

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE COMPARISON OF TURKISH AND ITALIAN POPULAR DRAMA TRADITIONS AND THEIR MODERNIZATION

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1987 yılının Ocak ve Ağustos ayları arasında İtalya Dışişleri Bakanlığı'nın bursu ile Roma Üniversitesi ("La Sapienza")'nde gerçekleştirdiğim araştırmanın sonuç raporu olarak yazılmış olan bu metin, o yıllarda, sadece araştırmamı yürüttüğüm profesörlere (Prof. Magli ve Prof. Marotti) ve İtalya Dışişleri Bakanlığı'na sunulmuştu. Daha sonra doktoramın, o yıllardan bu güne kadar sahnelediğim bazı oyunların, bazı kuramsal çalışmalarımın temelini oluşturmuş ve bu güne kadar hiç yayınlanmamıştı.

"Introduction" bölümünde açıklandığı gibi temel amacı ülkelerin halk tiyatrosu geleneklerinden yola çıkarak günümüzde nasıl bir tiyatro yapılabileceği sorusuna yanıt aramaktaydı. 21 yıl sonra metni bir kez daha okuduğumda ele aldığı temel konu bakımından güncelliğini koruduğunu gördüm. Ayrıca kültürlerarası etkileşim konusunda da hâlâ kullanılabilecek bir anahtar sunduğunu düşünüyorum. İtalyan ve Türk halk tiyatrosu geleneklerini karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemesi açısından da yayınlanmasının yararlı olacağı görüşüne vardım.

Metnin, "Introduction"da belirttiğim birinci bölümünü bir başka çalışmamda daha geliştirilmiş olarak yer aldığı için çıkardım. Tiyatronun doğuşu üzerine model oluşturduğum bir bölümdü bu. Ancak bu değişiklik, metinde bir eksikliğe yol açmıyor, çünkü orada oluşturulan model, İtalyan ve Türk halk tiyatrolarının doğuşu başlıklarında yeniden ele alınıyor.

Metinde, birkaç ufak düzeltme dışında bir değişiklik yapmadım. 21 yıl önce kaleme alındığını imleyen ifadeleri, metnin bu özelliğini okuyucuya hatırlatması için olduğu gibi bıraktım. "Bibliography" de buna dâhildir.

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İçerdiği fikirler ve temel yaklaşımı konusunda hâlâ aynı görüşleri paylaşıyorum; bunların bir kısmını daha sonraki çalışmalarımınla aynı temeller üzerinde geliştirdim, bir kısmına ise daha eleştirel bir gözle bakmaktayım. Ancak bu raporun özü itibarıyla belki de biraz ertelenmiş bir tartışma ve araştırmalar için zemin oluşturabileceğini düşünüyorum.

Introduction

“The world theater has been living a crisis since the beginning of our century. Unfortunately the close and the meaningful relation between the stage and the spectator do no longer exist. Dramatists, searching for a solution to this problem have been re-evaluating various historical heritages from traditional Chinese theater to ancient Greek drama. One tendency among these efforts is to re-examine national theater traditions and while trying to keep its traditional form to recreate this traditional theater with the new facts of the new life.”

(...)

“The focus of my intended research consists of this point: to study the Italian folk theater tradition from its origins to our day in comparison with the respective development of Turkish traditional theater and to examine the contemporary situation and to discuss the accomplished synthesis of the Italian folk theater from the stand point of Turkish traditional theater.”

This is how I set the aim of this research study, in the program that I have previously presented at the beginning of our research. And I also declared that the research was going to be carried out in four phases: the first phase being the confrontation of the origins of two traditional theaters; the second, the confrontation of Italian commedia dell’arte and Turkish Ortaoyunu; the third, comparison of respective developments of two traditional theaters; and the fourth, the modern attempts to utilize these traditional theaters. However, during the course of the research the study was diversified in various directions. For example, the study of the origins of two traditional theaters has led us to study the origins of popular drama or rather the origins of drama in general. Also the comparison of

two dramatic traditions had ended in the comparison of not only two cultures but also the socio-economic history of two countries, since they set the foundation of cultures.

The reason for this expansion was quite simple: scholars that I had studied already examined and compared the traditional theatres of two cultures. But somehow they ended up in questions instead of answers. Of course this was the result of a scholarly approach—since at least for me a scholar is a person who can ask the right question more than who can give the right answer, but their questions reached to the point of saturation, that it seemed to proceed further was impossible and everything was done once and for all. They of course have answered certain questions, but their answers were unsatisfactory or rather of little help for my questions. So the situation seemed like a deadlock, that we almost thought of dropping the study.

At this point, a very important study on the origins of tragedy enlightened our course, both systematically and also with the tremendous value of information that it contained. This was “Aeschylus and Athens” of George Thomson. His knowledge is used through out the study, but his systematic encouragement consisted of two points: first he showed us the exit out of this deadlock; second, he gave us the tool to proceed further.

The exit he showed us is in the following lines:

*“It has sometimes been said, especially in recent years, that the possibilities of further research in classical studies are limited. I believe that they are as limitless in this as in any other branch of science, historical or physical; but we are to exploit them, we must emancipate ourselves from traditional methods, which served well in their time, but are now exhausted.”*¹

Therefore I have changed my course and started to study the traditional dramas of two countries as a function of cultures and socio-economical developments. On the other hand, the study of the origins of drama of these countries inevitably led me to investigate the origins of drama in general. Therefore I gathered information on three major fields: origins and development of drama in ancient Greece, those of drama in Italy and those of

¹ Thomson, George, *Aeschylus and Athens, A Study in the Social Origins of Drama*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1966., pp. 4-5.

drama in Turkey. Having compiled this information I was ready for a comparative study. Thomson again came to my aid and showed me the method of my comparative study with his following lines:

“The comparative study of social evolution is complicated by two factors, both making for uneven development in the first place; the growth of many primitive communities has been retarded by economic difficulties of their habitat. The lower hunting tribes of contemporary Australia have failed to advance beyond the mode of production left behind in Europe at the close of the Paleolithic epoch; but though their economic development has been arrested, their social institutions have not remained stationary—they have continued to develop, but only in direction determined by that mode of production. In the second place, the more backward peoples have been continuously subjected to the cultural influence of the more advanced, with the result that their development has been accelerated, deflected or obstructed. In extreme cases the peoples themselves have been destroyed. The complications arising from the operation of this factor can not be fully resolved until we have worked out a theory of cultural diffusion, but meanwhile it may be observed that their significance can easily be exaggerated. Since the function of all social institutions, alien or indigenous, is to satisfy some need, the origin of this or that custom is not explained by saying that it was borrowed from abroad. As Ferguson remarked, ‘nations borrow only what they are nearly in a condition to have invented themselves.’”²

By using this approach I was not only able to make a sound comparison, but also I found explanations for the similarities and differences. Also the unique features of the Turkish popular drama tradition became comprehensible by the application of the logic of this approach.

On the other hand I tried to carry our study in two levels: first we discussed the historical development of the society and parallel to it, the historical development of the

² Ibid. pp. 3-4.

drama; then I tried to verify the outcome of this stage in the structural discussion of the dramatic activities.

Therefore my study starts with a chapter, discussing the origins of drama and explaining the emergence of popular drama with the socio-economic evolution of the society. Another outcome of this chapter is the demonstration of the basic features of popular drama, starting from its birth. The second chapter is dedicated to the origins and the history of Italian popular drama. With the very same approach the third chapter dwells on Turkish popular drama. The fourth chapter handles the comparison of two popular drama traditions with the same perspective and points not only the similarities but perhaps more, to differences between them. The fifth and the final chapter classify the modernization attempts and criticize them by showing their merits and shortfalls. Our proposal is also presented in this chapter.

As it is understood from the title I have given, this study is only a preliminary report, which means that it does not bear the accuracy of a work finished. Therefore there are a lot of points passed without a deeper discussion while some others were continually stressed. At this point I only tried to demonstrate a new approach.

In short, I kindly request the reader, to have all these factors in mind while going through the pages of this immature, but new approach. The merits of this study belong to the scholars that I have studied and that I name through out the text, and I am more than willing to accept its shortfalls.

On The Origins And The History of Italian Popular Drama

“Origins of the Italian popular theater”, in relation with the “origins of the Italian theater,” has been discussed by many scholars both separately and together with the origins of *commedia dell'arte*. It is neither our task nor capacity to re-discuss the whole issue; however we will present a general outline of the approaches and compare them.

From Origins To *Commedia Dell'Arte*

Main approaches of the scholars who studied the origins of Italian theater can be summarized as follows:

1. Those who believe that the origin of the Italian theater lies in *sacra rappresentazioni*.
2. Those who believe that the origin is the yearly or seasonal folk festivals (carnavale) and popular dramatic dances.
3. Those who believe that the Italian theater is a direct continuation of the Roman Theater.
4. Those who believe that Italian theater emerged from the revivals of the ancient Greek culture during Renaissance.
5. Finally those who believe that Italian theater is a product of the all of (or some of) the factors above.

Each one of the scholars explains only a portion of the total reality. Although they accept the basic discussions of the others, they emphasize their approach to the extent that we can almost call it “emotional”.

First of all we have to admit that there existed a dramatic activity during the medieval epoch. This subject had been discussed by Faral and later by Nicoll and their discussion and historical evidences clearly demonstrate that there was a very wide spread popular dramatic activity between the end of the Roman Empire and *commedia dell' arte*. However, there is a very important distortion in their outcome which weakens their discussion and thus credits the alternative approaches. This distortion is by looking at two similar forms of dramatic activities to claim that the historically later one is descended from the first, without searching the reasons of similarity. Originating from this point of view they start to elaborate on the descendance of stock-figures, themes, structures, masks, etc. By the time when historical facts reveal the reality and thus a direct descendance becomes impossible their discussions serve only to the counter approaches. In order to eliminate this distortion, it has to be very well understood that similar historical conditions may lead to similar outcomes, -though only “similar”, not “identical”-, although the origins are different; and also different historical conditions may lead to different outcomes, although the origins are “similar” (and sometimes “identical”). Therefore when a similarity is being discussed it has to be discussed in the context of history and society. If this approach is corrected according to this point of view it becomes very effective, as we shall see below.

Secondly, there has always been sympathy for the peasant rituals of different cultures, perhaps because scholars see in them an embryo of the dramatic activity. This is

of course true, but it is a widely accepted fact that the drama is not the ritual; it starts where the ritual ends. Also, the organizing and stimulating functions of the ritual can be carried out in drama only by the reversal of structure, or the types of drama which reproduces the structure of the ritual leads to contrary functional results. Besides this fact, the peasant ritual is no longer a ritual in the true sense of the word, -which means that it is not an activity of a non-diversified society-, but it is a social organ which keeps on existing although it had become useless long ago. Even the very careful studies which utilize this approach demonstrate this fact. For example, Toschi includes “narration” among the elements of the ritual, which only means that he has in consideration of an epoch when ritual is already on a decline. If we are talking about an authentic ritual, there is no need for narration, since the whole story is very well known by the audience, who did not even separately existed in the first stages but was a part of the participators as well. As Thomson’s discussion on the birth of dithyramb and tragedy shows in detail, the narration was necessary only after ritual ceased to be “a ritual”. However the purpose of this approach is to find a similar foundation as that of the ancient Greek drama, so the attention is directed to whatever is there that resembles ritual. Thus a hope is enjoyed of finding an authentic foundation for a “national theater”. But as we shall see further on in the origins of the Turkish traditional drama, there are cases, that the ritual did not lead to the birth of drama or at least lead to the birth of a different dramatic activity. Therefore, this equation from ritual to drama does not always work. However it is true that they serve for a structural analysis. Again the evidences provided by this approach, when discussed on a historical and social basis reveal interesting facts. These facts will be studied below.

Another problem is encountered when we take into consideration the approach that claims the origins are in “*sacra rappresentazioni*”. The only difference between this approach and the one above is perhaps the scholars of this approach have more religious feelings than the others. They see the ritualistic origins of the drama not in the leftovers of paganism but in the ceremonies of the church. Their starting point is again the birth of drama in the ancient Greek society. In order to develop their point they compare the Dionysian cults with the cult of the Christian church and they find a lot of similarities in the liturgy. In fact all of their points are true. However, again because they lack the historical and social point of view, their findings can only relate to the fact that Christianity is only one step ahead of paganism. It is not our authority to discuss the comparison of two religious beliefs, but even the well-known story of Christ’s birth from Mary and God and

thus his being the God, the son and the Holy Spirit at the same time is nothing but the revival and combination of totemism and ancestor worship, now only in the form of a purely human shape and with the only difference of an abstract notion of “God”. On the other hand because this approach had totally restricted itself to the field of religion and drama, it can not realize that the birth of drama in ancient Greek society was a product of the birth of private ownership on the land; thus its second supposed birth was in a society where private ownership has evolved towards another stage. In sum, this approach only provides valuable material for a structural study and may explain the relations between official liturgy and *sacra rappresentazioni*, but insufficient in explaining how and why this development took place at a certain time under certain conditions. The presumption that every religion is a creator of a drama will be handled later on in the origins of Turkish popular drama.

Still another problem is the fact that scholars always feel indebted to the ancient Greek culture when the “origins of drama” is matter of subject. We have already shown that all of the approaches discussed above, in some way or another display their fidelity to the ancient Greek culture: the very first approach claims that popular drama is the descendant of the ancient “popular drama”; second approach tries to create a new origin, but similar to the one in ancient Greece and finally the last one points to the similarities between two religious beliefs and thus tries to explain the origins. This concept of fidelity to ancient Greek culture is at the peak, when another approach claims that drama was reborn in on the revivals of classics during Renaissance. Although they accept that there was a dramatic activity before Renaissance, they claim that it was impossible for this dramatic activity to gain “an artistic form and value” without the revivals of ancient Greek culture. Therefore the determinative factor in the birth of drama during Renaissance was these revivals. In fact, this also is the truth, however since they lack the historical and social point of view, they don't see that both revivals of ancient Greek culture and so-called “rebirth” of drama were the products of the very same historical and social process. Of course they have influenced each other and these influences will be clarified below by taking into consideration the historical and social reality of the age.

Obviously we were neither the first nor the only one to see the shortfalls of these approaches; a group of scholars has already attempted to unify all or some of them. This is what we see in Pandolfi's efforts when he is explaining the origins of *commedia dell' arte*.

It can even be said that this approach draws a more complete picture of the process since it takes more factors into consideration than the others. On the other hand, they also can not explain the “why”s of the problem: why it happened at a certain period of history and at a certain place, why it did not happen in other places or happened in different directions? All these questions can be answered again by taking into consideration the historical and social factors and then the valuable information provided by these scholars become even more valuable. Only by the help of such a point of view this approach can be undressed from its compromising character.

Having discussed and criticized main trends of approaches about the origins of Italian theater, we can state our point of view.

First of all we have to repeat a widely accepted fact: an activity that contains elements of drama and thus has a potential to evolve into drama does not necessarily do so. Therefore, drama is the product of social and historical facts but not that of another social element. Of course all of the social elements influence each other and thus the birth of drama, but we always have to bear in mind that they are also the product of the very same reality that creates drama.

Under the light of this point, when we look at the middle ages we see a very wide spread dramatic activity. This dramatic activity consisted of two main lines: one of them was the popular drama and the other was the peasant ritual. The peasant ritual having lost its social and economic basis kept on existing, since it takes ages for an ideology to die. Naturally there were also dramatic elements in the peasant ritual, such as the Death-Purification-Rebirth triple cycle, change of costumes, protagonist and antagonist figures, etc. However peasant ritual has already been stripped off of its social function, “to organize and provoke the collective power of the society to change the reality”, and had become a matter of personal belief or superstition, as organized religions have become today. Since it was confined with the natural renewal, it also compensated for unchangeability of the oppression on the social level. Influence of the peasant ritual on the birth of other dramatic forms will be referred to as they start to emerge through out the course of the history.

However, the popular drama holds on to its ridiculing the social and religious order by way of “mimi” and “giullari”. Starting from the times of the Roman Empire, practically from the beginning of Christianity, we see that they made fun of this new religion as they did of the older one; they enjoyed the ridicule of baptism very much as they enjoyed the

ridicule of Zeus, Apollo and Heracles. But as the oppression of Romans evolved into a torture not only against Christians but against people as a whole, they started to rebel practically on the stage some of them getting martyred because of their religious beliefs, some of them getting burned by dictators as Caligula, because of their political attitudes. Also in this period we see a split in the popular drama because of an inner contradiction that it contained since from the beginning: professionalism, namely to live on the money provided by the profession, forced them to create and perform not always as the voice of the people, but from time to time for the joyful pacification of the people. These two tendencies lived together, sometimes, one of them winning superiority over the other. This was the condition of popular drama when we hear of its last concrete evidences during the middle of the first millennium. After this point the clues of the existence of popular drama is plentiful, however they yield very little information about the quality of these activities. First of all, these evidences are rather indirect, thus we hear from the offences of the church against popular drama; but there is nothing strange in this since one of the most important features of popular drama is its being unliterary and therefore unwritten. On the other hand, continuing attacks of the church show that it kept on existing in a way just at the opposite of demands of religious circles. But what were the demands of these circles? In order to understand it, we have to glimpse at the development of the Christian church.

When Christ was crucified, Christianity was obviously not a well developed and organized religion, but only a politico-religious movement similar to the ones seen in ancient Greece, but even less organized against the Roman oppression. Then when Christ was crucified, as the term goes, they were “caught in the dark without a lantern”. Neither the liturgy nor any other element of an organized religion existed. After the crucifixion, the movement having lost its charismatic leader, but perhaps so much the better, started to form its institutions. Thus came the New Testament and the other documents followed it. Comrades of the leader spread out to the world or rather to the Roman Empire and started to preach their demands. Thus the movement was forged into a religion but not a state order. As Apollonio points out, this process lasted until the end of the fourth century and after that date the religion started to gain a socio-economical and political definition, completeness and expansion. Of course all these starting to happen around the middle of the first millennium, was not a coincidence. However this socio-political system evolved into a barrier against the evolution of the ownership on means of production which was locked because of slavery. This decay, when joined with the invasions of Goths, Vandals,

etc., have brought the collapse of the whole system and out of the nearly two hundred years of chaos and also from the leftovers of the Roman Empire and of the dissolving tribal cult of the invading forces, came out the feudalism, which depended on serf labor and decentralized ownership on means of production, which was then mainly land. And also out of this process emerged the Christian church as a landlord among the others and thus defined its socio-economic standing point; when Rome had become the residence of the Pope in the eighth century it also became the ideological capital of this epoch.

During these centuries we see that popular drama continued to flourish perhaps more than before, since the balance between two social forces gave them a certain liberty. In the eighth century we also witness a change in the official liturgy of the church that besides the scriptural material there came the elaboration of these scriptures. They were called “tropi” and are considered as the origin of the new religious drama. But why there was a need for this elaboration? First of all, obviously the believers were sick and tired of hearing and watching the same ceremony, for almost three centuries after it gained its final form, in order to keep its control over the believers, the church had to renew itself. And in what direction does this renewal occur? In the direction of dramatization! But why in this direction? The simple answer is because the populace enjoyed it. But why did populace enjoy such a presentation? Because they were seeing it everywhere except for the church.

Another reason can also be the fact that church might have decided to beat his unmovable rival, the popular drama, on his own grounds, that he has been fighting against for ages. In fact this was not the first attempt, we hear of Arian and Arianism before the fourth century who perhaps attempted a similar attack when the liturgy was in the process of formation. They were then excommunicated, but now their strategy was being adapted.

Still a third factor may be the act that because the church and the state united a lot earlier in the east, this strategy was perhaps utilized a lot earlier. We hear of an Elijah play being performed in St. Sophia, in the capital of the east, in the middle of the tenth century, when the evidence of the first religious dramatic piece (though not yet a play) of the west follows it ten years later. In fact, starting from the sixth century onwards we hear from the east about the existence of dramatic sermons.

In short all of these changes in the church came as a result of the fact that religion gained a foot in the socio-economic structure either by fighting for it as it was in west or by a Machiavellistic policy, by joining with the existing state as it was in east. After having

secured and described its point of stand, as any other social element it also started to go under a process of decay and thus the religious drama was born, to ensure the credibility of the belief by calling in the aid of non-religious methods.

In Italy, this evolution of the “tropi” was first followed by “aude drammatiche”, practically dramatic religious songs and then by “sacra rappresentazioni”. In essence, need of elaboration of religious material by any means first reflects that there opens a gap that has to be filled and this gap is filled not from inside but from outside the religion. Therefore, as we have already mentioned above when the religion ended, there the drama started. The evolution of the religious drama has been examined by many scholars, but as Nicoll clearly demonstrates, its further line of development is its increasing secularity, or with the most proper terms its “popularization”. In these plays we see the questioning of the scriptural material, where Joseph is uneasy about Mary's bearing a child from the God or as in a later sample, during the crucifixion scene when the crowd was asked who they wanted on the cross, they simply cried the name of the governor of the city. Now it is very hard to explain all these facts (and many others that we consider unnecessary to repeat here) with religious devotion or feeling. This is nothing but the creeping of the popular drama right into the church and all the way up to the altar.

However there still exists another part of the reality of this epoch that we need to consider. This is nothing but the minstrelsy, which was the foremost characteristic of the popular drama of the age, perhaps even more than the mimi. But how can it be possible to take into consideration a form which is not accepted as fully dramatic? This form bears importance for our study for some reasons: first of all it will illuminate our discussion of the origins of Turkish popular drama; secondly, while we study this form we will also be able to clarify our point on the improvement of popular drama in this epoch; finally its so-called “half-dramatic” character is subject to reconsideration.

When we discussed the historical and socio-economic facts of the age we mentioned about the “invasion of Goths, Vandals, etc.”, that we hear of them in the fifth century, before the collapse of the Roman Empire. As the brilliant study of Chambers on the subject demonstrates, these invading forces were at the level of improvement that we can call as the monarchic period of the tribal-clan cult which leads to the birth of private property in ancient Greece. Now we already know that typical artistic form of this stage of development is heroic poetry and the typical belief is the peasant ritual. This was another

source of the existence of the peasant ritual in the medieval epoch. However from the combination of this culture and the mimi of the Romans, there emerged the minstrelsy singing heroic poetry or any poetry, telling jokes, using impersonation and traveling from towns to villages, from the piazza to the courts of the new conquerors. In fact the influence of this new culture could be seen even on Christianity. We understand that by conscious attempts, the Church adapts the paganistic festivals and the ideology of the conquerors and of the Roman Empire, in its yearly cycles. On the other hand marriage between the heroic poetry of the new culture and mimi of the Roman Empire already was completed by the fifth century.

When we look at the quality of the material that was used by minstrelsy, we see that it is no less dramatic than the first “Quem Queritis” tropi, that came into existence only late in the tenth century. We see dialogues both in the lyrics and narratives of this form, and impersonation is a characteristic feature. If we set our criteria for a dramatic activity as: “something that is watched, which includes a story with a contradiction and communicated to the audience by way of dialogue and impersonation and also all these are being done for enjoyment not necessarily in the sense of laughing”, then we see right here in minstrelsy a fine form of drama. Even today don't we sometimes go to theater to watch the solo performances of actors? Therefore if we are not hard-to-please and demand a stage, and a setting and a curtain and the lights, and a whole company-there is no reason why we should not accept the minstrelsy as a dramatic activity. And this dramatic activity alongside with the mimi, inherited from the Roman Empire, constituted the two main trends of the popular drama of the medieval ages. And other than the liberal performances of both minstrelsy and the mimi, main occasions of performance were the paganistic festivals that were now adapted as a part of the Christian calendar. In short when we reach the end of first millennium we see three forms of dramatic activity:

1. The popular drama which consists of two sub trends:
 - a. Mimi-as living on since the birth of drama.
 - b. Minstrelsy- the combination of mimi and heroic poetry of invading forces.
2. Peasant ritual which was the combination of paganistic rituals of both the invading forces and the Roman Empire.
3. Drama of liturgy, which was born of the combination of paganistic ritual and Christian scriptures with the stimulus of the changing age and popular drama.

We can also follow; this sequence of the process of historical and dramatic facts in the development of the Italian popular theater. The first evidence of tropi in Italy, as Apollonio demonstrates, goes even back to eighth century. Development of the liturgical drama within the ceremony lasts until the end of the first millennium. In Italy we see a social distress and chaos between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. At the very beginning of this period of unrest we hear again of the mimi. On the other hand, the nature of this unrest points to the fact that the society is on the verge of giving birth to another class, namely the bourgeoisie. Jacob Bruckhardt clearly expresses that through out this period we see the decay of the un-centralized feudalism and feudal relations of production. We see the emergence of the “city” and the “state”, in the modern sense of the words, with its police power, intelligence agencies, centralized government, bribery, etc. This development occurred in two sub-stages: first, the introduction of this new class to the history and the decay of feudalism between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries; secondly, starting from thirteenth century on, the domination of this new class, especially in the economical field, which is called “the primitive accumulation period of capitalism” by economists.

The outcome of this social change was also felt in the field of drama. Towards the end of the twelfth century, out of the liturgical drama came out the “*lauda drammatiche*”, which was nothing but a dramatic religious song. However this form reached its peak in the middle of the thirteenth century by Jacopone da Todi. In the very same time frame we see a similar development in folkloric lyrics, which started to gain a dramatic feature by the mimes of Cielo D'Alcamo and Ruggeri Appiliesi. By the beginning of the fourteenth century besides these two half-dramatic forms we witness the birth of humanistic drama. This improvement was the forerunner of “*commedia erudite*” which will follow it the coming century. This meant that, the new class-bourgeoisie- having gained enough power, not only affected the religious ceremonies and thus the religious drama (this is what the scholars are referring to, when they talk about the “*nuova religiosita*” of the new age), but also attempted to create his own dramatic culture. In this attempt they naturally turned back to the culture of their underdeveloped predecessors in the ancient Greek society. This pro-gained acceleration at the beginning of the fifteenth century, in which not only the “*commedia ertudita*” and “*commedia pastorale*” developed, but also in the second half of the century the birth of “*sacra rappresentazioni*” was seen. In fact “*sacra rappresentazioni*” was the religious drama of the new class. Also they have literalized the popular drama in

the forms of literary farces and “teatro volgare”. This literarization process which started by 1400's continued in 1500's by the literarization of mimi and guallari: Ruzzante, Cherea, Calmo, Zan Polo are the products of this change. By the middle of the sixteenth century all of these developments reached to a point of maturity, which consequently gave birth to *commedia dell' arte*.

Marriages of popular theater can also be seen through a structural analysis. We will not go into the details of this subject as it has already been extensively explained by scholars like Toschi, Herrick, D'Ancona and others. However, we would like to point to the fact that, the very same process that occurred in ancient Greece, was repeated here, although now in a different way. Out of all these marriages we see that the liberal form or rather the formlessness of the popular drama is destructed by the combination, but only to a certain extent. For example, the religious drama takes its episodic structure, but builds up a Death- Purification- Rebirth (D-P-R) triple cycle out of it with the yearly repetition of the religious cycles, which was also descended from the paganistic religions. Also the revivals of the ancient Greek culture affected the religious drama and improved the choral element in it. On the other hand the figures of the popular drama penetrated into the religious drama or its language, which was vernacular, influenced the literarization process. But on the other hand literarization limited the vitality of the popular drama, which mainly relied on premeditated improvisation and stage wit, either by putting it into words or by putting it into a form taken from past or religion. Now of course this process was not as simple as it was in ancient Greece, however neither the society was as simple as it was. Although it is more complicated to untie the process of diffusion between these forms, nevertheless it is not impossible to see that the main line of this diffusion was the limitation of popular drama by the forms of literature, religion, ancient Greek culture or peasant ritual. In essence the process is the same, however its practice is naturally a lot more complicated.

Before we proceed any further, we have to express the fact that our discussion has been extremely schematic; however this is necessary to understand the relations between the socio-economical changes and the developments in the popular drama. Of course the dates given are not strictly precise, we always have to think of a preparation period before the birth of an artistic form or a social reality; and also after it is being dominated or replaced by a new one, the older does not disappear right away. On the other hand the influence of the forms upon each other is inevitable; but we found it useless to explain

these influences since it has been discussed by many scholars extensively. If we try to summarize our discussion up to this point it can be stated as follows:

1. Starting from the fall of the Roman Empire down to the birth of *commedia dell'arte*, namely from fifth century until the sixteenth century, there existed a “popular drama” as it was defined and explained in the first chapter.
2. Because of historical changes, when feudalism was born, this also meant the birth of Christianity as a religion and also as a feudal lord and as the ideological monarch of the western world. This change led to the dramatization of the official liturgy, which was stimulated both by popular drama and peasant ritual, which was inherited from Roman paganism and the culture of invading forces. Structural discussion also reveals the very same facts.
3. Starting from the eleventh century on the feudalism started to decline, and bourgeoisie started to emerge. When this change had gained a reality by the end of the thirteenth century, dramatic lyrics was born both in the religious and folkloric poetry. Finally the domination of bourgeoisie had led to the literarization of existing forms, which were historically as “*sacra rappresentazioni*” in the religious drama, “*literary farce*” in the field of popular drama and revivals of ancient Greek culture as “*dramma umanistico*” and “*commedia erudite*”, “*commedia pastorale*”.
4. The last step was taken when the literarization of *mimi* and *giullari* started on the first half of the sixteenth century by the works of Ruzzante and Cherea and like.
5. However as the historical evidences show us the popular drama kept its separate existence, besides giving birth to new forms of dramatic activities, in relation with the socio-economic improvement of the society.

The Commedia Dell'Arte

Having discussed the origins of the Italian popular drama, now our task is to study the rise and the fall of the *commedia dell'arte* in the light of our previous comments. This subject, again, has been studied and discussed by many brilliant scholars; therefore our humble attempt will be to base our discussion on their material, instead of a genius research.

Although *commedia dell'arte* is less removed from our age and although the materials about its origin and development are more abundant than the other periods of the history of drama, discussions about it are more diversified than the others. On one hand it

is accepted as the bright star of the history of drama, on the other as one of the basest forms of the western culture. First of all, these kinds of evaluations rise from the personal feelings against this type of dramatic activity, which also reflected the preference of the scholar as an educated member of the society. Secondly, there obviously existed a dual character in the *commedia dell'arte*, especially at the beginning of its fame, lasting for a while also, that the scholars by pointing to the same period of time may either praise or despise it. Thirdly, a lack of a desire to be precise is seen in the attitudes of scholars, when they are handling the proofs for their points. Since these proofs were taken from other scholars or actors naturally are diluted with personal points of view. Instead of isolating these materials from personal sentiments, if they are taken directly, we can call these a conscious liberalism, which is utilized for the creation of proofs. This is especially quite obvious when we look at the other studies of same scholars or different parts within the very same study. Here we find more critical approach that could have been used in other parts as well. Therefore for our discussion we will use the method that Pickard-Cambridge successfully applied in his "Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy"³ and we will critically handle not only the approaches of these scholars, but also the preliminary sources, since all of them are stamped with the preference of the person who penned them.

When we look at the origins of *commedia dell'arte* from such a point of view, it is a paradoxical fact that who are against it provide us by more information than the ones who are in favor. Nevertheless there are some historical documents which are accepted by both sides. We will start our discussion with these materials: on 1611 the work of La Scala was published which contained the first print of the *commedia dell'arte* scenarios⁴; the legendary Gelosi performed between 1563 and 1604; on the very same year that this group was founded the first note on the performance of a Italian comedy style appeared, -though not from Italy but from Bavarian court-; the first contract of a formation of a group dates 1545; on the years of 1515-1519 an outdoor performance of "masked actors" is recorded; on 1496 we hear of a performance in a court, where the parts were written separately and therefore the play disappeared after it was performed. Now what does all these dates and facts signify?

³ Pickard-Cambridge, Sir Arthur, *Dithyramb Tragedy and Comedy*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, 1962.

⁴ Scala, Flaminio, *Scenarios of the Commedia dell'Arte- Flaminio Scala's Il Teatro elle Favole Rappresentative*, Trans. By Henry F. Salerno, New York University Press, New York, 1967.

First of all it shows us the line of improvement of *commedia dell'arte* from the piazza into the court and then on to the courtly or public stages of Europe. As we have previously seen there was a very wide-spread dramatic activity in the fifteenth century through out Italy under various forms. Among them was of course the popular drama, whether it is accepted as coarse and base by scholars or not, it did exist. They sometimes set their stages in the piazza, and besides acting (or by the help of acting) sold quack-medicines, romances, lyrics of folk poetry, etc.; sometimes took their place in the carnival and sometimes even joined the *sacra rappresentazioni* and ridiculed the virginity of Mary. When the princes and lords evolved into investigators of new lands and investors in trade and when cities like Venice became the symbol of new age, of course the ideology of the medieval period received the strongest blow and as we have already discussed a new taste of joy has arisen. This new taste, first sought for origins in the ancient Greek world, but it needed a certain period of time to pass until the studies in this field reached maturity; therefore for the time being the rather liberal entertainment of the popular taste was directly adapted. This was what the Marquis of Mantua, Francesco Gonzaga was referring to in his letter dated 5 February 1496. This step that popular drama took, namely that it entered the courts, was its death verdict, however it was also inevitable in the sense that professionalism of popular drama demanded this improvement. In the courts, popular drama found a more reliable source for providing its means of living, and also the new “padroni” of the new world, thus started to exchange skills with riches.

Secondly, these dates and facts show us the interaction and diffusion of the various dramatic activities of the age on the basis of popular drama. When we hear of an outdoor performance of “masked actors” in the year of 1518-1519, we already have a combination of peasant ritual and popular drama. Between this date and the formation of the first troupe in 1545, we have the molding of *commedia dell'arte* by the works of Ruzante, Calmo and Zan Polo. Here we see not only the characterization of the stock-figures (or rather their technical predecessors), but also the Romanticism of the new class (a case seen in all rising classes) begins to diffuse into the coarse and harsh realism of the popular drama. On the other hand, the formation of the first troupe on a contract is very significant both in the sense that the new world demanded this organization but also that art has evolved into a business or with the exact term the “show business”.

By the year of 1563 we hear that this business extends its borders even to the courts of other centers of Europe, which means that the popular drama had already secured his place in the court. On the other hand, starting from the very same years we begin to hear of a distinction between the courtly and vulgar masters of the profession. The whole career of Gelosi is full of their attempts to prove that they were not one of those on the street. In fact this diversification improves to the extent that some of them even were given nobility (of course just high enough to enter the court) or accepted to the learned circles of the courts. This fact was joyfully reported by many scholars who are trying to prove the artistic value of *commedia dell'arte*. However, the very same scholars admit that in the same time frame also started the disintegration. Two centuries later when Goldoni and Gozzi brought the last strike on this dramatic activity, it was not their fault but the inevitable result of a process that had started during the flourishing days of *commedia dell'arte*. As the learned circles of the courts became more acquainted with the classical culture, their influence on popular drama was increased more. On the other hand, the branch of the popular drama that entered the courts were trapped there because of means of living (namely, money), now the only thing that could be done was to proceed on this line until the end. That is what this branch did; however the popular drama released itself from this branch and kept on following its own line that we hear of their rough, indecent, harsh and ludicrous existence at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Gelosi was on the peaks of its career.

Before we proceed any further, we would like to open a parenthesis and comment on these attacks against the popular drama. First of all we should bear in mind that these attacks always came from the learned circles or from circles which thought of themselves as made of a different material than that of the vulgar folk. However these very same circles saw nothing base if a member of a noble descent kills all of his brothers in order to obtain the power; or infidelity or adultery or even rape occurs on the side of nobles. If we are really looking for indecent, base and “not fit for mankind” attitudes in this age, we should look into the courts, not out at the streets. As historians have clearly demonstrated, this age is full of all kinds of intrigues, bloodsheds, adultery, etc. Now, of course it may seem like an unfair game when the very source of this baseness accuses the people as being base; however, this is nothing but the new morality of the new class: to use double criteria for everything. Therefore the comments of these circles on the popular drama should be filtered through these facts. In short the age is full of so many indecencies especially on the

side of the power that, as Plutarch said long ago, those vulgar folks of the popular drama were perhaps even a little negligent in projecting this historical panorama. Besides, this is the very source of the popular drama: it reflects the life as it is.

When we return to the end of the sixteenth century we see that *commedia dell'arte* is living its most glorious days which was going to continue until the end of 1600's. Various companies flourished, they toured not only Italy but also the whole Europe; they were not only on the piazza but also in the courts. This period is the time when the popular and bourgeois elements in the *commedia dell'arte* were at a balance. However the very same time frame brings some major blows to the *commedia dell'arte* as well. La Scala's scenarios appear on 1611 which sets the basis for literary creation of plays; on 1645 *Commedie Italienne* is settled in Paris, which was another blow since it destroyed the nomadic character of this dramatic activity. After the second half of this century *commedia dell'arte* started to go always down; after settling down started to cry for the literary plays of playwrights instead of creating them themselves. On the other hand, these plays neither fit to the demands of the populace nor to the acting style of actors. A new struggle has started: to fit written texts and improvisation into each other. *Commedia dell'arte* tried another attempt by getting interested in half-political themes, but even this was unbearable for the political power who wanted to tame *commedia dell'arte* and *Commedie Italienne* was closed before the turn of the sixteenth century.

After this fall in France, *commedia dell'arte* returned to its origins and lived in the country fairs and festivals. Of course now it was in a foreign land its development differed and "opera comique" was born out of this adventure. On 1713 the new Theater Italienne was opened by Riccoboni, however suffered from the problems explained in the paragraph above. These problems were solved when the improvisational character was almost totally erased and when plays of French origin, which were more tamed than the ones before, were used. Finally the last glory or the last blow came when Goldoni totally literalized the texts and removed the masks or his opponent (or perhaps counterpart) Gozzi improved the fantastic dimension in *commedia dell'arte* and it lost its connection with the daily reality.

The structural analysis of *commedia dell'arte* through out its history also reveals the very same facts. It starts with the buffoonery of the Zanni and then those of Magnifico come in. Also starting from the first reported performance we see the unmasked lovers and

the rest of the cast. In this first instance of performance, we already have a well-developed structure and the professionalism, with the set of intrigues and other elements. Origins of these intrigues may be the learned circles but its adoptions by *commedia dell'arte* should be the result of professionalism, since a troupe had to give quite a number of performances, either on the piazza or in the courts, day after day, with different plots built on different intrigues. This demand of course stimulated the production, and thus came the complex intrigue structure of the scenarios. However another point was developed by the time of La Scala's scenarios, namely that the plays were in tune with the dramatic theories of learned circles that relied on the revivals of classical culture. By this improvement, the ties of this dramatic activity were cut off from its sources and that was why a scenario problem was seen towards the end of the century. In the seventeen hundreds this problem was partially solved by the disintegration of the element of Romance in the direction of melodrama and of the musical element in the direction of opera comique and finally leaving only the masks to *commedia dell'arte* of the original elements: that was why we see the "solo" improvement of these masks through out the eighteenth century. At the end, Goldoni-Gozzi couple also brought an end to the masks, the first one by rejecting them and the second by elevating them to the level of a mere fantasy.

What was the quality of *commedia dell'arte*? Was it a form of "popular drama"? Originally it was. The themes of earlier performances (as early as 1400's) reveal the fact that it had the capacity of "organizing and provoking the collective power of the society to change the reality". This was especially obtained by the contradiction between the characters and actions of the masks. Nicoll studies this subject extensively in order to prove that, in a way they are the neighbors of Shakespearean characters. This interpretation is of course subject to discussion; however it reveals the fact that especially in the sixteenth century this feature had vital importance. For example, the Zanni's, as the fools of the plots either set the intrigues or successfully get out of them; on the other hand, Pantalone or Dottore, -supposedly the respectable persons of the society-, were found in most base situations or by their own attempts they make fool of themselves. The courageous Captain is actually the most coward person among them all. Especially when we think of the live reflections of these people in the contemporary society the whole picture becomes more understandable. At this point, we are not claiming that the popular drama was class-conscious; however the Venetian merchant, Bolognese Doctor, Spanish Captain and Bergamask servant should all mean something. Perhaps their towns are not much

important, however even these towns reflect the social separation, the social reality of the age. Thinking about the changes occurred in this period of history, it is impossible to say that this typology meant nothing more than a fantasy for the spectators of the age. It of course evolved very soon into a fantasy in more learned productions of *commedia dell'arte* but they kept on more firm grounds when they were in the country fairs and festivals and town piazzas. From a mere artistic point of view their humble attempts may be seen as “not worth a penny”, but we should keep in mind that these are the comments of a different world and not necessarily reflected the effect of these performances on audiences which consisted of the people who were as “simple” and as “base” as the performers. Also these are the expressions of the very same commentators. Despite all these comments, it sure had a lot more strong ties with the reality of the age, for the simple fact that it almost lived up to our day, maybe by changing its outfits but keeping the same fundamental attitude: fidelity to reality.

If we sum up the result of this chapter, we can say that, Italian popular drama was built up on the inheritance of the Roman mime, combined with the tribal cult of the invading forces and improved through the centuries of the middle age, by giving birth to religious drama and to other dramatic activities of the age. Finally, *commedia dell'arte* was also an off-spring of this popular drama; however had also a debt to the newborn bourgeois class, starting almost from the very beginning. The glory of this form was reached, when these two contributing elements were at a balance, however this diffusion was like the chemical diffusion of acidic and basic materials with equal power, therefore at the end neither of them were left, but a neutral element (or elements) emerged. On the other hand, popular drama lived up to our day, by following its own path of development.

On The Origins And The History of Turkish Popular Drama

Origins of Turkish popular drama yield many problems for our approach that we have tried to build and carry up to now. First of all the term “popular” becomes a little blurry in this chapter, in the sense that what can be considered as “popular” according to our definition also constitutes the basic form of entertainment of governing circles as well. Secondly the word “Turkish” has been combined geographically and historically with other cultures and thus lost its purity and therefore needs to be redefined. Thirdly, the early documents are very rare and if there are any, they are far away from bringing any light to

our discussion. We can continue on counting these problems for a while, but we will stop here and try to set a foundation to proceed on. As they emerge during our discussion we will try to solve them one by one.

We will start with the definition of “Turkish”. Although the historical question that whether Turks have come to Anatolia before the Hittites or not is still waiting to be solved, (in fact, it is very difficult to understand what significance the answer of this question bears) we will set our starting point from the eleventh century when the Turkish occupation of the region started undoubtedly. Therefore the time component of our discussion is mainly from eleventh century up to our day. However the influence of the past on this period of time will be referred to as the discussion demands. On the other hand, this time constant also determines the geographical constant, namely the Anatolia, which always stayed under Turkish occupation since then. However, because of religious ties and since they occupied from time to time other regions, as far as from Spain to Iran, therefore the inclusion of these factors will be inevitable when the need arises. In short our definition right now is limited with the second millennium and Anatolia mainly.

Secondly, it is very hard to make a distinction between various forms of entertainment (that we will summarize in a while) both in the sense that it appealed to the people and governing circles as well and also all of these forms included in different degrees a “popularity” as we have defined. Therefore when we are discussing the origins of popular drama, we inevitably will discuss the drama in general, but we will also point the times when they have started to loose their “popularity”, without necessarily losing the people as their audience.

When we look at the dramatic activities of the Turks in Anatolia, we see the following trends:

1. Tradition of story-telling which consisted of two sub-trends:
 - a. Minstrelsy.
 - b. Meddah (the story-teller of towns)
2. Dramatic peasant rituals and dances.
3. Dramatic performances which started as mimical dances and developed in the following sub-trends:
 - a. Puppet-play.
 - b. Shadow-play.

c. Ortaoyunu (known as Turkish comedy).

These forms of dramatic activities were created and/or influenced by following factors:

1. Shamanism, inherited partially from Central Asia.
2. Culture of Islam, which was accepted by Turks even before they came to Middle East and both influenced and contributed by Turks.
3. The leftovers of the Dionysian cults in Anatolia which was occupied by Turks starting from the eleventh century.
4. The Byzantine culture that Turks have lived together with during the period of conquests.
5. The other cultures that were both influenced and contributed by Turks during the period of expansion in the region.
6. Western civilization that started to influence the Turks after the eighteenth century.

These are the points that almost all of the scholars that worked on the subject agreed upon with different degrees of emphasis that they put on each factor. This diversification arises from their preference which was set by their assumption or point of proof for their study. Again we see a condition similar to the ones that we had seen in the origins of popular drama or in the origins of Italian popular drama. Not having a socio-historical foundation strong enough to explain the factor values of these influences, they all explain a part of the reality without comprehending the whole. Before we continue any further we would like to point to the fallacy of some of these pre-assumptions which constitute the basis for the misinterpretations in these approaches.

First one of these fallacies is the concept that every ritual or religion is a creator of drama. It is of course true that in all of the rituals and all forms of religions there is a dramatic element. However the evolution of drama out of ritual or religion as we have already seen is the product of certain historical and socio-economical conditions in fact the religion or deformation of ritual (the peasant ritual) is also another outcome of this very same historical process. Drama starts where the religion ends or is decreased to its minimum level. This occurs only when the private property reaches maturity, a development that has never been seen in the subject region of this chapter. The nearest example is Ta'ziye, the sufferings of Huseyin; however although it has been practiced for

centuries, it had never created a tragedy, in the western sense of the word. Although a lot of parallels can be drawn between Ta'ziye and pre-mature forms of tragedy and even of comedy, this form is mainly a dramatic religious ceremony, but not a drama, in fact it is more similar to the primitive ritual in the sense that the diversification between the spectators and performers is less marked than that of the tragedy, since the audience also participates partially in these sufferings and is not satisfied by feeling it only “inside”. On the other hand, studies on this subject has already shown that the Ta 'ziye is a descendant of more archaic beliefs of the region, reformed under the influence of Islam. Also, when the religious drama in the west almost immediately went under a process of secularization (because of the reasons that we have already seen) this never happened in the Ta'ziye, it mainly continued on satisfying religious feelings, not secular testes of entertainment. Therefore we will stress the point that, it is true that all forms of rituals and religions have a potential to evolve into drama, but this occurs only under certain historical and socio-economical conditions, namely by the maturity of the private ownership on the means of production.

In this context another fallacy should be mentioned: the theory that religion of Islam had prevented the development of drama, in the region. Well, it is true that Islam is against (only to a certain extent) the mimicry or rather mimesis, since it is considered as a creation and therefore to create a part of nature or man (especially the image) is trying to be the God, who is the only creator according to this religion. However if we look at the history of Christianity we will see a similar opposition from the official circles against dramatic activities. In fact, maybe Islam was less severe in its opposition since it was already a well-established and victorious religion. Christ was crucified but Mohammed enjoyed the privileges of power during his life time. Therefore Islam had become a social and political order starting from the life time of its prophet. There is a very interesting legend that Evliya Çelebi tells us in the forty-sixth section of his book: here we hear of a mimic, who was hired by infidels to ridicule Mohammed, turns into Islam during the performance in front of the prophet and recites the first Kassideh, praising him. Up to this point, this story resembles to the stories of the mime-martyrs of Christianity. However the rest is more important for our discussion, that he carried on his profession and ridiculed the infidels in his later performances, where Mohammed himself was present, enjoyed them very much, so much that he himself showing his teeth. During his flight, mimic accompanied him in the cave and was given the name of Shur-ul-Habib. This mimic,

defended his profession against counter attacks that God has already satirized the vicious life of the people in his Koran and what he did was only repeating it. Of course this is partially legendary, however is in tune with the improvements in the west as well, where Christianity defined its social status and turned into drama. These all show that at least mimicry and religion of Islam did not theoretically contradict each other (it is impossible to find a line in Koran to support this contradiction), if there was a contradiction it must have come into existence later on. Reasons of this contradiction should be searched for in the social developments, not in theology. In fact, the fetvas of the later centuries reveal the fact that the Islam was less severe in its attacks and was only protective for the status quo. We will return to this discussion, later in the examination of the quality of Turkish popular drama.

Third one of the fallacies is about the cultural diffusion between two geographically near cultures. As we have already stated in introduction, this diffusion can only occur when one of the cultures is on the verge of creating the form that is borrowed or accepted. When Islamic cultures took over the heredity of the ancient Greek world, while they adopted some features of this culture, they were unable to adopt some others. The best example of this was given by Professor And, who explains that unable to explain the word “tragedy” in their mode of living, they used the word “facia”, which simply means “disaster” and of course far a way from reflecting the true nature of this form of drama. The same fact is also true for Europe in the same period of history, when Dante called his work “The Divine Comedy”, meaning that it started from worse and developed towards better. Both of these cultures were away from creating this form in its authentic meaning and therefore shifted the content of the word in the direction to find a corresponding context in their culture. Now of course it is impossible to call this diffusion. The same discussion, when applied to the theory of the continuity of Byzantine mimes in the Ortaoyunu and Karagöz or other forms of entertainments which there is a possibility to have been taken from the region, reveals the same facts. For example, when Byzantine mimes were reborn in Karagöz (if they ever did so) this was only in the level of creating any stock-figures and some basic themes, which were also potentially a part of the Turkish culture. The same is also true for the inheritance of Dionysian cults in the form of peasant rituals. As we shall see in a while these Dionysian cults, were fit for the level of development that Turks have reached, when they had confronted them. The same discussion is also applicable to the other regional or

religious influences. In short, neither the diffusion is comprehensible without taking into consideration the socio-economic and historical facts.

Now let us see these facts:

As we have already told, Turks had arrived in Anatolia in the eleventh century. They were a half-nomadic, agricultural society that consisted of various tribes, (known as “boy”s) who have accepted Islamic belief fairly recently and united under the military leadership of a monarch, who also organized the collective process of production in the society. This organizing power was mainly utilized to build water canals and like, which was vital in the climate of Central Asia for agriculture. In this socio-economic structure, two contradicting forces were living together: decentralization towards aristocratic society (as it happened in ancient Greece) and centralization around a military leadership. However, these two forces were kept in balance because of continuous expansion that was enabled by vast plains of Asia and continuous development of agriculture by the organizing power of the centralized state. Their accenting the Islamic religion was in tune with the force of centralization, in the sense that Islam, by bringing a religious and a political order centralized around the idea of God, not only united the scattered tribes in the Arabic peninsula, but also set an example for the other similar social structures of the region. Therefore Islam, in essence, was a political revolution that was interwoven with a religious order, to unite Arabic clans or tribes under a leadership. This can even be seen in Koran, which probably more than organizing the belief, organizes the state, social institutions, civil laws, etc. Since this organization meant a step in the direction that Turks were just about to take, they easily adopted this religion and thus the centralization tendency was reinforced. This also meant the re-enforcement of the military leadership of the monarch, who now exercised this power for “gazâ” (war made for the expansion of religion). This is what the history books say, but most probably the reason in the background was the inevitable expansion of this social structure, which relied on military force and agriculture. When they came to the rich planes of Anatolia it was impossible for them to stop and also this land was in the hands of infidels, who were Christian Byzantines.

Before they accepted the Islam, their belief was, as we expect, totemism, which was built on magic and exercised by organized priesthoods, the Shamanism. When they arrived in Anatolia they also found the similar leftovers of Dionysian cults which were basically

in the form of agricultural magic. There was a slight distortion in these beliefs because of Islam, where now the magic was directed towards the God (“Allah”) instead of the tribal totem. This shift can easily be seen in Dede Korkut legends which date back to this period.

And also with these legends we confront with the first form of popular entertainment, the minstrelsy, which relied basically on story-telling and what can be called as heroic poetry. In fact all of the scholars who studied on this subject point to the importance and fame of story-telling not only among the Turks, but also among other peoples of the region as well. As Thomson has explained it, this was the natural taste of this particular state of social development. In fact, since this form of social order had been living among the Turks for such a long time that minstrelsy had evolved into a mere entertainment and started to develop in the direction of mimicry, which set the basis for the impersonated dramatic story-telling, “the meddah”. However at this stage it was mainly a story-telling in accompanied by music and heroic poetry.

This stage is very similar to the one that we see in the rise of epic poetry in ancient Greece around 1200 B.C.⁵ When the limited area of expansion in the Greece mainland forced the society into a different line of development and eventually led to the conquer of private ownership; the vast fertile lands of Anatolia and Middle East that opened in front of the Turks, prevented them from following the very same line and their centralization, now also justified by Islam, led to continuous wars of conquest and thus the development of ownership on the means of production was arrested at this level. This level was the ownership invested at the highest governing power, the monarch, namely the Sultan. In this type of ownership, the Sultan assigned certain pieces of conquered land as a reward for military service to his vassals, who in turn contributed to the military power of the Sultan. However, this assignment of land was not permanent, that the land assigned could be taken back and assigned to another one, or changed by a better piece, and this was not an infrequent practice. In short, the type of ownership on the means of production and therefore the mode of production was arrested at this level among the Turks almost up until the end of the eighteenth century. Of course towards the end of this period the ownership tended to be hereditary, nevertheless even this tendency stayed to be exceptional, as were the privileges that Suleiman the Magnificent, had given to non-Muslim minorities. There were two instances in this time frame when decentralization gained power, one, right after

⁵ Thomson, George, *Aeschylus and Athens, A Study in the Social Origins of Drama*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1966., pp. 61-65.

the collapse of Anatolian Seljuk State, because of the Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century, and the other, in the years after the Ankara War in 1402. However in both cases decentralization did not last long and was stopped by the smallest but the most militarized tribe of the Turks, the Kayı tribe, which later on turned to be called as Ottomans. They kept on expanding from Vienna, down to Egypt, North Africa, from Crimea out to Persia. Also the continuous wars against the crusaders did nothing but to reinforce this feature in the later centuries. This mode of life naturally created an ideology for itself that lasted almost up until today. An interesting anecdote that exemplifies this ideology is from around 1830: after watching a Karagöz performance, a fierce commander, Georgian Mehmet Paşa admits:

“We can -face all kinds of difficulties when we are on horses and have our swords at our hands. Our Empire will be powerful and we can force our victory to the whole world. If we get off from our horses and get on carts, infidels (enemies) will tie a rope on our necks, if we leave our swords, everything will be finished for us.”⁶

Now, the society was arrested at this level of ownership and mode of production, the super structure of this society and therefore the arts in general and drama in particular followed a lateral line of development instead of a vertical one. That is why the repetition of forms was seen in music, architecture, poetry and of course in drama. Details started to gain importance instead of development of whole structure, therefore quarter notes were seen in music, detailing of images were seen in poetry and language gained importance in drama. We will not go into the details of this subject here, but we will have to stress that the leading features of the Ottoman culture and the other Islamic cultures of the region were not the outcome of religious limitations but was a result of the arrestment of social development at a certain level by the mode of ownership on the means of production. In fact the development of religion was also arrested at this point, by the leading theologians and philosophers of the religion. In short, religion was also a subject of this social and historical reality.

If we return to the origins of Turkish drama we see that along side with minstrelsy, there existed also mimicry. From the beginning of 1100's Anna Comnena informs us, that in the palace of Sultan Kılıç-Arslan, the Turks were making fun of Alexios I, when he did not lead his armies against the Turks, because of his sickness. Second document is

⁶ And, Metin, Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu (Kukla- Karagöz- Ortaoyunu), Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara 1969, p.130.

back from the fourteenth century where the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Paleologos II, who then was only a prince, informs Theodoros about the existence of mimus troupes in the palace of Ottoman Sultan, Beyazid I. What did they perform is unknown to us, but since it was in the palace we can imagine something similar to the ones seen in Byzantine palaces. These anecdotes are only important in the sense that dramatic performances were not totally unknown to Turks; however they carry very little evidence for the origins of Turkish popular drama. On the other hand, the historical evidences reveal the fact that there also existed a puppet-drama, most likely brought from Central Asia.⁷ Neither the puppet-drama gives us any clues about the features of popular drama. Starting from the second half of the fifteenth century we start to witness the development of popular drama. Two evidences, one from the reign of Mehmet the Conqueror and the other from the reign of Beyazid II, reveal the fact that mimicracy was very widespread and was enjoyed not only by the palace but also gathered considerable amounts of audiences in public places and occasions. Again in this period, the story-telling gained more dramatic characters especially in the cities, by dropping the musical element and picking up more mimicracy and limiting poetry.

By the sixteenth century, when the Ottoman Empire was at the beginning of its most improved stage, we see that foundations for the further development of popular drama are set. This is when the shadow play technique was taken over from Egypt and forged into Karagöz in the course of the years. In this century we can also gather some information about the themes and quality of popular drama. As it was in the medieval age of Europe, now again the religious circles come to our aid. Fetva's, decisions built on canon laws, reveal us the quality of these popular dramatic activities. For example, they prohibit the reading of Koran and its ridicule; also forbidden were the ridicule of religious teaching, law, other religions and foreign peoples, etc. At that time, obviously these were done, so that the religious circles as a defender of the morality of the power have decided to prohibit this kind of attitudes. Also starting from this century we see that various guilds joining public occasions or creating occasions themselves to raise money for their organization, and in these festivities they had put on various plays and acts of mimicracy.

Seventeenth century is both the brightest days and the beginning of the decay of Ottomans. Having reached to its limits in expansion, Ottomans enjoyed the cultural and

⁷ Ibid. pp. 1-90.

material riches of various countries under their domination. Shadow-play, -Karagöz-, gained its most developed form, mimicry, story-telling flourished. In this century we also see a very interesting diffusion between the peasant rituals of Anatolia and the other dramatic activities of the age, which existed either as hereditaries of Central Asia or brought from other regions under reign. Dr. Covell's memoirs⁸ point to this diffusion, which contained animal mimicry, a "hobgoblin", and a story. A careful examination of this anecdote reveals the fact that, now we face a dramatic activity, which combines the story-telling, mimicry and the peasant ritual, and is acted by Armenian and Turkish actors from the eastern part of Anatolia.

This anecdote is extremely important for our discussion because it shows the maximum level of improvement that could be created by the inner dynamics of a society with the characteristic features explained above. It is vulgar, indecent and elements of farce are dominant. It has a story taken most likely from the tradition of story-telling, combined with the animal figures and the structure of the peasant ritual and also seasoned with the merry-making tricks of the mimicry. Also another anecdote from the beginning of the eighteenth century reflects the very same process. Since both of these anecdotes were taken from the rather improved sections of the Ottomans, we can imagine the quality of the dramatic pieces in the other parts of the Empire.⁹

We have also said that the seventeenth century was the beginning of decay of this social order. Since this system was built upon continuous expansion, and since the expansion had reached to its limits (because it confronted with the technologically more improved states of Europe), we start to see the emergence of distress not only among the regions of domination but also among the Turks, right in Anatolia as well. The Empire, which was able to keep the balance by the investment of riches appropriated from expansion, now cut out of this source fall into a catastrophe. This decay found its reflection especially in the story-telling tradition, both in the meddah and the aşık, with the emergence of legends composed and recited about the rebellions of the people. Also the shadow-play, Karagöz, has started to gain political tendencies. However the rise of the shadow-play was in the eighteenth century when the decay increased and western influences had started to be felt. In fact, shadow-play shielded by a religious interpretation of its technique which relied on mysticism, became the champion of the people, by

⁸ Ibid. p. 174.

⁹ Ibid. p. 175.

handling both political and profane themes. Also it spread out to the whole area of domination of the Empire.

The leading feature of the eighteenth century is the entrance of the western influence to the Ottoman Empire. We have already said that during the reign of the Suleiman the Magnificent certain privileges were given to some of the minorities and foreigners to have private ownership of trade or certain manufactures. Now with expansion has reached its limits, these privileges were increased to cover other nationalities that were previously discluded. Also having lost its basis of survival, now the Ottomans searched for means of support from the west, naturally because of the more developed technology and trade and partially because of the expanding influence of the western world. Therefore, out of this process that practically lasted for two centuries including the nineteenth century the private ownership was imported from the west. This created a new class of foreigners who started to run the economical life of the empire. This brought in the artistic forms and other institutions of the west into the archaic structure of the empire and of course a crisis arose. The imported institutions, forms and criteria of course did not fit into the former mode of life, however there was nothing to be done, the process of a different type of diffusion between west and east has started, which relied on the economical appropriation of the east.

This process, at the very beginning gave rise to the formation of “Ortaoyunu”, the Turkish comedy. We have already seen that towards the end of the seventeenth century the natural diffusion of the traditional elements had created a form of a dramatic activity, which was basically vulgar, simple and folkish. However with the intervention of the western influence and therefore with the emergence of private property, the attitude and structure of this dramatic activity changed its direction. First of all it gained a degrading attitude against the people or rather various ethnic groups of the empire and against the Anatolians as well and evolved into a mere entertainment that relied mainly upon language. The western influence was not yet powerful enough to create a complex intrigue structure in this dramatic activity, but it forged the structure into a series of mimicry. Therefore in Ortaoyunu, while we see a standard form, this form is away from including a genius plot. Even the plots taken over from the story-telling tradition is distorted in the direction of presenting one mimic after another. Of course this structural quality forced the improvement of verbal entertainment; however ortaoyunu had never got involved in

political or socially sacred themes; perhaps because it could not dare under the tensions of its times, but most likely because of its genetics.

The very same process also created a split in the shadow-play, one tendency following the Ortaoyunu, gained the quality of being the entertainment of palaces, the other picking up more political and sensual themes, reflected both the distress and free thinking of the people. In fact, this attitude was not only among the shadow-players but was also seen among the buffoons. In one case they even dared to mimic the Sultan himself, during his own presence. This was of course punished severely; however they enjoyed the mimicking of the Grand Vizir and Police Chief of Istanbul. Therefore, when the private ownership was imported from the west (or was forced in by west) the true popular drama started to emerge.

However this was the deadly catastrophe of the Turkish popular drama, because the very same western influence did not wait long to introduce its dramatic activities. This is known as the western drama, in Turkey. The popular drama started a deadly fight against this newcomer, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century; but the result was already set from the beginning. Archaic forms couldn't resist against the continuous change of the society and against the conscious efforts of the pro-westerners. Finally the popular drama came to an end both because of internal contradictions and also because of political and cultural oppression.

If we sum up the outcome of this chapter, we can say that:

1. The Turkish popular drama constituted out of the inheritance of the traditional culture of Central Asia, acceptance of the Islamic culture and confrontation with tooth the archaic cultures of Anatolia and other cultures of the area of domination.
2. These cultures went under a natural diffusion, during the period, when the mode of ownership and the mode of production were arrested at a certain stage and therefore instead of developing vertically upwards developed laterally sideways. Thus, there never existed a popular drama in the sense that we see in the western world, however various popular dramatic activities to a certain degree, the feelings, criticisms, wisdom, and reaction of the people.
3. These forms of dramatic activities, when faced the imported or enforced private ownership and its institutions and forms, went under a strange process which partially united these forms, but could not forge them into a typical popular drama, since it was not the result of the inner dynamics of the society. Therefore, the very same process also brought the death verdict of these popular dramatic activities.

Comparison

We will carry our line of discussion also in the comparison between the popular drama traditions of two countries. A part of this comparison was inevitably hinted in the previous chapter. However, now we will not only gather our comments scattered through out the text of this study, but also organize them in the pattern of our discussion. Thus we will start with the comparative discussion of the histories of two countries, and then we will do the same for the histories of popular dramas. After pointing the already revealed facts in the structural analysis, we will conclude with the outcome, which will set the basis for the following chapter.

Origins of the histories of both countries lie in the totemic tribal society, which was in the agricultural state of development. In the Italian case this development went through following stages: in the southern Italy Greeks had introduced the private ownership, trade and tyranny, in the central and northern parts out of the natural development of the tribal society first emerged the monarchy and then the aristocratic republic. Combination of the military power of the aristocracy with the private ownership improved the Roman Empire into a both military state which demanded constant expansion and a state whose productivity relied on slave labor. This was a step ahead of the ancient Greeks who could not unite for continuous expansion which was vital for trade and production. Romans having accomplished this development proceed forward; the militarism provided the slave labor and appropriation of wealth that set the basis for productivity, which in turn enforced the military power. However this closed cycle could develop the Roman Empire only up to the point where the expansion could only be supported by increase in productivity and this could only be obtained by a more liberated labor than slavery. This inability to evolve into the liberation of labor brought the end of the Roman Empire and period of decay had started. The very same process evolved the Christianity and with the attacks of Goths, Vandals and etc. from the north, the empire fell. Out of the ruins of Roman Empire, emerged the feudalism which relied on serfdom and local autonomies. Combined with the geographical and climatic conditions of the region this system lasted almost for eight centuries. However the inner contradiction of this system was the fact that, despite it had a comparatively liberal work-power, it discluded a more complex division of labor, neither had chances for the further accumulation of wealth. This task was accomplished by bourgeoisie that emerged out of manufacturers and merchants of the period with the aid of

the autonomous lords. Starting from the sixteenth century the domination of this new class was started to be felt, the society went under a sequence of changes, which mainly resulted in the destruction of local autonomies. As the wealth started to be increased and centralized around this new-born class, the local, now merchant states first went through a deadly and bloody competition and then finally the modern Italian state was born.

Origin of the Turks was in Central Asia, where they reached the agricultural stage of the totemic tribal society. However, while the vast plains of Central Asia enabled them to continue to live in this stage longer than the west, the climatic conditions enforced the centralization of power, in order to make possible the construction of water canals and the organization of agricultural production. Centralization of power in return improved the militarization and thus the expansion of this society, which later on became its unique character. In fact, this centralization of power was the common feature of all of the states of Asia and Middle East, but only the Asian states improved the military power and feature of continuous expansion, that of course was a natural result of the geographic conditions. Continuous expansion brought the half-nomadic character of these societies, who conquered the land, appropriated and went on for new lands to conquer. The religion of Islam was the product of this process and in turn reinforced the centralization of power and militarism, ideologically. Thus the Turks expanding from Central Asia towards west occupied the Persia, Anatolia, Arabic peninsula, North Africa, and finally a part of Europe as well. This line of expansion prevented them from developing private ownership, the ownership stayed invested in the supreme governing power of the society, as it was in all of the ancient cultures of Asia and Middle East. Accepting Islam as state religion affected the centralization of power; as the warriors of the new religion they fought to expand it also because of the continuous Crusades they were forced to defend it as being the buffer between the Christian world and the holy capital of Islam. As we have already shown, this idea of “living on horse and sword at hand” continued up until very recent times, which in turn prevented their vertical development and thus when the western civilization interfered with technological superiority and enforced the private ownership into this society, its collapse was inevitable.

If we try to sum up these short summaries of the histories of two countries, we can say that because of geographical, climatic and historical conditions, the line of development of Italy was vertically upwards, whereas that of Turks was laterally sideways.

However we should keep in mind that this is a much generalized diagnosis and sometimes may fall short in explaining the details. The reason that we stress upon this generalization is the fact that it had been neglected by many scholars who studied on this field.

This difference in the historical developments was naturally reflected in religion, arts, ideology, poetry, literature, etc. For example one of the basic differences between Christianity and Islam is the fact that Islam had brought a whole system of civil codes, government, regulations for trade, etc.; whereas Christianity was interested more with the salvation of the spirit than the worldly businesses. Both of them were a political rebellion in essence, but Christianity had crushed into the state of Roman Empire, whereas Mohammed had formed the scattered Arabic tribes into a centralized religious state. When Islam became a victorious state power within the lifetime of Mohammed, Christianity, crushed by the Roman Empire, suffered for a long time (so long that suffering became a main theme in Christianity) before gaining the power of the state.

Naturally the development of the drama in general and that of popular drama in particular was affected by this difference in the lines of development, while the Italian popular drama originated from the Romans and changing shape through out the course of centuries, giving birth to other various dramatic activities depending on the emergence of new classes and decay of the older ones, integrating with and disintegrating from its offspring went through a series of changes. The Turkish popular drama followed a comparatively stabile path; changes of course occurred, but they remained in the same pattern, without drastic jumps or combinations as it was in the case of Italian popular drama. This lateral line of development of the Turkish popular drama was interfered with, when the confrontation between the technologically developed west and decaying east occurred. This confrontation, first brought a vitality to this lateral process and for a short while we observed the combination of forms to create another one. However, since this was not the result of the natural line of development, the false vitality was followed by the smash of this popular drama under the cultural weight of the west, which was enforced by economical supremacy and appropriation. These forces also account for the inexistence of a popular drama among the Turks in the sense of its existence among the Italians. Strikingly important another fact is, when the natural (by the inner dynamics of the society) emergence of private ownership leads to the birth and improvement to its later

stages of development of popular drama in Italy, its import to Turkey brings the death verdict of popular dramatic activities.

Therefore, when we look at the rituals and peasant rituals of both countries we see a lot of similarities. Being seasonal, change of costume, provoking the nature by agricultural magic, procession, singing, common meals, use of water and fire, death and rebirth theme, merry-making, partial ecstasy (if there is left any), two contradicting figures (white-black, winter-summer, etc.), the Death- Purification- Rebirth (D-P-R) triple cycle and many others are in common as we should expect. This is the uninterrupted and quasi-equal development of societies almost all over the world, and therefore resemblance between their rituals is more inevitable than natural. Also such similarities can be seen in the development of epic poetry of two cultures, in the sense that both of them handled similar heroic themes (with such similarity that it looks like only the names are different), chanted for the honor and the glory of kings, most likely in the accompany of music and handed from one generation to the other verbally. The tradition of minstrelsy and story-telling (mountebanks, etc.), all fall into this line and share the similarities of cultures. Since these similarities have been worked on and pointed to by many scholars, we will not focus on them, neither such an attempt would serve our purpose.

However we would like, to comment on the similarities which are related with the further stages of development and on the approach which favors these similarities. The main feature of this approach, as it was forged by Reich, Martinovitch and others, is its limitations with the theatrical field and its disclusion of the other factors. With such an attitude it is also possible to find a similarity between Jerry Lewis and Arlecchino, however this explains nothing about the qualities of Jerry Lewis or Arlecchino, separately; especially when we are feverishly seeking for a new exit for popular drama, in order to make the theater again the place of union of people. Therefore we have to discuss the similarities carefully and also point to the differences as well. As Professor And discusses in his studies devoted to origins of Byzantine and Turkish drama, these similarities pointed out by scholars or descendance of one form from the other can not be proven by historical facts, but are only outcome of a theorizing mind. This picture becomes more complete when we take into account the historical facts which reveal the similarities between the stages of development of the societies of seventh century B.C. Greece, the Romans and the Ottomans. On the other hand, the differences between these social structures (we will not

repeat them as they have already been expressed) should also be taken into consideration for the structural differences of the popular drama tradition in each case. For example, the line of development in the shadow-play, Karagöz, is in the direction of verbal wit, whereas in the Roman mime, the action gains more importance. The establishment of stock-figures is not as rigid as the ones we see in the Turkish sample. The similarities between the figures, their dresses, the form and themes, not only a little bit enforced but also if we assume the validity of the discussion, it will point to nothing but that they are the products of similar historical conditions.

This approach especially falls into a crisis when it tries to show the similarities between *commedia dell'arte* and *Ortaoyunu*. Neither the structure of the plays is similar, nor are the similarities between the characters more important than their differences. In fact a close study on the line of development of characters through out the history show that they fall apart from each other; for example Pulcinella ends in white-mime and his supposed brother Karagöz (or Kavuklu) ends either in town fair or nowhere.

These differences can be more easily understood, when you read or watch a series of Karagöz or *Ortaoyunu* plays in comparison with a series of their western brothers. The sameness, the repetition in the Turkish forms may force you to quit after a while, because this sameness is almost up to the point of use of tricks. However in the western forms each time you are confronted with a new situation or a new intrigue although the characters are same. If the intrigue is the same, than there is a change in the characters. The structure of the intrigue may or may not vary, but each time it is a new situation a new story. Especially in *commedia dell'arte*, as Nicoll shows us, the main stock-figures almost evolve into characters when we take into account a series of plays. However this is never seen in Turkish popular drama. They hardly become types, since there hardly is an action. Neither the popular attitude nor the comedy of the Turkish popular drama is related with the play, if Karagöz or Kavuklu becomes a black-smith it is only because the borrowed folk story demanded so, they could have become something else and use the same words as well. This is also true for Italian and ancient Greek popular dramas, but only to a certain extent, since there is an action in them, may be short, but it is there. Therefore we not only laugh at and observe the popular attitude in the primary buffoon, but also in the other stock-figures. In short, when the “lazzi” or similar tricks of the western popular drama is used to tie an action, such tricks constitute the plot itself in the Turkish popular drama.

However, Turkish popular drama compensates for the lack of action in the verbal field, its popular attitude and comedy arises from words. That is why Ortaoyunu is called “the piazza of words”. It is of course true that the same quick wit, verbal wisdom is a character of both the Italian and ancient Greek popular drama, but the verbal contradiction never gains such importance as it is in the Turkish popular drama. This is of course a natural outcome of the arrestment of the society at a certain stage of development when the verbal expression was dominant and when this dramatic activity was born.

But both the Italian and Turkish popular dramas are “popular” with their stand against the life. Perhaps this is why the scholars are encouraged to find similarities or relations of descendance among them. The people are people all over the world, almost all through out the history of the society with classes. They reflect their wisdom, their reaction, and their feelings through similar characters, in similar formats and even with similar plots. Naturally their areas of interest are also similar. If we also take into consideration that the peoples of both countries are rather geographically near and also have some customs in common as being Mediterraneans, we can extend these similarities even further. However, such an approach would serve to nothing, both in the sense that it has already been overdone and also because it is impossible to drive practical results from it. Similarity does not mean equality and differences, as we tried to show above count much.

Now with this attitude in mind, we can proceed on to examine the modernization attempts and their critics.

Modernization Attempts, Their Critic and Conclusion

Starting from the beginning of twentieth century we see a general crisis in all forms of art and therefore in theater as well. The historical and socio-economical reasons of this crisis will be summarized in a while, however for the time being it will be sufficient to say that this crisis led to the search of new directions for the revival of dramatic activity. One of the approaches among the many is the utilization and modernization of popular drama traditions. Attempts made in this direction can be classified in four major groups:

1. Esthetical approach
2. Commercialist approach

3. Protective-traditionalist approach

4. Popular-political approach

From time to time the combination of these approaches were also seen in a single work, nevertheless they underlined almost all of the works in this direction.

Esthetical approach is characterized by the appropriation of the characteristic features of popular drama, one by one or in groups of some, for the creation of a new esthetics for the existing drama. Either the spontaneity or improvisational character is emphasized or a hint of creativity is seen in the mastership of acting style or is being fascinated by the archaic (or old) outlook of the popular drama. Sometimes the lack of communication of the modern age is found in the puns and witty jokes, sometimes episodic character is adopted. Of course the lack of scenery and scenic effects were found most genuine creations and utilized as well. However the most important feature of the popular drama, its living relation with the audience is the foundation and encouraged all these attempts.

Commercialist approach is not much interested in creating new esthetics for the drama, but is, in search of anything new that increase the numbers in the ticket-box. Therefore it also does similar things by utilizing different characteristic features of the popular drama, but now from the point of view of an investor who has to make profit out of the money invested into these attempts. Therefore works in this line are less intelligent, less brilliant than the previous category nevertheless, they sometimes open their stages to the works of another category (especially to those of the first) if they find it profitable. Here the underlying motive is professionalism, in the financial sense of the word that it gained in this century.

Protective-traditionalist approach does not show any preference among the characteristic features of popular dramatic activities; instead, it wants them to be retained as they were. It is not even proper to call this a “modernization”, since they do not try to modernize anything. These demands are mainly supported by the elder masters of the leftovers of popular drama, by a circle of scholars and ethnologists who are trying to keep it either as a memory or as a nice museum piece of a diminishing art, which I believe a very respectful effort.

Popular-political approach, as can be understood from the name we have given, approaches the problem from the point of view of a politics of (or for) people. Therefore,

they emphasize the characteristic attitude of the traditional popular theater, although they also use its structural and esthetic features to different extents. These attempts come from the dramatists who are not only interested in theater but also in the problems of the world and even in the problems of daily politics.

Esthetical and commercialist approaches are similar in the sense that they are more interested in the formal characteristics than the essential ones. Also esthetical and popular-political approaches commonly originate from re-creation of the long lost relation between the stage and the spectators. Esthetical, protective-traditionalist and popular-political approaches share in common a certain “conservatism”, however that of the first is purely technical, that of the second is purely sentimental, and that of the third is purely attitudinal.

Before we criticize these approaches and state our point of view, we would like to comment a little bit about the historical and socio-economic features of our century. This is an inevitable task, because our discussion that we have carried up to now, relies on the thesis of close relation between the historical and socio-economical facts and popular drama. This task reveals the following outlines: first of all our century is a century in which the wealth and organization of production is centralized around the monopolies. Therefore on one hand the division of labor is diversified, on the other its density is extremely increased because of the centralization of production. This naturally brings the alienation and develops it almost to the point of a natural disaster. On the other hand, the centralization also centralizes the means of communication, all through out the world and therefore a new kind of diffusion begins. Everything in this world has a double value, a double meaning; every success accomplished can also be used for the destruction of the mankind, every step taken to conquer the nature and now even the space, on one hand brings prosperity, on the other disaster. All of the accomplishments of our century is obtained by a cooperation that has never been seen on the world up until today, but the same feature deprives the unit from comprehending the overall process. This confusing picture becomes even more confused in the social field, the social sources of unhappiness, dissatisfaction are considered as either the will of God (Christianity and mysticism fits in here with the theme of suffering), or as a natural phenomenon. The homogeneity of the tribal society, which was cracked by the birth of private ownership, has been kept alive to certain extents by means of other social institutions through out the history almost up until the end of the previous century, but this falsification game can no longer be carried on.

This reaction finds its expression in the artistic rebellion at the beginning of our century. All of the “ism”s of this period are rejected one way or another, not only the older means of expression but also the old values of the social order. And in order to set a new foundation they returned to the more primitive forms of art. This attempt inevitably led them to try to re-create the union of the primitive ritual in different media and under different themes. Also the political tendencies of our century emerged from this search of uniting the society; nationalism, national-socialism, fascism, communism and others were all the products of the very same process despite the fundamental differences among them. Either political or artistic, some of the attempts have exhausted these primitive sources as well, since the diversified nature of the contemporary life was not because of the decay in the theatrical or political field only, but was because of the decay of the society in general, that they were only a part of. These unsuccessful attempts were characterized by the fact that they tried to create new myths and new rituals that people would unite around, but our age is no longer the age of myths and rituals.

Another very important fact that we have to take into consideration is the unique character that the term “popular” has gained in this century as a result of the technological developments that affected the mass-media. How the interaction and diffusion between different cultures became more important and differed from that of the past, especially in the sense that now accompanied and introduced by economical supremacy, this interaction and diffusion had become “a two way street with a one way sign”. The autonomous character of the culture of different countries and different classes disappeared, again depending on the economical supremacy, one way sign functioned. However, the outcome was not a more democratic, homogenous culture but the diversion in two directions of popular and elitist tastes, the latter influencing the first, but only on a simpler level.

Now having this outline in mind, if we look at the modernization attempts, we can criticize the as follows:

Aesthetical approach was very important in breaking the taboos of the theater of “status quo”, especially because these taboos were a barrier in front of the renewal of drama, it brought vitality to the stage, actor was liberated and also gained more responsibility, since now he was not only asked to recite but also do some acrobatic tricks and use his body more than before. Music also gained its freedom and thus became an important part of the spectacle. Dance was improved and integrated into the show. All of

the elements of the theater were re-organized, with a new understanding, on a new foundation. Finally this approach was even able to create a new aesthetics for the theater; however this aesthetics was not popular. Elements borrowed from traditional popular drama when recreated and organized with the mind of today did not give the same result as it did in the past. The outcome had a tendency to become increasingly elitist, since what was a part of the daily culture of the past could only be appreciated through an intellectual labor today. Of course the very first samples were more naive, but later studies naturally demanded renewal and this renewal was not in the direction of popularity but in the new aesthetic categories introduced by the attempt. Therefore the popular drama tradition was very soon exhausted and marriages started between the traditional popular drama and other forms of dramatic activities of the history of theater. Unable to comprehend the foundation on which the popular drama arises, there even came a Pulcinella dancing tiptap. However without this approach we would have been less informed about the techniques of the popular theater.

Contributions of the commercialist approach were so little that it may even be considered not worth to talk about it. However the professionalism of traditional popular theater was inherited directly by this approach and lived in them. On the other hand, as we have already mentioned, professionalism has changed its meaning. It used to mean “mastership” in the art of drama, now only means “profitable”. Especially when the taste of people had started to be influenced and formed by the economically superior classes through the use of mass-media, even the “popular” attitude towards life has changed. We had pointed to the split in the popular theater during the last centuries of the Roman Empire; now the decaying portion of this split was picked up by these new “professionals” and forged into a theater “popular in outlook” but a defender of the status quo in the attitude. They had the people as their audience, but what they presented them, eventually served to the maintenance of the existing social order, only with a smile. However we should pay much attention to the fact that people were their audience.

The importance of protective-traditionalist approach is more ethnological than theatrical, but having suffered through the dark galleries of the history during this research, I personally have to admit that this is no less important than the theatrical attempts. To keep the traditional forms even with their most corrupt copies is very important, especially because when there does not exist a sample, there theorization starts and among these

diversified theories the theater people of the future can get lost. On the other hand there is a potential trap for this approach. Since the work that they do bears also a touristic value- because it is eventually in the field of ethnology-, they may fall away from maintaining the originality and end up in the hands of commercialism, though now from a different source. This was especially seen in the revival of the popular dances and songs in Turkey, the authenticity of the pieces displayed in touristic occasions are questionable. If this attempt is fortified by knowledgeable scholars of the field and with financial aids from either the state or non-profit organizations, it may serve as a live museum for future attempts of modernization.

The spirit of traditional popular theater lives in the popular-political approach. It has inherited the function of “organizing and provoking the collective power of the society to change the reality”. However, to what extent it is successful is questionable. Since it is not only claiming to be popular, but also political, it has a potential to “run the cart in front of the horse” as the idiom goes. In fact we see that this approach accomplished its function primarily in the context of political movements, because there it could find a group of people sharing the same ideology (or mythology) and ready to unite around an idea about to change the reality in a given direction. Only lately they have started to seek for a wider popular foundation. New attempts in this line always emerge with more political claims than dramatic accomplishments, but this is a dead end street, since popular drama can not be reduced to the struggles of daily politics, although it frequently participates in them. The politics of the traditional popular drama lies deeper than the political maneuvers of the daily life; it is in its attitude towards the life in general, in fact, this difference was recognized by some of the creators in this line, who concentrated on integrating these two elements into each other. But the main line of political attitude has remained unaltered.

After all these comments, what do we propose for the rebirth of popular drama?

First of all, we should stop seeing the traditional popular drama as a rich source that we can appropriate as we wish or as our esthetical, commercial or political needs demanded. I am proposing this not to defend the traditional popular drama or not because I am a conservatist but because these kind of attempts have already been overdone and the outcome has been of little help for the rebirth of popular drama. We have to take the traditional popular drama as a whole, as the protective- traditionalist approach demands, but neither one of the above mentioned approaches is this satisfactory. After taking it as a

whole, we have to set its socio-economic and historical origins and search for the influences and counter-influences between them, as well as between all of the other social elements. Then we will be able to complete the picture and be able to visualize the course of the popular drama as a function of the history. This study should be even carried to the level of even minor details, since every detail might gain a historical significance depending on the course of time.

After having accomplished this study, we have to focus on our age, analyze it, not only historically, but also structurally. Even this is not enough, we need to study the interaction between the various social, intellectual, ideological, political, artistic, etc. elements and circles of influences in our age; then we have to live with the people, to observe them carefully to learn their attitudes and tastes and “why”s of these attitudes and tastes and then we are ready to start experimenting on the recreation of the popular drama. This is the system that we propose for the modernization attempts.

As it is clear, we have tried to utilize this system through out the scope of this preliminary report. We have also presented a summary of the main forces functioning in our age. If we take into consideration all of these facts, we can recommend that utmost importance should be given to the attitude of the popular drama, namely to its “organizing and provoking the collective power of the society to change the reality”. In fact this should be the first criteria to determine whether a work is “popular” or not. Of course this sentence alone does not help much; we immediately have to proceed into the work produced. In order to maintain this function, the dramatic work has to build a close relation with its audience. This close relation depends upon three main factors: first of all the dramatic work has to be improvisational or rather pre-meditated. This means that the actor-creator should be very well armed to fit his performance to different audiences, different surroundings and different facts of the daily life. It is not enough to bring down the fourth wall but now a new relation between the stage and the audience should be established and it should be similar to the ones that we had seen in the traditional masters of this art, as far as the vitality goes. A close look at the known or unknown masters of the tradition will reveal the fact that they had “the wisdom of life”. But what does this mean? This means that they were not only knowledgeable about the intellectual heredity of mankind but also were able to use them for the “organization and provocation of the collective power of the society to change the reality”. However this is not as easy as it used to be in the past, now

both the society and social institutions have become a lot more complex. On the other hand, since the division of labor has increased to such extents, that an actor may hardly be aware of his body as a whole, which used to be perhaps the primary demand of the profession. Therefore in order to obtain “the wisdom of life” in our age, the actor-creator has to study not only the forms of arts, such as painting, literature, music, dancing, etc., but also all forms of knowledge, history, sociology, anatomy, mathematics, architecture, philosophy, etc. Thus having acquired the intellectual heredity of mankind, he will start to learn not to look at but to observe his age and society, and only then he will become “the wise man” of the life. After all these, when he steps on to the stage he will see the spectators as a group who gathered there to create something together. This creation will start by “picturing the habits of the age” as Brecht calls it, and the actor-creator through picturing the habits of his time (most likely starting from himself, will be able to share his experience with the spectators; having seen their habits the spectators will also join the dynamic creative process. In essence, this is the creation of a new aesthetics, this is a deeply political attitude, this is the re-birth of popular drama (and perhaps the drama) and it will also procure money. Thus, these attempts will also unite all of the four main approaches of modernization in one pot but also on new foundations. Maybe that is why it is better to call it the rebirth of popular drama than the modernization of traditional dramatic activities.

I observed the accomplishment of such an attempt in the “Mistero Buffo” by Dario Fo. Also some of his other works are on this line; however, I think that “Mistero Buffo” has a unique place among all. First of all, the main attitude of the work is “popular” not only for contemporary times, but also as a continuation of the traditional popular drama, in it I find the aesthetics that was searched for: the fourth wall is down; there is a new living relation with the audience. There is no scenery but the whole scenery is created by the actor. The episodic character of the play, which was tied with the new “lazzi” makes it adoptable to any surrounding. It may be performed in a formal theater (though it will lose much of its color), in a circus tent or out at the piazza. The actor is always ready to adopt himself for the audience. Then it is very political both in the sense that it includes daily politics, and also because its main target of attack is Catholicism which became rigid and a tool for class oppression through out the course of the centuries. By showing the origins of this rigidity through the use of popular religious tales, he discusses the catholic ideology

that is still living in the minds of his spectators. In fact the latter attitude is more important than the first, because the influences of the second one last more than those of the first.

There are two points; however, that darkens the success of this work: first one is that it was accomplished by one actor, Dario Fo himself, who distilled his mastership through out the experience of years. One would like to imagine other works like this being created by more actors equal to him in mastership. And the second one is the fact that despite its potential for attracting an audience of a wider range of origins, spectators mainly consisted of white-collar workers, students, etc. We will not deal with the details of this problem now, however we will just point to the fact that this narrowness of the audience was not because of the quality of the work but was because of the alienation that exists in our age, between the theater and the people. Therefore, as long as the line set by “Mistero Buffo” will be followed, the integration will naturally come. However the ultimate solution of this alienation lies not in the field of drama but in the field of social change.

In the case of Dario Fo, we see a man of letters, going through a series of experiences and a tiresome process of acquiring “the wisdom of life” from book towards the life and people. However in the case of Franca Rame, the process is reversed. Here we see an actress, originating from among the people and going through a similar series of experiences and finally reaching the “wisdom of life” and “wisdom of age” in her art. It is neither our task nor our capacity to make a comparison, but these examples show us the fact that this is a two-way street between the life of our age and the knowledge of this life. We can start from either side as long as we reach the other end and be able to compose both ends together.

Under these facts, what do we propose for Turkey? Again, first of all, we have to take into consideration the social and historical facts of Turkey. As we have already seen the popular dramatic tradition is very much different than that of Italy. It relies mainly on mimicry and story-telling. On the other hand, we have a western theater that is trying to gain a footing for the last hundred years or so, but accomplished little progress, despite all of the efforts. Centralization, militarization are still the most important features of the society. Besides, now there is a private ownership on the means of production. This has also brought degeneration in all fields of life, since it was not the product of natural development of the society. Apart from these the general economical productivity of the

Turkish society is much less than that of the Italian society and therefore the distribution of the wealth among the classes is totally different. Therefore any experimentation that will be attempted should be much more carefully calculated. The use of a theatrical technique or method of the eastern culture in the west may end up, with the worst possibility, as a professional attempt. However if the same thing is done in Turkey out of a technique or a method borrowed from the west will end up at least in nothing, if not worse.

Therefore, experimentation in Turkey should be “nearer” to the people than it is in Italy, for the simple fact that there does not exist neither a financial power to back it up for a long period of time, nor a middle class audience which has a tradition of going to the theatre or money to do so. However, this being “nearer” to the people immediately brings another problem, the problem of corruption caused by the new social order, in the tastes and preferences of the people. Right now there are various professional groups or dramatists who are appropriating this fact for their commercialist aims, without accomplishing the main function of the popular drama: “to organize and provoke the collective power of the society to change the reality”. When trying not to fall into this trap, there is immediately another one: to become elitist and lose the people as the audience, which means the end of the process of experimentation. Therefore, although the main lines of the things that has to be done are similar, the Turkish popular dramatists are faced with a harder task than that of their fellow Italian colleagues, their chance of making mistakes and correcting them are much more limited.

Under these cautions, I first ask for the state protection of the traditional popular drama, because it is also the “national drama”. This will establish a reference point for the future studies and experiments. On the other hand I would not like to fix a definite line or experimentation now, primarily because such an attempt will only have a polemical character and this is undesirable at this stage, when works on this field are extremely limited; and secondly because I have already hinted my preferences through out the study. However, this does not mean that I accept anything, but I find it useless to repeat what I already have proposed for the preparation of actor-creator. When works in tune with this line of proposal will start to yield fruits, than a more concrete discussion can be carried on.

On the contrary to most of the proposals of the scholars on this field, I demand this labor of the actor-creator, not from the state backed enterprises, but from universities, only to a certain extent, and mainly from independent companies which have such a tendency. The

main reason for this is that such a demand from state backed enterprises will not give any results, as far as I understand. But perhaps more important than that, also as the Italian case reveals, such tasks can only be accomplished with the freedom of independent companies.

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After a long self discussion, I have decided to include a list of the books that we had partially used for this study. Many of the books are discluded from this list because of their minor significance, and many others because they are still waiting to be studied. Still some others are not in the list, since they were indirectly -through the books listed- studied.

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Özet

Bu çalışma İtalyan halk tiyatrosunun kökenleri ve tarihi üzerine bir bölümle başlamaktadır. Commedia dell'arte öncesi ve commedia dell'arte bu bölümün iki alt bölümünü oluşturmaktadır. İkinci bölüm aynı yaklaşımla Türk halk tiyatrosu tarihini ele almaktadır. Üçüncü bölüm iki halk tiyatrosu geleneğini aynı bakış açısıyla karşılaştırmakta, benzerliklerden daha çok farkları üzerinde durmaktadır. Dördüncü bölüm son bölümdür ve modernizasyon çabalarını sınıflamakta ve değerlerini ve güdüklüklerini göstererek bu çabaları eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla tartışmaktadır. Araştırmanın önerisi de bu bölümde yer almaktadır.