ve Tiyatro*, 31.
[64] Firidinoğlu "Tanzimat'tan Erken Cumhuriyet'e ", 203.
[65] Nesim Ovadya İzrail, *Osmanlı ve Türk Tiyatrosunda Şahinyanlar* (Istanbul: bgst Yayınları, August 2018) 106.

As stated by İzrail, this finding requires more exhaustive research. However, considering that the newly founded state's official discourse that was tried to be spread through the Darülbedayi and Municipal Theatres and taking into consideration the aspect of this official discourse putting forward the Turkishness and the nationalism, it can be formulated an idea on why the names around the Darülbedayi and the Municipal Theatres were distant in relation to the Armenian theatre artists and why Armenian artists were excluded from the central organisations of the official ideology.

Lerna Ekmekçioğlu asks the question "*On one hand, excluded from the Turkishness but on the other hand invited to the Turkishness although superficially, how did the Armenians react to this seemingly confusing contradiction from the actual perspective?*"[66] and answers the question as follows:

> *What we see when we look at the Armenian press and the statements and the declarations of the Armenian intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s is that they did not detect such a contradiction. They remained generally silent against the practises that treated the minorities as non-Turks or foreigners, that even deprived them of certain fundamental civil rights; they "contented themselves" with whatever rights they had or they preferred to do so. In any case, they were left with no other choice. [...] In the country where the prerequisite of citizenship was the unconditional obedience to the Republic and therefore to the Kemalism, the "remaining" Armenians competed, so to speak, with each other to show to what extent they were useful to the country and thankful to the nation.*[67]

Throughout this period mentioned by Ekmekçioğlu, the general attitude of the Armenians of Türkiye in the social sphere and the attitude of the Armenian actors in the field of theatre show parallelism. The Armenians stuck in İstanbul carried out limited theatrical activities and performed their plays in Turkish in the meantime. However, by the year 1945, along with the developments in the world and in Türkiye's politics, the effects of the balance of powers occurred after the termination of the Second World War, the position of Türkiye having a critical importance as a result of the bipolar system and the political preference of Türkiye in favour of the USA and the Western Block began to be noticed.

This period of rapprochement in the external politics was the precursor of the important transformations "within" the country as well. This process where the direction of the politics began to partially change evolved with the National Development Party founded in 1945 and gained another acceleration with the foundation of the Democrat Party in 1946 and the realisation of the multi-party elections.[68] By 1950, a new period began with the Democrat Party in power.

Furthermore, 1945 is an important date for the theatre in Armenian. This year became prominent as a date marked by the removal of the "Unofficial Prohibition on the Armenian".

The Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu included for the first time the representatives of the Armenian press in the press list for the press conference that he would hold on September 5, 1945. The owners and the editors-in-chief of the newspapers Jamanak and Marmara published in Armenian attended this conference. The Prime Minister made statements on democratisation and minority rights during the conference. In this press conference, Suren Şamlıyan, owner and editor-in-chief of the newspaper Marmara, shared the hardships of the Armenian community and, having said that cultural activities could be carried out in Greek or Hebrew languages but not in the Armenian language, he asked the

[66] Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, "Kalanlar: Savaş Sonrasında ve Tek Parti Döneminde İstanbul Ermeni Cemaati", in *1915 Siyaset, Tehcir, Soykırım*, ed. Fikret Adanır and Oktay Özel (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2015), 550.
[67] Ekmekçioğlu, "Kalanlar", 550-551.
[68] Baskın Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006), 492-493.

reason for this hinderance to the Armenian. The Prime Minister Saraçoğlu said that he heard about it the first time and that there was no obstacle to the artistic activities.[69]

How can an unwritten practise be this effective? Ünlü says "*The Turkishness Contract functions essentially with unwritten rules, structures of the institutions, actual practises, daily habits, strategies of non acquisition of information and non affectivity and this functioning is sometimes not nice at all*"[70].

Commenting together Ekmekçioğlu's words and Ünlü's statements, it can be said that the survivors of the Armenian community acted with the inherent knowledge of the Turkishness Contract in order to survive, that they observed the unwritten rules of the Turkishness Contract even though there was not any prohibition and did not carry out any activity which would breach it, in the environment of pressure and violence throughout the years. Besides, taking into consideration the fact that the disturbance about the speaking of languages other than Turkish or the speaking of Turkish in an incorrect way that began to become evident at the end of the Ottoman Empire was carried to the highest point under the Single Party being perpetuated by the campaigns "Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!" (Citizen, Speak Turkish!), at the very time when the language question was discussed, knowing to what extent it was possible and safe for the Turkish Republic citizens whose mother tongue was not Turkish to carry out activities in their mother tongue is a topic which should not be ignored.

Upon the removal of the prohibition on the Armenians in 1945, the Armenian artists who withdrew in themselves for long years restarted the theatrical activities. Boğos Çalgıcıoğlu says that these artists who could not find a place for themselves in Darülbedayi carried out activities in amateur or semi-amateur theatres such as Yeridasarts Taderakhump (Young People Theatre Troupe), Vega Theatre Troupe, Stüdyo Theatre Troupe.[71]

Founded in 1939, under the guidance of Aşod Madatyan, Stüdyo Theatre became the first theatre company to perform in Armenian during the Republican Period with Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel's play entitled *Canavar* (Monster) and translated in Armenian by Madatyan under the name *Kazan* that was performed on February 25, 1946 at Ses Theatre by a cast of actors consisting of Lüsi Tokatlı, Zaruhi Değirmenciyan, Kevork Kabaracıyan and Haygaz Vosgeriçyan.[72] The company continued to perform plays in Armenian due to the interest created by this first play in Armenian. The repertory of the company that continued its activities until 1950 when Aşot Madatyan went to Beirut included mainly the plays written by well-known Armenian writers such as Şirvanzade, Hagop Baronyan, Yervant Odyan, Levon Şant.[73] And Yeridasarts Taderakhump, players such as Apraham Hıdışyan, Torkom Sırabyon which were members of the Stüdyo Theatre came from and carried some common points with Stüdyo Theatre with regard to the repertory of plays, is one of the other important theatre companies of the period.

Yeridasarts Taderakhump was established by the theatre lovers who would gather before at Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association). After Y.M.C.A. was shut, the theatre lovers from this association founded in 1930 Yeridasarts Taderakhump. The company that began to perform plays also in Armenian upon the removal of the prohibition on the theatre performance in Armenian, would stage plays chosen from a large repertory from the plays of the Western writers, which were precursors to the prominent playwrights of the Armenian community such as Goldoni, Shakespeare, Levon Şant, Yervant Odyan. Until the theatre season 1956-1957, the company performed plays at various theatres in various districts of İstanbul from Beyoğlu Ses Theatre to Pangaltı İnci Theatre. However, it is written that the company

[69] Quoted by İzrail, *Osmanlı ve Türkiye Tiyatrosunda Şahinyanlar*, 133-134.
[70] Ünlü, *Türklük Sözleşmesi*, 169.
[71] Boğos Çalgıcıoğlu, "İstanbul'da Ermenice Tiyatro 1923-1946 Arası Gayriresmi Olarak Yasaktı", interview by Vartan Estukyan, *Agos*, August 2, 2019, https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/22751/istanbulda-ermenice-tiyatro-1923-1946-arasi-gayriresm-olarak-yasakti .
[72] Quoted by İzrail, *Osmanlı ve Türkiye Tiyatrosunda Şahinyanlar*, 140.
[73] Quoted by İzrail, *Osmanlı ve Türkiye Tiyatrosunda Şahinyanlar*., 139-142.

fell apart due both to the financial difficulties and the decreasing number of spectators.[74] Another Armenian theatre company that staged their plays at Beyoğlu Ses Theatre was Arpi Theatre.

Founded in 1947, Arpi Theatre put an end to its activities in 1949 after two years of activities. Furthermore, Vega Theatre gathered to perform musicals under the leadership of Arşam Çizmeciyan who quit Arpi Theatre was founded in 1949. Vega Theatre became the centre of interest with the musicals of Dikran Çuhacıyan, Leblebici Horhor Ağa and Köse Kahya; however, the company fell apart due to the financial difficulties it went through, not being able to carry out activities for a long time.[75] The Istanbul Armenian Drama Theatre was one of the companies that performed plays in this period. The group that could perform plays for three years fell apart in 1954.[76]

The artistic ambiance that livened up for Armenian theatre artists upon the removal of the prohibition on the Armenian, stagnated in 1955. Although some theatre representations were performed on the occasion of commemoration ceremonies and anniversaries by and after years 1955-1956, there were no other activities besides the representations performed by the school alumni associations. It is known that the İstanbul Pogrom of September 6-7 that targeted especially the Greeks of Türkiye (Rums) but impacted as well non-Muslim communities of Türkiye had a considerable impact on this. In consequence of the acts of violence organised step by step, during the night from September 6 to September 7, the non-Muslim communities of Türkiye, the Greeks of Türkiye being in the first place, found themselves one more time worrying greatly about their existence and their future in the country. The alumni associations' stages became the centre of the efforts of Armenian theatre artists who withdrew into themselves in this unsecure environment to continue their theatrical activities.

The year 1946, when the prohibition on theatre performance in Armenian was lifted and the Law on Associations was enacted, was the same year when Pangaltı High School Alumni Association (PLYD)[77] was founded. PLYD was established by the rallying of a group of young students from Pangaltı Mekhitarist High School, among whom were Armenian intellectuals whose names would be often mentioned in the years to come, such as Zareh Yaldızcıyan (Zahrad), Ara Garmiryan, Garabet Ercan, Togo Acemoğlu and Arto Haçaduryan. Founded essentially to gather the graduates of this school, the association produced a much greater effect on the Armenian community. The association began to perform activities both in the field of literature and in the field of theatre from 1946, when it was founded. Thus PYDL has become both the place where *Kulis*[78], a periodical publication for theatre that would continue from 1946 until 1996, was issued under the guidance of Hagop Ayvaz and the association where the first theatrical activities began.[79] On the stage of the association that raised its curtains with the Armenian play entitled *Araçarg (Proposal)* and directed by Berç Fazılyan in the year of its foundation, plays both in Armenian and in Turkish were performed almost without interruption. While the pioneer names of the Armenian Theatre of İstanbul such as Misak Toros, Arto Berberyan, and Hermon Variş performed plays on the stage of this association from 1940's, the names who are still active on the stage such as Aram Gostanyan, Anahit Variş, Nişan Şirinyan, Murat Sarıçoban, and Burak Tokuç presented plays directed by them on its stage. The association constitutes an important place not only for the Armenian theatre but also for the Turkish theatre. Genç Oyuncular (The Young Players), among whom

[74] Quoted by İzrail,*Osmanlı ve Türkiye Tiyatrosunda Şahinyanlar*, 135-138.
[75] Quoted by İzrail, *Osmanlı ve Türkiye Tiyatrosunda Şahinyanlar*, 142-143.
[76] İzrail, *Osmanlı ve Türkiye Tiyatrosunda Şahinyanlar*, 144.
[77] Which will be mentioned from now on as PLYD.
[78] Emerged from Hagop Ayvaz's idea of asking himself the question "Why wouln't we have a theatre publication and why wouldn't we introduce our plays to the Armenians living abroad?", the Magazine Kulis related the memory of the theatre in its pages from 1946 to 1996. Many details about the history related throughout this text, many advertisements and criticisms about the mentioned theatre companies and plays figure in the pages of this magazine.
[79] "Pangalti Lisesi'nden Yetişenler Derneği: Dernekler", Türkiye Ermenileri Patrikliği, accessed June 19, 2023, http://www.turkiyeermenileripatrikligi.org/site/pangalti-lisesinden-yetisenler-dernegi-dernekler/.

were Genco Erkal, Mehmet Akan, Atilla Alpöge, and Ergun Köknar, performed their first rehearsals on the stage of this association.[80]

In the interview with Luiz Bakar, the first female president of the association, realised in 2014 by Agos upon the news that PLYD's building would be torn down, Bakar mentions that she had a part in William Saroyan's play entitled *My Heart's in the Highlands* directed by Harutyun Haçaduryan, one of the founders of the association, in 1954 and states that the artistic activities, the theatre being in the first place, organised by the Cultural Commission of the association consisting of Rober Haddeciyan, Zare Hrahuni, Zahrad, İkna Sarıaslan and Onnik Fıçıcıyan were received with interest for long years, that the association and its stage were shut down with the military intervention of September 12, 1980 but that the association continued from where it left after a while and that it had been the centre of the cultural activities for the Armenian community of Istanbul since the day it was founded.[81]

After PLYD, alumni associations such as Getronagan, Esayan, Aramyan, Karagözyan, Bezciyan, Surp Haç Tıbrevank, Feriköy, Dadyan, Tarkmançats, and Sahakyan were founded.

The Esayan High School Alumni Association is also one of the associations that started the theatrical activities from its foundation, just like PLYD. To that end, a representation committee was established within the association and Vahram Balıkcıyan was designated as the president of the committee. Berc Erziyan, Stepan Gamag, Armenuhi Zorayan, Şake Odabaşyan were also part of the committee. The committee had talks with Hagop Ayvaz. At the end of these talks, the rehearsals of İ. Galip Arcan's adapted play entitled *Lütfen Kesmeyiniz* (Please Do Not Interrupt) began in 1960 under the direction of Hagop Ayvaz and with the cast of actors consisting of Zeynep Lusinyan, Onnik Garavaryan and Sona Dedeyan.[82] Ayvaz relates both the theatrical activities started at the Esayan High School Alumni Association and the foundation of the theatre company named *Pokr Taderahump*, which resulted from these activities and emphasises its importance for the Armenian Theatre.[83]

Çalgıcıoğlu utters the following words about the theatrical activities carried out in the associations in the 1960s.

> *In this period, mostly the plays of "Krem" Simon and İ. Galip Arcan were staged. In the following years, with the increasing number of the associations' theatre companies, Shakespeare's classical plays such as 'Othello' and 'Hamlet' began to be staged with their translation into Armenian by Torkim Sırabyan. Besides this, the classics such as 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream" as well as the plays written by Rober Haddeciyan and Arto Berberyan were staged at Pangaltı Association. In this period coinciding with the end of the 1960s when I started my theatre carrier, 'Othello' and the play entitled 'Paralı Artin Ağa' adapted by Ara Gürden from Yervant Odyan's play entitled 'Çarşılı Artin Ağa' were performed alternately at the Getronagan Association. In fact, the Armenian audience saw Brecht's 'Man Equals Man' at the Getronagan Association for the first time in Armenian under the direction of Kevork Kabaracıyan.*[84]

Metin And describes the 1960s, which were dynamic years with regard to the theatre history as the most brilliant period of the theatre in Türkiye and indicates that the best plays with regard both to quality and to quantity were written in this period. Metin And emphasises at the same time the activities

[80] "Dans-Tiyatro-Müzik", P.L.Y.D, accessed June 19, 2023, https://www.plyd1946.com/dans-tiyatro-muzik.

[81] Baruyr Kuyumciyan "Zamanın Dönüştüren Rüzgarları PLYD'nin Kapısına Dayandı", *Agos*, June 6, 2014 https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/7276/zamanin-donusturen-ruzgrlari-plydnin-kapisina-dayandi.

[82] Quoted by İzrail, *Osmanlı ve Türkiye Tiyatrosunda Şahinyanlar*, 148.

[83] For further information, see Hagop Ayvaz, "I Doupt if They can Find Another Person as Crazy as Me", *Coulisse: Hagop Ayvaz, A Chronicler of Theatre*, interview by Berç Noradukyan, Boğos Çalgıcıoğlu (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, December 2020), 49-50.

[84] Çalgıcıoğlu, interview.

of the private theatres that carried out activities in this period.[85] He writes that numerous private theatres were founded in İstanbul and in Ankara from the 1960s. He emphasises that İstanbul Municipal Theatre lived as well through the period called "Golden Age" between 1959 and 1966.[86] Furthermore, he adds that the State Theatre continued to develop and spread to various Anatolian cities after Ankara and İstanbul.[87]

Karaboğa also defines the progress of the theatre started at the end of the 1950s and continued increasing throughout the 1960s as a "youth movement" and expresses the characteristical features of the period as follows:

> *The youth movement that took place in the theatre set off to replace the old with the new by trying the alternatives rather than to unite with the existing structure in order to bring new blood to the theatre, especially in its first years. As an extension of this move, the plays of the important contemporary writers such as Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett and later Bertolt Brecht as well as the plays of the new local playwrights such as Güngör Dilmen, Turgut Özakman and Sermet Çağan were staged for the first time by amateur companies*.[88]

In the background of this change occurring in the cultural, artistic field on the general level and in the theatre on the specific level, were the political developments of the 1960s. With the 1960s, it can be seen that it entered a period of detente (relaxation) concerning the Cold War. In this process where more moderate relations were developed with the USSR, important ruptures occurred in the internal politics. Due to the structure of the Constitution of 1961 paving the way for the ideological diversification and allowing the securing of the rights, the freedoms and the self-generating conditions of the different opinions, it is possible to say that a more lively, reformist environment developed in sociopolitical terms.

This lively and reformist environment affected not only the companies performing Turkish theatre but also the environment of the Armenian actors who were stuck in the associations. The theatre companies of the alumni associations tended towards a more innovative and original theatre conception compared to the professional theatres from the choice of the plays to the staging. In addition, it is possible to associate the fact that the theatre company named *Pokr Taderahump*, founded by Hagop Ayvaz, could quit the association stages and perform plays at The Municipal Theatre of İstanbul with the opposing, libertarian environment rising in the 1960s. However, this field that just opened would not last long and closed one more time because of the political developments in 1970s. Although a serious outlook emerged in terms of the economic conditions in the process leading to September 12, the pressure against all kinds of struggle for rights, the violence of the dominant deepened and the artistic environment got its share of these developments directly, the alumni associations of the Armenian schools continued their theatrical activities until the military intervention that would take place on September 12, 1980 due to their great efforts. In her book, which is one of the more comprehensive works about the activities carried out by the amateur companies emerged by means of the alumni associations, entitled *İster Ağla İster Gül: Sahne Tozlu Anıları* (Either Laugh or Cry: Dusty Stage Memories), Bercuhi Berberyan relates the activities carried out in association theatres from the 1970s to the 2000s, with their various aspects, from the choice of the plays to the acting, from the stage design to the audience profile. In the play repertory of the amateur theatre companies performing plays on the stages of the Armenian schools in various districts of İstanbul, Getronagan,

[85] And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e* , 160.
[86] And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e*, 189-190.
[87] And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e*, 188.
[88] Kerem Karaboğa, "Absürd'den Geleneksel'e Genç Oyuncular Deneyimi: Tavtati Kütüpati ve Vatandaş Oyunu", *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 13 (2002): N.p. https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/118302.

Karagözyan, PLYD being in the first place, figured well-known names of the Armenian dramatic literature such as Levon Şant, Yervant Odyan, Rober Haddeciyan, important names of the dramatic literature of the world such as Shakespeare, Chekhov, Brecht, Fernando Arrabal and contemporary names from the world literature such as Alan Seymour, Louis Fline, Agatha Christie. Besides, the works of the important playwrights of the theatre in Turkish such as Necati Cumalı and Haldun Taner were also staged.[89]

Commenting as well about the audience profile, Bercuhi Berberyan states that the ideal day for the audience at the association theatres was Friday and that both stages were full even when plays were performed in the same neighbourhood and at the close associations in the 1970s.[90] However, she emphasises that the spectators did not like watching "serious" plays. She even writes that the play entitled *Yılın Tek Günü* (One Day in a Year), which was a dramatic play about the Anzacs, written by Alan Seymour and rewarded "best play of the year" the year in which it was performed, was performed, one night, for only seven spectators.[91]

Furthermore, Çalgıcıoğlu utters the following words about the inclinations of the audience, the reflection of the political atmosphere of this period and the change that occurred:

> *From the 1970s, after the TV came into our lives, the interest shown towards the plays on the association stages gradually decreased and association players both downsized their teams and began to prefer entertaining vaudevilles, farces that would distract the audience from their daily stress. This fact hindered the choice of the plays approved in the international art world and the usage of original texts. In the 1980s, upon the shutdown of the associations, the theatrical activities totally stopped and the teams fell apart. […] In a few years, the associations reopened and the teams rolled up their sleeves for new plays. In this new period, plays that avoided meddling as much as possible were chosen.*[92]

The military coup of September 12, 1980, which had diverse effects on the society and the institutions, brought along restrictions and prohibitions against organisations such as political parties, unions and associations and heavy censorship on the visual and written media, broadcasting activities and artistic field. In this oppressive environment, the activities of the alumni associations of the Armenian schools halted until the mid-1980s.

Arto Berberyan wrote a play in 1986 for the celebrations of the 40th foundation anniversary of Pangaltı High School (Mekhitarist) Alumni Association. Since the play was presented in a period where the September 12 prohibitions were just loosened, the players were worried about the fact that they could face a hindering due to the fact that some parts of the play were in Armenain. Bercuhi Berberyan expresses this worry they went through as follows:

> *I can never forget how much we were worried about the possibility that the fact that some plays were performed in Armenian would create an additional issue since it was a period where the September 12 prohibitions on association activities etc. were just lifted and how much we were exhausted until we obtained the performing permit.*[93]

Having restarted the theatrical activities within the associations from the second half of the 1980s with all the fears and worries, the actors staged plays such as Chekhov's *The Weird Animal called*

[89] Bercuhi Berberyan, *İster Ağla İster Gül: Sahne Tozlu Anılarım* (Istanbul: bgst Yayınları, December 2020), s. 29.
[90] Berberyan, *İster Ağla İster Gül*, 42.
[91] Berberyan, *İster Ağla İster Gül*, 26.
[92] Çalgıcıoğlu, interview.
[93] Berberyan, *İster Ağla İster Gül*, 62-63.

*Human*[94] (1986), Necati Cumalı's *Nalınlar* (1986), and Haldun Taner's *Sersem Kocanın Kurnaz Karısı* (The Wise Wife of the Foolish Husband) (1989). Of these plays, *Nalınlar*'s entire cast consisted of the youngsters from Bezciyan High School and the Armenians living in the neighbourhood showed a great interest in the play staged at the association situated in Kumkapı.[95]

In addition to that plays such as Haldun Taner's *Sersem Kocanın Kurnaz Karısı* or Rober Haddeciyan's *Giragnorya Havşepag* (Sunday Payoff), which the Armenian community of İstanbul would establish a more close bond, there were also plays that were staged simultaneously with professional theatres at that time. For instance, the play entitled *İnsan Denen Hayvan* was performed at the stage of the Getronagan Association while it was staged at the same time at Kenter Theatre.[96]

The artists who performed a few times plays at Kenter Theatre over the years continued to be on the stage in the 1990s and 2000s. This company performing theatrical activities under the guidance of Arto Berberyan, director and stage designer of many aforementioned plays, was renamed "Berberyan Company" after the passing of Arto Berberyan in 1999. The plays performed by the company that came to the front in the 1990s and 2000s were plays such as *Yedi Kocalı Hürmüz* (Seven Husbands for Hurmuz) (1997-98), *Kaç Kişot-Don Nazar, Kınalı Ah*. However, the association stages could not actively carry out activities as before over the years due to the fact that the stages of the associations such as PLYD and Karagözyan Association had been torn down in parallel with the fast change of the city and due to the gradually changing profile of the audience-the fact that the audience cannot understand Armenian as before or the decrease of the number of the actors speaking Armenian-.

Meanwhile, the theatrical activities in Armenian schools continued as a tradition. While Getronagan High School staged plays every year on the occasion of March 27 World Theatre Day, Esayan High School organised "Inter-High Schools Theatre Contest in Armenian" which would later be renamed the "Inter-High Schools Theatre Festival in Armenian" from 2005. Besides, almost every Armenian high school performed theatre presentations at the commemoration ceremonies of the artists, the authors who have an important place in Armenian culture and history and at the end of the school year activities.

Founded under the guidance of Sosi Cindoyan and her team in 2001, the children's theatre called Patil that staged plays for ten years is another important experience that should not be ignored while talking about the Armenian theatre of 2000s. Cindoyan founded a children's theatre company named "Patil" within Pangaltı High School Alumni Association. Having emphasised the importance of performing in Armenian in the interview she gave to Agos, Cindoyan spoke as follows:

> *The weight was given to the plays in Turkish that developed gradually. But the theatre in Armenian is an important tradition of ours and a part of our culture. We must keep it going. The theatre is an important element for the survival of the language. The diction of the children might be broken since we do not speak Armenian much, but this is not an obstacle for them to perform. As long as they speak.*[97]

Cindoyan indicates that some duties fall to the associations as well in this matter. In accordance with her, the associations gather the youngsters under one roof is important both in terms of keeping together the society and transmitting the Armenian culture.[98]

[94] Berberyan underlines that the play belongs to Chekhov, but other sources state that it was adapted from Chekhov's stories by Gabriel Arout. For further information, see Sündüz Haşar, "Yıldız Kenter'i Kaybettik", Aydın Sanat, No. 10 (December 2019): 162, https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/1074625 .

[95] Berberyan, *İster Ağla İster Gül*, 60-61.

[96] Berberyan, *İster Ağla İster Gül*, 89.

[97] Sosi Cindoyan, "Ortaköy Sahnesinde Ermenice Kahkahalar", interview by Maral Dink, *Agos*, 28 March, 2014, https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/6770/ortakoy-sahnesinde-ermenice-kahkahalar.

[98] Cindoyan, interview.

Çalgıcıoğlu adopts a critical approach regarding the relationship between the association directions and the association theatres and the approach of the boards of management of the associations to the art but specifically to the theatre. He indicates that the weak number of stages and the usage of these few stages for purposes other than the theatre constitute a problem. He also adds that the theatre casts gather in the form of "theatre of employees", that they perform theatre activities with the motivation of meeting friends and socialising with them for a limited time and that such an understanding's contribution to the theatre is controversial.[99]

Despite all their inadequacies and criticisms, these alumni associations have the distinction of being a place where Istanbul Armenians come together, carry out theatre activities, socialise and introduce children and young people to Armenian theatre. The members of Hangardz[100], the only independent theatre company in Istanbul staging plays in Armenian today, most of whose members have undergraduate acting degrees, were also introduced to Armenian theatre through the theatre of these associations and theatre activities in Armenian schools.

Founded by Garine Maral Çizmeciyan, Lara Narin, Tara Demircioğlu and Yeğya Akgün, the company performed the world premiere of their first play entitled *Mer Çunetsadzı İrarmov Kıdnenk* (Let's Find What We Do Not Have in Each Other) in 2018, on the World Theatre day, at the Synergy World Theatre Festival organised in Nova Sad, Serbia. In 2021, the company presented to the audience Zaven Biberyan's story entitled *Kantsı* (Treasure) on its website as a digital theatre research as a tribute to his 100th birth anniversary. Furthermore, in 2023, it staged William Saroyan's play entitled *My Heart's in the Highlands*.

Considering herself a part of the Armenian culture and the Armenian artistic life that continue for long years, Lara Narin, one of Hangardz's members, says that she studied at Pangaltı Mekhitarist High School from kindergarten until she graduated from high school, that she is a member of PLYD, that she was a member of the executive board of the association for a while and that she stepped up on the stage through the activities carried out at the association at the time when she was studying. Narin states that the activities that she performed at the associations carried her to the Musical Theatre Department at İstanbul University and to Hangardz. She says that, although there are some issues at the associations one must reflect upon with regard to the diversity of the plays and productions, the alumni associations are still important places for those who want to act.[101]

Having acted at Patil Chidren's Theatre Sevada Haçik Demirci indicates that Patil had important contributions to him in terms of getting to know and loving the theatre, developing his knowledge of Armenian and understanding what performing in Armenian means. Antranik Bakırcıoğlu, one of the members of the company, who completed his high school education at Esayan High School, states that he was part of the Patil Theatre Company during the years when he was studying at Karagözyan Primary School but that his real relationship with the theatre started at the theatre club of the high school with the theatre practises carried out by Tara Demircioğlu and that he performs today within Hangardz inspired by the practises at high school, that performing in Armenian means for him not only speaking Armenian but also not disappearing and leaving a trace in this community. Another member of the company, Yeğya Akgün, relates that they faced a language barrier during the theatrical activities they carried out when they were studying at Sahakyan Nunyan Armenian School, that they did not understand the play texts most of the time, that their knowledge of Armenian was not sufficient and for this reason, from time to time, they had to memorise the texts without understanding much and get on the stage. He adds that the language barrier experienced during the rehearsals reflects as well on the body, that it is pretty hard to give the expression without having a good command of the

[99] Çalgıcıoğlu, interview.

[100] The Armenian word "hangardz" means "suddenly".

[101] Lara Narin, "Hay Mentee Mentor Seminar, interview by Tara Demircioğlu, Instagram video, 17 February, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/tv/CLXox3rBj86/?igshid=MTc4MmM1YmI2Ng==,

language. Another important subject emphasised by Akgün is that, although the Armenian community has been a community that prioritises the art and the culture throughout its history, the priority of the community is not performing any longer but to "survive" because of the destructive effect of what it was put through. According to Akgün's observation, what matters today for the Armenian community is being able to keep the schools, associations and churches open, in other words, being able to only "exist" rather than performing theatre activities at the schools or associations. Therefore, he indicates that the association theatres struggle to "exist" in this sense and that the performing theatre activities in Armenian is an effort coming way after. Saying that they worked on Hagop Baronyan's play entitled *Bağdasar Ağpar* with the students during the school year 2022-2023 at Sahakyan Nunyan Armenian School, that they simplified the text and they worked on the expressions in Armenian since the students do not have an adequate knowledge of Armenian, Akgün states that the students do not have any longer mother tongue competency and they cannot speak Armenian as well as Turkish. He indicates that he tells the students about the theatre history during the theatre practises with them but that most of them do not know much about the Armenian artists, despite the fact that they know about Muhsin Ertuğrul and Bedia Muvahhit. He says that Getronagan High School is different from the others on this subject due to the fact that events such as Gomidas commemoration events, Tumanyan commemoration events, Hay Gını[102] events are regularly carried out there and that this fact creates awareness in the students.

Akgün indicates that the association theatres show a resistance in terms of opening to Türkiye, making Armenians heard and professionalisation and that the preoccupation behind this resistance is a sociological fact. He says that they played their last play, *My Heart in the Highland*s, in Turkish, and that they would play it both in Turkish and in Armenian this season, but that performing in Armenian is not easy at all for the company. Saying that the Armenian is a language that occasionally comes into their lives, Akgün emphasises that they had difficulty concerning the Armenian pronunciation except a few members of the company and that they are worried about making mistakes while speaking Armenian on the stage. He states that there is not much audience which would understand the Armenian and that therefore the theatre halls would suffer from lack of audience when performing in Armenian while the theatre halls would be full when performing in Turkish. He states that it is nevertheless important to tell their story in their own language and that they do not want to give up on that despite all kinds of worries. He says that the plays of Boğaziçi Performance Arts Company from the beginning of the 2000s and the plays of Yolcu Theatre in recent years, which draw their subjects from the Armenian cultural history, constitute positive developments in terms of the creation of interest and awareness in the audience of Türkiye, that however they wish to say to the theatre audience of Türkiye "listen to our story from us". He indicates that they established contact with the Armenian culture, that they wish to keep alive the Armenian that is about to perish, that, besides this, they treat of universal subjects with the plays they choose and that their main goal is to perform theatre, that they wish to address not only the Armenian community but the populations, in general, living in Türkiye.[103]

The afore-mentioned words of the Hangardz members lead to, so to say, to the beginning after the rupture of the linear history narrative, to the "moment" when the Turkish pronunciation of the Armenian actors was detected as an "issue" at the Ottoman Theatre in 19th century and this "issue" was tried to be eliminated by means of the Literary Council, which was established. They cautiously open a door in order to rethink, walking backwards from the centenary Republican Türkiye to the Ottoman Empire, the roads they walked, the turns they passed through via the theatrical endeavours of the Armenian community. They draw closer to the question of what remains of the Armenian theatre since its foundation, as well as the question of what has disappeared, which can never be entirely known. Pondering this question, recognising that the response will always remain incomplete, may also pave

[102] The Armenian word "Hay Gını" means "Armenian woman".
[103] Antranik Bakırcıoğlu, Sevada Haçik Demirci and Yeğya Akgün, interview by Reha Keskin, unpublished recording, 13 June 2023.

the way for reflection on the "created absence" of a community whose visages, names and contributions have been erased from the theatre's historiography in Türkiye. This may prompt consideration of the perpetration of the act of expunging within the historiography that not only erases but also obliterates the very act of erasure itself.

Assessing the period after 1915, Talin Suciyan leans on two basic concepts: "habitus of denial" and "diaspora". Suciyan defines the "habitus of denial" as a habitus where the history between 1915-1923 is denied by the Republican elite and this denial supported as well on the international arena is recognised and reproduced in the daily life being institutionalised by the State mechanisms. She interprets many practises as practises inherent in the "habitus of denial" from the silencing of people with the campaigns "'Citizen Speak Turkish" to the "threats that have become a part of the daily life", from the "confiscation of the properties" to the "normalised discrimination and social pressure", from the "destruction of the historical heritage" to the "Wealth Tax".[104] Furthermore, regarding the concept of diaspora, she defends the thesis that the Armenians in Türkiye are also part of the diaspora, extending the usual connotation. For, according to her;

> *Either they stayed in İstanbul or in the provinces-let's say they could-, the Armenians did not live, could not live, were not allowed to live, in their homes, in places they accepted as their country, as it was the case before 1915. The country in the sense of home is the place where one's history, culture, relatives, past, graveyards, schools, and life experiences are. This place did not exist after 1915 for the Armenians. In any case, either in their home or elsewhere, the Armenians were now in the diaspora.*[105]

Hence, the issue highlighted by the members of Hangardz can be interpreted as a manifestation of the enduring domination and violence on the Armenian community within the realm of theatre. These consequences manifest in several distinct ways: a deficiency in the proficiency of the Armenian language, the obvious shortcomings of both school and alumni associations, in terms of both quality and quantity in the birth and development of Armenian theatre; the tendency of alumni association theatres towards introversion rather than professionalisation and increased visibility; and the notable scarcity in both actors and audience. These consequences can be interpreted through the concept of "habitus of denial" and "diaspora" as expressed by Suciyan.

## In Lieu of a Conclusion

In this study, I attempted to answer a fundamental question along the historical path I followed. During the Republican period, what happened to the modern theatre tradition that had been created by the Armenian theatre people? It is possible to say that both this question and its answer take shape in the background of the paradoxes, disasters and "habitus of denial"[106] that continue to exist from the Ottoman Empire to this day and the influence of which is intensely felt and that the answer to this question is one which will always remain incomplete.

Leaning on the research focusing on the Tanzimat period and concentrating on this historical interval in the literature, this study attempts to trace the Republican period. Concentrating on the Armenian schools where the foundations of the modern Armenian theatre were laid and on the alumni associations founded around these schools, this study focuses on the struggle for the existence of the

[104] Talin Suciyan, *Modern Türkiye'de Ermeniler: Soykırımsonrası Toplum, Siyaset ve Tarih*, trans. Ayşe Günaysu, (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2021), 294., and Talin Suciyan, "Türkiye'de Soykırım Sonrası Devlet ve Toplum", interview by Emre Ertani, Agos, 13 August, 2013, https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/5407/turkiyede-soykirim-sonrasi-devlet-ve-toplum.

[105] Talin Suciyan, "Talin Suciyan'la Modern Türkiye'de Ermeniler ve İnkâr Habitusu: Kendi Evinde Diasporada Olmak", interview by Emre Barış, 23 April, 2020, https://birartibir.org/kendi-evinde-diasporada-olmak/. On Suciyan's interpretation of the concept of "diaspora" see also Suciyan, *Modern Türkiye'de Ermeniler: Soykırım Sonrası Toplum, Siyaset ve Tarih*, 56-64.

[106] I borrow this definition from Talin Suciyan.

Armenian theatre while the debates on the national theatre and the efforts to create a modern theatre tradition in Turkish continued.

Certainly, this act of focusing has considerably rooted motives that are inherent in the historiography, the national narratives and the archives. The position, the presence and the absence of the Armenian theatre artists and theatre workers in the historiography and the national narrative with both the ignorance of their founding existence in the Ottoman theatre and simultaneously their gradual erasing from the Ottoman and Turkish stage come to the forefront as titles that need to be centred on. Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes as follows on this matter:

> *Silences are inherent in history because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. Something is always left out while something else is recorded. [...] The turn towards hitherto neglected sources (e.g., diaries, images, bodies) and the emphasis on unused facts (e.g. facts of gender, race, and class, facts of the life cycle, facts of resistance) are pathbreaking developments.*[107]

As put forth clearly by Trouillot, the silences or the ones which are silenced are at the same time the ones which are excluded, deemed unnecessary, and pushed out in the historiography. They are ignored by not being allowed to enter the national narratives from their border at this very point. Trouillot mentions four stages allowing the historiography to form this border and bringing into open these silences: The constitution of the sources, the transformation of these sources into archives, the emergence of the narratives and the constitution of the retrospective historical text[108].

In the narrative about the emergence of the modern theatre on the Ottoman territory as well, the historical silence and silencing are realised by the exclusion of the Armenian theatre artists from the narrative, by the elimination of the sources signalling their existence by this by a selectively-permeable perspective, the configuration of the archives accordingly and the historical texts built on the narratives that emerge meanwhile.

Furthermore, where is the origin of this silence and this ignorance hidden? The "National Thing" that takes on the task of being the element that keeps together the national community but that cannot be reduced to identification, denomination on the symbolic level is of such a quality that only we can have access to it, the others can never understand it and it is under the constant threat of the others. Therefore, while naming it, qualifications such as "us", "the real us", "our foundation", "our essence" are needed.[109] For this reason, all attributions relating to the Turkish, Muslim and masculine nature of the "National Thing" end up essentially determining the identity of the nation as well. That is why "Turning the ones within the Turkish country into Turks" by means of "Turkish and Turkist men" who are supposed to serve the country will be set as a target, and this target is inherent in the process of generalisation of the nationalist ideology. This amounts to a threat perception reappearing upon seeing the Armenians in the origin of the modern theatre in the Ottoman Empire. An understanding that diversifies with various approaches such as the total denial and the partial acceptance of their existence, the non-acceptance of their precursor quality and that prioritises the strengthening of the "National Thing" is in question.

Whether there are strict, impermeable borders idealised by the nation-state or borders that stretch out and have a tendency to extend by definition of the empire, the domination and the violence directed towards the Armenian theatre and its components repeat themselves in various ways in both cases. This domination and this violence take shape under the monist, standardised, homogenous cultural or

[107] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing The Past: Power and The Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 49.
[108] Quoted by Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, "Bir Yokluğun Anatomisi" in *Bir Adalet Feryadı: Osmanlı'dan Türkiye'ye Beş Ermeni Feminist Yazar 1862-1933*, ed. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu and Melissa Bilal (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2006), 332-334.
[109] Quoted by Umut Tümay Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları: Türklük, Melankoli ve Sinema*, (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2010), 309.

constitutional identity of the nation-state and around a vision of the world that will not harm the "high authority" and its values and in which what is at the "very" centre has the absolute voice.[110]

It is possible to see various aspects and the permanence of this violence in the interiorised knowledge of the "high authority", the "very" centre hidden in the statement "There is more need for the enlightenment of the dominant element in the country, we need to work on that. The prosperity and the happiness of the other element depend on the enlightenment of the dominant element" quoted by İbnürrefik Ahmet Nuri directly from Mınakyan as a proof of Mınakyan's love for the Turks in his article entitled "Theatre and the Education System" praising Mınakyan, published in the magazine Zeka in 1912, on the occasion of Mınakyan's 50th artistic anniversary celebrations and in the conditional acceptance of İbnürrefik Ahmet Nuri or in İ. Hakkı Baltacıoğlu's statement "It is a disaster that our stage is occupied by the Armenian actors who cannot speak Turkish well" in 1938 and in many examples that can be read leafing through the theatre history; and what is included more in the erased, torn pages of this history will always remain a mystery.

Therefore, although it started from the question "What happened to the modern theatre tradition created by the Armenian theatre people during the Republican period?" as stated above, this text does not seek a complete, clear answer to that question. It tries to verbalise the need to reflect on the idea that the theatre history narrative could be a crime scene where various ways of erasing, losing, destroying and denying all of this take place and on what can be the distribution of roles on this crime scene.

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[110] Fatih Altuğ, "19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Edebiyatında İmparatorluk, Medeniyet, Yerlilik, Yaban(cı)lık ve Din" in *Tanzimat ve Edebiyat: Osmanlı İstanbulu'nda Modern Edebi Kültür*, ed. Mehmet Fatih Uslu and Fatih Altuğ (Istanbul, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, March, 2020), 69.

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