

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS IN TURKISH TRADITIONAL PERFORMANCES

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On the performer side it is an information-giving process, though, the spectator is not communicating along the same axis. Nevertheless, its presence and composition and signals contribute to an actor-audience transaction. Then the spectators assume the role of transmitter of signals to the performers-laughter, boos, shouts, applause, silences and other signals audible as well as gestural. Both the performers and spectators themselves will interpret the performance in terms of hostility, boredom, astonishment, approval and so on. Especially in Turkish traditional performance, the audience's reception and its signals are an essential contribution to the formation, construction and progress of the performance, and have a tremendous influence upon textual form.

It is not possible to talk of a single theatrical message. They are multiple messages and the spectator will interpret the complexities of these messages by a perceptual synthesis according to the theatrical, dramatic and cultural experiences at his disposal. As members of the same society their sets of codes are more or less common to the sources, both performer and spectators. Not only are the theatrical and dramatic conventions shared between both performers and spectators, as soon as the audience enter the performing area, they agree to participate in the performer-spectator exchange. Besides this formal network of theatrical elements, there are also general cultural, ideological and ethical rules which are applied to people outside theatrical activities. Performances are unquestionably founded on the cultural codes of society at large without which the messages would be incomprehensible. So the traditional Turkish performance will inevitably depend on the behavioral, gestural and linguistic patterns, the characteristics of Ottoman society shown in the modes of design, postures, voice production, the etiquette system. In short all the theatrical and dramatic codes and conventions are based on the constitutive cultural codes.

The process of intercommunication occurs in a series: between a performer and his role, between performer and performer, between performer and spectator, and between spectator and spectator. This is one of the major distinguishing features of live performance. This multi-level feature of performance communicational exchange makes it extremely difficult to study in logical order. The transmission of the message that is the performance context, the reception of the message that is the audience context, and the interpretation of the message that is the cultural context, -each in turn shows different levels of cultural competence. To achieve this complex interaction both diachronically, that is, in its temporal unfolding on stage, and synchronically, that is at any given point in the performance continuum, several channels are used. Therefore, instead of studying this threefold communicative relationship, we shall simply analyse and describe various elements involved in these multi-level interactions.

Spatial Conventions

The Turkish traditional performance does not use a playhouse or stage. In the folk performance tradition the performances are either presented as a procession or by repetition at various places such as inside each house in the village in the intervals of a procession, or they may be presented in one place. The original reason for the former was to spread the magic about a whole community. In the latter case plays are presented in the village square where the onlookers are all the village people, and seek to effect a communal spreading of the magic of a ritual act by drawing the spectators into the action, or engaging the onlookers in improvised scenes. As we have already noted, apart from rituals there are rough and ready dramatic entertainments more for amusement and divertissement, though in many of them the allegorical notions of rituals can be recognized, since they are fashioned after the ritualistic models.

In view of this, there are ever-shifting relations of proximity and distance between performer-performer, performer-spectator and spectator-spectator, to the degree of body-to-body use of space where actor becomes spectator and spectator becomes actor.

We find parallels to this in the street farces of popular performance tradition¹, which are performed in the streets where the onlookers take part most of the time reluctantly, and a pre-arranged comic situation may be worked out with considerable improvisation

and many practical jokes on the spur of the moment in front of shops houses by impersonating such officials as the watch-man, the tax-collector or the treasure hunter, by teasing shop-keepers or householders, with practical jokes, or threatening them, as in the skit of the treasure hunter, where they pretend that there is a treasure hidden, and they attempt to dig with pickaxes and shovels in front of the shops, so that a tribute or blackmail money may be collected from them. Here also we find body-to-body use of space where performer and spectator exchange their roles.

The Ottoman festivals were complete total theatre. In them, as fixed-featured space was non-existent, we find complete dynamic proxemic informality and there was free intercourse between the performers and spectators with continuous interchange of their roles; so much so that the *tulumcus*, whose function was signalling the boundary between the acting area and the auditorium, had a very intimate rapport both with the spectators and the performers as if they were representatives of both sides, jesting and clowning body-to-body with them. Moreover, the role of the spectators was not merely that of observers, they were selective constructors and interpreters of all the signals coming from all directions.

The other genres of traditional performance, were more or less fixed but informal, For shadow and puppet performances, as for story-tellers, the natural places were coffee-houses. The following account of two story-tellers and one Karagöz illustrate the rapport of performer and spectator:

... seats were arranged in a semi-circular form one above the other, as in a theatre. A portion of the floor in front of the benches was occupied by low stools.

probably reserved for visitors of distinction; and close to the wall was a rostrum and a large easy arm-chair, on one side of which stood a little desk... after a few minutes' delay a man entered, and was handed up to the platform and chair, amidst a buzz of universal applause. In his hand he carried a small stick...

A profound silence prevailed among the company the moment he made his appearance; every one seeming desirous to be amused, and most anxious to catch every word that fell from his lips... who rising from his seat and making

three profound obeisances to the company... (the audience was) literally convulsed with laughter, shouting, screaming, and uttering a thousand exclamations of delight; and more than once it was evident, from their uproarious mirth, that he had succeeded in satirising the peculiarities of some well-known individual. At every pause in the story—very necessary for the actor, who was often exhausted by the violence of his gesticulations—wooden trays were handed about, and every one was expected to contribute a few paras. Of course the liberality of the audience was proportioned to the gratification they received; and on the present occasion he, no doubt, experienced substantial proofs of their approbation in a pretty considerable harvest of silver pieces.²

The second account is as follows:

There is a large coffee-house... which is much frequented by janissaries and others. Before this a number of joint-stools were placed in semi-circles, and occupied by Turks and Armenians, who are all helped to coffee and pipes, after which they sat silent like an audience in a theatre, and then a man ascended to a platform before an open window. He was a medak (meddah), or storyteller... He first clapped his hands three distinct times to intimate he was going to begin; and then, in engaging the deep attention, and exciting the various passions of his audience... There was one ruse in which he was particularly clever and successful. When he had wound up the attention of his audience to a high degree, and they were listening with breathless expectation of what was to come, he suddenly stopped, and stepped down among them with a coffee-cup in his hand, to make a collection; everyone knew the sooner it was filled with paras the sooner the story would go on, so they hastened to do so. He then returned to his place with his overflowing cup, and resumed the thread of his story where he had broken it off... The intervals between the parts of the story were sometimes filled with singing, like music between the acts in our theatre. Three musicians sat with guitars on the divan within, and accompanied songs which were sung either by themselves or others.³

As to a Karagöz performance, a more recent account, is as follows:

My introduction to him was made in Ramazan, 1894, in an outlandish little cafe, established in a ruined Byzantine building, immediately behind the great Bazaar... the long, white washed room, with a curved roof... line of lighted hor lanterns hung up against the wall, and casting a dull glimmer on the faces of the strange crowd seated in an improvised amphitheatre-for the performance invariably takes place in one corner of the chamber, across which a sheet is tightly stretched. In the front seats on time-worn arm-chair... were a few elderly Pashas, one to two in uniform, the rest garbed in the hideous frock-coat of modern civilisation, with fezes on their heads. Their little bright-eyed children nestled close to them, watching proceedings in that earnest, yet half-listless way peculiar to Turkish urchins. A few old turbaned Turks sat gravely apart, smoking their chibouks. The background was filled up as usual, with a nondescript crowd of odds and ends from every corner of the earth, including several Cook's tourists, in prosaic tweed suits. In an obscure corner of the room, a group of Armenian and Greek women of the lowest class, muffled up in their thick shawls, covering their heads and faces, sat apart, whispering eagerly one to another and occasionally bursting into fits of ill-suppressed giggling... During the performance tiny cups of aromatic coffee were constantly handed round by Circassian youths wearing the good old costume: baggy trousers and little couls of coloured linen, mere apology for turbans, heaped up on their shaven heads... Suddenly, the lights in the area of the improvised auditorium were extinguished, the sheet that was to serve for a stage shone opaquely transparent, and now the fun began in earnest. The orchestra -two drums, a flute, a viola, and a triangle- struck up those quavering sounds which enchant an Eastern ear, but which nearly drive the European listener mad.⁴

In the first two accounts, we find another signal of reception from the audience: the collection taken during the pauses, with the amount of money contributed showing the degree of their approval or

dissapproval of the performance. In this connection, the fact may also be mentioned that a wealthy member of the story-teller's audience might bribe the story-teller to change the thread of the story and especially the ending of it according to his whim; for instance, if it was a sad story, he might ask for and be granted a happy ending, or if the story was about a battle or contest, then the winning party had to be the one the wealthy listener favoured.

When we consider the most important genre, *Ortaoyunu*, here we find a kind of theatre in-the-round, where the acting area is cleared from the audience on all sides, and is conceived as not being discontinued and separated from the audience, both the audience and performers being on the same ground level. When carrying on the actors alternate their positions often so that the speaker faces a different side of the acting area, there is no setting to obstruct the view of the audience, only two empty frames, one higher representing a house, the other a lower one representing a shop or workshop. Here is a description of it by a foreigner in the 18th century:

This spectacle became still more worthy of curiosity, by the light of a score of Chaing-Dishes, of Iron, raised upon Stakes, in which a red flame was maintained, by burning Rags, dipt in Tar, and Pine Splinters. These dismal Chandeliers were placed in a circle, to give light to the Dancers in the center, while Tents prepared for Murad Mollach and his company, formed, together with the Multitudes who were present, a grand line of circumvallation, of which the Women of the Populace occupied a part. The Illumination, without this circle, was only intended to give notice of Entertainment of which the Comedy was the most valuable article. A kind of Cage, three feet square by six Feet high, hung round with a Curtain, represents a House, and contains one of the Jewish Actors dressed like a woman. Another Jew, in the Habit of a young Turk, and supposed to be enamoured with the Lady of the House, a valet pleasantly absurd, a fourth Jew dressed like a Woman, and acting the part of a Galland, a Husband, who is imposed upon, and in short, the Characters which we see every where, stand without and compose the Piece. But that which is to be met with no where else is the De-nouement; every thing is acted, and nothing left to the

imagination of the Spectators; and if the Summons of the Muezzin is heard during these interludes, the Musulman turn their Faces towards Mecca, while the Actors continue each to play his part.⁵

Although the observer mentions the empty frame was covered with a curtain, this was done occasionally in certain plays, otherwise no side of it was covered. In another account a century later, in 1836, an eyewitness, Miss Julié Pardoe, gives a long, detailed and vivid description of an Ortaoyunu performance. Her account is important for two reasons: first the date of this account is 1836, a date coinciding with the first usage of the name Ortaoyunu in Turkish texts where the performance genre itself dates from a few centuries earlier. Secondly, Miss Pardoe gives a full programme of a performance of various interludes, alternating in between other entertainments. From time to time her description has some distortions, and is mostly critical, but this should not be surprising since she was a foreigner and this was her first experience of Ortaoyunu, especially as she was conditioned by the theatrical conventions of her country. Here is her description of the setting:

A couple of frames, similar to those on which linen is dried in England, were placed on a line about twenty feet apart, while, in the centre, a low railing of about six feet in length divided the distance.⁶

One other feature of Ortaoyunu which helps in the informality between performer and spectator is that the actor, having gone through his part, steps aside and sits down closer to the audience, remaining on the arena in full view of the audience when not required for the progress of the spectacle. Women, or rather male actors representing women, sit in the frame which represents a house, and the musicians are also visible, they are placed in the arena too. When not active all these performers act like spectators, they show the same responses as the spectators, or stimulate the responses of the audience, and in this capacity they are a kind of intermediary between performance and audience. The proxemic relationship and the intercommunication is not only side by side but also face to face, except the women spectators who sit on one side, usually behind temporarily built lattices; when they are not lattices their faces are covered by veils. They are in a more privileged position since they can see the men in the audience without being seen.

The introduction of western theatre in the first half of 19th century resulted in a maximum of formality, where the spectator became an observer rather than a participant. He was expected to obediently provide predetermined and automatic responses. Similarly actors were imprisoned on a proscenium stage, limited by the text that they had to memorize. The pressure of new conventions rendered both performers and spectators passive. The contemporary accounts reveal that both performers and spectators had difficulty in complying with the new conventions. The spectators drank and smoked, sometimes the balcony audience would throw the peels of fruit they had finished or the dregs of their soft drinks, sometimes they had fight, and similarly from the stage the performers scolded the audience for their bad behaviour. Occasionally the authorities or the management of the theatres would issue sets of rules for etiquette in the theatre either in printed pamphlets or by way of the press. As late as the first decades of the Turkish Republic a theatre issued a small pamphlet containing ten commandments on how to behave in a theatre. For instance Ahmet Vefik Pasha who was Grand Vizier, and later the Chairman of the Parliament, in 1879, was appointed Governor of Bursa where he formed a theatrical company, built a theatre and translated plays by Moliere and other dramatists, but he also tried to train the audience by showing them how to find their seats without causing undue disturbance, training them not to smoke during a performance but to go the foyer during the interval not to make a noise and to avoid unnecessary laughing and clapping while the actors were on stage. When he was removed from his office, local newspapers immediately attacked him, accusing him of forcing the public to attend the theatre and also to applaud when he himself applauded. The papers claimed that if the audience did not applaud at what Ahmet Vefik Pasha considered to be the right moment, he would become very angry.

In the early stages it was very difficult for both the performers and spectators to comply with Western theatrical conventions such as the constraint of the proscenium arch, the raising and lowering of the curtain to mark temporal units of the performance, and so on.

For instance, an Austrian playwright, whose pen name was Murat Bey, reported that in a performance he witnessed of Schiller's *Robbers* by the Ottoman Company, two Moslem actors of the company retained their beards and turbans and Turkish attire in a forest of

Bohemia. When he asked the director of the theatre about this, he found out that these two actors refused to change their costumes according to the dictates of the play because they did not want to look like Christians.⁷ But after a few generations the Western theatre had become so rooted in Turkish culture that people conditioned to it regarded any departure from its codes as unthinkable. For instance, every theatre building was designed according to the norms of 19th century western proscenium stages, and plays were written in the weakest form of bourgeois drama.

On the other hand, the traditional performers continued their codes of performances into the first decades of the 20th century. Some tried to perform in the proscenium arch theatre. An early record of the first theatres in Istanbul was published in 1839 in a German periodical printed in Prague.⁸ Briefly it stated that for some time Istanbul had two amphitheatres and one theatre which produced Italian operas, and a new fourth one which was producing Turkish plays. This could have been the nucleus of a National Theatre, but its future development was rather dubious. In addition to the dialogue, which catered for the Turkish taste, music was an integral part of each production. Apart from two wind instruments and three pairs of cymbals there was also a six men choir, all of whom used tambourines and were directed by a choir master. This music accompanied the dialogue of the actors. Four men dressed as women performed some local dances. There was no scenery or settings. However, in spite of this criticism, the reporter of this news expressed hope that this would eventually lead to the formation of a National Theatre. Needless to say the performance described as having been acted in the fourth theatre in Istanbul was acted in the style of Ortaoyunu on a raised platform and with a proscenium arch.

In competition with the newly introduced western theatre, the traditional actors were urged to perform in the proscenium theatre, which gave rise to a new theatrical form called *Tuluat Theatre* ("the improvisatory theatre") which was a middle ground between the traditional Ortaoyunu and the European theatre, especially in its characters. Tuluat theatre introduced new elements into Turkish traditional popular theatre: the proscenium stage, the rising-falling curtain, and the set consisting of a painted drop, wings and borders. In their jargon they called this *perdeliye çıkmak* meaning "to act with curtain". There was another exigency for them, since the main the-

atre, the Ottoman Company obtained a patent from the government giving them a monopoly of performances in Turkish for ten years. The Ottoman Theatre's patent could not and did not affect the Tuluat Theatre. In this respect comedians, to dodge the stranglehold of this patent which covered only "legitimate theatre with a prompter", started performing on a raised stage "without a prompter" or *perdeli Ortaoyunu* ("Ortaoyunu with curtain"). Topicalized situations were borrowed from some plays in the repertoire of the westernized theatres and changed to suit the particular style of the traditional theatre with its extempore acting. So, in these ways the traditional actor carried on his informality under the dominion of the fixed-features of the proscenium theatre.

Dramatic and Histrionic Codes

The performer in traditional theatre is an extremely skilled and versatile ad-libber. Because of that he is not only an actor, but each actor in a performance is a dramatist and director, that is the creator of both the pre-text and the performance text. Parts of the text may be memorized because they perform the same play many times. Also the actors memorize certain fixed stylistic formulae, epithets, similes and phraseological combinations to have them ready for use as required. Even with the memorized parts, it is not a case of passive memorization and mechanical reproduction, but creative memorizing which enables them, on the spur of the moment during the process of acting and as the result of interaction with fellow-actors and with the audience, to produce anew and re-create. Improvisation gives the actors immense creative opportunities and at the same time requires that they possess certain qualities such as the power of observation especially of the audience, resourcefulness spontaneity, wit, fantasy, freedom of expression, and a talent for quick repartee.

The most important feature of Turkish traditional theatre is its presentational form. Both its textual structure and its performance are characterised by the traits of open form. Let us elucidate this statement. Especially Ortaoyunu by the nature of its means of expression and the quality of its rapport with the audience can be called presentational or illusionistic theatre. The actor does not lose his identity as an actor and he shows his awareness of this to the audience. The audience does not regard him as pretending to be a real person but as

an actor. The acting area is not conceived as being discontinued and separated from the audience and there is no removed fourth wall. The actor continuously reminds the audience that they are sitting in the theatre. Often the actor steps out of his role and makes the audience part of the show by acknowledging their presence. He is permitted direct address to the audience by such devices as apologetic prologues in which the actor announces the title of the play and asks for the indulgence of the audience, and epilogues in which, with certain maxims, he points out the moral of the play. Other devices employed are frequent musical interventions, asides, informative and parenthetical monologues, and scenes out of context. In addition, the actors do not have to disappear completely when they finish playing a part.

The second principal feature is its textual structure, which is plotted in the Aristotelian sense, but is a loose episodic structure in which unconnected and fragmentary scenes are woven together in what may be termed open form, and which does not require the compulsive attention of the audience. It is a way like the music form of theme and variations. Each play is in three parts: (1) Prologue or introduction, which in Karagöz is longer, but in Ortaoyunu very short; (2) The dialogue, a long interlocution between Karagöz and Hacivat in the shadow Play, between Pişekar and Kavuklu in Ortaoyunu; and (3) *Fasil*, the main play, which concludes with a brief finale and address to the public about the moral of the play, an apology, and an announcement of the next performance, its title and its place. Although every performance contains an example of the basic parts -prologue, dialogue and *fasil*- the content of these varies almost independently of the content of the other elements. Any combination of examples of each will do, but one example of each of the three parts is usually included in every performance. However each of elements is perfected as a unit in itself, and each show is composed of an apparently random combination of these prefabricated or extemporaneous elements. The actors decide which elements to put together for any given performance just before the show begins, or sometimes even while it is in progress. Every part and every plot is subject to great expansion, or contraction, or change of place. Actors may spin out the plot of a play, depending upon their inspiration of the moment, and upon the audience composition and its reactions. For instance, if there are too many foreign spectators in the audience, they can cut short the dialogue since it is based on purely verbal elements. Or if there,

is, for example, a hunchback, a stammerer or an Albanian as a prominent high official among the audience, they would omit it immediately to avoid humiliating such a person. As for *fasıl*, it is a single program of a series of scenes or playlets stressing an incident, they are variations and reiterations of the same theme with different types. Therefore these parts can be shifted, rearranged, put into different combinations, or one or two may be omitted, with the result that no two performances of the same play are exactly alike and none are totally different. This has the highest communicative value even for foreigners who do not know Turkish and if they have some knowledge of its basic outline they can enjoy the performance almost as much as a Turkish audience. As the observer, whose account of a story-teller we quoted before, says "I need only state that, though utterly unacquainted with his language, and enabled to follow the thread of the story only by the hurried explanation of Hodgson, I sat listening and laughing with the greatest satisfaction for more than two hours, without feeling my attention at all beginning to flag".⁹ The other foreign observer makes much the same comment as follows: "... felt as much interest and amusement as I could have done at the representation of one of our best actors. I had an interpreter beside me who explained the heads of the story; and though I could not follow it in detail, his pantomimes were so excellent and true to nature, that I could perfectly comprehend his characters without understanding all they said".¹⁰

I personally experienced this at least on three occasions with Karagöz performances, the first being in London in 1979, the second in New York in 1981, the artist there being one of the most distinguished performers, Metin Özlen, and the third time in July 1985 in Japan with Karagöz player Tuncay Tanboğa and Karagöz puppet player Nevzat Açıkgöz. In London the bare outline of the play was introduced by the director of the Little Angel Theatre. I attended four performances, and ninety-nine percent of the audience was composed of English people who did not know a single word of Turkish. In New York I introduced the play to the audience, in which the Turkish-speaking people were roughly ten percent. And in Japan there were around a dozen performances in Tokyo and other cities, at all of which I was present, and they were introduced by the director of the Puk Theatre in Tokyo and by me. On many occasions in Japan the entire audience did not know one single word of Turkish, but in spite of this all the theatres were filled with paying audiences who often

laughed and applauded to show their extreme enjoyment of the show. Analysing this success, I can say that through the high communicative value of repetition and exaggeration, the spectators discerned many common characteristics and certain norms that were possibly not fully understood, but that differed only slightly from their own. They especially appreciated the fact that Karagöz is a one-man show where one person not only manipulates the puppets but also speaks the different characters in their proper voices, including falsetto voices for young and old women. Also all the visual effects, particularly thematical transformation of Karagöz and Hacivat and young lovers into donkeys or goats, delighted them.

Generally each scene has two participants where a basic dichotomy in the status of the participants is observed. Even a storyteller's performance as an act of one person still occasionally includes a heated conversation with an unseen partner. Story-tellers and clowns are masters of total communication, both as entertainers and as propagandists of the social code.

Two protagonists remain in the apex of the performance. In Karagöz they are Karagöz and Hacivat, and in Ortaoyunu Kavuklu and Pişekar. Since they play actantially the same roles throughout, we may abbreviate them as K/K and H/P. They fulfill a predominant overall function in the story, with H/P acting as foil, and K/L having the principal comic role. As a stock type H/P is reflective, socially refined, belongs or pretends to belong to the elite class and so behaves according to their system of etiquette and speaks elite Ottoman Turkish full of Arabic and Persian words, and he is rather scholastic in a superficial way.

The basic dichotomy is more apparent between P/H and K/K. P/H is the warden of a set-order, the epitome of culture. K/K embodies the inverse of all the features of P/H. When encountering P/H or any other, type, he is always the antithesis of the other. P/H knows and practises the rules, whereas K/K light-heartedly violates them. The fundamental opposition between cultural norms and cultural ab-norms is carried out through the language and social behavior. K/K is one of the crowd and he is a social catalyst. He obtains some of his biggest laughs by his parodies of constant expression of repressed items in a culture and of its social taboos. His simple rhythmic patterns are repetitive dialect elements of communication and a mockery of intellectual values. From the audience point of view nothing

is sacrosanct. Whatever the apparent conflicts in the performance may be, it is likely that the latent conflict will be those present in the real life of the community, those encountered by the viewers in their social life. Mimicry of their fellow countrymen's foibles satisfies the needs of individual member of a community to understand social roles and to enjoy the mere act of imitation. Sometimes his witty barbs do not endear him to the high and mighty, nevertheless it is tolerated. Their dialogues are a stimulating social debate, providing people with cues for discussing alternative types of behaviour. And one of the chief values is the experience of being part of a community. They are popular with the mass of the people because they generally upset the complacent daily routine.

There are a few other elite refined types like H/P, such as the opium smoker Tiryaki, the Dandy (Çelebi) and all the female characters speaking with an educated Istanbul accent. In contrast with H/P, K/K is impulsive, rough and coarse, the traditional symbol of the "little man" speaking and using the language of the common people. While H/P is always ready to accept the situation and maintain the status-quo and the establishment, K/K is always eager to try out new ideas, constantly misbehaving and being an extreme non-conformist. The French poet Gerard de Nerval stressed this point in the following manner:

He always belongs to the opposition. He is either the scoffer of the middle-classes or a man of the people whose common sense finds something to criticize in the acts of the lesser authorities. When police regulations, for the first time, decreed that after nightfall no one should go out without a lantern, Karagöz made his appearance with a lantern, suspended in an unusual manner, imprudently jeering at the authorities because the regulations did not say that there must be a candle in the lantern. When he was arrested by the police and released again after it had been ascertained that he was in the right, he appeared once more with a lantern containing a candle that he had neglected to light.¹¹

He not only violates socially codified values but also more often the theatrical conventions. For instance in Ortaoyunu, moving to a different locality or making a long journey is indicated by simply walking round the arena a few times, at the end of which the actors in-

form the spectators that they have arrived at their destination after a long journey. Kavuklu tends to break this by jesting about this convention, saying that they have just made a few futile turns in the same spot. In Ortaoyunu, entering a house is expressed by making a gesture with the slapstick on the open frame which indicates the opening of a door, and lifting a leg as if crossing a threshold, and climbing out of a chair inside the frame, praising the house and its view from the second floor. Kavuklu discards all pretence by commenting that the house is merely a simple, empty frame. This violation of theatrical conventions by K/K has a threefold function. First, by breaking a convention he highlights the action and thereby emphasizes it and so attracts the attention of the less competent members of the audience. Secondly, he highlights the non-conformist traits of K/K. And thirdly, the effect has comic value.

We see very often that K/K breaks the conventions and the illusion, especially in the main part of the dialogue of Ortaoyunu and in a lesser degree in the *Karagöz* called *tekerleme*, in which K/K tells a far-fetched story which he tries to make the audience and his interlocutor H/P believe. Here H/P's role is maintaining the suspense and building up the climax by his facial expressions and his exclamations of curiosity and astonishment. Eventually it is discovered that K/K is merely relating a dream. This part of Ortaoyunu is very long and very ingenious through the make-believe efforts of both K/K and H/P. There are many stock type *tekerleme*. Although the audience know them already, nevertheless their curiosity is not exhausted, each time they are captivated by the skill of these two actors in creating the tension. Here are two examples of *tekerleme*:

*K/K raises silkworms in Bursa, and when the worms emerge from the cocoons they grow to such a size that half the house is filled with them. He then finds himself in one of the cocoons and begins to perspire and suffocate, but in reality he has only become entangled in the bedclothes in his sleep.

*K/K buys a pumpkin seed, plants it and the pumpkin grows to an enormous size. It takes four people three days to saw it in half, and then the whole neighborhood eats its inside. Eventually a boat is made from its skin. The boat is so large that it takes sixteen oarsmen to row it, but when it gets a little way out to sea, it dissolves and all its occupants fall into the water. Only Kavuklu manages to keep afloat and suddenly someone slaps his face. This turns out to be his co-

usin who is sharing his bed and who has accidentally hit him while stretching.

Although the actantial role of K / K is to be the principal comic, especially when dealing with refined types and women, when he is dealing with other dialectical types there is a switching of function where, in addition to being the principal comic, he also assumes the role of "foil". In both roles he is always victimized by his interlocutors. Likewise, H / P has double actantial roles too. On the one hand he is invariably a "foil", but on the other he is like the director or conductor of the performance. Bearing his slapstick as a status symbol, he regulates the flow of the performance by marginal control and makes explicit both the meaning of the action and his own role in it by his informative monologues and asides addressed to the audience.

The actors have three basic communicative mediums, as in any other theatre, but more so since in Turkish traditional performances there are almost no sets, lighting or other mediums. These are (1) Linguistic, (2) Para-linguistic; and (3) Body motion or, in its new terminology, kinesic devices such as gestures, movements, facial expressions, postures and others. Since all these mediums are used simultaneously we shall examine them together. The majority of these devices are used for comic effects but also to transmit the message of the play. Since they work simultaneously they render the message very explicitly. They are easily recognizable even by a uninitiated audience. Since most of the time various characters as rendered as stereotypes, body motions and linguistic features are often used indexically by vocal and gesture idiosyncrasies they are more or less stereotyped indices.

To achieve the followability of the performance and heighten the comic effects, the following are the main devices used: Repetition-Exaggeration-Contrast and Incongruity. Repetition at the elementary level is achieved by the mere repetition of a gesture, a movement, or repetition of one word or phrase. This is more used as stereotyped indices with various stock types. Each will repeat the same gesture or same word as a characteristic trait. Especially the stock types coming from outside Istanbul repeat the same word in their native language or dialect. And Tiryaki, the opium smoker, often goes to sleep in the middle of a conversation and snores loudly as he bends forward. Identical scenes repeated with different characters are essential elements, and nearly all the Karagöz and Ortaoyunu plots are based on this

or the repetition of an episode by the same character with variations. For instance in the play *Bahçe* (The Garden), K/K attempts to trespass into the garden many times by using different ruses each time he is thrown out. Repetition is noted in still another form when a character appears in duplicate. This occurs more often in *Karagöz*, but occasionally also in *Ortaoyunu* where two identical K/K appear on the scene from opposite sides, each practically doubling what the other is saying and each claiming that he is the real K/K.

Exaggeration is another chief device. It is more often used indexically. For instance, the main trait of Laz (the man from the Black Sea) and Bebe-Ruhi (the Dwarf or hunchback) is that they speak and act with such excessive haste and rapidity that no communication is possible with them. In the *Hamam* play (The Public Bath) two lesbian women are seen to be not on speaking terms. However, when they are finally reconciled sheer emotion causes them both to faint. In another play *Ferhad and Şirin*, Ferhad swoons each time he sees his sweetheart.

In all cultures, objects and artifacts are governed by rules of shape and proportions and collective usage and function. Familiar objects lose their unequivocal meaning, when they can be used in various combinations with a different function for each and thereby acquire different meanings.

In village performances, especially in the parodies of certain professions and trades, objects are grossly exaggerated. For instance, in a play parodying a surgeon, for the operation he uses a very large scythe. For parodies of barbers, often barber's implements are grossly exaggerated: instead of a shaving-brush a big broom is used, for a razor a big sword, for a shaving bowl, a large basin or a large basket. Often religious people or the pilgrim to Mecca hold a very big rosary with its beads made of dried dung or dried onions. Similarly Miss Pardoe, when giving an account of an *Ortaoyunu* performance she witnessed, described the Cadi in the play in the following way:

Of course the good taste which had made a jest of the feelings of their allies, and the morals of their women, would not permit the Turkish comedians to spare judges; and accordingly the Cadi was a huge caricature of humanity, with spectacles as large as saucers, and beard of sheep-skin.¹²

Likewise the peasant plays of ritualistic origin, as already noted use objects symbolically, such as phallic shaped objects, whips, ashes,

a bow and mallet and others. Musical instruments used by the dervish orders as well as by the village Alevis assume the function of a symbolic meaning that reinforces group identity and religious creed. For instance, among the Mevlevi, the *ney*, the reed flute, represents the mythological trumpet called the *sur*, the trumpet blast of the angel of death who awakens the dead on the Day of Resurrection. The Bektāşi instrument is the *nefir* or horn. This is the instrument also called *liffir* and *luffur*. In recent years it seems to have been chiefly used as a decoration hung on a wall. In the past it was used to declare a member excommunicated. On journeys, its sound was believed to give protection from wild animals. Among village Alevis, the *saz*, the long-necked zither, represents Imam Ali; its resonator represents Ali's body; the neck, his legendary double-pointed sword Zülfikar; and the twelve strings, the twelve Shi'ite Imams.

The metonymic usage of objects has a very high communicative value, especially in non-verbal performances. Sometimes, on closer examination, pictures of several centuries earlier reveal their true content. For instance, when I was studying hundreds of miniatures depicting one single festival which took place in 1582, I was puzzled by a pair of miniatures of a similar subject. Some clowns were playing with objects which resembled a juggler's club-bug, round, white objects with long handles. There was no information in the accompanying manuscript. In one miniature a clown, bending forward till he was almost on all fours, was balancing two of these objects on his back to the accompaniment of a tambourine. In the other miniature, another clown in the identical posture and again to the accompaniment of a tambourine, was balancing only one of these objects. Furthermore, in this second miniature there were two bare-headed men who were not clowns, one appeared to be just about to step on one of these objects which was lying on the ground, and the other was holding a similar object as if he was going to throw it to the ground. From a minute examination of these miniatures and with some background information, it became clear that these white objects were Saffavid turbans. At the time there was war between Persia and Turkey. In the course of the festival, word reached Istanbul that the Persians had destroyed an Ottoman force. The Persian Ambassador was immediately arrested and his box in the Hippodrome ceremonially pulled down. After this, a Shi'ite attending the festival placed himself in front of the Sultan's box, and in a loud voice, he cursed Shi'ism and threw his Saffavid robe and turban to the ground and trod on them.

His gesture was copied by other Shi'ites, and they all accepted the Ottoman religion. The Sultan presented them with Ottoman robes and turbans. On the spur of the moment clowns parodied this event, and to humiliate the Persians they balanced their distinctive Saffavid turbans on their buttocks.

The cudgel and the handkerchief of the story-teller have a different signification depending on the context in which he uses them. When he pounds his cudgel on the floor to signal the start of a performance it is simply a stick, but during the story the same action may indicate knocking on a door. When he puts his stick to his shoulder and takes aim, it becomes a shot-gun. Similarly, tying his handkerchief round his neck may signify a noose of rope to hang a man, but placed on his head it is the appropriate form of headgear, while half covering his face with it indicates a veil. Wiping his face with his handkerchief may signal a short pause. There are endless variations in the way his cudgel and handkerchief are used to enhance his performance.

The Message

The message transmitted involves two channels -optical and acoustic- and several codes that are actualized through both channels. Turkish traditional performances are not simply an accumulation of unrelated amusing dialogues, but are well-structured performances aiming at a global message, and this global message integrates in its own way a series of sublayers of messages...

Turkish traditional performances often engage in an act of communication that is paradoxical non-communication. Linguistic communication is specifically disparaged, actors contradict their comprehension of the message. The meaning of the replies has no connection with the behaviour of those who make them, the modification of a very small part of a word can change its meaning. These amusing inconsequential dialogues serve to emphasize the multi-national structure of Ottoman society, as the Ottoman Empire consisted of several ethnical groups, as well as provincials, colonials and foreigners, its society was rather complex. Most outsiders came to Istanbul to find work or to practice their special trades and crafts. There are also teratological characters such as dwarfs, stammerers, hunchbacks or mental defectives like opium addicts and the neighborhood idiot. This global message reduced the very fabric of the structure of Otto-

man society to incoherence, by the destruction of the language in the meaningless recital of stock phrases, puns, conundrums, double meanings and flowery metaphors.

The early performances of story tellers or theatrical troupes contained political satire, jokes and imitation of high officials, even of prime ministers. That was even more true of Karagöz, but we have not sufficient evidence of this as early Karagöz texts are not available. However there is just enough evidence to believe political and social satire was the basis of early Karagöz shows until the time of Sultan Abdülaziz and Abdülhamit II when censorship became very rigid. Several foreign witnesses in the first half of the 19th century are highly informative about Karagöz being frequently used as a political weapon with which to criticise local political and social abuse. One of these foreign witnesses says that "In Turkey, a country ruled by an absolute monarchy and a totalitarian regime. Karagöz is a character who never deludes himself or is lulled into a sense of security by shutting his eyes to the evils which surround him. On the contrary a Karagöz show is a *risqué-revue*, as fearless as a militant newspaper. No one is spared, except may be the Sultan,¹³

An Englishman finds the dialogue delivered by the puppet master in Karagöz:

"Often witty, at times seditious, neither sparing of the Sultan not his ministers..."¹⁴

Another eye-witness account explains at length that "Karagöz defies the censorship, enjoying an unlimited freedom". He goes on to say, "Even the press in Europe is not so aggressive. Countries like America, England and France are much more restricted in political criticism than Turkey, which is a country ruled by an absolute monarch. Karagöz acts like some sort of unfettered press. Actually Karagöz dialogue is much more fearsome as it is improvised and not tied down to a written text. Apart from the person of Sultan Abdülmecit, who is considered sacred, Karagöz makes no exception in his attacks. He lashed out at the British and French Admirals in August 1854 for the way in which they slowed down their work. He criticised their manoeuvres and their lack of efficiency in manning their warships. Even the Grand Vizier appeared on the screen. He was seen to be tried in mock trial as if he were an infidel. The court, not finding his defence acceptable, sentenced him to a term in prison at Yedikule. If this should

have happened in a different country, even a single showing of such seditious material would have been sufficient to promote the author's arrest and exile, where as nothing happened to Karagöz."¹⁵

In the same year, 1854, another Western observer confirmed this by saying that no one is exempt from the tongue-in-cheek hilarity of Karagöz. Regardless of whether his target is a pasha, a theologian, a dervish, a banker or a merchant, the Karagöz puppeteer would exhibit people from every social class and occupation in his action. Even a vizier, who watched a Karagöz show incognito, was forced to listen to some bitter facts about himself.¹⁶

In addition to this, we have a very important witness in a Frenchman, whose father was in Turkey between the years 1820—1870. This gentleman was conversant with all Turkish political affairs and political figures. In a book on his father's experiences, he devoted one long chapter to Karagöz.¹⁷ In this he claims the basis of the Karagöz play was political, employed for the purpose of social and political satire directed at events and persons current at that time. He gives several illustrations from the several performances he himself attended. According to him, even the Grand Vizier or the Sultan himself was not spared from Karagöz malivious invective and caustic wit. In one play, the political ideas of the vizier, Georgian Mehmet Reşit Pasha, and his deeds as a military man were shown in a humorous way. In another performance, Karagöz poked fun at the Sultan's son-in-law, who was the chief admiral and a thoroughly worthless man. Commenting on this, Karagöz advised a young man, who seeks to begin his career, by saying, "As you do not know anything, I advise you to become a chief admiral". In another performance, it was Topal Hüseyin Pasha and his homosexual preferences which provided a target for Karagöz. However, when Karagöz, during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz, brought an important pasha, Kıbrıslı Mehmet Pasha, to the screen, showing how his family was corrupted and stole money from the state, that proved too much for the official censor. As a result political satire was banned strictly and forever. The author goes on to say that since that time, Karagöz has fallen into childish vacuity and meaningless farce. As a matter of fact, Karagöz was never able to restore this pungent side of his character again. Yet this tradition of the political spirit of Karagöz survived in the newspapers, many of them bearing titles taken from Karagöz and *Ortaoyunu*. Karagöz, the

last of these sheets, was published until recently as a popular political weekly.

Another freedom enjoyed by Karagöz, as well as by other forms of Turkish popular theatre, is its obscenity and extreme licentiousness. This is a very natural thing for popular theatres in the manner of *commedia dell'arte*. An English observer, whose account of a Karagöz performance we have already referred to, pointed out that:

"Then followed a scene with the "fair ladies" which I may not describe-not even in Latin."¹⁸

Many foreign observers accounts confirm this.¹⁹ Some observers were shocked at seeing women and children at these obscene performances of Karagöz.²⁰ Another observer having the same experience, asked an elderly Turk sitting next to him, who has brought two very young girls to the show, how he could allow children to see such scenes of obscenity. The answer was: "They should learn; sooner or later they should know; it is better for them learn these facts than to be ignorant in these matters".²¹ Even in the year of 1861, in Pera, a fashionable quarter of Istanbul, a permanent Karagöz theatre built in a popular amusement spot, Petit Jardin des Fleurs, was opened to the public and attracted large crowds even though the entertainment offered was very obscene.²²

The male organ of generation, the phallus, was an accepted part of the Karagöz show. A foreign observer describes a Karagöz performance in which a phallus is featured.²³ It is even believed that the large, moveable arm of Karagöz had originally been a phallus. Several Karagöz figures bearing a phallus exist. The present book reproduces three of them. In one of these, a figure representing Karagöz, probably fairly old, carries a large-size, stylized phallus. Evliya, while he was enumerating ten titles of the play of the contemporary puppet master, Kör Hasanzade Mehmet Çelebi's repertory, amounting to some 300 plays, mentions one where:

"Civan Nigâr, a young girl, on entering a bath, was violated by Gazi Boşnak. Karagöz, tied by his phallus, is dragged out of the bath naked."²⁴

The phallus is not only featured in Karagöz shows, but is an important part of the rural rituals and skits even to this day. It was often exhibited in public festivals. For instance, during the circumcision ceremony for Mehmet IV's son, Mustafa, which was celebrated in

a festival lasting fifteen days in Edirne, a foreign observer mentions that a jester, attired in a costume made of straw and paper, rode on a donkey, carrying a giant size phallus. With this, he saluted the onlookers, while lady spectators, modestly shrouded behind their veils, or hiding their faces in their hands, stared at the sight between their fingers.²⁵ Some observers towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th say that the government imposed restrictions and enforced police control over the Karagöz performances. However, Karagöz being an extempore performance, obscenity in a more limited form still continued.²⁶

Since their first contact with the Western theatre, both artists and the general public have felt within themselves a war between the traditional and the modern.

The first daily newspaper was officially started in 1831 and published occasional news and articles concerning the théâtre. This paper was followed by another, *Ceride-i Havadis*, which was founded in 1840 and came out every 10 days, which also gave theatrical news. When the number of newspapers and other periodicals increased, more reviews and articles on theatre appeared. One problem continually discussed by the press was the fact that the Western theatre was being imitated and also that Western plays were translated haphazardly. The papers said that technically the theatre in Turkey could adopt Western technique but should produce plays based on life in Turkish society and Turkish cultural themes. The press occasionally gave reviews of plays and, in these, great interest was shown in detail such as costume or certain speech errors made by the actors. The press called attention to the faults of the theatre, poking fun at inadequacies and shortcomings of the plays and all aspects of the theatre which would bear improvement. The main criticism seemed to be that the actors laughed at their own jokes before the audience did. Other criticisms included the use of many heavy-sounding, artificial, difficult foreign words in the plays, hard for the audience to understand, and also the fact that actors were not always suited to their roles, especially physically. Pronunciation was required to improve, to avoid further mutilation of the Turkish language. Actors were expected not to depend to such a great extent on the prompter but should learn their lines properly. More original Turkish plays were needed: Actors must try and live the part not merely make stock gestures. Many critics however were more tolerant, taking into consideration the short time available for rehearsals before production.

Let us now briefly look at the problems affecting the Turkish theatre. Restrictions on individualism and upon the daily life of the people resulted in there not being enough material for drama. Some of the elements of westernization were resented by orthodox Turkish society with their notions of propriety and decorum. This also applied to Turkish family life which was kept so private that its description on the stage was considered to be a sacrilege. Another difficulty lay in the economic deterioration of Turkey. The standing handicap of illiteracy was also responsible for the state of affairs in the theatre. Also there was a deep rooted prejudice against all things theatrical, a prejudice which had grown from the idea that the theatre was licentious. For a long time, all actors were looked down upon as undesirable characters. As anyone who could read and write immediately became a civil servant, it was impossible to find actors who could read their lines. Therefore the general level of actors from the standpoint of education and culture was very poor.

It was contrary to custom for women to appear on the stage. There were some who did, but they were never Turkish. They were usually Armenians, with the occasional Syrian or Greek, whose murdering of the language, despite the fact they were helped by voluntary assistance from Turkish literary figures on the right pronunciation, was condoned by the exigencies. There were no teachers to coach aspiring actors. With so many different dialects spoken in Turkey, it was not possible to find a common language for the stage.

Theater companies apart from their immediate objective of attracting audiences, their ignorance of western dramatic literature in most cases was responsible for their general and continual display of all the sensational elements of romance, which brought forth the applause of the unthinking audience. Audiences were encouraged to applaud the passages declaimed in a highly artificial and loud pitch also those with an ethical significance and sentimental appeal. Incidentally not only were there difficulties concerning the appearance of women on the stage, but also concerning their being a part of a theatre audience as well. Usually women had to attend theatre in the day time. And a few theatres had a partition down the middle of the auditorium dividing the men from women.

The difficulty was to create an audience and an environment for theatre, and plays performed should suit their taste and seek to appeal

to the audience. Western plays were translated abundantly, but some were wrong choices. Western dramatists who used themes that had a relevance to all societies were better. In all the Islamic world, Moliere's plays have had the most galvanic effect both on the audience and on playwrights and actors. A mere translation is not adequate to please the audience, a translator or adaptor should succeed in putting into dramatic form the contemporary spirit of his own country.

NOTES

1 See *Memoirs of Baron de Tott containing the state of Turkish Empire and the Crimea...* I, London, 1786, pp. 174—176.

2 John Auldjo, *Journal of a visit to Constantinople and some of the Greek Islands in the spring and summer of 1833*, London, 1835, pp 122—125.

3 R. Walsch, *A Residence at Constantinople*, II, London, 1836, pp. 240—44.

4 Richard Davey, *The Sultan and his subject*, I, London, 1897, pp. 343—53.

5 Tott, *op. cit.*, pp. 136—37.

6 Julie Pardoe, *The City of the Sultan*, II, London, 1838, p. 133.

7 Murat Efendi, *Türkische Skizzen*, Leipzig, 1877, p. 104.

8 "Türkisches Theater", *Ost und West*, Prag, 1839, p. 312.

9 Auldjo, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

10 Walsch, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

11 Gerard de Nerval, *Voyage en Orient* Paris, 1861, I, p. 201.

12 Pardoe, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

13 Louis Enault, *Constantinople et la Turquie*, Paris, 1855, p. 367.

14 Adolphe Slade, *Records of Travels in Turkey...* London, 1833, II, p. 201.

15 [Joseph Pierre Agnès] Mery, *Constantinople et la Mer Noire*, Paris, 1855, p. 358.

16 Ubicini, *La Turquie Actuelle*, Paris, 1855, pp. 317—18.

17 Wanda, *Souvenirs Aneodotiques sur la Turquie (1820—1870)*, Paris, 1884, pp. 271—78.

18 Davey, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

19 David Nerreter, *Neueröffnete Mahometonische Mosches, Mosches*, Nürnberg, 1703, p. 365; G.A. Olivier, *Voyage dans l'Empire Othoman*, Paris 1800, p. 139; Gerard de Nerval, *op. cit.*, p. 200; Charles Rolland, *La Turquie Contemporaine*, Paris 1854, p. 1 s 44—148; Theophile Gautier, *Constantinople*, Paris 1856, p. 173; Edmond de Amicis, *Constantinople*, Paris 1835, p. 133.

20 Lemercier de Neuville, *Histoire Aneodotiques*, Paris, 1892, p. 70; Hermann Vambery, *Sittenbilder aus dem Morgenlande*, Berlin 1876, p. 34; Ivan de Voestyne, *Voyage au pays des Backi-Bouzouks*, Paris 1876, p. 308.

21 Wanda, *op. cit.*, pp. 277—78.

22 *Journal de Constantinople*, 30 September 1861.

23 Sevin, *Letters sur Constantinople*, Paris 1802, p. 8.

24 Until very recently researacehrs basing their findings on the error in spelling in printed text of Evliya, were mistaken about the word *kin* meaninga male organ of reproduction. Only recently, comparing the published text with one of the more reliable manuscripts of Evliya, was it realized that this word means a phallus.

25 *Memoires du Sleur de la Croix*, Paris 1684, pp. 119—120.