SPECTACULAR REGIMES AND POLITICAL DRAMA:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GREEK AND TURKISH THEATRE IN THE 1960S AND 1970S

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Greek playwright George Skourtis's play *The Nannies* (1970) and Turkish playwright Vasif Öngören's *Rich Man's Kitchen* (1977) dramatize a new era in the relationship between drama and politics in Greece and Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s. These playwrights, drawing upon the potentials of texts, genre, and contexts, questioned the legitimacy of the regimes of the period. This thesis investigates why and how theatre in Greece and Turkey departed from the official model, which constructed a modern, western and national Greek and Turkish identity. Instead, it became a resistant alternative enterprise.

The crisis of representation in the politics of identity intensifies especially during times when the regimes are totalitarian (in the case of Greece between 1967-1974) or polarized (in the case of Turkey during the 1970s). These contexts offered an abundant resource for drama as a result of the visualization of power and conflict and thus the theatricality of the regimes. Artistic productivity flourished during these periods in spite of the constraints imposed by the context. Theatrical genres led the communication between the texts and the contexts. Through the genres of protest (Theatre of the Absurd in Greece and Epic Theatre in Turkey) the theatres of these two countries defined alternative identities that are not, in most cases, compatible with the official construction of a national identity. I am exploring this dynamic narrativity in the contexts of increased
This thesis brings together theories of theatrical performance, dramatic literature, identity and politics in the cases of Greece and Turkey. As countries that had (or have) been on the fringes of the west, latecomers in the nationalization and modernization projects, they have similar acculturation processes. Thus they offer a rich database for the study of formation and development of cultural identity under modern nation states. An artful dialogue between these theatres overturns the rival nationalist identities and promotes more compatible local and cosmopolitan narratives.
Dedicated to my mother Aliye Çelik and my father Tahsin Çelik
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

An Artful Dialogue

It is unfortunate that the attempts for dialogue between Greek and Turkish artists that have been developing for some years now\(^1\) lack a supporting theoretical or academic interest. Turkish Studies in Greece and Greek Studies in Turkey are bounded by certain themes such as: conflicting issues in politics, ethnic Greek and Turkish communities within each other’s lands and nationalistic cultural histories that may end up in deconstructing “the Other” culture. The rich database of comparable literature on Turkish and Greek art and culture that are products of similar modernization and nationalization projects (since the struggle between local and international models occupied the social discourse of both nations as they hovered on the fringes of modernity) has been neglected.

Even the scholarship on popular folk art forms shared by both Turks and Greeks, such as shadow puppet theatre, reveals the restraint nationalism places upon intercultural

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\(^1\) Some examples of the collaborative art projects are: Painting exhibition by Greek artist Eleni Mylonas and Turkish artist Ertuğrul Ateş under the title “Togetherness” at The Marmara Istanbul Manhattan Art Gallery in New York (2000); “Songs of Peace” concert by Zulfü Livaneli and Maria Farandouri in Athens and in New York (2000); Turkish-Greek-Hungarian collaborative film project “Big Man, Tiny Love” directed by Handan Ipekçi (2001); Heracles’ Trilogy, a collaborative project by Attis Theater from Greece and a group of Turkish players presented at the 11th International Theater Festival in Istanbul, Theater Olympics in Japan and the Barcelona Theater Festival (1999).
phenomena limiting truly collaborative scholarly research, as both nations struggle to take the possession of "symbolic capital." Effectively, nationalistic narrations pose limits to a comprehensive analysis of similar or shared art forms. Artistic interaction begs to be supported by scholarly intervention challenging the official discourses of nationalism that tend to emerge just at times when they are most deleterious to cross-cultural conversation.

The exploration of the relationship of contexts with the dramatic texts in this thesis is promoted by the idea that scholarly work has to catch up with and support the dynamism in collaborative projects. Such academic studies propose to reinforce further communication between Greek and Turkish culture and search through the similarities and differences of the cultural modernization process both within and between these cultures. In addition, alternative combinations and comparisons of less represented dramatic literatures and performances such as those of Greece and Turkey can offer a resourceful patchwork, a creative multivocality, and a new perspective on international interaction that would be refreshing for the fields of comparative literature, theatre studies and cultural studies.

Plays written for the live theatre in Greece and Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s will be explored in this thesis and the analysis will focus on two exemplary texts—one from each country. The aim of my analysis is to show the prospective nature of these intercultural, critical, and dialogic texts in transcending the nationalistic boundaries of cultural production.

Why is theatre examined instead of any other means of cultural production? The comparison of the dynamics of theatrical discourses and practices in Greek and Turkish
nation-states reveal the importance attributed to producing national performance traditions in both of these countries. The configuration of a modern, western and national cultural identity in cases of "belatedness"\(^2\) (such as Greece and Turkey) emphasizes legitimization of such a novel identity with visual reproductions of high aesthetic culture of the west. Exploring the identity formation and challenge through the lenses of theatre is crucial since aesthetic representation has been an important part of the modernization and its equivalent westernization process in both Greece and Turkey.\(^3\)

National identity formation has a theatrical nature; it is perpetually recreated in and through various performative cultural practices that reinforce the embodiment of state ideologies. These performative cultural practices may vary from seemingly trivial bodily regulations such as dress, physical and verbal manners to regulations on aesthetic culture. For “belated” nations, these regulations are more visible as a result of their arbitrary enforcemen: by the elites in haste to catch up with western culture. For both Greece and Turkey, theatre as the most visual public art, has been a part of this hastened process of nation building from the birth of these modern states. Such a “visual basis” provides “an iconic model of a hoped for unity” of novel cultural identities (Herzfeld 2001, 256).

An investigation of the development of theatre in these nation states reveals the intermingled relations of the political and the theatrical. Politics is theatricalized and correspondingly the theatre is politicized whenever socio-political context produces an identity crisis as it happens in Greece and Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s, the period

\(^2\) The term “belated” is used for Greek nationalization, westernization and modernization processes by Gregory Jusdanis in his book *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature.*

\(^3\) This will be discussed further in Chapter 2.
under study. As Michael Herzfeld states, the "displays of order" or "modern spectacle" of nation-states "both reflect and, in the sense of their performative capacity, serve to shape social transformations" (Herzfeld 2001, 257). Thus, the rituals of the state that tend to increase in number and visuality at times of crisis generate both reaffirmation of the status quo and an oppositional subversive force.

This study reflects upon a period when dramatic literature and performance in both Greece and Turkey questioned and resisted the definition of culture and identity that have been imposed upon them by the westernist, modernist, and nationalist Greek and Turkish states. It is putting in dialogue the subversive voices of the Modern Greek and Turkish theatres in times of crisis-1960s and 1970s.

I am examining theatre and politics in Greece and Turkey from 1967 up to 1980. The political significance of these dates is that in Greece the military dictatorship started in 1967 and ended in 1974, while in Turkey, there had been two coups d'etat (1971 and 1980) during this period. Such interruptions and transformations of democracy in these countries (that lead to either authoritarian regimes or instability and polarization in politics) produce and reveal identity crisis that is questioned and analyzed by the dramatists. This is a period when the individual is clearly standing apart from, and in opposition to, the state.

I will elaborate on the dissident "voice" of the playwrights through two representative plays: The Nannies (1973) by the Greek author George Skourtis and Rich Man's Kitchen (1977) by the Turkish author Vasif Öngören. Textual strategies will be investigated considering the possibilities enriched by the theatrical genres of these plays.

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4 In his book about Polish student theatre, Jeffrey Goldfarb mentions "theatricality of communism" that initiates an ideological resistance in theatre.
in relation to the context in which they were performed. An analysis interrelating the
texts, theatrical genres, and contexts will provide an understanding of the powerful
resistant drama that flourishes when there is "sharp, clearly discernible conflict within the
society" (Eorsi 1979, 141).

The choice of the period led to the examination of the most productive contexts
and theatrical texts when playwriting and dramatic performance became an alternative
public sphere in both countries. Dramatic narration flourished during the era of military
intervention (1967-1974) in Greece and during a period of polarized political context in
1960s and 1970s in Turkey. These were the times when the private theatres and amateur
groups were the primary moving engines of theatrical productions in Greece and Turkey;
when theatre was becoming an institution out of the state monopoly. While various forces
were contesting the Greek and Turkish identities, dramatic writing and performance acted
as a civil society questioning, analyzing and opposing the autocratic forces in Greece and
Turkey.

The plays present the ordinary Greek or Turkish man facing similar problems in
their respective countries, where in an individualized, polarized industrial urban
environment, they face increasing oppression from the authorities. In the micro-histories
created by these selected Greek and Turkish dramatists, similar problems are smothering
the individual who tries to get out of imposed social and political identities. The heroes or
heroines who will be examined are disenchanted, suffering from alienation in the recently
changing conditions of life that have been enforcing emerging powers that are crushing
them further. Protagonists are prisoners of the political system. The only hope of survival
for these characters living in a hostile environment is to gain consciousness of the problems though coming together with others sharing these problems and their solutions.

The productivity and “potentiality” of these dramatic texts was increased through the choice of certain theatrical genres (theatre of the absurd in Greece and epic theatre in Turkey) under special historical conditions (authoritarian regimes, military rule in Greece and political polarization and violence in Turkey). Is the interaction between the text and the context more fruitful in certain periods and when an appropriate instrument of “voice” is available? The “potentiality” of dramatic texts *The Nannies* and *Rich Man’s Kitchen* suggests that this is so.

Bakhtin defines the term “potentiality” as “richness of possible meanings.” He accuses intellectual historians of ignoring the “genres and artistic forms as forms of thought” and claims the significance of genre being a “form-shaping ideology,” a specific kind of creativity embodying a specific kind of experience”(Morson& Emerson, 1990, 282). Although Bakhtin refers to the possibilities offered by the genre of novel, I apply his theory to theatrical genres such as theatre of the absurd and epic theatre that have the potential to enrich and reflect the experiences and thoughts of 1960s and 1970s in Greece and Turkey. In this attempt, I try not to be entrapped by a reductionism of treating the texts solely as micro-histories rather than aesthetic creations.

I was originally drawn to this comparison by searching for the effects on drama of the tensions on the rise between the Greek and the Turkish state as a result of the Cyprus issue (in the mid-1970s). Pursuing similar nationalist discourses in politics and theatre proved to be futile, since theatre was focusing on the socio-political context at different levels from the Greek and Turkish governments. Universalism and localism, rather than
nationalism, are the prevailing dramatic rhetorics of the 1960s and 1970s in Greece and Turkey. Theatre contested the national identity of Greeks and Turks, and replaced it by a humanist local and international identity. Proposing a new model for identity politics with their dramatic tools, the theatre of this period promoted dialogue by deconstructing any uncompromising nationalist rhetoric proposed by the official identities.

My thesis observes a shift towards the definition of identity through reflection on self and dialogic relation with "the Other" rather than the definition of identity through opposition to "the Other." Theatre offers a potential for critical examination of the rival manifestations of national or ethnic self, identifying the conflict within Greek and Turkish societies and thus opening up a space for dialogue about their respective alienations rather than externalizing them. Theater displays through fictive situations the similarity in the search for a new identity brought by political and economic instability within both countries. Disillusioned from politics, Greek and Turkish dramatists in the 1960s and 1970s call for creating a new culture. Intercultural similarities in the analytical, resistant, communitarian and international nature of the theatres of the period offer the possibility of a common cultural space or a "harmonious patchwork of cultures" (Bhabha, 1994, 168).

How is the dramatic protest and resistance against the official "Greek" and "Turkish" identity shaped? The answer to this question will be pursued through elaborating on two contradictory layers of identities in Greece and Turkey. First, the official nationalistic identity of each state (which was formed in opposition to the corresponding identity reinforced in the other nation and in compliance with the definition of these identities by the west) will be explored in the analyses of socio-
political and theatrical histories of Greece and Turkey. Then, the alternative identity formed in opposition to the official identity within each nation will be traced in the theatrical texts and genres of the 1960s and 1970s. This alternative identity, which has been neglected and suppressed by the producers of the official identity, has been crucial in criticizing the official “self” and promising a creative perspective to address the problems related to the socio-political context of the 1960s and 1970s.

While nationalistic discourse deters a comprehensive examination of intercultural borrowings and similarities that would set ground for dialogue, the performative discourse tries to deconstruct the nationalistic discourse by providing alternative concepts of citizenship and politics. Mutual understanding of the similar forces of modernization, nationalization and westernization acting upon the Greek and the Turkish identities is crucial for initiation of a dialogue. This thesis offers to put emphasis on the cosmopolitan and the local level of identity-making rather than the national level as a method of conflict resolution between the societies.

The following chapter will start out briefly examining the role attributed to the arts and literature in the promotion of a Greek and Turkish identity by the founders of these nations. The gradual domestication of theatre and changing ideas on the role of theatre in the new nation states provides a base for understanding the relevance of the development of theatrical culture in Greece and Turkey. Outlining the belated nationalization, modernization, and westernization processes in both countries that determined the formation of aesthetic cultures along similar lines is crucial for a further understanding of how the theater of 1960s and 1970s is challenging this official discourse. The chapter will provide a historical overview of the development of national
theatres in the western countries that have provided the examples from which Greece and Turkey would draw upon after the birth of their modern nation-states. A comparison of the experimental and productive natures of Greek and Turkish theatres in the 1960s and 1970s with the nationalist projects of enlightenment in the dramatic arts will be the main focus of this chapter.

The third and fourth chapters will analyze the “potentiality” of the dramatic texts, *The Nannies* and *Rich Man’s Kitchen* respectively. The agency and subjectivity of the individual who tries to get out of the identities imposed by the political context, and alternative narrations of communitarianism (or dialogism) within the isolationist or bipolar world created by the state institutions will be examined in relation to the authors’ choice of theatrical genre. The theatre of the absurd in the Greek case and epic theatre in the Turkish case will prove to be appropriate instruments of voice for the special historical conditions in each country. In addition, the relationship of theatre and politics will be discussed considering the visualization and spectacularization of power and cultural identity. The reactions of theatrical spectacles towards the political ones will bring totalitarian and polarized regimes under speculation. Performance cultures of the communist regimes and the Weimar republic will be explored in relation to those in Greece and Turkey in 1960s and 1970s respectively. Through such a comparison some conclusions will be drawn on “performative societies” that are formed through “endemic theatricalization of public and private spaces” (Kershaw 2001, 205).

A final chapter will be drawn from a comparison of the theatrical genres of the absurd and the epic; and of the theatrical texts analyzed in the previous chapters. The
significance of incorporating politics and arts, texts and contexts will be mentioned emphasizing the convergences and collusions of these discourses in various times.
CHAPTER 2

A HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF OFFICIAL AND "COUNTER-HEGEMONIC" DRAMATIC LITERATURE AND PERFORMANCE IN GREECE AND TURKEY

Benedict Anderson defines nationalism as a "narrative of identity" constructing "imagined communities" which replace dynastic empires with nation-states, monarchical institutions with republican institutions, subjection with citizenship, popular sovereignty with absolutism, national flags and anthems with inherited nobilities etc. (Anderson, 1983) Imagined communities are generated through recreating histories, attributing reinvented symbols and forming a restrictive culture around secular solidarities to replace those around religion and dynasties. For "belated" nations like Greece and Turkey, such cultural and aesthetic discourse for the invention of nations is prior to the social and economic possibilities. Their "nationhood" is primarily a cultural enterprise rather than being the result of technological advances as it is in the early modern states. Happening synchronically, the processes of westernization, modernization and nationalization are received as ideologies or mindsets.

In the cases of "belatedness," "modernization generally entitled fabrication according to western prototypes" (Jusdanis 1995, 44). National identity formation is
accomplished through following the western mode of cultural production and fulfilling the roles assigned for each state by the west. The formation of Greek and Turkish nation-states before the solidification of an “imagined community” forced these states to promote a national culture as a dynamic force to shape reality. For both cases modernization requires Europeanization as well as the formation of a national culture that would replace the heterogeneous ethno-religious identities of the pre-national period. The reconciliation of the local with the cosmopolitan, the eastern with the western, the religious with the secular, the traditional with the modern has been the enduring paradigm for both Greece and Turkey in the face of modernization. A totalized and unified national identity could be structured by eliminating these dualities.

Comparing the similar processes of modernization and nationalization in Greece and Turkey, namely “dilemma(s) of cultural identity on the margin of Europe,” becomes more significant considering that these are rival nationalisms have been defined in opposition to each other. The problems faced in making a connection between the culture of ancient and modern Greeks would be solved by othering the Turkish conqueror and claiming the contamination by this alien ruler (Keyder, 1993). Correspondingly, for modern Turkey, Greek identity was a part of the heterogeneous system within the Empire that had no place in the newly formed ‘homogeneous’ (in terms of ethnicity and religion) Turkish Republic. Both Greece and Turkey present the Ottoman past as “the Other” representing a backward and traditional society in contrast with their new identity.

This chapter will analyze the role of dramatic literature and performance in the project of modernization, nationalization and westernization of Greece and Turkey. The
significance and the routes of evolution of a national dramatic tradition in these states will be examined before spotting the derivations from these official norms.

First, the development of the dramatic space will be explored by outlining the changing functions attributed to theatres during formation of the modern states through the works of some intellectuals and playwrights (such as Jonson, Dryden, Rousseau and Schiller) and through examples from national theatres of some countries in the Eastern and Western Europe. The significance of promotion and control of theatres—structured as a controlled public space rather than a part of the transgressive carnival space in modernity—by the state will be mentioned emphasizing the need to and the difficulty of homogenizing the national culture. In the face of conflicting local and international models, development of national theatres in Greece and Turkey will be examined, elaborating on similarities and differences in the meaning of traditional and modern drama for both contexts. My aim is to pursue the evolution of an alternative "public sphere" or "counter-culture" or "third theatre," through defining the state-sponsored "tradition" that they grew against.

**Ideas on the Modern Theatre**

Regarding theatre as an entertainment for the lower strata, western intellectuals in the Middle Ages emphasized its corruptive and distractive nature. Theatre that had been considered as low art belonging to the marketplace was gradually moved into closed spaces as it became a "high" art serving elite audiences (mostly upper middle class). This domestication is linked to the homogenization and hygienization of aesthetic culture as intended by the modern state. Destruction of the defiant festive folk theatrical traditions
and containment of this popular space for restructuring into a representative institution were necessary for the unification of a nationalized cultural discourse (Stallybrass & White, 1986). The idea of representing the nation and building the national identity in theatre dates back to the European enlightenment.

For instance, Jonson and Dryden imagined an elevated audience, dramatic writing, and authorship. These dramatists sought “replacing a dispersed, heterodox, noisy participation in the event of theatre by silent specular intensity” (Lloyd & Thomas 1998, 87). In this sense, they are precursors of the cult of modernity seeking to transform the grotesque public body to “docile body.” Eventually, theatre would become a discursive sphere for acculturation of the unruly cosmopolitan body into the docile national body.

In the eighteenth century, Rousseau and Schiller discussed how a citizen should be represented and the form a spectacle should take in a modern nation state (Lloyd & Thomas, 1998). These intellectuals had conflicting theories about the role of theater in the process of molding the unified community they were aspiring to. The opposition in their stances was the result of different conditions in France and Germany with regard to the level of nationalization. Rousseau, living in an already advanced, confident, and strong state, degrades theatre, claiming that it has a deceptive nature in his Letter to Mr. D’Alembert written on 1758. For him, theatre gives a wrong sense of unity and community while in fact the audience is atomized into the closed, bounded and dark space. Compared to theatrical space, the festival space could generate intense communication, more egalitarian relations, free movement and transparency. Therefore, festival is a place where his theory of social contact would be better realized through a real unification and direct representation of the citizen. On the contrary, Schiller, living in
a fragmented territory on the periphery, defended theatrical institutions stating that they provide aesthetic education to citizens of various classes and statuses, unifying them under ethical citizenry in two of his works [On Aesthetic Education of Man (1795) and 'Stage as a Moral Institution' (1784)]. Schiller’s views, however, represent the new understanding of theatre by the intellectual of the enlightenment—especially in the belated nations—embracing it for its potential in forming a united national subjecthood.

Marvin Carlson mentions the shift in the state’s stance towards theatre in the seventeenth century, visualized by the public theatre buildings—prior private possessions becoming cultural monuments (Carlson, 1989). Public theatres became significant elements of the urban design for the possibilities they offer as new education centers. Monumental theatre, opera house, symphonic hall, and public art museum were “highly visible signs of civic dedication to the arts, especially arts defined by the high bourgeois culture of the nineteenth century” (Carlson 1989, 88). Legitimization of this elite culture as a “national culture” would require dissolving the dissident cultural identity of the majority. Nineteenth century French and British intellectuals believed that “theatre’s highest mission is to rewrite all the members of the audience in the same idealist feelings” (Arac & Ritvo 1991, 261). These newly publicized literatures and cultural temples were aiming to be the symbols of national unity subjecting people to the centralized state and to the elevated national culture.

Since the majority of the population in Europe was illiterate at the time of the birth of nationalist movements, theatre was the best way for the intellectuals to communicate their nationalistic ideals to people. During the Napoleonic era the government “looked at theater, the most public of the arts, to provide inspiration,
examples, and instruction to the citizenry” with the aim of “reinstituting a spirit of national unity” (Carlson, 1993, 88). As latecomers compared to national British and French theatres, Northern and Eastern European theatres produce “the initial manifestos which proclaim the need for a national theatre in order to fortify the language, improve manners and morals, educate the people and, ultimately, validate the credentials of the nation, putting it on par with its European fellows” (Senelick 1991, 3).

The role of theatre in fostering the native language was especially crucial for the nations under the domination of others, such as Czechs and Hungarians under the Habsburg Empire where the official language was German, for Norway under Denmark’s hegemony, and for Greece after 400 years of Ottoman rule. The function of theater in linguistic development was significant for both Greece and Turkey since they underwent language reforms aiming to attain “pure” Greek (Katharevousa) (by eliminating Arabic, Italian and Turkish influences) and “pure” Turkish (by eliminating Arabic and Persian influences).

State Control and National Spectacles

The rise of national theatres is linked to the efforts of national administrations to control cultural discourse-making. After the formation of nation-states, governments either formed or took over the pre-existing theatrical institutions. The significance of subduing the dramatic tradition and development was due to the strength of theatres as spaces for propaganda when the resources of communication were scarce for the illiterate public.
The USSR provides a clear example of this aspiration for control. After the revolution, the Bolsheviks nationalized most of the professional theatres, centralized theatrical work, limited private stages, and controlled the repertoires, and amateur activities (Mally, 2000). The Soviet cultural ministry emphasized the educational role of theatres. New identities of class and nation were promoted on stage aiming at increased national sensitivity.

Particularly in cases of totalitarian regimes, either communist or fascist, imposing order necessitates visualizing the claimed grandiosity of the states and their culture (which leads to the performativity or theatricality of these regimes). “Spectacles [or “outward replication of order”] are concretized ideology—a mystification of political might and an opiate for those suffering under a cruel hegemony” (Herzfeld 2001, 270).

Nationalism displays the same excessive visualization especially in the belated nations such as Greece and Turkey. Performances of unification are proof of self-revelation to join the ranks of the other nations. Tangible expressions of nationalization are parades, ceremonies, celebrations as well as spectacular artistic forms. Political might and unity are displayed through the performance of national celebrations and spectacles of art and culture. These artistic spectacles are also displays of civilization, modernization, and westernization. Among the familiar images of Turkey, there are those that reflect spectacular performances of ballet, national theatre and symphony orchestra that carry the implications of civilizing agency (Bozdoğan & Kasaba, 1997), aesthetic unity, and beauty. For the Greeks, this agency and unity is realized through images referring to the revivals of the classical Greek drama performed in the ancient amphitheatres.
Moreover, the theatricality of nationalism is an inevitable result of the existence of dissident traditional cultures incompatible with the official modern culture in Greece and Turkey. The emphasis on visual imagery to “correct” the frustration created by conflicting identities is necessary for national homogenization. As the official concept of the workings of society moves away from the realities of everyday life, both of these spheres enforce theatricalization in order to deal with the other (Goldfarb, 1980). As the bureaucracies perform a unified national drama, the local dissident cultures stage a corresponding illusory play of conformity.

The next section will deal with the formation of national theatres first in Greece and then in Turkey. Then the ways in which the formation of an official dramatic culture was overturned at the peak of the theatricality of governments in Greece and Turkey around 1970s will be discussed.

The Official Dramatic Tradition in Greece and Turkey

Contrary to the trend in Western Europe “institutionalization of the arts... was imposed from above through centralized planning rather than emerged in response to changes in Greek [and Turkish] society” (Jusdanis 1991, 104-105). The project of enlightenment required production of an aesthetic domain and narrative to legitimize and strengthen its move towards the western ideal.

Histories of the Modern Greek theatre reflect the impact of two forces that lead to formation of a Modern Greek identity: Modern Europe and Classical Hellas. The legacy of Classical Greek drama improved by the contemporary Western theatrical tradition was expected to be seen in the Modern Greek dramatic institutions by both Western and
Greek intelligentsia. Adamantios Koraes (1748-1833), a prolific Greek writer who made scholarly editions of classical Greek texts, helped the construction of a Greek theatre in line with the cultural enlightenment project. Some playwrights who were dedicated to the projects of nationalization and Westernization wrote in “purified Greek” (Katharevousa—a language “that was attuned to the ancient Greek”) during the first years of the Greek state (Sideres 1957). In 1903, riots broke out when the National Theater performed The Oresteia in Modern Greek rather than Katharevousa, which “remained the language of the state, church, army, press and most scholarly discourse until the 1970s” (Jusdanis 1991, 45).

From the liberation of Greece (1829) until the end of the nineteenth century, there was no regular state funded theatrical activity in Athens. “The establishment of permanent theatrical company, equal to those of the other countries, becomes an inescapable duty, imperative need of the national life” (Sideres 1957, 8). Starting from the 1860s, there were outdoor summer theaters staging traditional performances such as shadow puppet theatre and storytelling. These forms and other folk performances such as, religious rituals and laments provided a resistant “hidden transcript” towards Turkish rule and then towards the westernization process enforced by the elite (Van Steen, 2000). Folk performance traditions stood in the way of building a “high” culture: a culture that sought the revival of classical drama and the prevalence of western performance tradition. Modernization and westernization required the dissolution of contradictions in conception and reception of theatre between the popular and the elite forms.

A national theatre founded by King George I in 1901 was closed down in 1908 due to lack of funding, then reopened in 1932. The first performances were of ancient
Greek repertory (Agamemnon by Aeschylus, Theio Oneiro by Xenopoulos). The accounts show that from 1955 to 1986, 177 classical Greek productions were performed in theatres of Greece, 138 of these plays being produced by the National Theatre (Athens) and the State Theatre of Northern Greece (Thessaloniki) (Walton 1987, 287-291). As Kotzamani observes, "the National [Theater] established a strong high culture theatre tradition in Greece that was western-oriented. Contemporary modern dramaturgy was underrepresented in its repertory, which was primarily focused on ancient Greek drama as well as on the classics of the distant past" (Kotzamani 2001, 91).

The hegemonic effect of the European view of how dramatic traditions should evolve in modern Greek theatre has been described by Constantinidis who concluded that "It took the modern Greeks nearly a century of trial and error to construct a 'natural,' 'national' performance style for classical Greek tragedies by imitating the revival productions of the Italians, French and Germans" (Constantinidis 2001, 29). Until 1974 national and private theatres preferred to perform European plays or Classical Greek plays rather than Modern Greek ones (some private companies however, such as Karolos Koun's Art Theater, would support the productions of modern Greek plays, encouraging new playwrights from the 1950s onward). The supposed unpopularity of Modern Greek drama is questionable given the fact that between 1932 and 1974 the official theater institutions did not encourage the production of plays written by modern Greek playwrights. According to Constantinidis:

"Theater as an institution in the Kingdom of Greece (1832-1973) stood in a complex, almost schizophrenic, relationship with the dominant ideology. During the monarchy, ideology privileged the agreeable voices of cooperative subjects while it tried to contain or silence any dissonant (and therefore 'disagreeable') voices. Any dissenting minds were identified as nonconformists or troublemakers and their work was overtly or covertly discouraged by those who managed the
state and the church, as well as the state-funded and privately-funded theater companies, affecting people on either end of the play production process—dramatists and audiences alike” (Constantinidis 2001, 2).

Modern Greek drama did not fit the Greek enlightenment project and so it was ignored in literary historiography because of its divergence from the European conception of drama belonging to the Greek nation and its heterogeneous nature in conflict with the necessity of homogenization of the Greek identity.

Such a tension between the “traditional” and the “modern” is observed in a different fashion in the project of building modern Turkish drama. Lacking a theatrical tradition in the western mode, modernization, nationalization and westernization of the Turkish identity required a complete take over of the western theatrical tradition, disregarding dramatic folk traditions that were reminiscent of the multiethnic imperial past. Furthermore, plays that were preponderant in the era before the formation of the republic on the ills of westernization and those promoting Ottoman nationalism were left out after 1923 (plays by Namik Kemal, Ahmet Mithat Efendi, Şemsettin Sami, Reçaizade Mahmut Ekrem). Instead, heroic and nationalistic plays about the war of independence were written during the early years of the republic. (De Bruijn, 1994) As in the Greek case, traditional folk performances as well as the plays written under Ottoman rule were not compatible with the Turkish enlightenment project. For both Greece and Turkey, whose national identities were fragile in the face of the western nations; eliminating the contestation by the folk performances and gaining full control of the aesthetic culture was a necessity.

There was an effort to pacify the audience, who persisted on the active participation accustomed in the folk performance traditions, and to make them consider
theater a respectable "high" art in Turkey as in Greece in their early years. The republican elite was expecting from the popular theatre performed in the peripheries to educate the people into the republican modernization project. The state tried to control the troupes [Tuluat (improvisational) theatre groups] that traveled in Anatolia and staged performances carrying traces of traditional folk drama. The authorities wanted to direct them to a realization of the ideal of utilizing theatre as a tool for educating the illiterate public into the politics of the new state (And, 1983). However, the aim, the repertoire, the function, and especially the improvisational nature of these traveling groups were hardly compatible with the state’s goals, so we hardly hear them mentioned in modern Turkish theatre histories.

Centralized theatrical activity was predominant until the 1980s. "State authorities resisted the formation of regional theaters that were hard to control. The state was reluctant to create an instrument which would reshape the cultural structure of the society without its full command and control" (Saral Kurhan 1999, 15). The overall reluctance of support from the government to the development of theatrical institutions was interpreted as a result of the conception of a strong centralized state sponsorship that brought about strong central versus weak regional theaters. Eventually, centralization of theatrical activity and censorship led the gradual decline in state institutions’ contribution to the development of modern Turkish theatre after the mid-1960s.

Ironically, Turkish theater historians emphasize the legitimization of modern Turkish theater through the "inspiration" it gets from the tradition of European drama as well as that from traditional folk theatre. Most of the Greek and Turkish scholars of theatre had an agenda of conflating the traditional to the modern and the western in order
to produce an imaginary linear progress of dramatic culture. However, it is questionable whether the founders of the modern Turkish theater intended to appropriate “inspiration” from the traditional folk theatre. Muhsin Ertugrul\(^1\) claimed that “the theater has a task other than for art, especially in nations like ours which have demolished the old life style, and in replacement for this, have created a new society by not even mixing it with anything from the ruins of previous one” (Saral Kurhan 1999, 6). As the Art Director of the Municipal Theaters he intended to present the sublime examples of western theatre above any other dramatic tradition in order to create a “civilized” theatrical culture.

The City Theatre in Istanbul was the first official theatrical institution (not fully sponsored by the state) reopened in 1927 after the formation of the Republic followed by the establishment of the State Theatre in 1949. The education in the state conservatory (opened in Ankara, the new capital, in 1936) was shaped by German artists and directors. As in the case of the musical conservatory, which neglected (or abolished completely) traditional Turkish music, the theatre departments had no division studying and staging traditional performance forms, which were considered dead. Classical plays in Greek, Latin, French, English, German, Russian and Italian were translated into Turkish and performed on stages of national theatres as well as those of a few private theatres. From the first years of the republic, Turkey was represented as a place where the arts are supported and fostered by the state.

“For Ataturk, art, in general, was the dynamo of the educational system, as he once stated: ‘if a nation is without art, then it means that one of its nourishing veins is broken.’...Two years before his farewell, Ataturk, in November 1936,

\(^1\) Muhsin Ertugrul (1892-1979) is considered as the father of modern Turkish theater. He was a very influential figure who accomplished many developments in the state theatrical institutions as well as those that were private. His aim was to create an educative theatrical culture supporting the modernization project. For him “the theater was crucial for the orientation of people to western culture.” (Saral Kurhan 1999, 6)
emphasized once again the importance of developing the arts in Turkey, addressing the members of the National Assembly: 'Gentlemen' he said, 'it will certainly be very persuasive if all members of this National Assembly have the interest and labor to support fine arts in all its branches, to increase the pace of cultural life in this nation.' (Nutku 1986, 169)

Despite these claims for promotion of a "modern" theatre in the pro-western Turkey, the support for theatrical institutions never satisfied the theatre people. They claimed that the state had no defined and stable policy towards theatre, and that its interference was mainly destructive by aiming to control, rather than being constructive by aiming to help the arts flourish. State control of theater institutions led to heated debates during the 1960s.

"New Expressive Forms"- Emergence of Alternative Representations (1965-1975)

Around the mid-60s the theatres in Greece and Turkey deviated from the official nationalist model, fostering alternative models for the construction of Greek and Turkish identities. These theaters became resistant private enterprises aiming to transform the official identities. The sharp conflicts within the society, such as increased instability and polarization in politics and in the social sphere (in the case of Turkey around 1970s) or increased authoritarianism of a dictatorship (in the case of Greece between 1967-1974), led to the crisis of representations. These periods provide inspiration for points of rupture in the national dramatic literature and performance since the definition of "national" becomes blurred and divergent. "Cultural fragmentation" and the "co-legitimation of a number of overlapping national cultures goes hand in hand with civil antagonism" (Cochran, 1990).
Dramatic literature and performance have dissident natures ripe for a productive usage in resistance or in counter-hegemonic constructions. As Jusdanis claims, literature has an inherent "negative function" (this could be extended to dramatic literature and performance). Thus, although it has served the nation-states immensely through producing cultural identities for its citizens, eventually literature "occupies a paradoxical position in simultaneously mediating identity and reflecting on it from a distance" (Jusdanis 1991, 47-48). Theatre has similar connotations of dual functioning, both as cathartic and revolutionary. Although theatre collaborated with the nation state in its birth acting as cathartic, historically it was feared for its potential for subversion. Theatre occupies a liminal space, it moves back and forth between the two ends: the ideological state apparatus versus the carnival space. It is usually on the border of the aesthetic and the political: "this constitutive contradiction in theatrical autonomy enables the construction of theatrical nationhood as at once a cultural monument to legitimize hegemony and the site on which the excavation and perhaps the toppling of that monument might be performed" (Kruger 1992, 187). The definition of a 'legitimate' theater is questioned in times when the national identity is contested since aesthetic culture is a crucial site where the cultural identity of the nation is perpetually created.

There was a confusion and contestation in the definition of Greek and Turkish national identities during 1960s and 1970s. The coups d’état (in 1960, 1971, and 1980 in Turkey, and in 1967 in Greece) and seven years of military rule in Greece may be interpreted as "efforts of the caucus of the state to re-appropriate its monopoly on the definition of Turkish (or Greek) nationalism" (Yerasimos, Seufert & Vorhoff 2000, 30). Making the state power visible by the actions of the military forces to restore order, or in
Foucault’s words the emergence of a “negative” unproductive power results in positive productive resistance or critical functioning of the aesthetic realm. As the political sphere mirrors the artistic sphere by spectacleizing power, the artistic sphere takes an oppositional counter-hegemonic political stance.

From the mid-1960s onward, the theatres of Greece and Turkey became a part of the civil society or in Habermas’ terms, the “public sphere.” They resisted being a part of the ideological state apparatus, claiming their political concerns and rights in the dramatic narrative. Theatre, believing in the power of the public sphere, (willingly or inevitably) attained the role of an intermediate institution overseeing the authoritarian state. Theatres of Greece and Turkey in 1960s and 1970s provided a regular setting for critical discourse, and so the dramatic space became a public sphere, a forum for discussion.

Counter-hegemonic dramatic literature and performance gaining strength in the mid-1960s in Greece and Turkey, trying to create a new consciousness different from and opposing to the “unifying language of nationalism.” Artists and playwrights search for agency for creating (in the Turkish case) or disrupting (in the Greek case) “metanarratives such as ethnocentric nationalism..and..international communism…” (Constantinidis 2001, 20) This agency was built through using the subversive theatrical genres of the west: the theatre of the absurd and the epic theatre.

Playwriting developed mainly after the 1960s in both nations, revealed by the increasing number of indigenous plays staged by both state and private theatres, and emerging new playwrights. Bacopoulou-Halls categorizes post-civil war modern Greek plays written after the 1950s as those of “existential protest” that preferred the theatre of
the absurd as a genre. Turkish playwrights on the other hand predominantly explored and worked on Brechtian Epic theatre.

The artists and playwrights in both Turkey and Greece were educated into established western hegemonic discourses. However, in 1960s and 1970s, a powerful indigenous drama was created in spite of the hegemony of western discourses. By participating in the disruptive movements of the absurd and the epic that carried anti-modern and anti-western premises, the playwrights could break the “ideal” official constructs of playwriting. As Ahmet O. Evin claims for the Turkish authors of social realism in the late 1960s, the Greek and Turkish playwrights used these genres to establish their own version of the power dynamics and socio-political problems:

“The anti-establishmentarian intelligentsia, like the elite reformists and nation-builders who preceded them, were preoccupied with Turkish [or Greek] society not in terms of viewing it from the perspective of an imaginary construct of the West, but with a view to creating a construct of Turkish [or Greek] society by means of using the methods and tools provided by a Western genre” (Evin 1993, 100).

Playwrights in Greece and Turkey used the “anti-establishmentarian” western genres to create resistant, vital and engaged theatres nourished by the context they were performed in. These theaters performed social change, “participating vigorously in social struggle, contributing to new social formations or leaving rich legacies for future artists and scholars” (Reinelt 1996, 10).

In this period, Greek and Turkish private and/or amateur theatrical institutions resemble “third theatre” defined by Barba in some respects. Third theatre “lives on the outskirts of the centers and capitals of culture in search for “new expressive forms” standing against “the circle of established theater accepting the laws of supply and demand, giving way to the preferences of political cultural ideologists” (Barba, 1986,
Robert Brustein’s definition of the third theater appearing on the American stage around 1960s is as follows:

“The third theater is gradually becoming a rallying point for all those frustrated by the moral cant of government leaders and artistic cant of cultural leaders, for its drama, though born out of a sense of ineffectualness, seeks relief from political impotence in untrammeled free expression” (Brustein 1969, 35).

For him, increasing polarization within the society or of the society from the government brings the need for restoration of existing institutions. An attempt to restructure theater corresponds to the attempt to restructure the society in these times.

A hot debate among the prolific theater directors, playwrights and actors on whether there should be state funding for private theatres in Turkey was published in the prominent Turkish literary magazine Varlık. It revealed the discontent from state theaters and political controls that were destroying theatrical creativity and liberty. They discussed the inevitability of privatization of theatrical institutions as they were pushed away from the state who strangles them (Ofluoglu, 1993).

The above conditions of resistance are prevalent in both Greece and Turkey during the period under study. However, the differences in the possibilities of narration offered by the socio-political context of each country assigned these theaters either a-social or social natures.

“The plays of existential protest (in most instances) were not popular with the mainstream middle-class audiences and the totalitarian government for two reasons. First, they deviated for the official ideology and the acceptable products of the theater market. Second, they abandoned the facile code of realism because they refused to imitate social reality and, through imitation, perpetuate repressive social models. Instead they evolved as a sign of protest, a highly personal language which was often incomprehensible to general audiences” (Constantinidis 2001, 146-147).
Choosing an a-social manner with regard to the audiences can be considered as resistance to the massification of culture promoted by totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, such as the military dictatorship in Greece. Contrary to this a-sociality, Turkish theatre of the period chose to communicate with as many audiences as possible to bring a new consciousness and “transcend the internal inertia of the official theater institutions” (Saral Kurhan 1999, 57). Since the theatrical discourse stood in opposition to the political discourse, Turkish theatre embraced a social attitude to counter the political polarization as Greek theatre followed the a-social path as an opposition to the totalization attempts of the culture by the state. Considering the politics of the period in Turkey that embraced polarization rather than totality of cultures, socialization was the appropriate way of resistance. Greek theatre on the other hand, had to resist totalitarianism through individualization and/or localization. Each theatrical tradition found its own way of “reconfiguring national identity” during times of “crisis in representation of the shared national culture” (Constantinidis, 151).

The following two chapters will be elaborating on particular plays representative of these “counter-hegemonic” theaters since what made these periods the most productive within the modern Greek and Turkish theater histories is reflected in these plays. Their use of genre and resources pulled down from their contexts will be examined.
CHAPTER 3

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN POLITICAL AUTHORITARIANISM & THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD IN GREECE

In his study on the representations of body in the eighteenth century discourse and performance, Joseph Roach claims that “the ideological and the aesthetic converge within the ritualized gestures (of power) and conventions of historic performance” (or “period style”) (Roach 1999, 100). “Ritualized gestures” that are practices to “recharge” a power “of its reality as ‘super-power’” (Foucault 1977, 57) have a highly performative nature in totalitarian or authoritarian regimes through the open use of force, extensive control mechanism and censorship. This “negative” or unproductive power¹ is inherently self-destructive since it cannot incorporate alternative identities, solidarities and resistance as in the case of a “positive” power. The following is an attempt to display a “positive” performative resistance against a “negative” performative power.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the agency of an author may be empowered by the usage of a certain literary genre. His performative resistance and the richness of meanings in his texts may be intensified through the usage of an appropriate tone of “voice” or communicative tool. The theatrical genre of the absurd proved to be

¹ Defined as “Poor in resources, sparing of its methods, monotonous in tactics it utilizes, incapable of invention... A power in no condition to produce, capable only of posing limits, it is basically anti-energy.” In Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p.85.
productive for evaluation of the possibilities offered by the context of an authoritarian regime for the Greek playwrights of the period.

This chapter elaborates on the relations between the context, genre, and text in Greece: authoritarian military rule between 1967-1974, the possibilities offered by the theatre of the absurd and the Modern Greek theatre of the era through the case of a play. The next section will deal with the question of how drama in Greece is shaped under the censorship of an authoritarian regime. Then a brief history of Greece under the military rule will be outlined to familiarize the reader with the context. The theatre of the absurd, the “ideological alternatives” (Sammons, 1977) and tools of narration it provides for the author will be discussed. And finally a close reading of the text, *The Nannies*, will be done relating it to the preceding premises.

**Drama under Censorship**

As Williams claimed in *Marxism and Literature*, any attempt to create an emergent culture “depends crucially on finding new forms or adaptations of forms” (Williams 1977, 26). So a venture to transcend the absurdity of culture offered by the authoritarian regime requires adaptation of a new genre unfamiliar to the dominant, a powerful “art of political disguise” that could surpass the “discourses of dictatorship.” Examining Eastern European drama, Eorsi concludes that both comedy and tragedy flourish when there is “sharp clearly discernible conflict within the society.” However, the dilemma is that “conflicts necessary for serious drama do in fact develop in society, but at the same time an authoritarian ethos and bureaucracy also develop to prevent the relatively unbiased portrayal of these conflicts” (Eorsi 1979, 241). That is, where there is
censorship and tight control of the written word the conditions are often times simultaneously ripe for productivity in drama.

Milosz claims that intellectuals living under totalitarian regimes find “exceedingly ingenious means of masking themselves” as “life in constant tension develops talents which are latent in men.” “Mental acrobatics… sharpen the intellect” (Milosz 1953, 54-81). Thus, the “arts of political disguise” dynamically evolve and survive in the most strangling conditions. For example, in Czechoslovakia, theatres became one of the primary sites of resistance against the communist party by maintaining “subtle subtexts” in their performances that would be a “true paradise for a semiotician, but a nightmare for a literary censor” (Glenn 2001, 63).

We could call playwrights “dissonance creators”\(^2\) who open new routes to go around the tower of realities without being captured by the guardians. So as Van Dyck argues, censorship may be a productive tool by creating a positive force against itself through providing “a poetics that can be deployed to other ends” (Van Dyck 1998, 4). Contradictory to the passivity and silence it tries to achieve, censorship may lead to the emergence of new tools as “relations between censors and victims appear dynamic and multi-directional” (Van Dyck 1998,4), resembling the dynamic relations between the dominant hegemonic and hidden counter-hegemonic transcripts of power.

A brief history of censorship and drama during military rule in Greece should be stated before moving on to the theatre of the absurd and its efficiency in promoting

“dissonances” the playwrights are aiming to create.

1967-1974- Politics and Drama under Military Rule

On April 21, 1967 a coup d'etat took place in Greece without effective resistance from the public or any institutions of civil society. Unstable political parties were not able to provide alternative solutions for the continuity of a democracy that had “drifted to a state of semi-paralyzed under-functioning and corruption” (Katris 1971, 13) for about ten years. The military junta legitimized its action by “the need to forestall an imminent communist seizure of power” (Clogg 1992, 163), although there was no evidence of such a threat. Many left-wing sympathies, politicians and others against the regime were either imprisoned, exiled or placed under house arrest.

In order to reinforce and solidify the military’s position in power, an authoritarian constitution was ratified in a questionable plebiscite in 1968. The colonels claimed that their intention was to “defend the traditional values of ‘Helleno-Christian Civilization” (Clogg 1992, 163) and “re-educate Greek people and to change their mental habits” (Rouflos 1972, 154) Being the “pillars of morality” and the only “legitimate” definers of Greek identity, the military’s control over cultural life was in the form of suppressing anything that might jeopardize its self-preservation rather than prohibiting anything that was not a propaganda of the regime as in totalitarian regimes. This “semi-freedom” was used by the dissident intellectuals for fighting against the dictatorship.

One of the examples of the cultural policies pursued under the dictatorship is a declaration of the government on 1969 that films shown at festivals in Greece and Greek films shown at festivals abroad had to be compatible with the religious beliefs and
traditions of the Greek people, and with the public order and national security. During the years of dictatorship, all stage companies (including the Art Theatre where *The Nannies* was performed in 1970) had to submit their scheduled plays to censorship committees that inspected the texts on moral and political grounds.

Carolos Coun's Art Theatre (formed in 1942) deserves attention regarding its role in helping Modern Greek drama “advance towards new forms, new concepts, and towards contemporary means of expression” (Bacopoulou-Halls 1982, 109). The company promoted avant-garde forms as alternatives to French boulevard plays and Greek farce, interpreted many Greek plays in subversive methods, and stimulated and introduced more than ten new playwrights.

Constantinidis refers to a change in the characters and their representation in Modern Greek drama after the Second World War. For Halls, although the introduction of surrealism and the absurd (through French and German influence) took place in the conflictual context of the Civil War (1944-1949), the playwrights became more proficient in writing absurd plays, mainly during the military rule. Constantinidis chooses a representative sample of absurd plays produced between 1966 and 1973 calling them “plays of existential protest” and argues the influence of “domestic socio-political conditions” in the increasing usage of the genre of the absurd.

In spite of the unfavorable environment created by the censorship between 1967 and 1974, Greek dramatists produced about fifty-two plays, an unusually high number compared to any other period in the development of Modern Greek drama (Karampetsos 1979, 213). Most of the popular playwrights (such as Kostas Mourselas, George Skourtis, Iavakos Kambanellis, Marietta Rialdi, Stratis Karras, Loula Anagnostaki, and Antonis
Matesis) produced absurd plays during the seven-year period. Although they had worked on genres other than the absurd before and after the military rule, during the period they communicated with their audiences mainly through this genre. And interestingly, Karampetsos concludes that the “flowering of Greek drama” died out when military rule was over “once possessing the freedom to be more realistic and appeal to the intellect” as a result of neglecting “the ability to touch the emotions” and ignoring the “success with the abstract, indirect forms of myth and ritual” (Karampetsos 1979, 213).

What did the theater of the absurd offer as an ideological alternative and linguistic tool that furnished the Greek drama of the period with such a powerful voice?

The Theatre of the Absurd

“His is an irredeemable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and the setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity.”

This definition of the absurd reflects the alienation of the individual from his time and setting as the forces of modernity devaluate him. The theatre of the absurd tries to display the “sense of senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought” (Esslin 1980, 4). Three aspects of this genre make its use favorable to the authors writing under authoritarian regimes: the similarity of the condition of modernity to dictatorships; the significance of reflecting “psychological realities” of the subject; and the multiplicity of languages as a liberating tool.

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Modernity and authoritarian or totalitarian regimes converge in multiple aspects that stimulate “aesthetic” representations of “the ideological.” Performative or ritualistic quality of both systems emerge as a result of an inherent tendency to design and control societies. “Planning grids of high modernism” that eventually “undermine individuals’ capacities for autonomous self-governance” (Scott 1998, 349) work itself through the populace by rituals that in the extreme cases “negate the social relations and the physical matter” (Gregory & Timerman 1986, 67) to maintain a “total identity.” Control aims to enforce a definition of reality. Since practices reinforce production of meaning and ideology, performances of power are crucial for defining the society under the modern state. Regarding this performativity (going from action to ideology, resembling Stanislavski’s method of acting) modernity and especially totalitarian states on the fringes of modernity present a valuable resource for the art of drama. Literature on torture and execution as public rituals in totalitarian regimes emphasize the theatricality of these practices. The emphasis of the theatre of the absurd on violent and grotesque figures, bodies “worn out or in a state of decomposition” (Constantinidis 1985a, 141) is a representation of physical decay as a consequence of the rituals of the state.

Esslin refers to Kafka’s novels as more accurate precursors--compared to naturalistic novels--of the horrifying inventions of modern man such as concentration camps and totalitarian regimes, through “exploring the perplexity of man confronted with the soulless, over-mechanized, over-organized world” (Esslin 1980, 316-317). The issues raised by criticism of modernity such as critical analysis of power, morality, faith, isolation, and alienation are parallel to those raised by the intellectuals of the authoritarian regimes. The theatre of the absurd was the genre resisting against the
totalitarian regimes of Eastern Europe. Concentration on the psychological aspects of the social conditions through myth and allegory, enabled the absurd plays to display the realities of life without being openly, thus dangerously, political. By mixing of poetry, grotesques and tragicomic horror, the theatre of the absurd aims to communicate the psychological experience of the characters involved; experiences of minute modern man or those under the authoritarian regime.

In the *Body Ascendant* Harold Segel examines “modernity and the physical imperative” and “totalitarian uses of the cult of physicality” (Segel, 1998). Performance of the body in Nazi Germany is exaggerated through the priority of physical training by sports and gymnastics, and through the claims that physicality of the Jew is degenerated. Celebration of the physical went along with anti-intellectualism. “Languid expressiveness, descriptiveness, lyricism, and psychological analysis become things of the past, their place taken by toughness, precision, detachment” (Segel 1998, 10). Theater of the absurd emphasizes psychology rather than the physicality, and thus stages an alternative “meta-communicative frame” resisting “the physical imperative.”

At this point, Bateson’s usage of “meta-communicative frame” in his theory of psychotherapy on the patients of schizophrenia shall be mentioned to relate it to the aim of the author of an absurd play (Bateson, 1955). Bateson defines schizophrenia as “abnormal use of psychological frames” that “delimit the ground against which the figures are to be perceived.” He suggests treatment through therapist’s manipulation of these frames. So the loss of the ability to regulate metacommunicative frames (which leads to a failure in recognition of the metaphoric nature of fantasies) may be redeemed by playing with these frames-reorganizing them.
Authoritarian or totalitarian regimes may seek to play with these metacomunicative frames, insert or force some abnormal frames. A communal schizophrenia (such as the Holocaust) might emerge as a result of these arbitrary manipulations of the psychological frames. However, such enforcements can be redeemed by supporting strong and stable psychological frames of the subject as a resistance to these formulations. A powerful “frame” work can be attained either through individual’s fantasies and plays⁴ or through building a community, a group of people supporting each other’s frames simultaneously.

Absurd theatre provides individual rather than collective support for a healthy psychological framework. This theatrical genre uses “mythical, allegorical and dreamlike modes of thought-the projection into concrete terms of psychological realities” (Esslin 1980, 349). The authors, standing between the private and the public, are in a way working on psychotherapy through reflecting the disoriented frames of the retarded individual tired, hopeless, and alienated; the “inferior” hero, a minor but representative figure in the society. Knowing the fact that there is an abnormality in individual or social psychology is at least a step towards therapy. Since the recognition of the absurd condition is necessary to transcend it, absurd theatre is successful in staging the tyranny of the society over individual’s acts, feelings and ideas. Although there is no resolution in these plays and they “finish at a dead end,”⁵ being conscious of this condition and its psychological effects on the subject gives some liberty.

⁴ Research on prisoners revealed that disorientation of the individual is low in people “who create themselves an active or purposeful inner life or fantasy” (Kubzansky 1961, 29-30).
Linguistic freedom is an integral part of the “multidimensional poetic imagery” of the theatre of the absurd. In order to display multiple forces acting on the subject, pulling him from each sides, language is deconstructed to be re-organized in innovative ways. Van Dyck mentions the military regime’s effort to “clean” the language, demand the use of *Katharevousa* (official language, “pure” Greek) in education and state affairs.

Complicated, ambivalent and contaminated use of language by the absurd is a resistance to linguistic chains. Van Dyck refers to Lyotard’s “paralogy” for defining resistance of Greek authors against discourses of dictatorship. Paralogy offers various options and discourses in social contexts where there is heteroglossia. It is “performative paradigm of language with its...negotiation of alternative truths” (Van Dyck 1998, 30). Claiming no single truth, creating a confusion of truths invalidates the monopolized truth of the authoritarian regime by revealing a gray area. Displaying “complex, diverse, animated environments contribute...to producing a resilient, flexible, adept population that has more experience in confronting novel challenges and taking initiative” (Scott 1998, 349). Thus proposing multiple realities and solutions through paralogy eliminate the monologic unitary structure of truth suggested by “single-purpose institutions.” Such a language obliterates the most powerful strategy of the dominant which is isolating deviance.

*The Nannies*

The main characters in this three act play are Paul and Peter, two tramps who are “unshaven, dirty, wearing shabby clothes,” outcasts in the society, having just come out of the prison. Resembling Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, or Karagiozis and Hadjivatis in the Greek shadow puppet theatre, Paul is portrayed as “the pragmatist and
conformist" and Peter as "the naïve idealist." They are in a coffee house having ouzo, prattling to pass time. The charismatic authority figure Stavros who has been gazing upon them for a long time, offers them a job—to be the companions or nannies of his wife. For Paul, this is a chance to "re-enter the society," whereas for Peter the exciting part is the content of the job, so they accept the offer.

In Stavros' luxurious aristocratic mansion, they enjoy consuming expensive goods and feel lucky for the easy and comfortable life they are thrown into. Shortly thereafter, they realize that they are no longer free: Stavros locks the doors behind him every time he leaves and the windows are bolted. There are no clocks, no photographs, magazines or mirrors but only statues that stand as metaphors of the house itself, "dead as a stone." When they ask Stavros about his wife his ambiguous language shocks them: "She is dead...She is alive and well" (p. 42).

Feeling strangled without any fresh air under Stavros' increasing oppression in the house that "smells death," they want to quit the job and leave. But, Stavros bribes them, raises their wages and promise that they will have access to all the worldly goods they would like to acquire. The truth about the wife is revealed. Their job is daily reverence to a woman's dead body, "cover her with flowers, light candles to adorn her beauty and mourn loud and long for salvation"(p.47-48). In the climactic moment when Stavros brings her corpse full of worms they burst into tears for the life they left behind and for their desperate future: "There were difficult times but it was wonderful. Do you remember, hey, Peter? All that is finished, Peter. It's all over!"(p.58) Stavros has the ultimate power from then on: "I am your guardian angel who has come to free you... You no longer have a choice" (p.55).
In the final act, tension between Paul and Peter builds up as they choose different paths to follow: Paul became a robot performing the duties assigned; Peter, tired of the absurdity of this condition, is about to collapse. The only meaningful object in the house is the collection of pornographic photographs Peter brought with him. Money coming from Stavros has lost its function and value, and has become a piece of paper they play games with or even wipe their mouths.

In the sudden moment of revelation Peter decides that he cannot live imprisoned in Stavros’ house any more and attempts to escape. Stavros’ arrival and provocation of Paul against his best friend leads to the “irrational moment” when Paul kills Peter violently using the crowbar which Peter had picked up to break the door with. Stavros praises Paul: “Well done Paul! You have come out triumphant! Tomorrow your wife will come. You’ll have children, many children any your children will have more children, year after year!” (p.78)

Interplay of the Text, Genre and the Context

The semiotics of this play within the genre of the absurd shifts from a refusal of sense to disguised sense or from surreal to hermeneutic regarding the context of the production. Skourtis defines his position well through a comparison: “Ionesco’s subject is death too—the superior force which governs man’s life—...My subject is death, but not the death we suffer at the end of our lives... He talks about natural death, I talk about social death” (Bacopoulou-Halls 1982, 138). Refraining from evaluation of validity in Skourtis’ analysis of Ionesco’s plays, it gives us an idea of the allegorical structure of his
own play. Genre functions as a veil covering the meaning against the threat of the censors.

The play is abundant with allusions and metaphors familiar to the audience of the theatre of absurd as well as those of the contemporary social condition in Greece. The following is an attempt to examine these “secret subtexts” under the headings that are prominent issues of the genre compatible with the context. The keywords I will elaborate on are consumerism, community and ties, faith and morality, isolation and deprivation. Power, domination and submission will be the primary spheres of analysis encompassing all the previous terms.

Power is solidified through the figure of Stavros, his house, wealth and the dead body supporting his position. He is the rule maker, defining the discourse (morality, truth, beauty etc.), the past and the future is under his control, identities are under his surveillance. One can easily draw parallels with him and the Greek colonels who came to power in 1967. The female corpse is recalling the maternal imagery of the nation and the nationalistic rhetoric of feminizing the country. Constantinidis argues that the dead corpse is used as a metaphor to comment on the death and decay of democratic institutions in Greece. This state of decay is maintained regularly through ceremonies and the monuments (statues in Stavros’ house) by hired people. However, the main strategy to maintain power is the ancient divide and rule policy. The workings of this strategy is defined by Milosz as: “desire to better ones own lot at the expense of one’s fellow-men; … an ethic of war pitting all men against all others, and granting the greatest chances of survival to the craftiest” (Milosz 1953, 76). In the play, Paul is the “craftiest” who could adapt to the exigencies required by the context, whereas Peter is the “weakest link.” In
Stavros’ framework, there is either black or white: you are either for or against the authority, and thus isolation of deviance is facilitated. Peter and Paul are forced to take opposite sides. Still, this is not sufficient to explain the power Stavros has over Paul in making him kill his “brother.”

Isolation and sensory deprivation is the most important factor in creating a puppet out of Paul. Scott defines such an environment created by totalitarian institutions as resembling sensory deprivation tanks used for experimental purposes (such as “eighteenth and nineteenth century “asylums, workhouses, prisons and reformatories”). “Over time they can produce among their inmates a characteristic institutional neurosis marked by apathy, withdrawal, lack of initiative and spontaneity, uncommunicativeness, and intractability” (Kubzansky 1961, 29). A house where there is no notion of time, no object that reminds of an alternative life outside, a place where you forget what your face looks like “is ultimately stupefying” and would create a tabula rasa where a new identity could be inserted. Peter’s ability to keep up his “purposeful inner life or fantasy” provides him the strength to endure this sensory deprivation. In his “paper-thin theory of hegemony” Scott gives two conditions for ideological domination: the possibility of upward mobilization and “complete atomization” by close observation (Scott 1990, 82-85). For Paul, both of these conditions exist, so submission is inevitable.

The setting is crucial for reinforcing isolation. The coffeehouse in the first scene is a cozy and humanitarian context, a part of Greek culture representing the celebration of socializing and community. This setting stands in contrast with the isolated mansion of Stavros. The former represents a heterogeneous community and the latter a uniform one. The playwrights’ goal in modern theatre of promoting as “politics of difference” is
achieved by offering a pluralistic anti-structure resistant to imposed unanimity. “All theatre has the potential for communal transformation (or reaffirmation) by giving spectators the fleeting experience of alternative modes of community during performance” (Barr 1998, 184).

For Skouritis, alternative modes of community implies multivocality. Paul and Peter are relatives in a complex way (they are cousins, and Peter is also Paul’s uncle) and this funny relationship is emphasized by a long dialogue in the first act. Scott mentions the dominator’s attempts to eliminate traditional ties in order to enforce loyalty and total submission (Scott, 1990). In the play Stavros provokes Paul to kill Peter to eliminate a liminal communitas created by the two tramps. As an alternative he promises Paul a wife and children, a family based on need, a safe controllable bondage favorable to the dominant. Foucault defines family as “the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production” (Foucault 1978, 100). The family ensures that Paul will perform, legitimize and reproduce the power structure. This “structure” cuts down the liminality of the coffee house tramps who are “representatives or expressions of universal human values” (Turner 1969, 110).

Defining values (or “discourses of dictatorship”) is another aspect of power. Stavros’ lines about his dead wife resemble the military’s discourse making speeches: “The Epitome of Beauty. Truth personified. I am the only one who has known the Truth. I am the Prophet”(p.47). Religious overtones and claims to be the defender of moral values, savior of the contaminated are similar to the colonels’ promotion of purification, “Helleno-Christian values” and the censorship as defense of the morality and religious values. For the poets of the period, methods of resistance against this discourse were:
usage of contaminated language, the confusion of terms; foreign terminology along with Greek, sexual imagery et cetera. Peter's contaminated and "paralogic" language of a tramp stands in opposition to the monology in Stavros' censorship of this language and his enforcement to sing the lulling chants for the dead woman. Peter's pornographic photographs represent another muted speech as symbols of resistance against the corrupted morality and salvation offered by Stavros. Skourtis puts forth the humanitarian morality of Peter, seeking freedom and resisting to the illusory world of soulless commodities and consumption.

"Ruled by a dictatorship that called itself a 'Greece for Christian Greeks,' the country continued to integrate itself into the networks of intentional capitalism with a steady flow of foreign imports and a regime supported by American politicians and the CIA" (Van Dyck 1998, 59). Consumerism that has increased by American aid supported the military regime. Reaction to the new trend is observed in many literary works produced during the period. Paul and Peter's agreement with Stavros to sell their souls for the appropriate price, blinded by the money and luxury of the house proves to be futile as their freedom and will is gone. The money and goods lose their function and value within the context of a prison. In the end, Peter attributes new functions to these pieces of paper, wiping his mouth, eating them, and playing with them. Paul's conspicuous consumption of food and endless desire for more money is disgusting for Peter. Still, he accepts the money Paul offers him as he is about to leave the house. There is no "idealistic hero" but only "images of physical and moral decay" as "the (self interested and disoriented) characters are doomed to an alienated existence" (Constantinidis 1985a, 143). The bodies in decay in this play resist the physical beauty of
modernity and totalitarianism by reproducing the performance of torture. Peter’s dead body is a “produced” truth “inscribed on the body of the victim” in the arena of the rituals of power (Dubois 1990, 324).

Productivity in Visible Boundaries

George Skourtis stated in an interview:

“All societies thrive on property and depravity, aggression and suppression. My plays finish at a dead-end because present social structures offer limited alternatives for better life. So, I dream of a humanistic revolution which is not guided by politicians and economists” (Constantinidis 1985b, 9).

A communicative proclivity and a productive nature full of “potentiality,” The Nannies, brings in alternative narrations of communitarianism or dialogism in the isolationist world of the colonels ripe for “communal schizophrenia.”

Disillusioned from politics, entrapped in time and space, the literature under censorship reflects problems strangling the individual who tries to get out of the identities imposed. Loss of freedom and control over the absurd modern world or authoritarian regimes is reflected through the same dynamics, performing isolation of the subject. Freedom is to be able to put “ideological alternatives” to the framework imposed by the dominant or at least being able to display the position of submission.

Gregory and Timerman refer to Girard’s claim that “violence can play a redemptive role in a society experiencing dissolution through the loosening or weakening of its social structure” (Gregory & Timerman, 1986, 70). They propose that violence is generating resistance even in the most constraining condition under the military rule or “state terror” in Argentina.
This leads to a “generative” force against a “non-generative” or “negative” power. A “productive matrix” (unintentionally but inevitably) created by the censorship takes its energy from the negative structure facing the intellectual who takes pleasure in an honorable positive resistance against it, deconstructing it in literature and on stage.

“The Nannies is ultimately a play about a world where two people wait for a convenient solution to the hopelessness generated by a materialistic society devoid of the humanistic vision, a solution that induces a dangerous hypnosis of the mind and creates a hysteria of acquisition culminating in violence and corruption or in an unquestioning obedience to much that govern the terms of our existence.”

For the audience who is not familiar with the context of the production, the play could be deciphered as an absurd play against the absurdity of the conditions of modernity (such as bourgeois life style, various repressive sources of authority pulling individual from different sides etc.) However, it is crucial to note the potentiality provided for the genre by the context.

Elimination of the “secrecy” of power that is “indispensable to its operation,” (Foucault 1978, 85), visualization of the dominant forces that create the absurdity of social condition takes resistance out of the web of power. Materialization of power initiate and facilitate the generation of a productive resistant discourse. However, this productivity is limited to the period of visibility. Thus, when negative power is eliminated (in the cases of post-totalitarian and authoritarian regimes) the intellectual finds it extremely hard to adapt to this new environment and produce under invisible boundaries.

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CHAPTER 4

POLITICS AND POETICS IN A POLARIZED CONTEXT: TURKISH THEATRE OF
THE 1960S AND 1970S

The inspirational resources and the communicative power of the visual arts,
especially theatre, seem to increase at times of crises in the politics. In the previous
chapter, such a crisis was in the form of totalization in the political sphere. In response,
the oppositional theatrical stage was aiming anti-massification through the genre of the
absurd. This chapter will elaborate on a different case of regime crisis vs. theatrical
response: this time polarization in politics will give rise to theatrical performance
supporting unification and rationalization through the genre of the epic.

The collapse of a parliamentary government in finding solutions to contemporary
socio-economic problems ends up in the search for radical solutions in politics. As
various marginal parties and the state authorities seek unification within their own
frameworks, their use of symbols and myths to increase supporters, and the violence on
the streets bring about spectacularization of the political activity. As political actions turn
into drama observable in everyday life, theatre and other visual arts are nourished from
this increasingly performative society.
George L. Mosse, in his book on political symbolism in Germany before the Third Reich, claims that when “all forms of life become politicized” “men do not mind that the pressure of the world may grow heavily upon the literary imagination, stifling artistic creativity and transforming it into political documentation” (Mosse 1975, 215). This statement fails to explain “the extraordinary cultural ferment in all of the arts” during the Weimar Republic (Willett, 1988) and Turkey in 1960s and 1970s.

This thesis claims that the intensification of political spectacles inspires rather than “stifles” the artistic creativity. Therefore, theatricalization of the political, meaning politics which incorporates elements of the dramatic performance, gives rise to the politicization of theatre—which does not necessarily limit, but rather enhances the possibilities of theatrical space.

The need for spectacles of order in politics may be the result of instability due to swiftly changing conditions in the social, economic and political sphere. Such conditions in Turkey between 1960s and 1980s are signified by three military interventions bringing new eras of politics on the extremes. Democratization in 1961 with the suddenly acquired rights and freedoms is followed by an authoritarianism and increasing polarization leading to drastic violence during 1970s. Then, in 1980s a totalitarian intervention by the military provided long term “stability” through the forceful depolitization of the masses.

The aim of this chapter is to elaborate on the ideological politics and poetics of 1960s and 1970s and to show how the artistic competence is inherently linked to a political vision integrating theatre to the social realm. The political purpose in theatre engenders richness in structure and content. The socio-political conditions nourished the
genre of epic theatre as late as 1970s while the theatre functioned as a form of "resistance" against authoritative clusters of power. The genre of Brechtian Epic Theatre is explored in this study in an effort to define the "voice" of these texts in relation to the political texture of the 1970s.

The following section will provide an account on the political and theatrical history of Turkey between the 1960s and the 1980s to familiarize the reader with the politics and poetics of the period under study. Then, the flourishing theatrical activity during 1960s and 1970s in Turkey will be explained through comparison with a similar period in the German history, the Weimar Republic. The spectacularization of the political sphere and its effects on theatre will be analyzed through the "displays" in these polarized spaces of radical politics.

Following this discussion, epic theatre, the most popular genre of the period in dramatic theory and writing in Turkey, will be examined considering its historical, ideological and structural compatibility with the context. And finally, a close reading of Vastf Öngören's play, Rich Man's Kitchen, will relate it to the preceding premises.

**Democratization and Crisis**

In 1960, Turkey underwent a military intervention. Paradoxically, the new democratic constitution prepared after the coup on 1961 assured more civil rights, providing greater autonomy to universities, freedom of organization to the students and right to strike to the workers. Feroz Ahmad claims that Idea Clubs (*Fikir Kulüpleri*) formed by university students to discuss the problems confronting Turkish society during the process of economic development were the first examples of civil society "in a
country where bureaucratic control had smothered all initiative” (Ahmad, 1993). New political actors emerged; civil society reacting to the enduring state control developed under the new constitutional freedoms.

Turkish theater during this period was flourishing in activity-in terms of playwriting, theoretical studies, and number of performances-due to the release in controls of the arts. The formation of many theater groups by a new generation of performers trained either abroad or in some amateur theatres, led to “a great movement out from the official theatre institutions” (Saral Kurhan, 1999). The practitioners denounced the corruption in state sponsored theatrical institutions stating that the aim of theatre should be to bring into light the problems of contemporary Turkey, and to contribute to the development of political and social consciousness of the people.

During 1960s, the number of theatrical performances that were offered everyday in large cities like Istanbul and Ankara raised enormously.1 The plays staged were increasingly those of young Turkish playwrights2 dealing with social and economic

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1 “In 1960, Istanbul audiences had a choice of less than ten plays on a given day but more than thirty by the end of the decade; the increase in Ankara in the same period was from five to about twenty,” (Halman, 1976: 38).


3 Some of the young playwrights of 1960s and 1970s are: Başar Sabuncu, Oktay Arayıcı, Vazif Öngören, Kerim Korcan, Haşmet Zeybek, İsmet Küntay, Bilgesu Erenus, Adalet Ağaoglu. Older generation of playwrights who were productive during the period are: Aziz Nesin, Haldun Taner, Orhan Asena, Necati Cumali, Melih Cevdet Anday, Turgut Özakman, Refik Erduran, Çetin Altan, Günsör Dilmen. (Şener, 1986: 252-254)
problems openly, staging political issues without the need to use an allegorical language.

Decentralization of the theatrical activities was occurring both throughout the country and within the big cities. Amateur and professional groups were formed in several Anatolian cities (such as Adana, Balikesir, Izmir, Samsun, Diyarbakir etc.) in various regions and many troupes were traveling through Anatolia. Within the urban centers theatre buildings ceased to be the only performance space due to financial problems faced by the theater companies and desire to be closer to the people. Some troupes would perform in slum areas and in the factories pursuing their motto: “everywhere is theater”.

For instance, Theatre of Action for Revolution, (Devrim için Hareket Tiyatrosu) established in 1969, staged 360 performances in various spaces such as during strikes and demonstrations, in wedding halls and coffeehouses and on the streets. (Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi, 1988)

By the end of the 1960s the political situation became chaotic and tension was on the rise in Turkey. As universities were having a hard time functioning and factories were frequently on strike, democratization and the resulting politicization of the students and the workers through the liberal constitution “proved too risky and costly for the right” (Ahmad, 1993). The intervention by the military in 1971, indirect military rule for two

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4 Some examples of the issues dealt in the plays produced and performed during 1960s and 1970s are: unemployment [Vasif Öngören’s Göç (Migration)]; changing family values [Turgut Özakman, Oacak (Home)]; feudalism, repression of the peasants, underdevelopment as a result of state’s neglect in the villages [Cahit Atay’s Karaların Memelleri (The Peasants of the Soil), Recep Bilginer’s İsyancılar (The Rebels), Yaşar Kemal’s Teneke (Tin); problems of the intellectuals [Melih Cevdet Anday’s İçerdekiller (Insiders), Oğuz Atay’s Oyunlarla Yaşayanlar (Those Who Live through the Plays); “dangerous histories” referring to current problems [Erol Toy’s Pir Sultan Abdal, Orhan Asena’s trilogy on the events in Chile, Güngör Dilmen’s Aktarıl (White Gods)] corruption in state institutions [Aziz Nesin’s Yaşar Ne Yaşar Ne Yaşaması (Yashar Neither Alive Nor Dead) Turgut Özakman’s Sarıpar 1914]; social and economic problems of oppressed classes [Sermet Çağan’s Ayak Bacak Fabrikası (Factory of Orthopedic Feet and Legs), Vasif Öngören’s Zengin Mutfağı (Rich Man’s Kitchen), Adalet Ağaçolu’s Çatıdaki Çatı (Crack on the Roof)] etc. (And, 1983), (Sener, 1986) and (Halmán, 1976)

5 Stated by Memet Fuat and Güney Akarsu, prominent directors of the period. (And, 1983)
years and the changes that were made in the constitution all proved the military’s consent to the idea supported especially by the major political party of the right (Justice Party): The constitution of 1961 was a “luxury” for a developing country like Turkey. Measures taken to restore law and order suppressed leftist groups and many intellectuals (such as Çetin Altan, Şadi Alkıç, Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlıcar, Sevgi Soysal, Can Yücel, Erdal Öz, Sebahattin Eyüboğlu, Azra Erhat, Cevat Çapan, Turhan Selçuk, Yaşar Kemal, Aziz Nesin, Vastef Öngören and many others) active in literary and/or theatrical community. The aim was to dissolve the civil society that has been growing strongly against the state and the haute bourgeoisie. What was attained however, was political violence, mainly as a result of the economic crisis (due to the world oil crisis, decreasing foreign aid, low demand for Turkish guest workers abroad, unemployment etc.) leading to social crisis, that took three dimensions: ideological (left vs. right), sectarian (Sunni vs. Alevi or Shi’ite) and ethnic (Turk vs. Kurd) (Hale, 1994). Frequently changing weak coalition governments⁶ as a result of uncompromising politics of the two major political parties (Republican People’s Party and Justice Party) reinforced the minor parties like Islamists (National Salvation Party) and ultra-right (Nationalist Action Party) to gain strength in government to further polarize the political environment.

A study made on the novels reflecting the period of military intervention, the March 12 regime, claim that this literature represents the collapse of the intellectual isolated from the state, from the people who they were trying to speak for, and from their ideals (Akser, 1999). Demoralized and psychologically corrupted by the tortures,

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⁶ There were four governments between 1971-1974 while there was an indirect military rule; after the elections of 1973, seven different coalition governments came to power. (Hale, 1994: 339)
interrogations, imprisonment and by the feelings of suspicion and guilt faced during this period, the more ideologically oriented left is replaced by an increasingly violence oriented left confronting the right wing militants. Marginalization of the left was reinforced by the obliteration of the ideological grounds for democratic action: the freedoms of universities and trade unions had been curtailed and most importantly, the representative of the left in the parliament, the Workers’ Party, had been banned.

In theatre however, demoralization is not as clear, the struggle seems to be going on in an increasing pace in performance and theory. Playwriting, theoretical publications and staging of political plays restarted after 1973. Most playwrights were among those intellectuals for whom being in jail offered some compensations such as meeting with “organic intellectuals,” (workers and Kurds) reading translations of leftist publications (since theatre was a site primarily belonging to the left) and translating and producing new materials for the upcoming period of intense conflict. When they were back on the stage after 1973, they were fighting against both government and right wing authoritarianism acting upon them physically and psychologically. Although many plays were censored, theatre companies were closed down and attacks by Islamist and fascist groups on theatre buildings and actors/actresses occurred during performances, vigorous theatrical activity did not stop until the 1980 coup. After the military intervention in 1980, many directors, playwrights and performers were either imprisoned or fled to Europe (Öngören went to Netherlands). They formed Turkish theatre companies abroad, some returning to Turkey during the 1990s (De Bruijn, 1993).

The following section will inquire into the reasons for productivity in the realm of theatre in Turkey during the period under study. The spectacle will be viewed as a totality
incorporating the political with the aesthetic intensively in times of radicalization. The emphasis of the Weimar culture on visual aesthetics will provide a base from which similar conditions can be traced in Turkey.

Spectacle-The Political and the Aesthetic

The Weimar Republic represents a critical period in German history, between the end of First World War (1918) and the rule of National Socialists in the Third Reich (1933). Economic crisis, political instability and polarization were the main features of this chaotic space where visual arts were unusually productive. In the artistic genres such as painting, architecture, sculpture, film and theatre there was an ongoing experimentation effected by new movements in Europe, expressionism, new objectivity, dada, Bauhaus etc. The shared experience of the war, the Bolshevik Revolution and the disillusionment from the parliamentary democracy bound the intelligentsia who believed in radical transformations for change.

Furthermore, the arts were nourished from a rich resource for innovative visual expressions, from the political symbolism:

"The direct involvement of the masses of people forced politics to become a drama based upon myths and their symbols, a drama that was given coherence by means of a predetermined ideal of beauty. Political acts were often described as particularly effective because they were beautiful, and this whether German nationalists were describing their festivals and monuments, or German workers were talking about their own May Day parades" (Mosse 1975, 8-9).

In addition to the spectacles of the left and the right aiming massification, the state bureaucracy was performing the lately attained national unity through invented festivals such as "Constitution Day." The spectacularization of the political actions by the
left, right and the state bureaucracy presented creative alternatives for the arts, either to argue against or to utilize as tools for organization. For instance, the irrational mythification and symbolism of the ultra-right was countered with the rational expressionism of the Brechtian epic theatre.

The widespread use of visual arts to critique the society and to incite action through appealing the senses was popular in Turkey from 1960s until the 1980s. Graphic arts and theatre were favored above all other forms of artistic expression. This was an inevitable outcome of intense visualization and symbolization of everyday life and of the identities. “A particular musical instrument, drink, costume, sport from the Turkish past, or a particular hair style and mustache associates with Turkists become symbols of Turkishness” (Çağlar 1990, 91) or its opposite identity “communistness.” As the military and the state bureaucracy made their “displays of order” (for instance on the individual bodies subjected to torture during the intervention or in Cyprus during the international crisis of 1974), the right and the left camps performed their own spectacles.

The following lines of a fascist politician reminds the Nazi “physical imperative:”

“A young Turk who has an active mind and a powerful body and is full of faith can accomplish anything. We are against the irresponsible generation having long hair like women, wearing jeans, with chewing gum in his mouth and a guitar in his hand” (Feyizoglu 2000, 51).

These lines were the precursors of commando camps that will be opened in 1970s introducing courses such as judo and karate to train “young Turks” fighting against communism. The socialization of an ultra-rightist would be supported by cultural festivals and celebrations (such as From the Altais to the Danube, Ergenekon Nights, Nights of the Greywolves, Turkish Music and National Dances Festival) named after the
myths on the Turkish past. During these celebrations, there were marching songs
contests, performances of judo, folkdance, sword fighters, folksongs and theatre (plays
such as Table of Moscow, Red Claw, Mute Evil etc.) (Feyizoğlu, 2000).

Performance on the streets included the mass rallies of left and right wing
politicians, demonstrations, strikes, boycotts and graffiti wars. Corresponding to the
rightists, there was an enormous increase in the number of leftist organizations after the
1973. Especially the mildly leftist Peoples’ Houses, and radical student organizations
would organize spectacles such as caricature exhibitions, football tournaments,
folkdance, folksong and theatre performances. The appropriation of tradition and folklore
was the goal for both the radical left and right whose interpretation of the “heritage” was
different.

As the spectacle is de-centralized, moving from the theatrical stage to the other
public and private spaces, the resulting “dramatized society” seeks to be defined through
performance. The identities become visualized symbols of various mythical
constructions. This society offers theatre the possibilities of alternative resources, targets
and audiences. Theatre has much more to say in front of more audience as the stage
welcomes the social forces.

The following section will introduce, through examining the genre of epic theatre,
how theatrical stage responded to the social forces in the polarized performative spaces
mentioned above. The leading questions are: Why was epic theatre an appropriate genre
for the statements of concerns of the theatre people during 1960s and 1970s? How did the
adaptations of Brecht and the plays written following his theories and techniques acquire
the quality of being international and national at the same time?
Epic Theatre and Its Applications

Epic theatre—a term first used by Erwin Piscator (a prominent German director of the political theatre)—was developed into a comprehensive theatrical genre that have enormous impact on post World War I modern theatre by Bertolt Brecht. He started out searching for an alternative way of expression, denouncing the traditional Aristotelian “dramatic form” because of its incapability of connecting to the modern world and its problems such as war, social and economic crisis, alienation of the individual due to the technologization etc. He was for a politically engaged theater without losing the aesthetics of the art form. This genre introduces a novel technical structure for theatre in an intensely politicized environment.

Episodic structure (interdependent but separate scenes not following a linear path of sequence) is an important component of the epic theatre. Usually a narrator opens the scene to inform the audience about the events that will take place during that part of the play, there is no need for a linear progress to facilitate understanding. Events move “in ‘irregular curves’” rather than “in a straight line” so the spectator will be directed to examine the content rather than the sequence of the events (Martin & Bial, 2000: 25).

Another important element of epic theatre is de-familiarization or alienation (Verfremdung) effect that enforces presentation rather than representation, aiming to attain rational thought rather than emotional catharsis. Epic theatre targets a rationally active audience rather than an emotionally involved one whose energy is abused. Alienating him/her from the performers (drawing the audience out of identifications reinforced by cathartic involvement with the performer) is the tool used to create rational
action. Thus the effect of catharsis that would endanger critical analysis of the play is hindered.

A technical tool for attaining alienation is *Gestus*: the coherence of the elements presented on the stage (body movements, gestures, music, makeup, props etc.) that is apt to reflect a social position related to the dynamics of the society. It introduces the audience several socially conditioned “frozen frames” of the context to engender critical thinking.

In the 1960s and 1970s, inquiring into the epic theatre both in terms of theory and practice, adoption and adaptation of Brecht’s works were very popular in many different locations around the world, especially in the colonized or recently decolonized Third World. The genre of the epic would provide the means for a theatre critiquing the problems of modernization, nationalization and industrialization increasingly faced in many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. “Brecht was a common source of inspiration to dramatists from many colonized and marginal societies, responsible, indirectly for introducing them to each other” (Martin& Bial, 2000: 182). Theatre practitioners and historians from various countries including Turkey claimed the compatibility of the Brechtian epic theatre to the local tastes and to the indigenous theatrical traditions. The inherently international roots of the epic theater (the effects of Chinese theatre) may be of the precursor for its high appeal all around the world.

The appeal of epic theatre for the Turkish stage especially after the 1970s is not a surprise. The factors that made the epic theatre a favorable genre for the Turkish

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7 Prominent actress of Brechtian plays Zeliha Berksoy, and theater historian Sevda Sener claimed that epic theatre is close to the traditional *Orta Oyunu* or *Meddah* (story teller) theatres due to some similar aspects such as the usage narration and satire.
playwright can be categorized under historical, ideological and structural compatibilities. Historically, the birth of this type of theatre coincides a period when Germany was facing economic problems as a consequence of the First World War, the Weimar Republic. As discussed in the previous section, polarization of the politics in Germany during this period (1918-1933) increased as the right gained power and moved to the extreme and the left became more resistant in its activities. Swiftly changing political and social realities of the country brought new ways of expression such as the epic theatre. The similarity in the conditions of change, crisis and polarization in politics make this genre compatible within the Turkish context especially after 1970.

*Verfremdung* (alienation) effect “gives a hopeful sense of active agency through its prefix ver- which connotes movement around a static central entity” (original emphasis) (Bryant-Bertail, 2000: 19). Fate is deconstructed in order to open ways of a new consciousness for human agency. This is accomplished by situating the audience into the mechanics of the context lived in, thus creating disillusionment. Alienation effect of the epic theatre provided the technique for attaining politically conscious and activist audience Turkish theatre of the period under study searched for.

As the leftist Turkish intellectuals moved from Kemalist to anti-imperialist ideology during the 1960s and 1970s, they proclaimed the unification of the oppressed nations against the imperialist west (especially the United States). Becoming more actively resistant, they aimed to create a revolutionary movement emerging from the peripheries of the city, of the nation and of the world. The changing climate of Turkish politics, high pace of urbanization and industrialization leading to an increasing number
of workers encouraged the leftist intellectuals to provide a base for action through educating these people to class consciousness.

The emergence of a civil society, especially through the activities of students brought a continuous criticism and analysis of the social, political and economic climate. The art of theatre was considered as functional for discussion among the intellectuals and for the education of public. Thanks to these features, theatre was freed from the claims that art (especially fine arts\(^8\)) is a product of and for the bourgeoisie. Theatre aimed at activating the political consciousness so it was considered as truly revolutionary “legitimate” art form for the leftist activists and intellectuals.

Why was the incitement to agency and action in the mode of a rational intellectual appeal rather than an irrational emotional appeal that might have been more effective? Why was theatre of cruelty or theatre of the absurd not preferred in Turkey in the 1970s? Epic theatre’s desire to attain rational thinking rather than an emotional engagement suits the Turkish playwrights’ aim of reversing the political discourse of the 1970s. In a context where both ultra-right and ultra-left extremist politicians and activists target emotional upheaval to provoke people into action, theatre searched for reconstruction of reason. A new consciousness prescribed in the plays of 1970s was not promoting blindfolded shortsighted activism that would only provide arbitrary solutions neglecting the roots of the social problems. Choosing a rational theatre model rather than the theatre of the absurd or theatre of cruelty (that would probably be better representatives of the irrationality going on in the social and political sphere) shows the playwrights’ need to

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\(^8\) This discussion on arts belonging to and produced by the middle class is an issue coming up in some March 12 (the date of the coup on 1971) novels (*Dugun Gecesi, 47'ler*). The young extremely radical rudimentary leftists are criticized for their denunciation and even hatred for the fine arts.
stabilize the worlds they created on stage in contrast with the uncontrollable space outside theatre. Epic politics of the theatre was against the Aristotelian poetics of the political scene. Aristotelian drama of the political sphere was now countered by the real politics of the epic theatre. In the 1970s, the stage becomes an analytical space, warning people of the dangers of an emotional catharsis though inconsiderate action, a place where the spectators share their frustrations and mistrust of the context.

The dynamism of the epic theatre does not leave the audience immobile with frustrations and mistrust. Rather, it promotes a continuous struggle through the ever-moving circle of dialectical thinking never reaching to a synthesis, representing the ongoing transformations in the context of the 1960s and 1970s. Theatre is a ground for perpetuating analysis rather than a static synthesis. It is a “dynamic process rather than a product” (original emphasis) (Bryant-Bertail 2000, 19). A dialectical move “never reconciles...ideologies and social attributes through its aesthetic design, but presents them to us in their irreconcilable state” (Bryant-Bertail 2000, 24). Such a design reinforces contradictory ideologies to be polarized and marginalized rather than providing a multiplicity that would allow them to stand side by side. This structure that encourages polarization in dramatic presentation is appropriate for attaining the accuracy searched for in reflecting dynamics of Turkish context.

The following section will analyze one of the best examples of epic theatre in Turkey in the 1970s. Rich Man’s Kitchen is selected because of its popularity and its meticulous reflection of the political and intellectual agenda of the period. Immersing poetics into the politics, the creative application of epic theatre to the Turkish context gives it the blend of a local and international fervor.
Rich Man's Kitchen

Vasif Öngören, an actor, director and a prominent playwright of the 1970's, produced four plays [Almanya Defteri (Göç), Asiya Nasıl Kurtulur?, Oyun Nasıl Oynanmalı?, Zengin Mutfağı] that were staged several times by many different theatre companies. Studying Brecht's epic theatre in the Berliner Ensemble for six years, he had a strong background on writing and directing epic theatre. In one of the interviews Rich Man's Kitchen is described as "a play most relevant to the dialectic development of the period Turkey is living in," and Öngören mentions that a playwright should be aware of his responsibility to show reality beyond the ideological sugarcoating. (Tiyatro 77, 1977)

Staged in 1977, the play reflects the turmoil of the period, and mainly the intense conflict between the right and left wing groups. The setting is the kitchen of a factory owner's house. As Ayşegül Yüksel has pointed out in the preface of the compilation of Öngören's plays, this is a setting popular in the Turkish film serials of the 1960's, a cozy place where the servant and the boss are displayed in a warm and friendly relationship. However, "Öngören first places the audience within the 'familiar' setting of the kitchens of the rich, then by showing exactly the opposite of the 'pretentious' relations in those films, he alienates him from those kitchens." (p. 10) Thus the setting becomes an important factor supporting the alienation effect of the epic theatre.

The main character is the Cook (Lütfü Usta) who has been working in the kitchen for twenty years. The play depicts a critical period in his life when he tries to decide whether he should leave his job. He is forced to make this decision as the working conditions and the climate of the workplace is changing along with the fluctuations in the political climate.
The Cook performs the role of a narrator as well as the protagonist, opening every scene with an introduction to the events that have been going on within and outside the house, thinking out loud critically of the limits and definition of his duties as a servant, of his frustrations on which side he has to stand for, questioning if he has to take action performing a group identity in the flow of events that lead gradually to his gaining a class consciousness. The other characters are: the Maid, a young girl coming from a working class family; the Driver (Seyfi), who becomes more and more politically conscious and active as the plot unravels; driver’s brother (Ahmet), a worker constantly conveying information about the activities of the workers and the political events taking place to the Kitchen thus to the audience; and the Maid’s fiancé (Selim), a young and poor university student who has been cheated by his brothers and sisters in the share of inheritance gradually becoming a militant fascist. Although they do not appear on stage, the owner of the house Kerim Bey and the Maid’s brother Murat (a leader in a workers’ union) are representatives of the two main sides in the class conflict that is constantly accelerating throughout the play as the other characters take their sides. Kerim Bey’s dog brought from Europe is a symbolic figure representing the armed protectors of the capitalist system. Nourished and kept strong with expensive food, it is the guardian of 'the boss' and of 'the house' attacking harmless intruders.

The play starts out with a real event, the workers' demonstrations on June 15-16, 1970, that were the first massive activity when Turkish workers showed themselves to be a unified class. In the turmoil of the day, the Maid and her boyfriend are engaged in a small ceremony in the kitchen by the Cook. The same day, being afraid of a revolution of
workers, the owner of the house has fled to Europe. Soon the military authorities announce martial law and a search for the organizers of the demonstrations begin.

As the play moves on to the military intervention on 1971 and the following March 12 regime, Kerim Bey (the boss) comes back from Europe. Selim (fiance of the Maid) denounces one of the leftist activists to earn some money for their wedding. Being afraid of getting killed by the activists’ friends, Selim hides in Kerim Bey’s house who welcomes him for his ‘courage’ in denunciation. Selim is sent to a camp for ‘education’ in fighting against communism, while we are informed that the workers who are involved in demonstrations are either fired or imprisoned. The capitalist-state cooperation seems to be growing against the working class. As the workers (represented in the acts of Murat) are trying to get organized, the capitalists (represented by Kerim Bey) form their small militia to undermine these acts.

After his ‘education’ is completed Selim becomes an aggressive anti-communist administrating the role of a police within the house. The Cook’s personal protest by poisoning the dog fails when the boss replaces it with a new dog and when Selim starts an intense investigation to find out who poisoned the dog. Suspecting everyone else except the Cook, Selim concludes that his fiance is the one who commited this crime collaborating with some communists. He intends to torture her, while everyone else is suspicious of the Maid for being his spy. In the end, series of events culminate at the kitchen gang’s (the Maid, the Driver, the Cook and the Driver’s brother) learning Selim’s plan about his fiance and preventing a planned attack by the militia headed by Selim to a meeting of workers organized by Murat (the Maid’s brother). The play concludes with a dialogue of the narrator with the audience, telling them how the rest of the servants have
chose their sides in the left as they are replaced by the rightists and asking the audience whether he should quit the job or not. The Cook questions his identity and allegiances as well as that of the boss and those of the audiences. “Whom are we serving now? A man should think about who he is serving... I have decided to leave this job! Still, I want to get your opinion. Which is harder, to leave or to serve Kerim Bey? Well, let me go now!” (p.284)

The play eventually divides the world into two blocks: fascists or capitalists and workers or communists. As Selim says, “A person is either form us or from them. If he is against us then he is leftist, this is the measure. If you can’t get this measure you can’t get anything.” (p. 275) In the end the undecided person, the Cook, who is the only person left in the Kitchen, is in the worst condition compared to those who have decided on their affiliations. There are two clearcut classes and the family background of a character seems to determine which side he should take. The Maid and the Driver coming from a working class family move to the left side of the scale as Selim coming from a bourgeois family chooses to move to the right extreme.

Öngören’s characterization is not in line with Brecht’s choice of shaping the characters. Rich Man’s Kitchen does not present split personalities who carry both good and bad within themselves as in Brecht’s plays (for example, Shen Te in the Good Woman of Setzuan). Although transformations might occur throughout the play (as in the case of Selim) for the most part, the characters are either good or bad. Furthermore, the genetic determination of character and choice of ideology diminishes Marxist and thus Brechtian claims of social conditioning.
However, putting aside the possibility of such clearcut characters, the play aims to reflect the reality of the period Turkey is living in. In 1970's, as the polarization in the politics increased, the people were forced to take one of the two sides. The characters consider themselves in a war where everybody else except them can be from the enemy side. The author seems to think that every regime based on strict authority with the intention of annihilating free thinking and crushing human will, creates a corrupted psychology of the individual torturing himself perpetually through suspicion from each and every other person.

The kitchen, once was a safe place where the lower class people could gather for a friendly chat, had now become politicized as every other space in the country. The division of these people through ideological opposition shows that the intentions of bourgeoisie were accomplished. Such a setting supports the *Gestus*, or the social picture that reflects the dynamics of the society. The familiarity of this cosy environment reflecting the daily lives of ordinary people amplifies the effect of disillusionment from the context to engender critical thinking. The events are not happening in an abstract space far away from realities. Thus, the audience is situated in a socio-political environment where action is necessary since he may end up in a similar kitchen.

The play dramatizes the theoretical by placing it in the everyday life of ordinary people and reflecting how they are pulled into either left or right as a consequence of the flow of events rather than conscious thinking. The narrator warns the audience that the problems faced in these ordinary lives are shared and we all have to think "who we are serving" in this flux of identifications. A conscious thinking about where he belongs is
asked to the spectator to prevent any irrational conclusions determined by the suddenly confronted, unexpected situations.

Throughout the play, there is almost no referral to an autonomous government or any other state institutions. The non-existence of an independent state authority reflects the chaotic situation where the capitalists, establishing their laws and armed forces as the "heads" of state, are in fight with the "belly." The body of the superstructure invaded by the capitalists is symbolized by the dog in the play. The action towards obliterating the dog proved to be an arbitrary solution resembling the action of workers and intellectuals towards the state and towards the capitalist. The condition of anarchy and terror of 1970s is reflected in the authors conscious choice of leaving out any encompassing entity that would act as an arbitrator between the capitalist and the worker, or the fascist and the communist.

Şener states that "Rich Man’s Kitchen is an attempt to combine the epic form of Brechtian plays and the spectacular elements of traditional entertainment." Öngören’s use of elements from popular theatre aims to stimulate a dialogue between the audience and the performers. Following Brecht, he imagined an active audience like those of traditional folk performances. However, the incitement to action in an epic performance did not necessarily coincide with the acting style of a traditional performance. Although the author’s portrayal of the Cook “reminds us of the traditional Meddah who used to tell stories while acting them out at the same time, in the manner of a one-man show” (Şener, 1986: 262) Öngören, as a director, did not favor an acting style that would make the play

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9 Brecht’s opinion about the western vs. eastern audience is outlined in his lines: “The west sat with bored smiles, the stupidity of which was downright comical. So it missed the customary sensational decoration
a "one-man show." Identification of the audience with this funny old man is prevented by the "lightness and naturalness" in the style of acting exemplified by the performance staged by Öngören’s company Birlik Stage on 197710 (Çılizoğlu, 1978). Çılizoğlu criticizes Ankara Art Theatre’s interpretation of the play as their representative acting style reinforced identification with the artist rather than inciting critical thinking.

Naturalness is a challenging task to the actor; however, he is supposed to be fully aware of his responsibility to be just a functioning part in the Gestus, no more no less. The non-presence of the two main sides in the class conflict, the capitalist (Kerim Bey) and the union leader (Murat), (who are the real protagonists in the political play inside the theatrical play) is another aspect of the play that reinforces Gestus and alienation effect. Presenting the ordinary rather than the heroic or the demonic is compatible with the following intention of the epic theatre: “The Gestus of the performer and the Gestus of the performed were to interact in a dialectic that reveals their social function while creating the Gestus of the performance. And the Gestus of performance was to take sides in the social struggle of our age” (Martin & Bial, 2000: 48).

Eventually, this text of tableaux communicating to the audience an ordinary world where behaviors are socially conditioned, try to rationalize the chaotic outer world (Turkey in the 1970s) where the identities are interrogated. The author poses the question to the audience “Whose side are you supporting? You’d better decide before you are forced to make irrational choices in haste.”

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and color of the situations. It restricted himself to the common material. So, who is primitive and who is not?” (Bodek, 1997: 150)
Questioning Identifications

Dating back to the 1960s, Turkish theatre people tried to attain a democratic theatre that is, in Augusto Boal’s terms, a “dialogical form” being “a part of social activity, pedagogy, psychotherapy and politics” (Boal, 1998). In the 1970s, however, this objective was harder to accomplish as theatre was persuaded to become one of the sites for the violent armed struggle. An attempt to create an active civil society within the realm of the theatrical performance was going along with a reaction against the authoritarianism that was in the form of censorship by the government and by the ultra-rightist groups.

As the streets became performance spaces for expression of complaints through demonstrations, the theatrical space, being nourished by this excessive performativity, became aware of its potential to affect the socio-political context. Democratic protest rather armed struggle was the source of inspiration for theatrical performativity. The “rationality” proposed in the epic theatre was a resistance against the irrational violence on the streets.

Kemalist nationalism, based on the idea of a unified, classless, and secular Turkish nation within the borders of the Turkish state (assigning the Turkish identity to every religious and ethnic group) was competed on various scales with the emergence of class consciousness, Kurdish activism, ultra-nationalist and ultra-Islamist sectarianism. Just like nationalization, modernization and westernization were questioned as well. Anti-imperialist left wing intellectuals questioned the concepts of modernization in the western lines.

10 Brecht claimed that the success of the alienation effect depended on “lightness and naturalness” of acting
Turkish theatre in these times, found a local, communitarian as well as an international fervor through the usage of epic theatre. Although a genre appropriated from the west, epic theatre provides the tools for the best examples of indigenous playwriting when it is combined with the suitable political context.

Theatre of 1970s started questioning the definition of identities formed in the flux of socio-political environment. The theoreticians and practicans of drama predominantly emphasized consciousness of a class identity among any other possible identifications contested during the time (such as ethnic or religious). Still, the theatrical experiments of 1970s carried the significance of being the preliminary attempts to create an environment inquiring into how “Turkish” identity could be shaped.

rather than an exaggerated “unnatural style of acting” (Martin& Bial, 2000: 19).
CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, an analysis of the relationship between drama and politics in Greece and in Turkey—the rivaling belated nations—during 1960s and 1970s is presented. The connecting link between these theatres is their resistant political involvement that proves to be an integral part of their artistic energy. Greek and Turkish dramatic writing and performance are empowered by the socio-political contexts that offer potentials encouraging the merge of the artistic with the political. The identity crisis in the Greek and Turkish society in this period pushed these theatres out of their initial position as national state institutions. Being part of the ideological state apparatuses by birth, their social awareness in a critical period led Greek and Turkish theatres out of the homogeneous westernized national models of theatrical institutionalization.

In times of intense conflict (or states of emergency) within the society, the power is made visible to re-establish order. In Foucault’s terms, this appearance is a shift from the “positive” to “negative” power (meaning a move from the productive hidden power to the unproductive visual power). As politics incorporates illustrative elements of the arts, in response, arts become ironically critical and attempt to deconstruct the political spectacle. Spectacularization of the politics leads to the creation of “positive” visual artistic spaces in resistance against the “negative” displays of order. Accordingly,
dramatic narrative displays the play of a play, negate the political discourse. By parodying the stylized genres of politics, theatre aims to destabilize official discourses.

In Greece under military rule, the theatre responded to the irrational totalization attempts in the political sphere. Dramatic space reversed political discourse by supporting the sanity of an individual and his local communitarian bonds. In the Turkish theatre of the 1960s and 1970s, the same idea of communitarianism was presented against irrational polarization. As state power is negated in the politics of Greece (under the military rule) and Turkey (under the political polarization) theatres, of these countries started to question who they are serving. Rebellion against the absurdity of the conditions presented by the changing environment, de-familiarization from the context and anger of witnessing or living within an irrational era are the feelings of Greek and Turkish playwrights as well as those of the epic and absurd theatrics. Authoritarianism of both totalized and polarized politics leads the dramatization of the outcome: trauma or communal schizophrenia, in Bateson's terms "abnormal use of psychological frames."

Effected from cruel political realities, playwriting in Greece and Turkey during 1960s and 1970s is dominated by an oppositional and critical energy that is fighting against irrationality of the violent, suspicious, disintegrating and lulling identity production by the negative political powers.

What is the role of theatrical genres in conveying the voice of Greek and Turkish playwrights? The epic and absurd theatre are genres already on the fringes of the modern, the western, and the national, critical of these identifications. Thus, by nature, they were suitable for alternative voices that would be critical of the Greek and Turkish official discourses in the 1960s and 1970s.
Both epic and absurd theatres reflect a “crumbling setting” symbolizing the disintegration of communication and humanitarian relationships “in the fragmented and confused universe encompassing the individual” (Shunami 1975, 46-56) The settings, the kitchen and the mansion, are becoming alien to the characters in time. The repressive nature of these spaces persuade the disintegration of the communitarianism, eliminating the humanitarian bonds between the characters by bribing some against the others and by instilling them suspicion from the others. The deprived, authoritarian, isolationist world of play refers to the real world that is neither consistent nor explicable any more. The plays reflect the effect of rotten powers on the ordinary people. Events and the mindsets are out of logic and still on the symbolic (or absurd) or realistic (or epic) levels they may victimize anybody.

Paradoxically, the settings also present optimistic revolutionary alternatives against disintegration of the resident subversive communities. The coffeehouse (the setting prior to the mansion) in Skourtis’ play and the kitchen in Öngören’s play are generative in terms of gathering, socializing and “cooking up” against the “head.” They are spaces of relative freedom where the oppositional ideas and feelings could be shared.

A comparison of the plays analyzed in the previous chapters (The Nannies and Rich Man’s Kitchen) with reference to a parallel comparison of epic and absurd theatre presents several outcomes. Both plays are based on a master-servant relationship that emphasizes critical questions on identity: Who are we serving? Do we have the freedom to make a choice? Can we stay out of the hegemonic power mechanisms? These questions are posed to the characters in the play, to the audience and to the institution of theatre itself. The way criticism is structured and the optimism about change of the
immediate circumstances resisted against, are different in Greek and Turkish plays. So the answers to the questions above vary as the divergence in the theatrical genre would imply. Brechtian “analytic disclosure of power and its relations” in Öngören’s text concludes in the possibility of a new consciousness to provoke active resistance against such power. On the contrary, Skourtis’ text “represents...power at its most elemental, through its often visceral registers in human tissue,”¹ a sinister power that diffuses into the subjects psyche to disable the capacity of rational thought.

A comparison of the subversive characters in both plays tells us a more optimistic story of identification and resistance. Peter and the Cook resemble heroes of the traditional folk theatre in their funny, confused and satirical mood. Friendliness of their confusion is apt to result in an anti-Brechtian identification with the audience rather than creating alienation. However, such identification may have positive consequences since it is not based on eliminating the “Other.” Peter and the Cook create the “Other” within, by continuously questioning themselves. Their eventual transformation in and through the play is exemplary. They produce a counter-discourse by attempting or accomplishing a tragic action. For the Cook in Rich Man’s Kitchen such action would be to leave the kitchen like the rest of the servants. Peter on the other hand, commits his fatal tragic action by trying to get out of Stavros’ mansion.

The playwrights’ aim is to create a consciousness of the scene, to instill an awareness of the individual’s standing as a subject who may end up serving the wrong side. Then the actor and the audience can chose between a conscious puppet or a

¹The above quotes in full: “Brecht sought an analytical disclosure of power and its relations; subsequent dramatists have sought to represent this power at its most elemental, through its often visceral registers in human tissue” (Garner 1994, 161)
conscious opponent. Theatre also questions for whose profit it, as an institution, is working and resists being a representative of the state power.

As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis started with a search for nationalist narrations in theatre during a time when the Greek and Turkish state powers were highly dramatized against each other when they were fighting over Cyprus. The outcome of this search was completely opposite of the expected. The anti-national, critical, communitarian and constructive natures of Turkish and Greek theatres of the 1960s and 1970s had the resources to stand critical to the rivaling nationalisms rather than reaffirming nationalist narrations. Affected from the international subversive movements (epic and absurd theatres), they provided alternative indigenous identities that would surpass the displays of unity, order and nationalism. Lost their belief in the state, Greek and Turkish theatres were involved with the hostilities within the nation state rather than externalizing them. Carrying both international and indigenous fervor, they suggested a critical outlook deconstructing Greek and Turkish official discourses. After all they were aware that Greece and Turkey had the similar fate of being “America’s Mediterranean Neighborhood,” suffering under the rule of imperialist powers promoting nationalist movements and puppet military forces. The critical awareness of theatre about the plays of order staged by the Greek and Turkish states enables them to be the moving engines for “positive” resistance.

There are several insufficiencies of this study. It would be necessary to examine more than two plays to support the conclusions above. Also, failing to explore the

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2 A phrase used in the editor’s corner of a prominent Turkish theatre periodical. The article is on the political context in Turkey and Greece, stating how they both suffer under imperialism. (Tiyatro 73 1973, 11)
audience response to the analyzed plays is a several handicap in the search for understanding the Greek and Turkish theatrical cultures.

Although this cannot be considered as an in-depth analysis satisfactory for the disciplines of theatre history, comparative literature, political science or history; it is an attempt to intermingle all these disciplines to promote multidisciplinary forms of reasoning. As Bruce McConachie suggests in his article on theatre historiography, such a framework is prospective in surpassing the narrations framed by nationalism, a crucial obstacle that has to be surpassed in the Greek and Turkish studies of each other's culture.
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