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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TURKISH DRAMA AS A VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL
AND POLITICAL COMMENT IN THE POST-REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD,
(1924 TO THE PRESENT.)

by

BRUCE ROBSON

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF M.A. OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
DURHAM.

AN ABSTRACT OF THIS THESIS.

The modern Turkish dramatist has two traditions of theatre on which to draw : the folk play called 'orta oyunu' and the classical theatre of Western Europe. These have been known in Turkey for at least a hundred and fifty years. When writing comedy, he has found 'orta oyunu' traditions of most use; when writing on social or political themes, the traditions of Western European theatre, as first employed by Namık Kemal, have served him best.

Since 1924, he has concentrated on plots which presented characters learning to live with the profound social changes demanded by the Constitution of that year. Criticism has entered his work either by contrasting individuals at variance with the norm as represented by Republican society, or conversely, society's short-comings with some exemplary individual dedicated to Revolutionary concepts. Because of a traditionally oppressive censorship, he has not been in the habit of being outspoken in his criticism and he has become very adept at cloaking his comment in mythical, legendary and historical plot.

When the censorship was relaxed as a direct result of the 1960 Revolution, all at once he was free to voice opinions he had masked since the foundation of the Republic and these burst forth with an adolescent enthusiasm wherein the criticism was forthright but not always reasonable or accurate. It is foreseen that the next stage in his evolution will be to distance himself from his subjects and present his opinions in a more mature argument. It is noted that his critical work has been understandably more honest and less cryptic since the relaxing of the censorship, especially since 1965. Fine Turkish plays have been written in this period but no form of expression essentially Turkish in inspiration has yet evolved.

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1. The Initial Dilemma.

When literary or academic discussion of the drama is engaged upon, it is almost inevitable that theatre people will dismiss the proceedings as invalid. Similarly, when directors and actors talk of the play, men of letters and academicians will often turn their backs on the ephemeral nature of the discussion. In a way, both parties are justified in their reaction to the other's views because the drama is an inextricable blend of the momentary experience of the performance and the lasting one of the play's text in print.

From an academic point of view, it is safest to deal with the play in print, and the playwright, then, as an author; yet in doing so, one is cutting off the play from the very purpose for which it was intended; that is, performance. Terence Rattigan has said to the effect that a writer cannot call himself a playwright till he has seen his plays in performance.

Yet as soon as the literary man accepts that the play in performance is a valid part of his thesis, the initial dilemma expands in all directions. How much of what is seen is what the author intended; to what extent have the actor's lines been adapted to his range of playing; how much has the director moulded the play after his own style; how much of the play is sheer technical expertise? Not least in the consideration of the 'play in performance' is the mood of

the audience at the time of its subjection to the piece. The audience's response can either lend wings to the event or nail it to the boards. The weather, a national crisis or a death in the family can all affect the reception of even the most brilliantly executed play.

From the point of view of the academician, all these theatrical vagaries provide shaky foundations on which to base a critical judgement. The only true basis for such is tangible evidence. Once this is admitted, one can only proceed by attempting to deal with all factors, the tangible and the intangible, giving precedence to the durable and concrete over the spontaneous and ephemeral.

For the purposes of this thesis, an examination of the written text will be given premier importance. Then, the author talking about his own work will be considered. After that, points of direction of the play in actual performance, which were seen to illumine passages of the text, will be treated. Finally, the critics' evaluation will be relegated to the least important role of all.

In treating Turkish drama, however, the problem is not that easily solved. Firstly, texts are not published according to their merit as literature or as popular successes. The choice would seem to be the arbitrary decision of the individual publisher. Secondly, the Turkish playwright, prefacing his play with a puff composed by himself for

publication in the programme, often seeks to condition his audience by telling them in advance of the stage presentation what he has written. Often, after seeing the play, the discrepancy between his intention and his achievement is marked. Then, to be influenced by one performance of a play can be hopelessly misleading. "Deli Ibrahim", seen on three separate occasions, proved to be three different experiences. On the occasion of the Cumhuriyet Bayrami, 1967, the audience, primed with nationalistic spirit instilled by the day's parades, lent a vital immediacy to the performance by its response to certain scenes. This was noticeably absent on the other two occasions. On the second, the leading man was obviously ill, while, on the third, the house was half full.

The word of the critic, which might have proved an effective bridge between the theatrical experience and the literary integrity of the play, has been relegated to last place in importance, since it is almost impossible to decide whether the Turkish critic is being impartial or not. Several elements are responsible for this. The first is the smallness of Turkish theatrical society. Theatre is centred on Istanbul and Ankara. Critics and Writers are in each others' pockets. Friendships and loyalties are involved in the assessment of work; so much so that objective criticism is rare.

The information used in the preparation of this thesis, then, has been gleaned from the following sources in order of reliability ; the published text of the play; the introductions to these texts; the author talking about his own work in newspaper articles and puffs printed in the front of theatre programmes; the actual words of playwrights, critics and actors as heard in debate or rounds conference tables, such words being taken down in shorthand and written up afterwards. And lastly, journalistic criticism.

Plays will be dealt with in the following order of precedence. Plays seen and read will be treated first. Plays read only will follow. Plays where the text can be submitted with the thesis will take precedence over all.

In respect of the above handicaps, it is at present impossible to prepare a comprehensive study of the development of Turkish drama as a vehicle for social and political comment over the period indicated in the title, but sufficient texts are available to pin-point and illumine the main features of that development.

2. The Drum Beats Nightly.

"Anliyana sivri sinek saz; anlamiyana davul zurna az."

This is an old Turkish proverb which translates as follows. "To those who understand, the sound of the mosquito is as loud as the strumming

of the saz; to those who do not, even the rhythms of the drum and fife seem faint." This would seem to fit to perfection the current attitudes of modern Turkish dramatists to their audiences. As much as can be said this side of libel about contemporary persons and institutions responsible for guiding the fate of the nation is being said. Those who are at all aware of current affairs will hardly miss the point being made simply because it is not stated in bold, obvious terms. It is no mere than good taste which prevents today's dramatist from being more explicit. However, those who are ignorant of the current scene, either wilfully so or through dullness, can not be made to see what they are incapable of recognising. At any rate, it is not the responsibility of the dramatist to take on this task.

It is a dirge played on the 'davul-zurna', those old instruments of warning, which accompanies the recitation of this proverb at the end of "Devri Süleyman." This piece is a very controversial, out-spoken, political satire for the theatre, which opened in Ankara after some censor trouble in April 1968, and played for the whole season with official blessing to packed houses. To some, this production celebrates the final release of the Turkish drama from the clutches of an oppressive censorship which has crippled its expression

for centuries. Most of the movement towards freedom, like major developments in other fields, has been achieved in the last ten years. However, the struggle for free expression has a history which precedes that date by many decades. Now, the tones of criticism have reached the pitch of the 'davul-zurna', but playwrights for almost a century have been hinting with the persistence of the mosquito's drone that things social and political on the Turkish scene have been far from perfect, and these in the audience, whose ears have been pitched to the nuances of social and political undercurrents, have been able to single out the hints from the apparently innocuous entertainment. Unfortunately, at times, it has been the censor's ear which has proved the more sensitive and this has resulted in a crippling, oppressive supervision of the theatre by the Court or the Republican Government.

From the earliest Ottoman times, there has always been some sort of popular entertainment in Constantinople. The 'surnameler' record the public festivities accompanying the births, marriages, accessions and triumphs of the various sultans. Taking part in these celebrations were acrobats, jugglers and contortionists of varying kinds. Mock battles were staged for the enjoyment of the city-bound populace, depicting Ottoman victories over the foreigner. But such entertainments

were largely in the nature of sideshows. So, too, was the work of the 'meddah', of the master puppeteer who operated the Karagöz shadow play, and of the live actors of the 'orta Oyunu' who translated the traditional stories of the puppet show into human dimensions.¹ One stopped in the street, drawn by the loud colours of the puppets' or actors' costumes; one listened to the gagging of the main characters and laughed at the exploitation of the foibles of the minor ones, then moved on about other business. Since the stories of each play were traditional and well-known by each member of the audience, it was possible to arrive after the commencement of the play and leave before the end of the action without one's enjoyment or understanding being impaired. Such entertainments were taken lightly, demanding of the spectator a minimum of concentration. But even so, light and empty though these plays were in the main, they did essay the odd comment and criticism of event and personality currently on the social and political scene. However, such criticism was never original. It was always derived from well-aired gossip.

The idea that a play should be more than a peep-show came late to the Turkish theatre and did so by way of foreign influence. Perhaps the first entirely serious Turkish play on record as being seriously

1. AND, Metin. "History of Popular Entertainment in Turkey," Forum Press, Ankara, 1964. pp.17 - 61. Historical details of pre-revolutionary dramatic entertainment have been taken from this work. The author of this thesis worked with Metin And on his text.

intended by the playwright and received as such by the Constantinople audience, was Namik Kemal's "Vatan yahut Silistre" ('The Fatherland' or 'Silistre'.) This was performed amid great disturbance in 1873 and earned for its author exile in France. It is noticeable that Namik Kemal did not choose to express his political propagandist theme in the traditional format of the puppet play or the 'orta cyunu', but harnessed instead the five act form current in the European theatre of his day. He had become familiar with this during his youthful travels in the West and by attending performances from the classical repertoires of Racine, Corneille, Moliere and Goldoni given by touring companies from Italy and France.

About this time arose a problem which besets the Turkish theatre to this day. It is, namely, that if a play is serious, its form and exposition must needs be according to the European model. It is declaimed and intoned in the manner of the French classical actor reciting the central speeches of each act in a tragedy of Racine or Corneille. The actors remain stationary while delivering their speeches; or lately, due to the popularity of the Brechtian epic theatre technique, stand in a line and chant their message at the audience across the footlights. But should the play be a comedy, it is automatically

released from this stylistic restriction and bursts out in the vital, unruly fashion of the early 'orta oyunu' players. Those plays which seek to combine comedy with seriousness of purpose like "Yalova Kaymakamı", more often than not turn out to be an uneasy sequence of scenes, some of which are broadly farcical and others of which are little more than heavy, purposeful recitations; a pastiche of repartee, which abounds in untranslatable puns, very crude physical humour, and socio-political diatribe, thick with reference to current headline news.

Formlessness, then, is the hall-mark of the traditional Turkish theatre, and where form is necessary to render intelligible the process of a definite theme, a type of technique, undisguisedly foreign, is drawn upon. Nothing essentially Turkish in style, since the popularising of the theatre in Constantinople during the Tanzimat period and especially after 1859, has been evolved.

It has been said that criticism by hint and oblique reference was already present in the shadow and 'orta oyunu' plays; also that Namık Kemal's "Vatan yahut Silistre" was a propagandist play. It was because this piece was propaganda for the Young Turks against the Court that serious Turkish drama was forced underground for almost sixty years, from about 1875 to about 1935.

The theatre thrives when a nation is trying to define its goals and aims, but once such have been settled upon, literary talent is channelled into pamphleteering, speechifying and other forms of address more immediate than the hypothetical situation presented by the theatre play. This was the fate of the serious theatre in the decades following the 1870s. The Young Turks, home from exile, were engaged in a life-or-death struggle with Abdülhamit II, the Red Sultan. "Vatan yahut Silistre" was revived on the success of the 1908 revolution and gave rise to a rash of plays by Young Turks in a similar vein, none of which were in any way remarkable other than for their blatant use of the stage as a platform whereon to set their non-dramatic harangues on independence, autonomy and the fate of the Empire. Between 1914 and 1923, there was little dramatic activity because of the war and the struggles for Independence which followed it. There was, however, an inexplicable rash of theatre building in 1919, but little in the way of new works to be housed therein. It was only after 1923 that the country had leisure to think of the theatre again.

Turkey became a republic on October 29th, 1923. This was achieved as a result of Mustafa Kemal's driving out the occupation forces of Greece, France, Italy and Britain, which nations had partitioned the country after World War I. On the final banishment of the sultans and

the disestablishment of the caliphate, modern Turkey came into existence. After all these ex-colonials - Yugoslavs, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Albanians, Syrians, Arabs and Russians - who wished to call themselves 'Turks', had been invited to come and dwell in the new Turkey, the borders were closed, and a desperately artificial programme of nationalism was introduced to weld this polyglot population into some sensibility of a common heritage and aim. While Turkey's independence and autonomy were at first political changes, it was not long before they necessitated radical social reforms, the assimilation of which is still giving a large section of the population trouble today. This can be directly traced to Mustafa Kemal's own personal view of what was to be understood by the term 'modern Turkish republic'. He did not see it simply as being a change in regime; he saw it rather as a revolution in the pattern of his nation's thought. Coming as it did after several centuries of Ottoman rule, during which period most constructive thinking - aloud at least - was viewed as sedition, the Constitution of 1924 and its attendant reforms did not sit easily on a people more used to, and preferring, tradition and custom to the pains of a rational existence, the application of which necessitated complete reorientation. In 1924, then, apart from a few far-seeing intellectuals, Turkish society was trying desperately,

in the face of a determined leader backed by a self-made law, to preserve the old religious and social customs which belonged more to the Middle Ages than to the twentieth century. The decades which separate that period from now have been devoted to assimilating western culture, at first on a level of uncomprehending imitation of surface qualities, and latterly, on the deeper, more permanent level of understanding through explanation of how the country's survival in the twentieth century depended on the success of these reforms.

Once more, then, after 1923, for the people of Turkey arose the dilemma of identity and defining the national aim, which infused the theatre with a new purposeful role in the national life. In the insecure, shifting years of the new Turkish Republic when a strict censorship over the country's artistic and intellectual activity was a necessity to prevent backsliding, new flight was given to the dramatic imagination whose job was to get said by analogy and by implication what could not be said openly. The bald lesson delivered in direct terms from the platform could be reiterated and pieced out within the more attractive framework of a dramatic story.

The Republic was not slow to harness the talents of Turkish artists, but tried to do so by restricting them to certain fields

of creative labour. In 1931, the Cumhuriyet Halk Party opened the Halk Evleri, a branch of whose activities was to be the drama. The Halk Evleri Movement, founded by the general secretariat of the Republican Party, was an attempt to carry forward the aims of the social reforms into the cultural life of the villages and small towns. The main aim was that of spreading the new system of republican life to the farthest ends of Turkey; " to introduce to the people the usefulness of prose, journalism and research through the medium of folk-lore told in the pure Turkish language." 2

"Ülkü" (Aim) was the publication of the Halk Evleri Movement. It named nine branches of 'halk' (folk) culture, one of which was theatre. It stated that a play sponsored by the organisation would exhibit the following qualities. It would have a story, the aim of which would be to strengthen the audience's love for the country and the nation, and prompt their enthusiasm for social and political reform. The story of such a play might be a historical one which would encourage the audience to relive moments of 'our glorious past'; for instance, in the celebrating of the heroes of the recent War of Independence; or, on the other hand, it might have a lyrical plot which would celebrate ' the natural beauties towns.' It might be a social commentary which would show as ridiculous,

2. KARPAT, Kemal. "Türk Edebiyatında Sosyal Konular," ^{Varlık, İstanbul}, 1959, p.35.

disgusting and totally undesirable, reaction, superstition and narrow-mindedness, throwing into relief the desirability of all things true and honest. Above all, the play would inject into the audience 'a love of being among and part of the people.'³ Niyazi Aki endorses this assessment of the duty of Halk Evleri theatre.⁴ Whether such a play has been written is hard to say, but it is clear that rather than develop an original idea, playwrights were encouraged simply to use the stage as a platform to celebrate Republican Party achievements.

It was not unreasonable of the new republic to have expected its artists to toe the party line, but such an atmosphere is hardly conducive to the creation of great dramatic literature. However, the stimulus to write and discuss having been given by the complete disruption of the life pattern that ^{had} governed the populace since the beginning of the Ottoman period and the personal problems brought about by such an emotional upheaval, it was for the playwrights to stretch their imaginations to find plots that would allow them to say what they wanted to by way of comment and still remain inside the law; to turn, in effect, the 'sivri sinek' into the 'saz'.

Needless to say, the drama of the early 1930s was largely derivative in inspiration, drawing heavily on popular plays of the

3. KARPAT, Kemal. op. cit. p.xiii , p.35 of his text.

4. AKI, Niyazi. "Çağdaş Türk Tiyatrosuna Toplu Bakış 1923-1967", Ataturk Universitesi Yayinlari, Ankara, 1968,pp.41-46.

theatres to the West. Plays of the period are insipid to say the least; often they are naive in their black and white view of things. One suspects they are insipid, not so much because their authors have little to say, but because of pressures imposed by a watchful censor. However, gradually between 1940 and 1968, they gather momentum in the strength of their temper and content, developing along the following lines.

Plays were written where socio-political opinion was introduced as pure social commentary on the individual's ability to get along with his society, which generally meant his facility for absorbing the changes of the revolution into his life pattern. In some plays, like those of Cevat Fehmi Başkut, the individual's behaviour was often singled out as the example for the crowd to follow, or, inversely, it was criticised by comparison with the norm as represented by the behaviour of society. Plays dealing with modern times and themes seemed trapped within this unimaginative format, where in the end national virtues and values were always rigorously declared for depending on which side they happened to lie. In "Paydos",⁵ for example, the teacher, Murtaza, represents the modern Turk, enlightened and conscious of his country's needs, who is prepared in the face of personal gain to pit his wits against reactionary elements among his colleagues and family. On the

5. BAŞKUT, Cevat Fehmi. "Paydos", fully discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

other hand, in "Harput'ta Bir Amerikalî"⁶, the millionaire, Abraham Maderrus, is made to see by the true Anatolian peasant the selfish waywardness of his mode of life and to adopt in its place a modus vivendi more beneficial to the society from which he hales.

Later playwrights experimented with the uses of historically and mythically parallel situations to hint at improvements that might be brought about in modern Turkey and to criticise the more obvious follies of the new Turkish way of life. Character weaknesses of great men of history in such plays turn out to be more than coincidental echoes of current opinion about the doings of current personalities.

It was almost by default that the Turkish theatre was finally given a freer hand to treat the pressing problems of the moment. One of the points of criticism levelled at the Menderes regimes of the fifties was that the censor held too tight a grip on the nation's freedom of expression. When, in 1960, the army junta successfully overthrew the Democrat Party's regime, the new government was forced to bring into effect several promises it had made to the people to enlist their support of the revolution. One of these was the promise to release the press and the arts from the oppressive censorship to which they had been subjected under Menderes.

6. BASKUT, Cevat Fehmi. "Harput'ta Bir Amerikalî", fully discussed in Chapter 1. of this thesis.

This opened the way for a series of searching new plays in which the idea of entertainment was only second to that of instruction. "Pusuda"⁷ by Cahit Atay was the first play to treat with due seriousness the village problem. It was performed first in 1961. During the next seven years, the theatre - private companies rather than the State - were to become more and more frank and outspoken in its treatment of contemporary problems, till after the advent to power of the new Adalet Partisi in 1965, there seemed to be no subject or personage in Turkish public life safe from the searingly critical gaze of the aware dramatist.

In the season, 1967-8, two entertainments, "Sarıpınar 1914"⁸ and "Devri Süleyman"⁹, slashed at the last bastions of Turkish national pride. Everything that ought to be said - indeed, can be said - has been said. It now remains for the Turkish dramatist to reduce the volume of his voice and increase the depth and accuracy of his treatment.

Most of the achievement in the field of thematic and technical experimentation has been in the hands of the private theatres. With very few exceptions, these are owned by actors and actresses who once trained with the State Theatre, which institution was initiated in 1948. Finding the State theatre repertoire too restricted and its management too inclined towards nepotism in the awarding of key roles,

7. ATAY, Cahit. "Pusuda", fully treated in Chapter VI of this thesis.

8. ÖZAKMAN, Turgut. "Sarıpınar 1914", fully treated in Chapter VII of this thesis.

9. ENGİN, Aydın. "Devri Süleyman", fully treated in Chapter VII of this thesis.

these chose to risk financial ruin and break loose on their own. It is significant that when this thesis was discussed with one of the State Theatre dramaturgs, he said to the effect that it did not really exist since the State Theatre never consciously treats with social or political themes. His final word was, "If you choose to see things and read things into our work.....". Güner Sumer of the Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu said practically the opposite ; that if a didactic message did not come through each play - more than that - if a definite policy and dogma was not seen to repeat itself from production to production, then the members of the AST were failing in their purpose.

3. Defining a Purpose.

Ten years ago, a history of the Turkish theatre would not have proved a very fruitful or enlightening study in respect of its illumining and illustrating contemporary Turkish thought. In the main, it would have been seen to have reflected outworn European fashions and traditions. Exceptions to this would have been one or two works like "Paydos" and "Harput'ta Bir Amerikalı", which exploited situations involving mild social criticism for comic and melodramatic purposes. However, at the close of the sixties, the theatre reflects in the clearest, most incisive and often bitterly critical way, the latest thought of the nation. The drama spills over with poignant, forceful and analytical

self-criticism of hitherto accepted and unchallenged institutions, and the censorship - which, from earliest times to this present decade, has stifled any serious thought in the theatre - has slackened off and broadened its mind to include all but the vilest, most pointed libel and slander, and all but the fiercest, anti-national opinion. The lesson that has been learnt is that a nation's strength lies in its ability to assess and evaluate its weakness and faults, as well as to celebrate its virtues and achievements.

It might be thought that in the above paragraph, too much emphasis has been placed on the theatre as a vehicle for defining the nation's purpose. However, a nation as young and artificially created out of chaos as Turkey is, is obviously going to put this problem of discovering its identity before all others, and naturally the theatre, as the most vital and forthcoming of the arts, is the best medium through which to bring enlightenment in this respect. Any nation's drama has two main purposes :to entertain and to instruct. At times of ease and confidence, the element of entertainment seems to dominate, while during times of stress and national uncertainty, the element of instruction overshadows the entertainment as messages are stated, aims underlined and directions indicated. This has been the case with Turkish drama since the founding

of the Republic in 1923. One might compare the purpose of Shakespeare's history plays in lauding the triumphs of the House of Tudor and exposing threats to the same, with the purpose of theatre in Republican Turkey.

Drama as an art is not an absolute entity. What constitutes drama varies according to the demands of individual persons and individual countries. In the end, it must be left to the individual nation to define to what purpose it will put the medium. This has been fairly adequately formulated as far as Turkey is concerned by Professor Kemal Karpat, who states, "there can be a national literature in the reflection of the problems of a country."¹⁰ Though he chooses the term 'reflection' in the one instance, he states later in the same work, that in a country struggling to retain a separate existence and autonomy in a hostile world, "the function of literature is to prophesy, which stimulates the people to discuss and, as a result of public opinion, governments act."¹¹ Turkish theatre, then, is held by many to be the testing ground for new thought, where theories and ideas may be tried out in hypothetical situations; where Man may seek to define his spiritual and temporal role in connection with the forces that govern his life; namely the State - the tangible force - and the Infinite - the intangible force. In this respect, modern Turkish theatre shares quite deliberately a purpose in common with the classical Greek Theatre.

10. KARPAT, Kemal. op.citp. (XII) Introduction to his text.

11. ibid.

A conference was held on May 23rd, 1968, at Hacettepe University, where the topic : "What can the theatre give to Turkey ? What is the role of the universities in the development of our theatre ?" was discussed. Three speakers of very diverse sympathies gave their opinions concerning the nature of the function of Turkish theatre. The first speaker was MAHİR CANOVA, one of the doyens of the State Theatre, director of the State Conservatory, producer of plays and sometime actor. He said :

" All those working in and for the theatre are striving towards the 'aim for perfection, completeness and fulfillment' (tüm). Theatre is a 'shared' (ortaklaşa) art, a branch of the fine arts in which many arts share. It is an art with its own particular methods and media Theatre can be used for many purposes; for instance, when we are at war, we like to see "Vatan yahut Silistre". However, the theatre should never be used as a vehicle solely. It should first and foremost be thought of as an art form, though it began originally as a message from the gods. Man has found himself through it and has appropriated it to his own use. If the theatre is not to be taken as an art, then it is no more than a type of topic for discussion round conference tables. Man of today turns to his problems through the medium of art.

It is unfair to deal with Man as if he were a duplicate of the same pattern. To treat him thus, one reduces his individual thoughts and aim to the level of 'general socio-political movements'. To do this is to exert a destructive influence on the theatre, the theatre being a particular art rather than a general one. It is often bemoaned that the subjects the theatre treats are always the same, but the individuality of each play lies in the distinctive form, technique and treatment ~~is~~ superimposes on its subject. Even plays in translation gain fresh interest through adaptation. The main thing to be avoided in the theatre is monotony and the second is obscurity. That is why 'Karagöz' and 'orta oyunu' are practically extinct today."

At this point, Mahir Bey went onto speak about the adaptation of foreign classics for Turkish audiences. He said that Shakespeare has a universal message, but the nature of that message is different from nation to nation. It is not sufficient, in his opinion, to reproduce this playwright faithfully in a sixteenth century English context. His value to Turkey lies in his adaptation to the modern Turkish context.

Mahir Bey was, then, voicing the official view of the State Theatre, one of the aims of which is to bring the theatre of the world, acknowledgedly superior to the national product in many ways, to enrich the experience of the Turkish nation.

The next speaker was ÖZDEMİR NUTKU, lecturer in theatre at the University of Ankara, theatre owner and critic. Perhaps his speech was the most illuminating of the three, since in pleasing the students most, it seemed to shed more light on their opinions than on those of the speaker. Their response to what was said seemed to reflect the fact that their idea of the function of the theatre coincided with the one that was being outlined to them. Özdemir Bey claimed :

"Aesthetics is not arbitrary. Art is a science. Authors and actors should study the problems of their society. Literature and art are the true reflectors and mirrors of social life. In certain periods of time, a writer can only create an art which reflects that period. The criteria by which art is assessed are never absolute. Kant

calls art 'some sort of game created by idle people.' On the other hand, Hegel says the basis of art is history. Art can assist in the development of a people's feelings and ideas, and also in their relationship with other peoples of the world. 'Art for art's sake', then, is a slogan used by loafers and idlers.

"Theatre gains life from being in tune with the times and the people. Hence it is and ought to be ever-changing. The effect of the theatre as a weapon of reformation in religion and politics can be traced in all ages. In the Baroque era, the theatre was the spokesman for political power as well as education. In the French Revolution, it was used to catch out those who went in for polemics. In the 19th century, the theatre spoke out against dictators, while in the 20th century, theatre is the most effective weapon of oppressed colonial peoples against imperialist powers."

At this point in the proceedings, wild cheering held the speaker up for several minutes. This matched very neatly the mood of the students at the time of the conference. This speech was given a month prior to a nationwide boycott of universities and higher educational institutes by the students¹², and mass demonstrations by the youth against the visit of the U.S. Sixth Fleet to Istanbul¹³.

"What can be done in the development of the theatre in Turkey? First of all, the types of play chosen for performance ought to be in tune with the needs and current thoughts of society. Good theatre ought to have government support and there should be a laboratory for theatre studies. The general drift of society's opinions and aims, the analysis and presentation of the same in dramatic form ought to be the studies of such a laboratory, in order that the nation's development and changing characteristics may thus be preserved in drama for the inspection of future generations. We once had our own national traditional theatre which was characteristically eastern. Condemning it as crude and improvised (tulûat), we turned our backs on it and it died. We ought to go back to its traditions, since art is of the people for the people."

These last words were drowned by the cheers of some and received by others

12. June 1968.

13. July 1968.

in silence. The style of the speech would not have disgraced the French Revolution in its worst rabble-rousing period.

The last speaker was HASAN AKSOY, president of the dramatic society of the Middle East Technical University, self-styled student leader and leftist to a degree. In his speech, enthusiastically received by the group he brought along with him, he mentioned the theatre only as much as was necessary to justify his being there, and devoted the remainder of his time to a diatribe on Marxism. When questioned on this, he was forced to admit that he had read very little of Marx. His speech was noteworthy as representing the leftists' reluctance to recognise the medium in any other capacity than as a vehicle to explain the village problem and the triumphs of Marxism to the ignorant peasant public.

It is noticeable, then, that in the opinion of these three gentlemen, diverse and separate though their sympathies are in the main, the theatre in Turkey has an active role to play in the development of the nation. They seemed to agree on the following : firstly, that the theatre ought to be a national one. It might play foreign classics but not merely for the sake of doing so. Such foreign plays ought to be chosen from the point of view of their appropriateness to the current Turkish experience. Secondly, modern Turkish playwrights ought to be

conscious of, motivated by and recorders of the main social and political movements of their country. Thirdly, that plays chosen for production ought to have an active, positive, concrete purpose behind them ; they ought not to be indulged in merely for reasons or pure enjoyment. For this reason, the very popular version in Turkish of "My Fair Lady" was mentioned neither by Mahir Bey nor Özdemir Bey, and was openly scorned as frivolous nonsense by Hasan Bey. It was also remarked that, except for the oblique reference in Mahir Bey's speech : "The theatre should never be used solely as a vehicle or tool.... the main thing to be avoided is monotony and the second main thing is obscurity", the word 'entertainment' was never mentioned during the entire proceedings.

Theatre, then, has become a very serious consideration in Turkish cultural life during the last ten years. From being a pleasant way of passing a couple of hours in not too serious a manner, it has now become a topic of organised academic study. Apart from the State Conservatory, a department of theatre studies flourishes in Ankara University and a department of Turkish theatre is mooted for Hacettepe University in the autumn of 1968. It is a measure of its new-found importance that so many people; academics, journalists and actors, show so much concern for its future - how it is to be used and to what ends?

The fact that it seems to have been dormant and undervalued for so long, filling only a minor role in the nation's cultural life, is attributable to its having been subjected to all the rigorous controls that a newborn sense of nationalism necessitates and inflicts on a people.

During the early stages in the painful process of creating the new nation, the position of the theatre could not have been a very active one. With so much opposition to the enforced programme of modernisation of the new state, a desperate control of the country's artistic and intellectual activity was a necessity. Artists are notorious prophets or reactionaries depending on their private persuasions. In the early years of a nation, individualism needs to be restricted. During the struggle for independence and the definition of the new state, philosophical debate on the desirability of this and the unacceptability of that can only be read as treason. The theatre, at such times, assumes the characteristics of the circus, as was the case with the French theatre at the time of the 1789 revolution ; or if it is to attempt to be serious, it must adopt the characteristics of the political platform where official party lines are echoed in uplifting, undramatic harangues.

However, by the 1950s, having successfully avoided implication in the Second World War action, Turkey was beginning to settle down with confidence as an independent state. This was no mean achievement

considering the wave of Communist persuasion that engulfed the Balkans and Central Europe at this time. In combatting this, Turkey's best ally had been her traditional enmity to Russia as an idea, whether Czarist or Socialist making no difference, an enmity going back at least to the time of Catherine II and the infamous Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, 1774. By 1950, Turkey's borders were defined and accepted by the world powers as immutable. So, with her place among nations secured and her mid-century identity firmly fixed in the nation's mind, the time had arrived to examine and assess what had been achieved. In this the playwright was quick to recognise his role. Beginning at first to volunteer his ideas with caution, he gained momentum and temper in proportion to the confidence he earned from the government. When it was seen that he was well-intentioned and not eager to create discontent but only to catalogue it, he was at last given his head.

Perhaps the most graphic way of presenting this growing consciousness of his role as commentator on the state of the nation and his corresponding seriousness in respect of his now accepted status as such, is to reproduce the intentions of each of three famous authors addressing their respective audience in an attempt to introduce their work.

The first and oldest of these is Cevat Fehmi BASKUT, writing about his play, "Harput'ta Bir Amerikalı" in the State Theatre Programme covering the 1955 season. He states to the effect that there are several ways of looking at his play. One might take it as an elegy on a dying township, in this case the township of Harput which is slowly falling apart as its sons emigrate, lured by easy wealth obtainable further to the west. On the other hand, Cevat Fehmi writes, one might take it as a lament bewailing Turkish passion for things foreign, both countries and cultures. Lastly, the play could be read as a good natured condemnation of 'kompraders' (by which is meant those business enterprises, established by foreign Imperialist powers, to exploit with foreign capital Turkish land, facilities and resources, the profits from which are drained off into foreign banks.)

Having gone to great lengths to establish that he does not actually advise that the reader or audience take any of the above suggestions as the author's direction towards the true meaning of his play, he goes on to insist that " Though such problems do exist and deserve to be reflected, I simply sought to write a comedy." To research the problem, he tells us he went to Harput and Elazığ which saddened him considerably. However, remembering he was writing a comedy, he threw

in the scenes in the Istanbul Hilton to brighten up the action. It is worthy of note that this play and its introduction were written in 1954 when the theatre was still under rather close supervision. Here, then, the author could not be more vague about his intention. He is saying that whatever the audience chooses to see, that is their business : and he washes his hands of all blame concerning their findings.

The second author is Cahit ATAY, introducing his play, "Pusuda" in a letter to the reader reproduced in the front of the printed text. His first play, "Pervaneler", had been set in the French context and was hardly a success. However, it caused sufficient stir for people to importune Atay on the subject of his next text. His letter reads:

" 'Let the next one be about us,' they kept saying while I persisted that great theatre is not concerned with 'us' and 'you'. The only problem in the theatre is Man. Despite the strangeness of their plots and characters to the Turk, a great number of foreign authors have 'created majestic works for us'; on the other hand, there is a great wealth of plays of a purely local interest. There is no doubt about the Britishness of Shakespeare. He was as English as Chekov was Russian and Lorca was Spanish. However, the cry for the next play to be one concerning 'us' was burnt into my brain. Poetry, short stories and novels concerning immediate Turkish problems were enjoying great popularity, so one day, just like the Irish poet, Yeats, advised, I let myself be captured by the literature which was running wild and free from the mountains and the villages. I knew the people of Turkey in the various corners where I had worked. For instance, I was well acquainted with the families of Cek, Ali, Föter Hasan and Kara Raşit in the villages where I had served as a teacher, and their images have 'sat cross-legged in my head' with the ease and sincerity of Pirandello's six characters ever since. Their conversation concerned land, water problems,

"blood feuds and drought. These people, whom the poet calls 'those whose hands and feet are not hands and feet at all,'¹⁴ were as local as it is possible to be with their shalvar, mintans and kaskets. But their efforts and struggles, celebrated in their songs and laments, belong to humanity and reach out over the whole world. I felt ashamed. I felt useless, an unproductive son of my country. All of a sudden, I found myself on the side of those who worried me with the request that the next play be one concerning 'us'. What should I do, I pondered, what should I do ?

"Then, quietly but nonetheless vitally, there appeared in my mind's eye Bostancı Dursun, Ağa Yılanoğlu and Yaşar, beside whom those actual acquaintances mentioned above seemed to pale. Let me explain that Dursun was so named because his mother wished to keep him when he was born. Perhaps he was her twelfth child and she hoped he would be her last; or perhaps all the others had died as babies and she hoped this one would be allowed to live to manhood ? The reason for Yaşar being so named has a similar purpose. 'Yaşar!' is the heartfelt wish of the Anatolian mother bereft of so many of her children through blight of poverty, illness, famine and war. The last of the trio, Yılanoğlu, is so named because of his coming between these two good friends, Dursun and Yaşar, like a snake, turning their friendship to hatred by creating a deadly rivalry. What should I do next ? The play was to be built round the trap created by Yılanoğlu for the other two. The whole work should come to an end on a symbolic note.

"You will laugh at Dursun. He is one of the serious - funny fellows of Anatolia. But beneath his laughter, if you are made by my writing to taste the bitter salt of teardrops, then I am worthy of calling myself a true son of this fatherland."

It is noticeable, that, in his letter, Atay actually acknowledges his desire to arouse his readers' attention to the recognition of and concern about the problem which is at the centre of the play. There is also, of course, a desperate desire to give the audience what they want, and one wonders what matters most to Atay; what he has to say

14. Direct translation. Atay may mean 'unrecognisable as human beings', that is, 'monsters'.

or whom he has to please ? In spite of this, Atay has created a very powerful play. Having promised entertainment in "Pusuda", he achieves his aim of involving his audience and soliciting their commitment concerning a problem that exists for seventy per cent of the nation.

The last letter, on fire with criticism, concern and the desperate need for a stage from which to be heard, is from Fikret OTYAM, introducing his play, "Mayın".¹⁵ It is remarkable for the author's seriousness of purpose and long history in pursuit of the underlying truth behind what he has to say. The lengths to which he has gone to amass fact and supporting evidence in the form of photographic and taped material, does indeed make something of a science of the theatre. However, as the author himself acknowledges, it was the dramatic ability of the Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu which made his play, already worthy as a social document, acceptable as a piece of theatre for the stage. Fikret Bey writes in an article, printed in 'Ulus' newspaper on March 28th, 1968:

"In "Mayın", I wanted to tell the audience about the circumstances people find themselves in due to injustice, cruelty and neglect; of the bitterness of not knowing or owning one's own land; of the desire and longing to possess land and of the need for the Constitution to be correctly applied.

"From whence did "Mayın" spring ? In 1957, I was writing for 'Ulus', on which newspaper I was features editor. The party in power at the time had placed 'Ulus' under lock and key as far as freedom of expression was concerned. Having therefore nothing much to do, I slung my cameras across my shoulders and headed for the south-east, a trip I had done before God knows how many times. In May 1960, 'Ulus' was shut down after some government officials had associated the paper with the Kızılay Incidents. Orhan Birgit 'raised his hand to his head three times'¹⁶ and that was how it all started. Orhan Birgit was supposed to come to dinner that night but failed to

15. OTYAM, Fikret. "Mayın", fully treated in Chapter VI of this text.

16. direct translation.

"appear. Instead the police arrived and constrained upon me to tell them where he was. Those were strange days. Well, after that happened, straight away the next morning, I grabbed my newborn daughter, İrep, and took the elder one, Elvan, by the hand and started out. I left them in mid-Anatolia and headed south alone - to Adana, Gaziantep, Urfa, Ceylanpınar and from there to Kilis."

Otyam continues :

"It was then that I began to collect news through interviews which resulted in the play, "Mayın". First of all, they were published in the newspaper, 'Ulus', which opened up once again after 1960. Then I joined 'Cumhuriyet'. At that time, there was a feud between the villages of Aktil and İncecik in the region of Maraş. Unbelievable things were happening in those parts. From the scene of these incidents, I returned with notes and photographs. They were published in 'Cumhuriyet' under the title of 'Topraksızlar'. This story was in two parts, the second part being entitled 'Gâvur Gölü'.

" So, then, "Mayın" had been on my mind since 1957. However, to this time, I had always thought of it in terms of a film script, but - damn poverty! - I was unable to realise this dream. I constantly explained my idea to other people but it just did not go down.

" In terms of theatre, I made this article, 'Topraksızlar', the first act, and added 'Gavur Golu' to it as a second. To this, I tacked on the story concerning those people who live in the mixed areas of the Syrian border, people that I loved so much, about whose mountains and valleys, ways of life and emotions I knew so much.

" Then a member of a well-known Istanbul theatre group came to me and praised my work to the skies, cried till dawn and insisted that my play should be given to no other group but her own. Then - don't ask me why - it all fell through. I feel such shame for that person. It seems she was afraid. She pleaded poverty as the reason for denying me production. It seems she was having her own theatre built or something, and funds were low.

"What happened then ? Well, Ayberk Çölok had recently joined the paper. I asked him for his opinion on the play to see if he thought it worth anything. Apparently, he thought it was because he took it up, began to work on it and direct me as to what should be revised, what added and what omitted. Time and time again, I sat down to rewrite it till eventually it became what it is now.

" What is it I am trying to say to my audience in this play ?
 I am trying to expose the situations which arise when people find themselves the victims of injustice, cruelty, oppression and neglect; of the bitter hurt they feel when wilfully deprived of possession of their own land; of the intense longing and desire for this one thing from life; and of the desperate necessity to insist on to the letter the rights of each countryman as laid down in the Constitution. I want to say that things have been going on in the manner depicted in my play since time immemorial, but that a further continuation of such evils will be tolerated no longer. There are a great number of people in the Maraş area without land, in Malatya and Kilis and in fact all over our homeland. The events of this play are based on truth and fact. My books and photographs, compiled on actual location, stand as evidence to this. Are they enough for the theatre ? I have worked hard to make them suffice. My dear friend, Ayberk Çölok, the manager of the AST, as well as the players who pumped every last drop of their talent into this play, have covered up my shortcomings as a dramatist, and the result of this combined effort is a sound, effective play.

"I was asked if there would be more studies of this kind? Of course there will be. In 'Cumhuriyet', there was another of my articles which the now-deceased Asaf Çiyiltepe wanted to put on stage called "Bir Karış Toprak İçin" and yet another called "Kaymakam Bobo". Both these share the same theme ; the desire of those without land to own some, and the problems concerning the same. Also, they contain a heavy warning of what will come to pass if the Constitution is not applied in the manner for which it was intended. "

Here, then, in these three addresses, the attitudes of of the authors, as well as those of the society and times for which each was writing, are thrown into relief.

After reading Cevat Fehmi Başkuş 's address of 1955, one wonders why he was so undecided about the meaning of his play. Would he

have bothered to dwell on the actual problems of dying townships in the east if he had simply been writing an entertainment as he claims; or if he thought his audience was not prepared to have its conscience prompted ? Is his withholding of his actual purpose simply an attempt to be provocative, to drive his audience into the theatre primed to solve the problem of his intention for themselves ; or is it the same strict censor that jogged Fikret Otyam's elbow in 1957 restricting Cevat Fehmi in 1955 ? He mentions that he bothered to travel to the east to visit the actual local setting of his plot and is almost apologetic in explaining away the broad comedy of the Hilton scenes. One is led to the conclusion that if he was writing without pressure, his somewhat frivolous, melodramatic approach to his theme forbids us to consider him as a serious writer. On the other hand, it is possible to see him as a pioneer of village-problem drama if one supposes that his play was produced despite the control of a hostile, over-cautious censor. The ultimate question is, has this author more to say on his subject ? His output since 1955, during this period of ever-increasing freedom of speech, does not suggest he has.

How different the tone of Cahit Atay's letter of 1961 ! While there is a note of deliberate, commercial seeking out of a subject that will please his audience, and a certain preciousness in the claim that

half the nation was clamouring at his door for the expending of his talents on a play about 'us', it is noticeable that, having chosen his subject - the ağa-peasant problem -, there is no apology for scenes thrown in merely to entertain. Actually this play is a masterpiece of economy, both in action and characterisation. He does, however, promise that his story will entertain but that such entertainment will be inherent in the treatment and not appended as an extra. Of course, at the time of his writing "Pusuda", the trail he was pursuing had been well blazed in other forms of literature. No one in 1960 was pretending that a serious problem did not exist in the villages; not even the censor. Yaşar Kemal's "İnce Memed" had been published in 1958 and was widely read both at home and abroad. Fakir Baykurt's novel "Yılanların Öcü" had been made into a very popular film by Metin Erksan by the time Atay's play reached the stage. Both novelists treated with deadly seriousness and unrelieved purposefulness the same desperate Anatolian problems, using plots which were in themselves indirect yet poignant criticism of a regime that allowed such evils to exist. The new fashion of parading one's social conscience on the stage pervades Atay's letter and certainly his play let loose a flood of similar treatments, either sincerely felt (like Otyam's) or conveniently manufactured (like Orhan Kemal's "Yalova Kaymakamı") for the ready market, on the Turkish theatre over the next seven years.

When Fikret Otyam began work on "Mayın", the idea of serious treatment of village politics on the stage was revolutionary. By the time his play reached the stage in 1968, it was a well-known, even tired topic, yet Fikret Bey's play commanded full houses during the whole season it played. This surely was due to the obvious sincerity which his actors could not fail to exude through their interpretations, a sincerity which bursts forth in his letter of 1968 describing the tenacity with which he pursued unenthusiastic producers till he eventually found his stage. It is noticeable that he never even mentions entertainment in his letter, though entertainment was certainly to be had in abundance at any performance of "Mayın". This author is first and foremost committed to his subject, but is aware that he has a lot to learn about writing for the stage. However, he has the humility to state this and accept advice.

This, then, is the state of Turkish theatre today : a theatre in which commitment, honesty and awareness of the nation's problems as a whole, are of paramount importance. It is for this reason that the drama of Turkey merits critical appreciation and consideration both at home and abroad.

Nineteenth Century Turkish Theatre.

- Two Traditions -

Before discussing the forms and themes of post-revolution Turkish theatre, some attempt must be made to outline the traditions of pre-revolution times to bring out by contrast what modern Turkish dramatists have adapted to their use and what they have reacted against and jettisoned.

Upto 1839, the Turkish theatre had developed in two distinct directions. The first of these was as a folk and popular street entertainment. The shadow plays of Karagöz and their counterpart using human actors, orta oyunu, catered largely for the masses. The second of these directions is better referred to as 'theatre in Turkey' since it was largely in the hands of foreign companies often performing in their particular native language. Armenians and Greeks performed farce, melodrama and burlesque in the popular theatres of Galata, while Italian and French companies were imported to perform before invited audiences of fellow-countrymen and enlightened Turkish guests at their respective embassies. So it was predictable that when the first play written in Turkish and performed in that language appeared at Naum's Theatre in May 1858, it should draw heavily on either or both of these established traditions.

1. The Shadow Play and The Orta Oyunu.¹⁷

If one were to describe a Turkish shadow play in a simple, single phrase, one would refer to it as a Turkish Punch and Jody show. Indeed, it shares many features with this English sea-side children's entertainment. The central characters of the Turkish play, Karagöz and Hacıvat, enjoy the same warring relationship as that of Punch and Jody; they complement, act as a foil for and like each other about as much as their English counterparts. The audience at both plays reacts in the same way. Both rely on traditional plots decked out with topicality and local fun.

Karagöz figures are made of brightly coloured camel hide cut to transparency. They perform behind a white linen screen onto which their shapes and colours are back-projected by means of a strong light. The manipulation of the figures is by means of a number of rods attached to the figure's neck, elbow, wrist and knee. The ends of these rods are retained in the hands of the puppeteer so that during the performance, the machinery of the production may remain invisible.

The Karagöz shadow plays were adapted for live actors and performances of such by companies of semi-professional or amateur strolling players were known as 'orta oyunu'. One explanation of the term, 'orta oyunu', is that it is a corruption of the Italian 'commedia

17. AND, Metin. op. cit. p.vii, p.17ff. of his text.
see also "Three Karagöz Plays" by the same author. Details of this publication not available.

della arte' and was originally brought into Turkish as 'arte oyunu'. Another explanation is that the term should be taken literally. 'Orta' means 'middle', 'square', or 'space', while 'oyun' means 'game' or 'play'. Therefore, the words taken together might indicate 'a play to be performed wherever there is a space or area large enough to house it.'¹⁸

At the centre of every plot are the same two figures, Karagöz and Hacevat. Each shadow play proceeds after a traditional pattern. Each has a 'mukaddeme' (prologue), a 'muhavere' (dialogue) and a 'fasıl' (main plot.)

In the prologue, Hacevat addresses prayers to the Sultan in the high-flown Persian and Arabic of the Court and religion, while from the corner of the screen he is broadly spoofed by the 'wise fool', Karagöz, in a series of deflatory asides. This is followed by the 'muhavere', a dialogue on topics of current interest wherein the erudition of Hacevat is ridiculed by the everyday common sense of Karagöz, pretending ignorance for purposes of irony.

With the introduction of familiar Istanbul street characters like 'Çelebi', (the fashionable dandy with his hopeless love affairs and Frenchified Turkish), 'Tiryaki', (the opium addict), Güllü, (the lady of the rose to whose hand Çelebi aspires) and 'Türk', (the

18. AND, Metin. op. cit. p.vii, pp.20-1 of his text.

honest woodcutter from Anatolia), each of whose idiosyncrasies is exploited for its broadly comic potential, the plot is embarked upon.

A traditional plot often used by 'orta oyunu' teams was the story of "Kanlı Nigâr", a famous whore of old Istanbul. Several versions of this plot are known. Metin And mentions one version in his history which goes as follows :

"Çelebi gleefully announces that he has used and swindled two courtesans. Meeting another two, he resolves to do the same again, but fails to recognise one of his proposed victims as Kanlı Nigâr. Once in her clutches, she drags him into her house, beats and strips him, throwing him naked into the street for wasting her time. His bravado quickly evaporates when he is jeered at by the crowd who gather round him. At length, however, taking pity on the young man, the street people enter Nigâr's dwelling to sue for his clothes, only to arrive in double haste in the street once more as naked as Çelebi. Finally, peace is made with Nigâr by each buying back his clothes. Çelebi has learnt his lesson. No more will he brag about a manliness he does not possess." 19.

In the summer season of 1968, the Arena Tiyatrosu of Istanbul presented another version of the same story. Its plot unfolded as follows :

"Ağa efendi (Hacevat), a man of overt religious mien, owns a vacant house, the key of which he leaves with Apti, the coffee boy, (Karagöz), who is commissioned to show round the property any prospective tenant. Kanlı Nigâr and her two girls, one of whom is her virgin daughter, ask to rent the house for business, but Apti is not sure if this can be arranged, the owner being a very respectable man. For a fee, however, Apti agrees to present the famous whore

19. AND, Metin. op.cit.p.vii, p.23 of his text.

"and her girls as the family of a recently deceased Circassian pasha of indisputable good character. Though doubtful at first about the tear-free faces of these women so recently bereaved, the Ağa is eventually persuaded to rent the accommodation to Nigâr, and Apti collects a fee from both lessor and lessee.

"Once installed, Nigâr's old clientele search her out. Lâz (the sailor from the Black Sea), Külhanbeyi (the ruffian from the slums) and Acem (the Persian) descend upon Apti to discover from him her whereabouts. Each insists that she owes him money. The Lâz talks Apti into the ground in a nonsensical monologue lasting some quarter of an hour; Külhanbeyi threatens Apti with dire consequences if he does not tell the truth, while Acem lies through his teeth unable to distinguish false from true.

"Then Celebi, visiting his father's property, sees and falls in love with Nigâr's daughter (Güllü). When he breaks this news to his father, the Ağa has found out the truth about the new tenants. He forbids Celebi to see the girl ever again. However, Apti, for a small fee, arranges for the young couple to meet behind the Ağa's back. By this time, Nigâr has recognised the Ağa as the man who raped her when she came as a serving girl to his house, the man who robbed her of her chance of a good marriage and a decent life. Telling Apti of this, the two of them set about a scheme to expose the Ağa for what he is and even a few old scores.

"Setting in motion a complicated intrigue involving wizards and spells whereby Celebi and the girl are changed into farmyard fowls, Apti tricks the Ağa out of his property and into marrying Nigâr. The Ağa is shown to be the hypocrite he is and in order to be forgiven agrees that the couple should marry with his blessing."

To have seen "Kanlı Nigâr" was at once to have been put in mind of old time burlesque and modern pantomime. The monstrous, vulgar vitality of the plot was garnished with current political jokes. The production was marked by a garish raciness and a bold use of colour in language, costume, light and sound effect. At least half of what was said was

directed either blatantly or by use of aside at the audience. In no respect is anything said on the stage intended to be taken seriously. The main object of the exercise is simply enjoyment. Despite what Mahir Canova said to the contrary²⁰, there is a noticeable revival of 'orta oyunu' productions. In the last three years, at least one production per year has appeared performed by a major company, enjoying a lengthy season.

It is plain, then, that this style of play is suitable only for light or broad comedy, depending to a great extent for its success on the gusto with which the actors interpreting Karagöz and Hacıvat exploit the stock situations which include,hoax, disguise, knockabout farce and practical joke. 'Orta oyunu' is very much an actor's theatre and holds very little attraction for the author who feels he has something serious to say.

It was then to be expected that when a serious Turkish drama evolved in the mid-nineteenth century, that it would look for its inspiration to other traditions than those of the native theatre. This, the new Turkish playwrights found in the theatre of western Europe.

20. See p. 39.

2. The Theatre of Western Europe in Turkey.²¹

The earliest record of foreign plays being performed in Turkey mention that such activity was instituted on the suggestion of foreign embassies. In the late seventeenth century, there is mention of the French Embassy importing a company of French actors on several occasions to give the works of Racine, Corneille and Moliere. In the following century, the Italians brought in Goldoni's plays. These were given in the French and Italian embassies for the amusement of the ambassador, his staff and their guests, which included men and women of enlightened Ottoman families. Till 1873, the only serious theatre of any standard (that is, excluding pirated versions of French melodramas), was that imported by foreign companies. Thus sprung up the association in the Turkish mind that Turkish theatre was purely a medium for entertainment while serious drama was solely the province of foreign groups. This belief seems to hold in certain circles in Turkey today and this is responsible for what is wrong with a great deal of current Turkish theatre.

It is interesting that the most popular foreign author in Turkey now, as then, is Moliere. This is because his plays lend themselves very much to the 'ortaoyunu' style of playing. His comedies share with 'ortaoyunu' many features including that of the plots of both being largely

21. AND, Metin. op.cit.p.vii., p.33ff. of his text.

concerned with unmasking of pretentiousness and the exploding of hypocrisy. It is a short distance which separates Georges Dandin and the pompous pasha eager for court preferment or the position-seeking provincial aga of the Turkish version. Recently, the Turkish State Theatre has discovered a similar quality in the works of Ben Jonson.

The work of popularising the French theatre was greatly advanced by the theatre-minded, ex-Grand Vizier, Ahmed Vefik Paşa, who, being appointed to Bursa as governor in 1879, had a theatre built in that city. The directorship of this he gave to Tomas Fasulyeciyen, who drew off the actors discontented with Agop Vartovyan's megalomaniac direction of the Gedikpaşa Theatre and produced a programme of Moliere, Montepin, Hugo, Labiche and Scribe, especially translated by the governor himself. The pasha used to attend rehearsals of these plays to make sure the standard was kept up to that of French companies he had seen.

Once the taste for foreign drama had been established, several Armenian companies saw the commercial gain to be made from the exploitation of ready-made stories roughly bent to fit the taste of 'orta oyunu' audiences. French farce was perfectly suited to 'orta oyunu' acting styles and French melodrama appealed to the Turkish sense of tragedy; one which believes implicitly in the agency of fate and coincidence. Agop Vartovyan,

(Güllü Agop), director of the Gedikpaşa Theatre, which was opened in an old building in 1860 and moved to a new one in 1867, produced plays from the French performed by Armenian actors and actresses in excruciating Turkish . (The reason why Armenians seemed to monopolise theatrical enterprise was that, being Christian, Armenian women were allowed to disport themselves on the stage whereas Moslem women were discouraged from this by the reaction of the audience. Having actresses, the Armenian theatre could produce a finer finish than Turkish groups, reduced to using men to represent female parts.) The successful activities of Güllü Agop provoked the interest of Turkish authors and actors, who began to write according to models provided by the French theatre, and gradually the company became a Turkish one with a Turkish repertoire.

The other famous Armenian company was that of Mardiros Minakyan, who performed at Naum's Theatre in Pera, Istanbul. Between 1885, after the abolition of Agop's company, and 1908, when he took up teaching dramatic art, Minakyan produced countless adaptations by Turkish translators from the plays and novels of Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas fils and Emile Zola.

The first play on record as having been acted in the Turkish language was translated from an unknown original by Hekimoğlu

Sirap and presented as "The Hypocrite and the Reckless one" This was given in May 1858 at Naum's Theatre in Pera, Istanbul. The plot was set in Genoa, the characters were Italian and the entire inspiration was as in the original, no attempt having been made to Turkicise the work in any way.

It is generally accepted by theatre historians that the first really Turkish play is "The Poet's Marriage" by İbrahim Şinasi, which was published in 1859. However, an examination of this play reveals that while it is written in Turkish, there is little of particularly Turkish inspiration about the story or the characters. "The Poet's Marriage" ridicules the social conventions of the time governing arranged marriages. A young poet is in love with a girl whose family are trying to force her elder sister on him. With the help of friends who bribe the priest, the poet is eventually united with the girl of his choice. The influence of Moliere is unmistakable, especially in the introduction of a priest - of all people !

One is inclined to award the honour of having written the first Turkish play to Namık Kemal, whose "Vatan yahut Silistre", while it adheres in form and style to the current French melodrama, is completely Turkish in inspiration, expression and content.

So great is the influence of Namık Kemal on the serious writer for the modern Turkish theatre, that some consideration of his dramatic work must preface the main body of this treatise. Perhaps his greatest bequest has been that of attitudinising. Quite deliberately and without apology, he will stop what little action there is in his plays and allow his main character to harangue his audience with patriotic diatribe extending to pages of script. This facet, while rendering him rather foreign to the taste of English audiences, seems to stir and excite the audiences in the Turkish theatre. In the Turkish tradition, it is no embarrassment to have a character step forward out of the action and declare at length his patriotism. Even should he insist on his beliefs in 'vatan' using the most cliché-ridden, stock vocabulary, the audience does not judge this a serious dramatic fault.²² The Turks still take their emotions with them to the play and expect to have these engaged during the evening; unlike the English audience, who immediately distrusts when called upon by a playwright to respond emotionally. Far from being alienated the Turks are carried on and into the action by such an appeal. It is with this in mind that one must approach the works of Namık Kemal - and his disciples among the current serious dramatists.

22. Perhaps this characteristic is common to the whole Middle East ?

"El-Fatah Maran" and "Suleyman Al Halep-i", produced and played by Karam Matawe at the Özbekir Theatre, Cairo, 1965-6 season, shared much in the way of content, style and technique with Namık Kemal's plays.

3. "Vatan yahut Silistre"²³ and "Akif Bey"²⁴

Namik Kemal was born in the year 1840, in the twelve-month following the Tanzimat, that first blow to the absolute power of the sultans. Very much a man of his day, his life was taken up with the pursuit of an active programme to further the 1839 reforms, his final goal being a constitutional monarchy based on a model currently established in the newly united Germany (1870). In the forty years of his life, he was at the same time poet, journalist, novelist, critic and playwright. In all his works, the driving force of his life - the achievement of constitutional government for Turkey - was never far from his mind.

Of his plays, "Vatan" is the most famous, though others in the style of "Akif Bey", produced in 1874, are more typical in that they share the same 'love and honour' melodramatic style and content which so delighted nineteenth century audiences all over Europe.

When Akif Bey, a naval officer, is reported missing in action, his wife, seeing an opportunity in this to rid herself of this tiresome union, has him declared officially dead by the courts obtaining papers saying she is free to marry once more. Losing no time, she marries the lover she had taken as soon as her husband had left for the front. No sooner is the ceremony over than Akif Bey returns. Disgusted at his wife's behaviour, he divorces her so that she may stay with her new husband.

To this point, all is relatively simple. However, thinking that divorce is insufficient punishment for such behaviour, Akif Bey presents himself at his ex-wife's menage to castigate her further, and, confronted by the new husband, he provokes a duel which results in the death of both men. Unknown to

23. KEMAL, Namik. "Vatan yahut Silistre", Remzi Kitabevi, Istanbul, 1965.

24. Kemal, Namik. "Akif Bey", adapted by Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Telif Tiyatro Eserleri Serisi, Maarif Basimevi, Ankara, 1958.

everyone, Akif Bey's father has followed him to the scene and arrives in time to discover the corpse of his son. He turns for revenge on the perfidious wife and shoots her for causing so much suffering.

This play has all the features of most other melodramas of the period. Throughout there is the stifling presence of a strong moral element which robs the play of any surprise in the way of the meting out of fate. Exaggeration and improbability hover about each event which carries the story forward, such as the timely arrival of Akif Bey after the second marriage. The appeal of the exercise is to the emotions rather than to the intellect. Pity by way of tears for the good who suffer and admiration for the virtuous who fail, is the first demand of the author from his audience. Scenes where good news which will bring relief to suffering are prolonged and suspended, the news being withheld to produce a refined emotional effect and a greater pleasure when the relief is actually announced. The higher the suffering, the greater the release when it comes. Of course, a choice scene is carried on to interminable lengths where the hero or heroine wrestles with the moral problem of whether to put self before duty, limping from cliché to cliché through thought and word. They are set through as a duty rather than as part of the entertainment, since before the soul-searching begins the choice has already been decided on in favour of virtue. Any reversal of the hero's usual decision to put duty before self would, by nature of the style of the play, stop the action entirely.

When he wrote "Vatan", though, Namik Kemal struck an immediate and lasting response in the heart of his nation. At the time of composition, Turkey felt its power as an empire and a conquering nation ebbing slowly but surely.²⁵ Some of her sons even felt the evil powers of disintegration working at the Ottoman Empire from within. The history of Turkey in the fifty years following the first performance of this play proved that such fears were not ungrounded. In fact, it was only by the efforts of Kemal Atatürk, that the process of disintegration was checked and one of rehabilitation and rebirth of the nation instituted. Yet, even after the collapse of the sultanate and caliphate, which had always been viewed by radicals as the main disruptive elements in the movement towards national unity, forces both inside and outside the country were concurrently at work to bring about her collapse and ruin. And still, today, the youth of the country feels that this is the aim of the imperialists and 'kompradors'. A performance of "Vatan", then, is a reaffirmation of love and loyalty to the essential Turkish idea.²⁶ No one could claim that this play is or was great drama; its faults are too many by far to support such a claim. But it has lasted because of its spirit and Turkishness in the same way as the national anthem has.

Basically, it is the same stuff as "Akif Bey", only the 'love'

25. RAYNER, Robert S. "A Concise History of Britain," Chapter 67. pp.537-542, and Chapter 71. pp.584-587, Longmans Green and Co., London, 1961. This describes adequately the external pressures which prompted Namik Kemal's indignation and action on behalf of his country.

26. Mahir CANOVA's speech, p.xxii.

and 'honour' of this play has been refined into a choice between love of self and family, and love of country and country's honour. Somehow this does much to win for "Vatan" its superiority over other plays in the manner of "Akif Bey". It is not, however, a skill inherent in the composition of the play so much as the fact that current events and popular feelings, which gave rise to its composition, provide an atmosphere ideally receptive to its jingoistic tone. Whereas the situations in "Akif Bey" are hypothetical, contrived and highly improbable, events in the Turkey of the 1870s brought the choice of İslam Bey in "Vatan" to the doorstep of every patriotic Turk. The story of this play proceeds as follows :

The time is 1854. The Crimean War with the Russians has begun. Turkish provinces on the Danube are threatened by the oncoming Russian armies. Constantinople is in a panic as the Turkish armies have suffered defeat after defeat in the preliminary skirmishes of the war.

This is the dire situation which separates the young lovers at the centre of the story. These are Zekiye and her handsome young officer, İslam Bey. However, much as he loves his sweetheart, he loves his country more. At first, Zekiye cannot understand this, but when she steals upon him addressing his volunteers, telling of his readiness to lay down his life for his country, she is fired with the same patriotism, and secretly decides she will follow him to the front disguised as a man.

The army under İslam Bey moves to a fortress near the battle line on the Danube, and Zekiye, whose disguise has so far not been penetrated, is admitted alongside her unwitting lover. The castle is commanded by Colonel Ahmed Sitki Bey and his trusty friend, Major Rüstem Bey, both of whom declare at length their unfaltering loyalty to 'vatan' despite prolonged discomfort and separation from their beloved families for many years.

The Colonel asks for three volunteers to carry out a suicide mission of blowing up the enemy's ammunition dump which is situated at the heart of the enemy camp. At once, without thought to personal safety, İslam Bey offers his services, followed by Sergeant Abdullah and a third person who turns out to be Zekiye - of course !

On the completion of the mission, Colonel Ahmed recognises Zekiye as his daughter and her engagement to İslam Bey is announced to the accompaniment of gunfire. Everyone raises the cheer :

- Yaşasın Vatan ! Yaşasın Osmanlılar !

- Long live the fatherland ! Long live the Ottomans !

It might be contended that this is a gloriously unsubtle play sporting the basic unrealities of the army recruitment poster advertising 'an outdoor life with action every minute', gaily ignoring the daily boredom and monotony of army routine which is at the heart of such a life. It certainly seems that the wedding of İslam Bey and Zekiye at the end is an unnecessary sop to melodramatic convention. However, when danger really besets from without and within as it did in 1873; when foreign armies were amassed on the farther shores of the Danube and a weak home government teetered on the brink of repeating the same disastrous foreign policy which brought it close to dissolution twenty years previously; when so many of the audience were furtively avoiding the choice between love of comfort and love of country, perhaps it was and is the duty of the stage, the extravagant art, to present the ideal in black and white, unsubtle and lacking in action though it may be ?

"Vatan" like many great and lasting plays, struck the most meaningful chord in the spirit of the age. It belongs to that group of plays to which belong "Our Town"²⁷ and "Look Back In Anger"²⁸. The dramatic tension is contained not so much in what is happening on the stage as in the contrast it provided to the everyday experience of the audience in the pit. "Our Town", produced in an unsettled, post-war America on the brink of the Macarthy regime (1948), built a drama out of sheer eventlessness by contrasting the scene on the stage with the tumultuous, complex existence of most Americans in those days. Nothing of any great dramatic consequence comes about in Thornton Wilder's play. People are born, marry, breed and die. The town and the surrounding countryside are changed only by the seasons. The main values are stability, unity and security ; in fact, all the things the audience did not enjoy in real life at that time. The anger that burst out over the audience from the set of John Osborne's play, was important, not so much in itself, in its direction back and forth between the characters, or between the ^{individual} character and his environment; but in the fact that present discontents had at last been articulated. By its example, an apathetic, or at least silent, generation was provoked into complaining about the deprivation it felt it was victim of. "Vatan" likewise was the voice in the wilderness, still and small at first, but accurate in its identification of faults and alarmingly clairvoyant in its prophesy of consequences.

27. WILDER, Thornton. "Our Town", Penguin Plays, London, 1966.

28. OSBORNE, John. "Look Back In Anger", Faber and Faber, London, 1957.

Namık Kemal spoke especially for his own generation whose lives had been slowly poisoned by decades of humiliation at the hands of an ineffective home government and the foreign policies of the main European powers, who, whether professing friendship like Great Britain and France in 1854, or Germany after 1870 and upto 1918 - or hostility like Russia, blatantly used Turkey to further their own private schemes.

The events which directly gave rise to the writing and production of "Vatan"(in the face of and in spite of predictable trouble from a highly suspicious and ruthless Court censor) was the awareness of Kemal and his patriotic friends that the sultan, who had been persuaded by Lord Stratford de Redcliffe in 1854, to engage in a very ill-advised war with Russia resulting in dire consequences to Turkey, was about to commit exactly the same mistake, which presumably might have been expected to produce the same results, and which, in fact, it did. This is born witness to by the terms of the Treaty of Berlin, 1878.²⁹

As a young man, Namık Bey had witnessed his country thus goaded into war in support of foreign interests. He was aware that his sultan was prompted at every move by Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, British Ambassador to the Sublime Porte, who first advised the sultan to defy the Russians and then accede to their requests for peace, all because it fit snugly with British foreign policy at the time. He suffered when the

29. RAYNER, Robert S. op. cit. p.14.

Turkish fleet was sunk by the Russians at Simop in 1853; when the Russian army advanced, apparently uncheckable, to within sight of Constantinople; also when, by the Treaty of Paris, 1856, the Danube provinces were liberated from Turkish suzerainty, the independent kingdom of Rumania being carved out of such lands in 1861.

In 1871, in his thirty first year, he was aware that no lesson had been learnt by his government in the twenty years since the Crimean War. The Sultan, impotent and restless, watched the Russians flagrantly violate the 1856 treaty by rebuilding their forts in the Crimea and sending their gun-boats over the Black Sea to menace Turkey's northern shore and in particular the Bosphorus. He was aware that the success of the Danube provinces in their struggle for freedom had unsettled the sultan's Macedonian and Serbian subjects, who were itching for self-determination.

The Turkish government embarked in 1873 on the very foolish policy of dealing with the Balkans by provoking them to rebellion so that they might be set upon at once and crushed beyond all hopes of further uprising. This was an open invitation for Russia, always the self-styled champion of Christians in Moslem countries, to intervene on behalf of 'the oppressed Christian subjects of the sultan'

and war finally broke out in 1874. If anything, the Turkish losses by the Treaty of San Stephano, which was ratified by the Treaty of Berlin, 1878, were even more catastrophic to Turkish interests than had been those agreed to by the 1856 treaty, as two of the results were that the independent kingdoms of Serbia and Bulgaria were created out of the sultan's Balkan territory.

This is the background to "Vatan"; the background of an entire generation, aware of what was wrong and completely denied the right either to voice an opinion aloud or offer what they thought to be constructive advice on pain of being punished for sedition or treason. In the light of this, perhaps Namık Kemal's inclusion of such a speech as İslam Bey's ("Vatan", Perde I, Meclis 4.)³⁰ addressing the volunteers in the courtyard while Zekiye watches from the salon above, does not appear as wordy, stilted, needlessly repetitive and downright pointless as it otherwise would.

A good half of this speech is stock heroics. It is in the same tone as everything else he has uttered up to this point and adds nothing to his stature as a character within the play. From this point, he becomes a mouthpiece for his author, and it is because of this that he claims the audience's mounting attention as they search among his words for hidden comment and veiled criticism of the current regime.

30. "Bir kere düşün mü^Zeyyen görürsün !"

Bearing in mind that no criticism of the sultan's policies was hitherto known in the theatre upto this time, nor had anyone dared to attempt it from the public platform, or, to any great extent, in the press; also bearing in mind that the audience at any public performance, even of the most innocuous nature like the 'orta oyunu', was liberally sprinkled with 'agents provocateurs' from the palace, eager to report on the comment of the play as well as the reaction of the spectators, one can begin to imagine the tense atmosphere of the first night, April 1st, 1873.

The first scene was no more exciting than a thousand other monologue openings wherein the ingenue heroine declared the nature and object of her love and one or two doubts and fears. Scene two held little more in the way of surprise as one watched the lover, İslam Bey, steal upon his beloved, declaring his love and receiving protestations of her undying affection in return. There was nothing new in the knowledge that their union must needs be postponed since the hero's presence was required at the front to face the foe. Scene three proved yet another static, extended monologue by the heroine bewailing her misery at their parting. By the end of this scene, nothing more had happened in the way of physical movement other than İslam Bey's entry and exit from the salon and Zekiye's going to the window to hear her hero address the volunteers.

Then the Danube is mentioned. Zekiye springs to life in anticipation of the danger to those vital parts of the empire, fired like the audience with a catching patriotism which leaps across the footlights. The audience's reaction, however, is on two planes; the first being the memory of the fate of the Danube province linked with the fear that even more may be lost in the forthcoming struggle, the second being the thrill of danger that anyone dare utter the word 'Danube' in public, the very mouthing of the word being in itself an open criticism of the sultan's foreign policy. All at once, the play takes to the air and takes everyone with it. Initially, no more than another romance, the whole work gains in dimension by this striking of a chord of realism.

The drama, then, lay first of all, in the shock received on the mentioning of the forbidden word; then, in the lightly veiled references, which abound in speech after speech throughout the play, to governmental dishonesties. One might consider the following :

"If the Danube is surrendered, then the fatherland will cease to exist³¹! The Danube provinces had been lost. Was Namık Bey saying the fatherland was already dead ?

"... if the fatherland dies, no one inside it can live. Perhaps some might.... yes, perhaps... but no...." 32

31. "Vatan yahut Silistre" , Act I, Scene 4, pp37-38. "Tuna aradan kalkarsa, vatan yaşamaz."

32. idem. "... vatan yaşamazsa... insan değildir."

Does he mean the statesmen who engineered the Peace of 1856 ? Or perhaps he refers to the sultan himself ? Then there are such lines as :

"Since the name of Ottoman has been known throughout the world, the Danube has been crossed and crossed again (by the enemy), but has never been given up, and what's more, never will be... as long as the people know what it is to call themselves Ottoman." ³³.

But the enemy had made a permanent crossing of the Danube into imperial domains, part of which had been given up. This was as good as telling the people that they had forgotten ! Little wonder, then, that after the final curtain, the audience rose and clamoured for the author. Hearing he was not in the theatre but in the office of 'İbret' further along Beyoğlu, they rioted along that thoroughfare chanting : "Long live Namik Kemal ! Death to the oppressors of the people ! Our country does not want to be involved with wars ! To hell with the government ! The spirit of your play exposes the grief of our country ! " Eventually collecting outside the newspaper building, they forced a public appearance out of Namik Kemal and his friends who were received with hysterical enthusiasm.

The hysterics which accompanied the description of the evening's events to the 'sick old man' in the Yıldız Palace, were hardly of the enthusiastic kind. His reaction was to close down 'İbret' at once and exile both editor, staff and budding dramatist till further notice.

33. *ibid.* " Osmanlı nâmi işiteli hiç bir vakit alınmaz."

Namık Bey and Tefvik Bay, the editor, took themselves off to Paris, where they established the Young Ottoman movement, whose job was to press unceasingly for governmental reform from their place of exile. By this time "Vatan" had become so popular as a symbol of freedom that not only were performances of it forbidden, but the mere mention of the word was viewed as sedition.

As soon as the popularity of the play was established, it was translated into German and sent to that country for performance. At the time, the German and Turkish situation, the former with the Hapsburg Empire and the latter with the Russians from without and the central government from within - bore similarities; the Prussians having achieved over the previous ten years what the Young Turks were striving for.

In order to silence the Young Ottoman movement, the sultan let it be known that their suggestions for reform were being considered with favour and that they were invited back to Turkey to help formulate a programme of change. They accepted, but no sooner had they set foot on Turkish soil than they were arrested once more, this time to be sent to remoter places of exile ; Tefvik Bey to Rhodes and Namık Bey to Cyprus, thence to Magosa, where they were hardly likely to find society interested in their rebellious philosophies. Even so, during this period, Namık Bey contributed

prodigiously to Tanzimat 'freedom' literature. From this time to his death, he concentrated on the drama, because, after his experience with "Vatan", he considered the theatre both the most pleasant form of amusement and the most effective organ in the welding of society to a common purpose. ³⁴

So, in "Vatan", Namık Kemal had written a lasting play, the qualities of which are inherent in the mood rather than in the dramatic art. The feeling of Islam Bey are those of Atatürk a generation or so later; and these in turn are those of today's young 'sosyalistler' who rant and rave at the present government, which, contrary to the sultan's government, wisely allows them to do so in complete freedom, knowing full well the value to such of denying them the added attraction of the taste of forbidden fruits.³⁵

Technically the play is a very ordinary example of nineteenth century melodrama. It is in four acts, each of which is divided into short scenes, some being little more than extended monologues where the action is suspended for minutes on end or pushed ahead by agency of narration. The play proceeds pageant-like, devoid of surprise or novelty, other than what is achieved through the announcement of territory won or lost and the discovery that the soldier, Zekiye, is the daughter of Colonel Ahmed.

Characterisation is one dimensional. Each character is introduced in a stance which he holds till the final curtain; The promised conflict

34. Background details to the production of "Vatan yahut Silistre" have been drawn from the introduction to that play, op.cit.p.12, called 'Bazı Küçük Notlar', pp.5-20.

35. see the discussion of "Devri Süleyman" in Chapter VII of this thesis.

between private, personal love of woman for and love of country is curtailed almost before it arises, when İslam Bey stalwartly settles for love of 'patria'. And so, the good remain good, which means that they fulfill their patriotic promise. There are no bad characters in the play. As with "Our Town"³⁶, "Vatan" is the celebration of positive values dramatically contrasted to the experience of the audience before whom it is played. Its popularity over the last hundred years has been ensured by the prevalence among Turks^A of the belief that their country is constantly threatened by an encircling group of hostile nations, and by a natural bent to corrupt practice within their governing institutions which prove a ready ally for these ill-intentioned nations.

It might have been expected that such an intensity of feeling, conviction, purpose and commitment to the same, might have given rise to a school of dramatists in the same vein thereby founding a national drama. No doubt, however, that any aspirants to such were permanently discouraged by Namik Bey's experience at the hands of the authorities following the initial performance of his play. In fact, no such attempt to echo his philosophy reached the stage till 1908, by which time the nation's best literary talent was being channelled into more direct address than could be achieved within the framework of the drama. A rash of patriot-dramatists brought forth a number of plays in the

36. op.cit.p.17.

manner of "Vatan", however, these were often little more than political harangues. Then in 1914, war became imminent and, as a result of its being so hopelessly bungled from the Turkish point of view (actually in the manner of 1854 and 1874, the role of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe being assumed in 1914 by the German Legation under Baron Wagenheim), the sultanate and the caliphate began to topple. By 1918, freedom and the obtaining of a constitution had left the realms of hypothesis and had entered the portals of probability. And so, the drama as an outlet for stifled, forbidden thoughts had lost its usefulness. The half-whispered treasons of "Vatan" became the loudly proclaimed denunciations of 1920 : so virulent, in fact, that their intensity effected the eventual exile of the House of Osman in 1923. With the advent of modern Turkey in 1923, dramatic enterprise and innovation all but dreid up. Several new theatres were opened in 1919, but no excitement comparable to that of the opening Of Namik Kemal's play was to be experienced again for many a long year in the Turkish theatre.³⁷

So, then, prior to the Constitution, Turkey had two dramatic traditⁱons. The former was that of the shadow play or 'orta oyunu', treating frivolously some frivolous 'mahalle' material in broad farcical terms, stopping the story to address the audience with patter

37. The work of André Antoine, visiting Constantinople with his company from the Odéon Théâtre, Paris, later invited in 1914 to organise the Darulbedayii Osman-i, might be said to have been exciting, but this was hardly attributable to Turkish inspiration.

liberally sprinkled with socio-political quips and crude lavatory humour. The latter tradition was the deadly serious, pedantic and pedestrian 'grand oeuvre' in four or five acts, full of message and empty of drama. Such plays relied heavily on the predetermined affiliation and commitment of the audience for effect, since none bother to argue or apologise for the stand they take. "Vatan" must in effect be one of the flattest plays ever written, yet those very qualities which render it flat and dull have had the most far-reaching influence on the new republic's dramatists.

It is for this reason that such an extended discussion of pre-Revolutionary drama has been engaged upon. It would have been grossly unfair to treat post-Revolutionary dramatists in a vacuum, without seeking to explain the restricted nature of the traditions and heritage on which they had to draw.

In this section of the thesis, the texts of various modern Turkish Playwrights will be examined, illustrating the growing seriousness among dramatists in the treatment of themes of current socio-political importance.

It will be seen that this has been a gradual process, the treatment of social themes preceding that of political ones. In the main, the social drama will be seen to deal with the individual's position in regard to his society, mainly, his being at variance with it. Largely, his problem has been that of assimilating the changes to his life pattern brought about by the Revolution of 1923-4. The overthrow of the sultanate and the caliphate was overtly a political consideration, but its long-term effect has been one of profound social upheaval, asking of the individual a complete reorientation of living modes.

In some cases, playwrights have taken the individual's behaviour and held it up as a model for society to follow. In others, his behaviour has been criticised by comparison with the norm as represented in the behaviour of the community around him. Where his political life has been under review, it has often been necessary for the playwright to cloak his opinion behind myth, legend and history.

Latterly, however, with the almost total relaxation of the censorship, the treatment of religious themes and political subjects has been engaged upon. This new freedom has not produced, however, the balanced, intellectual assessment of the state of the nation. Rather have the new political works been in the form of a broadside, the level of thought and the tone being more that of the adolescent with his new, found freedom, being not quite sure what value it has for him and those among whom he lives, yet being fully determined that none should doubt that it exists.

"Hint A Fault and Hesitate Dislike."Two published plays by CEVAT FEHMI BASKUT.

From the many plays he has written over the last thirty years or so, two of the most famous have been chosen for treatment in this chapter. It is a facet of this playwright's talent that in treating only two one can as well generalise about the others which have come from his pen. It is remarkable that in this thirty year period, his talent and attitude towards his subjects has not developed in any direction, either towards a more critical or a more tolerant viewpoint. Perhaps his most distinguishing feature as a writer is that he has remained in a constant state of suspension between extremes of opinion. One feels that he is desperate to withhold judgement at all costs. His eye is the eye of the satirist, but his pen is that of an entertainer. He can single out foibles and follies; at times he picks on out and out vices, yet he treats all as topics for perusal rather than analysis. He has no reforming zeal, just a nostalgia for a better world which may or may not have existed in the past of his memory. All this, he defends with one phrase which goes, "... though such problems do exist, I simply sought to write a comedy..."³⁸ It is for this reason that the quotation from Alexander Pope's "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" suggested itself as a suitable

38. See introduction to "Harput'ta Bir Amerikali", State Theatre programme, 1955-6 season, op.cit.p. xxix of this thesis.

title for this chapter. In the lines :

"Willing to wound and yet afraid to strike,
Just hint a fault and hesitate dislike" 39

Pope was objecting bitterly to Joseph Addison's 'milk and water' reception of the poet's committed work. In this chapter, objection is being raised to Cevat Fehmi's withdrawal from commitment to the subjects he has chosen to be his themes. An artist must never toy with his subject. Part of his role is to render the appropriate treatment, to judge seriously the serious fault and to consider lightly the topic that deserves light treatment. In this respect, one might quote again from the poet from whose work the title of this chapter derives. The matching of treatment to subject matter in "The Rape of the Lock" is the supreme example of that artist's sense of appropriateness. His failure in this capacity is the main judgement against the work of Cevat Fehmi Başkut.

The position held by Cevat Fehmi in the rank of premier Turkish dramatists is due largely to his prolificacy. Almost no season passes without some new work of his being presented by the State Theatre. Revivals of "Harpüt'ta Bir Amerikalı" and "Paydos" are frequently enjoyed by Turkish audiences. They find his treatments light, devoid of complication in plot and characterisation, readily comprehended and as readily forgotten. His solutions always declare for the virtuous, projecting as

39. POPE, Alexander. "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot", Methuen and Co., LTD., London, 1954, p.30, ll.203-4.

virtues, characteristics the audience would like to think it harboured. The impossible in the way of change for the better is never demanded. The virtuous always seems accessible while the initial folly is ever humanised by the author's quaint, humorous delineation of it. While initially his material is the stuff of Moliere, Cevat Fehmi chooses the pastel shades where the French playwright uses bold, primary colours.

Whether or not Cevat Fehmi is 'willing to wound' is a questionable matter. His choice of theme would suggest that it has occurred to him from time to time. Perhaps his evasion of outright criticism in the above mentioned works can be attributed to the severity of the censorship at the time of writing? "Paydos" appeared before the public in 1943 and "Harput'ta Bir Amerikalı" in 1955. However, in the decade and a half since this last work appeared, the censorship has been lifted considerable, yet his attitudes remain at the same intensity as they were then. The easing of the climate has released in him no depth of treatment or temper. One has but to compare his introduction of the 1955 play⁴⁰ with that of "Emekli", performed in the 1967-8 season by the State Theatre. About this latter work, he writes :

"Are you one of the old retired folks ? If so, then you'll recognise this problem. Are you one of the newly retired, or perhaps you are about to become retired. If so, then this problem is about to be visited upon you.

40. op.cit. p. xxix.

" If you are of any of these groups, then your position is as follows. You have become old or grown rather tired during the period of time laid down in the law during which your service has been required by your country. The government has noted your service, judged it adequate and has said to you : "Here is your pension. Go home and rest." You are then free to spend your remaining few years in the manner which you have chosen.

"In theory, this decision is accepted by everyone, but once it is visited upon you and your home, you refuse to accept it. It is not permitted within your doors. You, like the rest of your family, eat, drink, walk, visit, read and go to the theatre. The only difference between yourself and them is that they go on working whereas you potter about as you deem fit. This is not a situation you readily accept; nor do those round you find it easier. For instance, presuming your wife is of the same age, there is no retirement for her. Isn't she too worn out, tired and of the time of life when she ought to be allowed to rest too ? Or is she supposed to carry on and die in harness ?

" To each of us, the sentence : " You are doing nothing, absolutely nothing. Aren't you bored ? Have mercy. At least lend a hand once in a while," assails our ears from time to time. Though according to the tone of the household, the phrasing may be different, the meaning is universal.

" This problem is one of our present social problems. I have always thought of putting it in play form. A couple of months ago, I conceived it as a sketch of eight or nine minutes playing time for broadcasting on Istanbul Radio. Those who watch the play, however, will notice quite a bit of difference between that and the radio script. Although the sketch was the barest outline, it formed the core of my theatre play. The interest aroused by this tiny sketch showed me I had stumbled over a crucial problem of our times so I sat down and wrote this play.

" What else can I say about "Emekli" ? From this point on, it is your opinions we want. I hope you like it, is what I feel like saying. However, hope is as old as the author's first play and more times than not, it is never realised." 41.

The same enigmatic, withdrawn approach to his theme pervades both passages.

To this point, criticism has been levelled at Cevat Fehmi because of a sense of disappointment at opportunity thrown away. This is justified

when one considers that if pure entertainment was the playwright's aim, controversial topics could have been avoided altogether. His fault is to have taken serious themes and treated them too inconclusively. Despite this, however, it cannot be denied that social and political comment is implied in the two of his works chosen for treatment.

In "Paydos"⁴², the comment is purely social. "Paydos" is a hymn of praise to selfless devotion to service in the community. The central character, Muallim Murtaza, an elderly primary school teacher, is more of a victim than a hero, a pillar of social conscience who sees his humble role in society as god-given, a task reward enough in itself for him ever to pursue remuneration in more material terms.

Murtaza lives with his wife, Hatice, and his son, Ridvan, in a mortgaged house left to him by his mother. His satisfaction with his poorly laid job has led him into financial difficulties. Hatice wants Ridvan to marry the daughter of a rich grocer, Hacı Husamettin. The grocer will accept Ridvan if Murtaza will give up his unprofitable employment as a teacher and join him in the grocery trade. Knowing her husband will never consciously agree to this, Hatice plots with Husamettin to have Murtaza dismissed by the Ministry of Education. This is duly effected and in desperation, Murtaza turns to the grocery business. Desperately unhappy and doomed never to be rich since he refuses to sell short measure, he escapes from the meanness of this alien life into daydreams about his teaching days.

Ridvan does not want the grocer's daughter, being in love with Ayşe, the daughter of one of Murtaza's crooked tenants. Seeking for acceptance in decent society, she tries to dissociate with her father. However, her attempts at this are gloriously unsuccessful till it is proven that she is actually the daughter of the worthy Salih efendi, a much respected and liked man. Her acceptance, then, is gained by relationship rather than inherent worth. At the close of the play, the Ministry discovers Murtaza to be innocent of the crimes laid to his charge. Invited to take up teaching once again, he readily does so, leaving the shop to the care of some worthy villager.

42. BASKUT, Cevat Fehmi. "Paydos", Ceylan Yayınları Matbaası, İstanbul, date of publication not stated.

The stock situation - long lost daughter, two characters intriguing against a third, the benign idealist caught up in a web of financial speculation and double-dealing - belongs to a tradition at least as old as Balzac and Zola. The theme of vocation smothered by necessity; of idealism corrupted by commercialism, reminds one that Clifford Odet's play, "Golden Boy", which treats the same theme, was current news at the time this play was performed.

The entire conception of Murtaza is negative. He is rejected and restored by the agency of others. If any positive attitude at all is seen in his behaviour, it is in his repetitious insistence on putting personal fulfillment before financial gain in spite of every hardship. He does not bother to show, either by action or argument the superiority of his way of life to that of his spouse. In fact, in her materialism and constant nagging of him to bring home a realistic wage, she often appears the more reasonable of the two. Even when he is forced to recognise the straits he is in, he is too involved in his teaching to attempt anything active in the way of working out a solution.

His last speech in the play shows him as adamant as ever in the honest pursuit of vocation at the expense of all else.

"It is dark outside; noisy and fierce.... love your school, children; love your instructors." 43

It is obvious that Cevat Fehmi is a supporter of his man character's cause and this leads one to suppose that it is a certain deficiency in his art that he cannot present a more persuasive case for Murtaza. On the other hand, by his presentation of the teacher as he stands, Cevat Fehmi declares himself to be at one with the tradition of Turkish dramatic literature from Namık Kemal onwards. In the Turksih character, there is a decided streak of admiration for the goodness which is above all meanness and seeks to dissociate itself at all costs from such, even at the expense of its own personal safety. In this, Murtaza is the close relative of İslam Bey in "Vatan yahut Silistre", Prince Mustafa in "Hürrem Sultan", Kara Mustafa paşa in "Deli İbrahim" and Hasan in "Merdiven".⁴⁴ All simply insist that they are right to the point where tenacity borders on obstinacy and dissociation verges on pure vanity. All are seen in their insistence to be utterly ineffective.

Perhaps this reading of Murtaza's insistence as a negative virtue is too western an approach? It certainly seems that there is a tradition in the East which awards the laurels to the one who insists the loudest and the longest.

43. "Paydos" , Act III, Scene 7, p. 216. "Kağıt kalem alın
sevin çocuklar."

44. "Hürrem Sultan" and "Deli İbrahim" fully discussed in Chapter IV. of this thesis; "Merdiven" in Chapter II.

The principles of prose laid down in the seventeenth century by Veysi and Nergisi⁴⁵ placed erudition above clarity in their list of virtues. Employing a vast vocabulary of Arabic and Persian mixed with Turkish, they reiterated the same thought in phrases where the sound mattered as much as the sense and the emotive power of the words as much as their rational weight.⁴⁶

Murtaza's wife, in contrast to her husband, values money for its own sake. She sees her son as an investment. She is not a clever woman but she can muster enough cunning to plot against her husband's interest so that she might have her way. This being a striving for security, she might be forgiven to a certain extent for her scheming; but she neither respects her husband for his ideals nor does she allow him peace, and for this she must be blamed. Spiritually, she is dead; her life is driven forward by a desire for material wealth.

45. See KARPAT, Kemal. "Social Themes in Contemporary Turkish Literature," Part I, The Middle Eastern Journal, Vol.14, Winter 1960, Number 1, page 32. Here he quotes Hasan Ali Yücel, "Türk Edebiyatına Toplu Bir Bakış", Istanbul, 1933.
46. This tradition seems to hold true in the classical Arabic Theatre. See op.cit. p.11. In the two Egyptian plays seen, there seemed to be three types of scene. In the first, the hero declaimed in long intoned speeches his patriotic philosophy down-stage centre; in the second, crowd- chorus gathered on street corners to discuss the hero's behaviour and remark how his deeds acted out his patriotism; and in the third, crowd and hero stood together on the field with the deed done, vowing to carry their combined patriotism to higher and more glorious goals. In the case of "El-Fatah Maran" and "SuleymanAl-Haleb-i" the term 'hero' is well-applied, since both youths picked up swords and led charges to lend body to their words. It was noticeable that the louder each harangued and the longer he insisted, the more he carried the audience with him.

Obviously conceived as a wholly unworthy character, Hatice arouses in us sympathy since behind her complaint, there lies the undeniable fact that in Turkish society position and financial success go hand in hand. One's sympathy is with Murtaza but one's reason is with Hatice. Beside what she has to say, Murtaza's mouthing of ideals sounds hollow, as if the very utterance of the word 'school' were meant to convey to the audience the entire mystical experience felt by the speaker. In the following lines, it is Hatice who rings true and Murtaza who sounds hollow and lame :

HATICE : Here's 182 liras for you (our monthly wage). Take it; eat, drink, dress well and have fun with it.

MURTAZA : Hatice hanım, the spiritual satisfaction that my profession gives me is enough. To teach and bring up a man you could never understand how great a thing that is. Teaching is a godly art.⁴⁷

A disturbing use of coincidence and a heavy touch of sentimentalism in the way of lightning reversals of behavior patterns seriously threaten the consideration of Cevat Fehmi as a serious dramatist. One bears in mind the revelation of Ayse's true parentage and the 'digging for treasure by lamplight in the back room' episode (Act I.), showing a paucity of invention and making one wonder from time to time if the world of this play is not perhaps that of fantasy and fairy tale.

47. "Paydos", Act I, Scene 1, p.13. "182 lira... Al da bol bol ye....
... Muallimlik Tanrı san'atıdır."

The secondary characters in this play verge on caricature. Their impact is achieved through attitudinising through declaration of their values and aspirations. For instance, the importance of Ayşe lies not so much in herself as a person as in the reflection what she says casts on the values of the society by which she feels trapped. She tells us at length what fashions and manners are allowed to city girls and denied to her,⁴⁸ and what she feels she need imitate in order to become acceptable.⁴⁹

She eventually wins acceptance in society when it is discovered she is the daughter of the respected Salih efendi. By this, she is deemed worthy to become the wife of Murtaza's son. The only excuse for the use of such a lame stage trick would be if, thereby, some criticism of the teacher's values were intended. However, the tone of the entire work is such that any suggestion that Murtaza is other than above reproach is rejected out of hand. The reading of this, then, suggests that Cevat Fehmi shares with his chief character the belief that worthiness is achieved through association with the worthy.

Muhtar Hasan and Hacı Hüsammettin exist to throw into relief the teacher's virtues by provoking him to defend his own way of life in the teeth of their vicious attacks upon him.

48. "Paydos" , Act I, Scene 7, p.68. "Biz köylü kızlarına ... Keyif benim değil mi ?"

49. idem , ActII, Scene 3, p.104. "Ne poker biliyorum... diyebiliyorum"

Such a provocation is contained in Hacı Husamettin's speech in the first act.⁵⁰

Ridvan is the weakest character in the play. He exists as an enigma. He says little, and, for a graduate in philosophy, is remarkably eager to agree with anyone who accosts him. If he is meant to represent the finished product of the complete education his father advocates, then he fails. The audience is left with no deep impression of his success and achievement in this respect.

In "Paydos"; Cevat Fehmi has presented a central character who embodies all the social virtues of the new Republican man and upholds them in the face of attack on all sides. In "Harput'ta Bir Amerikalî",⁵¹ he treats with a central character who has jettisoned all the aims and values of the new Republic and who re-learns them by discovering the humility to listen to a lowly man of the soil.

This second play concerns an American millionaire, Abraham Maderrus, who comes to stay at the İstanbul Hilton. His story continues thus :

" Once installed in the Hilton, Abraham hires a secretary, Necmettin Aris, to help him discover the long lost brother whom he believes to be the sole survivor of the Turkish family from which he hales. All he knows is that he is of Turkish origin and that he started out in the town of Harput in eastern Anatolia.

50. "Paydos", Act I. Scene 8. p.80, "Tabii iflah olmaz! "

51. BAŞKUT, Cevat Fehmi. "Harput'ta Bir Amerikalî", İnkilap ve Aka Kitabevi, İstanbul, date of publication not stated.

"As a result of advertisement, three candidates arrive at the Hilton claiming to be the long lost brother. Their motives, however, are more the lure of a possible share in the millionaire's wealth than any desperate desire to recover lost relatives for the sake of family love. A lady with a little girl also arrives claiming to be the lost brother's wife.

"Maderrus is puzzled by all these encounters and cross claims, and decides that the best way to sort things out is to return to Harput in the hope of coming across some record of the family at source. But, by the time the party arrives in that eastern town, it is clear that none of the claimants to brotherhood has a credible case. The real brother does, however, turn up in Harput. Everyone is put out to find that he is the poor villager, Ahmet Müderrisoğlu, whom everyone has beaten and scorned for his poverty. Abraham takes great delight in assuming the role of saviour and seeks to restore to his brother all the dignity he feels he deserves as the brother of an American millionaire. To his utter surprise, however, Ahmet shows fierce pride in his humble role but honest life. He expresses great contempt for the millionaire's money. His values are seen to centre on family loyalty, service to the community and country and such, which he explains means to him standing by the town wherein one was born, sharing in its fate and the fate of those among whom one grew up. He has nothing but scorn for those who desert to the west in search of easy wealth."

Shamed by Ahmet's fierce, patriotic loyalty and by the innate pride of the dying township of Harput, whose inhabitants have emigrated in waves till hardly any but those who cannot afford to go are left, several speculators decide to remain in the town and build a tourist hotel which they hope will attract wealth and breath new life into the dying community.

"Concurrent with this main plot, a sub-plot concerning the escape of a lunatic and the career of a police officer employed to track him down, is introduced by way of comic relief from the drawn-out process of discovering the true brother. A farcical situation is concluded by a farcical solution when the lunatic turns out to be the police officer conducting the search. There is also a brief love interest when the millionaire's secretary proposes to Ayşe, the heroine. She shows no interest in this lackey of foreign wealth, reserving her love for Ahmet in his poverty."

As in "Paydos"; characterisation is pursued on a surface level. Characters exploit catch phrases. Fikret Aman sprinkles his Turkish

with as many international expressions as he can lay his tongue to. 'Okay' and 'bye-bye' bristle among the Turkish words and his conversation sounds more like an inventory than a dialogue.⁵² In some cases, the 'humour-like' quality of a character is emphasised by the application of a surname which defines the ruling passion. Ahmet Hamlet has a tendency for quoting Shakespeare,⁵³ while Ahmet Bulur chatters incessantly about his inventions⁵⁴.

Both Ahmet Müderrisoğlu and Ayşe show their disapproval of the hollow values of those who surround them by their silence in the midst of chatter. Only at the end does this silent criticism burst forth in articulation, when the hero condemns the millionaire's lack of concern for his place of birth and the unfortunate family he left behind to fend for themselves. Outlining in detail the privations upon which Abraham has turned his back, Ahmet repeats by way of refrain : "Where were you then, my millionaire brother?"⁵⁵ Both in his attitudinising and his use of rhetorical question, Ahmet recalls Islam Bey in his role of prompter of the public conscience.

Cevat Kehmi has said there are several ways of looking at his play. One could take it as an elegy for a dying township, representing by analogy the country, and the millionaire, the thousands

52. "Harput'ta Bir Amerikalı" , Act I. Scene 2. pp.13-18.

53. idem , Act I. Scene 5. p.58.

54. idem , Act I. Scene 5. p.39.

55. idem , Act III. Scene 5. pp141-2. "Milyoner kardeşim, sen o zamanlar neredeydin?"

who each year leave Turkey for the promise of greater rewards in the West, denying thereby their country's heritage.

On the other hand, one might take it as a lament bewailing the Turkish passion for foreign countries and cultures, a fashion which has a lengthy history. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the very foreignness of Persia was seen by some to be proof of superiority to things Turkish. In the 19th century, France took over this role, while at the time of the First World War, it was Germany that represented the utmost in desirability. At the end of the second World War, the United States assumed the role of the Promised Land which it still retains in the eyes of the foolish and discontented.

Lastly, the play could be read as a good-humoured condemnation of the 'kompradors'. However, hastily covering himself in the event of any objection to the play by the censor, the playwright goes on to say that though such problems do exist and 'deserve' to be reflected, he simply sought to write a comedy.⁵⁶

The work of Cevat Fehmi, then, is disappointing because it does not fully declare its intent. It is neither openly frivolous nor sufficiently committed in its views to merit much discussion as work of serious social purpose. There is sufficient use of purposeful

56. See the author's address, State Theatre programme, 1955-6 season, op.cit.p.xxix.

material here to have expected the playwright to have voiced clearer, more definite opinion. Instead, his play exploits situations. One cannot wholly attribute this deficiency to pressure from the censor, since some noticeable release of pressure should have been noted after 1960, when his work might have assumed new strengths. This however has not been the case.

Perhaps the most unsatisfactory quality of his work is that it lacks the pursuit of any one serious theme to its conclusion. It is all very well to tolerate the world's variety, but it is the first duty of the serious writer to declare his position in respect of the same beforehand. Whatever he may think, Cevat Fehmi allows his audience to wonder whether he considers it passable that people should avail themselves of easy wealth, even if it does involve a little deceit. Or perhaps he is suggesting that the deceit is harmless because it is discovered and thwarted? While putting the moral in the mouth of Murtaza and Ahmet Müderrisoğlu, he does not destroy the case of Hatice hanım and Abraham Maderrus. Hatice has a right to complain about her husband's pathetic salary when better prospects are at hand. Maderrus has a right to move freely in pursuit of a better life and not to have his offer of help spurned when he returns. Staring us in the face is the solemn fact that

his sitting by his starving mother's bed side without a penny to his name would hardly have repaired her situation. If this, indeed, is a mode of behaviour which the author judges to be despicable, then it is his duty to be more explicit as to why we are to accept such a verdict. Simply to shrug it off and insist " it is wrong because it is wrong because it is wrong " is a totally unsatisfactory state of affairs.

" The Run Of The Mill."

In all probability, had Cevat Fehmi Baskut been writing for the English stage, he would never have achieved prominence on the scale he enjoys it in Turkey. Factors largely responsible for his success in his homeland are mainly properties of the nature of Turkish society. The playwright of competence has no difficulty in finding a ready audience in Turkey. Theatres are near living areas and people will come out in bad weather to see a play. There is a natural curiosity in the Turkish character and people will watch with tolerance and without criticism almost anything presented for their inspection. All that is demanded by spectators is entertainment and almost anything that happens in the theatre qualifies as this.

Perhaps the greatest distinction between the English and Turkish audience is that the latter is not divided. Plays in England aim at attracting different types of playgoer. Plays in Turkey play to less sophisticated but more open-minded audiences. Whereas the English are consciously wary of what standard a play and production reaches, the Turks go to the theatre to look in on whatever is presented to them; they are prepared to be interested in anything.

This is how Yildiz Kenter can take Ionesco to the villages and pack out everyhouse. The Turkish audience has no preconceived idea of what it wants to see and is, therefore, easier to please than its English counterpart. Incidentally, by default, as it were, it tends to be treated to much more experimental and exciting work than its British opposite, since its viewing patterns are less rigid therefore more safe economically speaking.

Every year, the Turkish theatre presents many unremarkable new plays, which, while they add nothing but volume to the national repertoire, provide sound, solid, pedestrian entertainment. Of this type of play, Cevat Fehmi's are representative. Those treated in this chapter, while unremarkable as pieces of theatre, are quite worthy of study as social documents since they reflect so thoroughly what their audience feel about many topics.

The captive nature of the Turkish audience exercises a dual effect on playwrights. Firstly, it induces a sense of security which saps the inventive power of the artist. Being so thoroughly familiar with the beliefs and values of his audience, the playwright tends to take much for granted and can be lazy. This is perhaps no more evident than in his assumption that the virtues of the 1924 Constitution were solid gain. In every case, it results in his viewing a situation

from an accepted standpoint. Stories are robbed of a great deal of novelty because so much is taken for granted. Any character who declares himself against the values of the new republic is doomed thereby. This tends to rob plays of interesting argument and substitute in its place bald statement. Professor Karpāt says to the effect that 'literature prophesies, people talk and governments act.'⁵⁷ This certainly does not hold true in the theatre. Nothing is said on the stage that cannot first be read in the press or heard on the lips of the crowd.

The other effect the audience exercises on the playwright is a rather refreshing one as far as the foreigner is concerned. In Turkey, nationalism and patriotism is still a laudable virtue and not something to be self-consciously admitted to or smothered as being too unsophisticated to declare openly. The playwright feels no compunction about praising aloud his nation's achievements which often gives his work a positive, forceful quality which is rarely seen on the English stage and even then, probably only in a revival of "Henry V." It does, however, lead him occasionally into the trap of using the stage as a platform; yet it also points to a sad gap in the range of emotion permitted to the English playwright, who is rarely allowed more than to bemoan his nation's failings and never to laud her successes.

57. KARPAT, Kemal. op.cit. p. *XIII*. Introduction to his text.

The following play have been selected, then, not because they say something new or provocative, nor because they are particularly fine examples of dramatic art, but simply because they throw into relief some aspect of the Turkish character which is seen to have far-reaching social consequences.

"Yalan" by Orhan ASENA. 58.

This play was first performed in December 1959 by the State Theatre in Ankara. The story is slight and heavily overladen with sentimentality.

A girl called Vicdan (Conscience) has committed suicide. While the police conduct a surface investigation as to why she should have done such a thing, the girl returns as a spirit to dig out of her relatives the real reason. Her father, mother and sister each are in some way responsible for Vicdan's fate and, when confronted by her prompting, they are finally brought to accept their responsibility.

The form of the play is naive and weak. It proceeds by a series of systematic revelations as each character statically recounts his story.

However, these admissions are based on some very real problems.

Sureyya, Vicdan's mother, married Mehmet Ali, a man fifteen years her senior, for his position. Announcing that he feels the pressures of his inspectorship too great, he informs her that he wishes to take a desk job in the office and a certain amount of demotion. Sureyya is furious. She moans at him :

"I married you because you were an important government official, and in the end you turn out to be a miserable clerk." 59. She is still a beautiful woman like Vicdan's elder sister, Vildan, and, like so many Turkish people, considers this to be everything. Vicdan, less handsome, feels bitterly inferior to both her mother and sister. Sureyya feels wasted on this elderly man who has lost

58. ASENA, Orhan, "Yalan" , Türk Kültür Dernekleri Genel Merkezi, Ankara, date not stated.

59. idem , Act I. p.24. "Koskoca bir müfettiş... sonunda bir memur."

all interest and ambition. Her discontent leads her into a miserable affair with a young man whom she is unable to love as he wants to be loved. Discovering that all she wants is physical attention, he tells her that he is not interested but knows of others who would do just as well if it is all the same to her. Though we are not told how Vicdan has come by the facts of this affair, this turns out to be the mother's contribution to the daughter's suicide. Vicdan condemns her thus :

"The masculinity you failed to find in my father's arms was the power that pushed you into the arms of that other man..... Then when you came home with a bigger lie than ever, that was the day I died, mother."⁶⁰

Mehmet Ali is advised by anonymous letter of his wife's infidelity. He follows instructions given to him of the time and the place of her rendezvous and comes upon her in the act. Returning home, he wavers between suicide and complete inactivity. His guilty wife returns with a present for him which he accepts in silence. That he is a man neither in bed nor in his convictions, that he will not acquit his honour, is his part in his daughter's tragedy. To the point of finding his out, she had idolised him; then he broke her faith in him and destroyed her belief.

Vildan's blame is due to her flaunting her beauty before her less attractive sister, and Nejat, Vildan's fiance, is castigated for not declaring at once for the more beautiful sister, for being cowardly in pretending love for the less attractive because he felt inadequate before the beauty of the moreso.

Each character is allowed to give his own apology before Vicdan's ghost throws into light the truth behind the pretense. This is a very drawn-out and forced thesis in which the author seems very vague about what it is he wants to say; however two very interesting things emerge. The first is the importance given to beauty, and the lack of it as a motive for self-destruction. The second is that it

60. "Yalan" , Act I. p.30. "Seni boyle her defasinda o gün öldüm, anne."

should be perfectly acceptable to the audience that a character should kill herself because of her father's failure to live up to her expectations of manliness. Beauty is the prime consideration throughout the play. It is the reason Mehmet Ali chose Süreyya for his wife, the reason why Vicdan feels inferior to her sister and the reason for her insecurity in her romance with Nejat. It points to a supreme folly widely practised in middle class Turkish society; that of exchanging looks for position. In this play, a fifty three year old man of uncertain health has married a handsome active woman of thirty eight. When the contract was agreed upon, the immediate prospect of position and physical appearance seemed a fair exchange and blinded both partners to the temporary nature of these states. Süreyya failed to see that position is totally reliant upon the application of effort, while Mehmet Ali ignored the fact that beauty needs constant serving. Neither had the maturity to declare wholly for physical happiness or economic settlement, but tried to organise a compromise, through which a third and innocent party suffered. Whether or not that suffering is justifiable depends on the extent to which a son or daughter may be allowed to command the behaviour of a parent. Considering the closeness and dependence between members of a Turkish family, a certain amount of support must be given to Vicdan's claim.

It has been suggested that this play is a study in sexual repression. There are elements of this in Vildan's wilful and fruitless seduction of Nejat and also in Mehmet Ali's indecisive reception of his wife's adultery as if he in part forgave her. There is also a suggestion that Vicdan sent the anonymous letter to her father to test him, but all this is a matter of conjecture. Certainly in a more permissive society, the bonds within a family as sexually orientated as this one seems to be, would be considerably slackened.

One facet of the Turkish character robs dramatic literature of much material which otherwise might be considered seriously. This is the element contained in the proverb "Allah'in dediği olur", a statement of the belief that from the beginning, one's fate is written across one's brow. This leads dramatists to take frequently the easy way out of a crucial situation. 'Deus ex machina' are resorted to wherever the plot is too thick to solve by natural means. Fate steps in every now and then and tidies up the loose ends. While this is perfectly acceptable to Turkish audiences, it drastically reduces the weight of the thesis. One is left wondering whether one has witnessed a real situation being worked out in realistic terms, or, if, perhaps, the whole conception was not after all against some fairy tale landscape. Perhaps the most disappointing

use of this melodramatic device was in Metin Erksan's film, "Acı Hayat", a serious study of the juxtaposition of immense wealth and poverty in modern Istanbul. To emphasise the contrast and bring this home to the ^mpapered hero, the poor girl was permitted to win the national lottery, whereupon fortunes were dramatically reversed and the thesis dissolved into a version of Cinderella plus a revenge theme.

Two plays inviting such treatment but desperately avoiding it were "Ocak" by Turgut Özakman and "Merdiven" by Nazim Kurşunlu. Both are studies in social disorientation, with situations that could easily have been solved by resorting to melodrama. The fact that both playwrights resisted the temptation elevate these pieces and render them worthy of serious consideration. Both plays deal with people who cannot either comprehend or come to terms with the changed world around them. For these people, as for everyone in Turkey, the changed world is that which followed the dramatic upheaval caused by the Constitution of 1924. While this was initially a political arrangement, it turned out to have deep-seated social consequences. In a way, the new values imposed by the Constitution lie behind every problem play of the period. Most crises result from the clash between those who can and those who cannot accept the change brought about by the transition.

61
"Ocak" by Turgut ÖZAKMAN.

This play was first performed by the State Theatre in Ankara in 1962. Its title derives from the Turkish saying : ' O evin ocağına incir dikti.' 'A fig tree is sown in that home's hearth.' Like the fig tree tears up the hearth, the son of this family breaks up its unity. There is a poem by Aziz Nesin which crystalises the main problem in this play and others of the same type of which there are many. It reads :

"The best father in the world is mine;
 Only in our thoughts are we enemies,
 Our hands show us to be friends.
 He tells me : 'You have passed the age of forty,
 And still you have not made of yourself a man.'
 I listen to him with my head bowed;
 He is the only man before whom I would bow my head.
 He reads from the Koran to the spirit of my dead mother,
 A pain which has hurt him for thirty years.
 He calls me a heathen but never bears a grudge." 62.

The hearth, then, is the symbol of family unity in this tragedy, which deals with the constant attacks on Tarık's hearth from laziness, aimlessness, weakness and evasiveness. As a modern Turkish social tragedy, this stands out from others by the virtue of the fact that the central situation does not depend on outside agents but grows out of the character weaknesses already inherent in the participants. Circumstances do not strike at Tarık's family, despite their efforts, but because the tragedy is created by each individual's shortcomings. The initial status of the family and its potential, while far from promising of great things, is

61. ÖZAKMAN, Turgut. "Ocak", Türk Kültür Dernekleri Genel Matbaası, Ankara, (1962?)

62. NESİN, Aziz. Collected Poems. "Dünyanın en iyi babası... Diş bilmeden."

certainly a long way from being desperate. Despair is self-induced; tragedy grows from inadequacy, not in the struggle with superior destructive outside forces like death, famine, drought, unemployment and the like, but in coping^{un} realistically with their dissatisfaction in finding themselves in the station of life to which their efforts have rightly assigned them. They are simply incapable of formulating and carrying through a scheme that would bring about improvement.

Tarik is a car-repair worker who is intensely sensitive about the fact that he is unable to provide more lavishly for his wife and family. He feels he ought to have so much better. When his wife grumbles and his eldest and youngest sons threaten to leave home in search of their dreams, he admits he cannot blame them. This leads him to thrash around wildly in search of ways to come by easy money. Fear closes in on him to the point that he sees, in the ill luck of those round him, a threat to his own future :

TARIK : There was an accident in the garage next to ours. One of the mechanic's ribs was broken. It seems he will be unable to work for four to five months. One day - just supposing - one day, if my head is broken 63, open - or - how should I say? - if I should be taken ill!

The grandmother has long since retired from the real world into one of butlers, exiled pashas, carriages and numberless guests to lunch. She is the extreme case in the family, well over the brink into second childhood. However, it is clear from the first that the others, apart from Fazıl, are well along the same road.

Safiye, Tarik's wife, believes, as a mother, that if she agrees with everything her family says, and provides uncritically everything they want, this will necessarily ensure their happiness and keep them together under one roof and around one hearth, which she believes in implicitly as the main virtue. As unrealistic as any of them, she fails to see that it is not in her power to provide the things that each wants to make him happy. She substitutes for this reality, her negative course of action in trying to lure them to wanting what she thinks they ought to want.

63. "Ocak" , Act I. p.12. "Bir kaza olmuştü hastalansam."

Nihat, the eldest son, is glib tongued, good-looking and a wastrel who makes his way from one good time to another; between one loan and another. He is unable to hold down a job and boasts of this as a distinction of some merit. He is certainly at his happiest when he has given in his notice and not the least worried by the extra strain his unemployment puts on the family purse. He is a man of infinite charm who is only too willing to enter his grandmother's fantasy if it pleases her. When sacked with four day's severance pay, he wins over his mother by presenting her with a string of artificial pearls bought with the last of his money. He believes that he would be perfectly happy if his mother would allow him to leave home. The fact is, though, that she does not keep him there against his will. It is true that she does persist in saying how nice it is to have the family altogether, but none of them are of the type who would be unduly influenced by this if the fruits of leaving were attractive enough. In other words, Nihat's yearning to leave is a built-in excuse for making nothing of the present.

Özcan, the youngest son, emulates Nihat. He finds Nihat's cavalier behaviour attractive and wants nothing more than to be allowed to emulate it. He is equally rootless, and is lazy and churlish into the bargain. When asked to go to the grocer's for his mother, he hides behind the excuse of studying.

Between them, Sevda and Fazıl, the daughter and second son, have qualities which could redeem this miserable family, yet both lack the positive quality that could bring about their salvation. Sevda is crippled. She has a beautiful nature which refuses to acknowledge meanness in others. In moderation, this would have been an attractive thing, but in her excess, it looks too much like yet another form of the family disability to accept reality for what it is. It certainly leads her to her destruction and the further misery of those about her.

In the midst of all this fantasy, cursed with an almost Cassandra-like power of prediction, is the only positive force in the play. Fazıl is positive in that he can see what is wrong with the family but not in a way that could provide for their salvation. His thinking is positive in that he can single out the defects of each, yet he is powerless to act in a way that could lead them towards a way of life they would find more satisfactory. Fazıl, the middle son, is a hard-worker and a realist, who sees the only hope as lying in the family's coming to resign itself to its place in society as the family

up in these words spoken by the grandmother.

"Paşa dönse, herşey düzelir." 67

"When the pasha returns, all will be put in order."

But the pasha's world has passed. The rules of the new world are fixed. The family's solution lies in their own hands, in appreciating the nature of their allotted role in the system and their striving to do their best within the confines of that role.

This is not a tragedy in the classical sense of the word. There is no propulsion towards doom. In classical tragedy, the storm gathers and breaks, the air clears and in the end, there is a promise of better times to come. Perhaps the very lack of this promise makes this modern tragedy more desperate than any classical one. In "Ocak", we leave the family as we find them, with the same tensions momentarily suspended but with all the elements of unhappiness and discontent as present at the end as they were at the beginning. There has been no release, no rehabilitation. The family is none the wiser. Tarık's final scheme for the grocery shop is as wild as his initial taxi-chain project. Safiye, once critical of and detached from the grandmother's wanderings takes her place in the old lady's chair and seems less active in her attempt to weld her family together and more content simply to beg them to stay under one roof.

67. "Ocak", Act II, p.44.

The unity around the hearth has been restored once more, but it knows no new strength and it is certain that there is no permanency in it. The problem is brought to a conclusion but no solution has been found.

"Merdiven" by Nazım KURŞUNLU. 68

This play was chosen to open the new Altındağ Tiyatrosu by the State Theatre in Ankara in 1964. This was a gallant attempt to bring the workers of the old town into contact with the bourgeois of Yenışehir. Plays chosen for this theatre were to have subjects which would appeal to both sections of the audience, but mainly which would attract the poorer section of the community. The theatre was in a way intended to be a staircase between the two. The staircase in the title of the play, however, referred to society with its many steps up and down to higher and lower stations. In the last few lines of the play, Şefika says to Hamdi :

"Bu dünya bir merdiven, Hamdi bey, kimi iner, kimi çıkar." 69

"This world is a staircase, Hamdi bey; some go up and some go down."

This rather sad little observation crystalises the experience of this pair, who, through the inherent fault of not being able to comply with the norm, are on the way down. The norm is the system as represented here by the 'belediye', the town council. Those who appreciate how it works can

68. KURŞUNLU, Nazım. "Merdiven", Milli Eğitim Basımevi, İstanbul, 1966.

69. ibid. Epilogue, p.120.

organise it to their advantage like İsmail and Gülşüm; those who persist in ignoring its values and processes like Hamdi, who chooses to opt out, are doomed to failure and destruction.

Hamdi, once the highly prized 'director of filing' in a government office, has retired to pursue his pipe dream of cultivating flowers in the garden of his self-built home. Though money is short, he has been eager to retire because the system and its efficiency, with which he had grown up, has broken down. He bemoans the new values thus :

"I visited the office the other day. They have taken on two new clerks. Now the staff has gone up to eleven in number. In my day, I managed perfectly well with nine. When I started there was three of us; Sallabaş, who looked after the dossiers, the head clerk and myself. In those days, the heads of department were called head clerks ... That office of three strong was then expanded to four, then five. Whenever the work got on top of them, they would employ another clerk (instead of dealing with it themselves). In the room that seemed to me, on the day I started to work, like a paddock, there's now hardly space to breathe." 70

In this passage, Hamdi puts a finger on a desperate bureaucratic deficiency.

Unfortunately, Hamdi has given up his job before his house is paid for. No sooner has he settled in the partly finished house, than the 'belediye' arrives with instructions to build a new road across his front garden. Luckily, the contractor assigned to this job is Vecihi, who remembers Hamdi as a colleague from office days. Learning of the old man's financial difficulties, he rents the basement of Hamdi's house as an office and a lodging for İsmail, the peasant 'helper' he has brought with him, and offers to complete the building in lieu of rent, refusing to consider that the cost of finishing the house is well in excess of reasonable rent. It is only when İsmail objects to the bad business of such an arrangement that it is realised that he is Vecihi's partner, not his servant, who provides the funds while Vecihi provided the technical skill. At this point, Vecihi is over-ruled, however.

Once installed, İsmail sets about making this bad proposition pay by turning his lodging into a grocery store, where he encourages Şefika to run up a hefty bill. It is only when this sharp peasant's uncle arrives from the village that it becomes clear that İsmail has

70. "Merdiven" , Act I, Scene 7. "Geçenlerde daireye uğradım.....
..... kalmadı sonunda."

some scheme afoot against Vecihi. The young man has been slack about keeping books and Ismail, by an elaborate system of double entry, holds the young man to account for four thousand Turkish liras' worth of debt, which has been paid out by the partners as bribes to Süreyya bey, the 'belediye' inspector of works.

"This was for the silver tray bought as a wedding present for Süreyya bey's sister-in-law. This thousand is for the famous singers invited to the circumcision party of Süreyya bey's son. This is for the changing of the chassis of Süreyya bey's car and also the upholstery of the same. This is for changing the colour of his car to pistacchio green and for the renewal of the left tail light....." 71

Thus he itemises the bribes and exposes the local government system.

It is worth mentioning here the author's skill in presenting social commentary without breaking deliberately into the fabric of the plot. The criticism is woven into the story and the characterisation, and not grafted on as in the case of Ayşe's story in Cevat Fehmi's "Paydos".

Vecihi is forced to foreclose on his generous loan to the old couple in order to extricate himself from the peasant's grasp. Hamdi can only pay Şefika's grocery bill and what is left to pay on the house by exchanging accommodation with the wily Ismail and by accepting employment as Ismail's odd job man and night watchman to the road works.

When the third act begins, Hamdi is discovered living in the basement. Ismail has married Şefika's washing woman, Gûlsüm, and the couple have moved upstairs. Ismail imparts that he wants Hamdi evicted because he hopes to bring in an architect to demolish the house and erect an apartment block on the site. The only way for Hamdi to stay on is for him to buy the basement of the new block in advance for thirty thousand, putting his last five thousand down as a deposit. Hamdi decides to try and avoid this humiliation by seeking to retrieve his old office job, but this he finds has long since been filled. Şefika now takes in Gûlsüm's laundry to make ends meet and begs Ismail to give her husband a job. This is arranged if Hamdi will learn to type and

71. "Merdiven", Act II, Scene 8. "Süreyya bein görüncesine
..... sol arka lambası."

and keep the accounts, but when Ismail begins the relationship by throwing his hat and coat at Hamdi, whom he intends to be a general lackey, Hamdi's pride gets the better of him and he beats Ismail about the head, thereby wiping out his chances of survival.

The epilogue finds Hamdi and Şefika living in a 'gecekondu' which they are slowly buying. Thankful for small mercies, Şekifa adopts an optimistic attitude saying that it will be paid for in ten months after which time they should be able to manage quite well on Hamdi's pension. Till that time, Disguised in dark glasses, Hamdi is reduced to selling artificial flowers from a tray on street corners, bemoaning the fact that evil seems to succeed in this world while virtue loses out every time.

Thus, to the last, Hamdi can see no reason for his failure in his own actions. Neither can Şefika, though she does not grumble. Yet undoubtedly, it is his indulging in the proud luxury of beating up Ismail (Act III, Scene 17.) and the fecklessness of Şefika over the grocery debt (Act II, Scene 14) which are the most active elements in their downfall. Hamdi is a good man but a foolish one. As a type, he belongs to the same group as Murtaza, Kara Mustafa Pasha and Prince Mustafa.⁷² He is presented in such a way by the writer that the audience is meant to consider his inherent honesty and nobility as an excuse for his crass stupidity. This recurring theme of ineffective goodness is one of the greatest disappointments in Turkish dramatic literature, and perhaps the greatest failing in the Turkish character. Too often in public life, the good can appreciate the corruption that abounds, but choose to retire above it rather than attempt to beat it

72. See page 37 of this thesis.

at its own game on its own terms. Never once does Hamdi consider dealing with Ismail, except on that one expensive occasion where a blow costs him his livelihood.

As a character, Hamdi has no depth or development. He exists to be deposed, to be a victim. Ismail is a much fuller character. He is a complex of schemes and plans for the future. He can observe, appreciate, bend, twist, use a situation and emerge the better for the experience. One is left wondering if, indeed, he can be called a villain when the system allows itself to be used by the likes of him as it does. Is it a crime that in a corrupt society, he uses corrupt means to survive? It is a moot point whether he can be blamed for the revenge he takes on those about him. He renders humiliation only where he has received it. Compared to him, Vecihi comes out the worse for his arrogance. From the beginning of the partnership, Vecihi has looked upon Ismail as something rather beneath contempt, even though the peasant's savings were essential to the forwarding of the young man's schemes. Being above money matters and the grubby business of account-keeping, he is at least half to blame for his partner's successful swindling. In other words, he is another younger version of Hamdi. The man who knows evil exists and does nothing about it must be held a party to the blame.

Hamdi, like Tarik in "Ocak", cannot appreciate the problem of the new democratic society. The obtaining of place by birth was halted by the Constitution, and place by success, through either fame or wealth, superceded it. One's own efforts replaced inherited legacy as a means to position. The immutable barriers of birth and court recognition were replaced by the more fluid frontiers of wealth. It is the new system as created by the Revolution and the Republic that allows Ismail to put his peasant cunning to work, to work for his fortune and to achieve his advancement in society. It is Hamdi's failure to recognise the system for what it is and how it works which is responsible for his ruin.

In "Ocak", the family of Tarik is criticised by one of its members, Fazil, for not being able to come to terms by the demands of society. In their case, all society asks is that the individual accepts his limitations and takes his place according to his ability and means. Society is seen as a reasonable, all-embracing norm in which one can take one's place with honour. In "Merdiven", Hamdi fails, like Tarrk, through being at loggerheads with the system, but the norm is no longer seen to be reasonable. It appears like a conspiracy. Hamdi criticises it in detail. His social criticism verges on the political when he exposes in no uncertain

terms the vagaries and vices of local government. There seems little to justify Tarik's evasion of social responsibilities; however, while Hamdi must be judged because his evasion brings hardship to Sefika, he must also be excused in part for his choice, since society as represented by Süreyya bey is a very unsavoury, unattractive prospect. In the former play, the writer is criticising the individual from the point of view of being at one with society; in the latter, he has placed himself apart from both, adopting to both an equally critical attitude. One blames Hamdi for his folly; one might have blamed him even more had he succumbed to the pressures of the system as represented by the 'belediye' and reflected in the compliance of Ismail. One is left with the sobering thought that Hamdi's and Ismail's may be an alternative choices.

" The Uses of Legend and Myth."

a study of two published plays by Güngör Dilmen KALYONCU.

Güngör Dilmen Kalyoncu has published two plays. The earlier of these is "Midas'in Kulaklari", first performed by the State Theatre on 6th October, 1960, and published in December 1965. The latter is "Kurban", performed by the Cezzar- Sururi Topluluğu on 19th January, 1967, and published in May of the same year. The former play is a free treatment of the Midas legend bringing out a contemporary political and social moral. The latter play lends to a modern village story a legendary, timeless dimension by employing a formal, ritualistic, classical treatment in the composition. Both plays are similar in tone. Zehra, the central character of "Kurban", is as familiar and universal a figure in the Turkish experience as Midas, the king of Greek classical theatre fame. Perhaps even more than through their personalities, they are familiar characters by virtue of their problems. These plays will be treated together, since, while the former qualifies undoubtedly as legend because of its traditional place in Greek mythology, the latter is raised to legendary significance by virtue of the universal, ritual suffering of Zehra, a suffering which links her across national and geographical boundaries with all women, desperate to establish their basic human right to retain and command the loyalty and faithfulness of the man who took them in marriage.

The former of these plays is distinctly a political morality, written in the late fifties when only the wilfully blind could pretend that corruption was not rife in Turkish public life, and only the wilfully stupid would dare to stand up and say so. "Midasın Kulakları"⁷³ therefore is a retreat behind the mask of ancient legend to obtain freedom to level by analogy criticism on the contemporary state of the nation. It has been maintained by the State Theatre personnel that that institution never presents political plays. If this is not a contemporary political play, then it is difficult to account for its popularity in the annals of modern Turkish dramatic literature. In fact, its very popularity with audiences seems to underline that it is saying something very close to the Turkish public's conscience at the time.

"Kurban" was both written and produced after the relaxing of the censorship. It does not need to withdraw behind a mask to say what it has to say. It is a social drama in a decade when social problems had already been well-aired on the stage. It is unique in this genre for its impassioned moral tone. Like "Midas'ın Kulakları", it does not exploit a popular theme or vogue, but treats its subject from the standpoint of strictly honest commitment. This, above all, wins for Gûngör Dilmen his place of supremacy among modern Turkish dramatists.

73. KALYONCU, Gûngör Dilmen. "Midas'ın Kulakları", Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara, December 1965.

"Midas'ın Kulakları" is a one act play, the middle play of a trilogy, the first of which is "Midas'ın Altınları" and the last of which is "Gordium Dügümü". It does, however, exist as a complete work in its own right, quite independent of the other two.

The plot of this play is taken from the ancient Phrygian myth. Pan and Apollo are debating who of the two is the better musician. It is of lyre against Flute, the sophisticated against the traditional, the city against the countryside, Quarrelling, they fail to come to a decision. At length, they call on King Midas to mediate and judge. The king decides in favour of Pan. Apollo, insulted and furious, changes the king's ears into those of a donkey. The king, filled with shame at this blemish, seeks to hide his affliction under a funny red cap. Only the king's barber shares his monarch's dreadful secret. This poor man is made ill by the king's desperate desire to hold back the truth of his state from his people. The barber says :

"I can stand it no longer. They kill me, God damn it, they kill me. Where do I carry them - my master's ears ? On my head, in my throat, in my intestines, with pain - with a black pain, prickly like hair and alive." 74

Thus, the barber stifles under the weight of the secret. Seeking an outlet, he chooses to whisper it into a well in the fields. But the reeds near the well take up the story and relay it to the people on the breath of the wind. The whole city learns of the king's ears and makes fun of the monarch. Midas, at first angry, learns to look at the problem from another point of view :

"Thousands of pairs of eyes will seek mine ! If they happen to detect in mine even half a fear, I am defeated - defeated!" 75

He knows that fear is his first defeat, and, conquering this, he decided to reveal his ears to his people. When he does so, the populace are awed. By this act, he is belittling the curse of Apollo and raises himself to the level of the demi-gods. The telling event of the whole play is when Midas, thus half a god by his defiance, receives a visit from Apollo who lifts the punishment of the ears. The king is horrified. The mark of his martyrdom is removed and once more he sinks back into the ranks of meremortals. "

74. "Midas'ın Kulakları" , Scene 8, p.51. "Dayanamıyacağım daha tüylü canlı."

75. ibid. , Scene 16, p.75. "Binlerce çift.... yenildim! "

As a modern political morality of the early sixties, one might read this conclusion in several ways. Is Apollo's reaction the way the government of Turkey seeks to emasculate the heroes of its opposition ? Is perhaps the fate of Midas, the fate of the salon socialists-emasculated by material profit ? The central theme of this play is the problem of making a judgement both truthfully and dispassionately, despite internal and external pressures. Niyazi Aki, in his treatment of this play, seems to suggest that Midas' dilemma is purely external and that his behaviour, in the face of adversity, as visited upon him by Apollo, is exemplary and wholly worthy of praise. He seems to ignore the ambivalent nature of this behaviour, at one time summoning courage to bear the affliction, while at another fearing a loss of prestige and status at being relieved of his martyr's role.⁷⁶ This play, then, while it treats with the theme of tenacity in standing by one's beliefs no matter what the price, treats with the axiomatic theme of how such tenacity can easily spill over into sheer obstinacy and arrogance. It makes a plea for universal freedom to form an opinion and to voice the same abroad without fear of persecution. It achieves much of its point by the repetition of slogans as that where Midas says three times :

" I shall give my judgement freely"⁷⁷(without prejudice or pressure)

This is to say, "I shall judge in freedom", a thing which he carries through

76. AKI, Niyazi. op.cit. p.xiv. Part II, Chapter 2, p.107 of his text.

77. "Midas'in Kulakları", Scene 2, pp.22-23. " Yargımı özgürce vereceğim."

despite the threatening presence of hostile gods. Even with his donkey's ears, Midas speaks as he feels to be true and will not retract the judgement of Apollo. He speaks thus to the goddess of the Moon :

"This would be changing my judgement, this would be regretting it (ever happened), I am King Midas, I am the judge, Midas. How would it look if I were to change my judgement? " 78

Throughout the play, the king's protestations are received by the audience in two ways. While lauding his tenacity in the face of such odds, one wonders if perhaps his actions are those of a rational man or those of a madman. Isolated, his voice rings on the air like the prophet crying in the wilderness. Because the burden of his message rings out in such stringent tones, those of a madman driven to extremity, is he to be read as a crank ? Does the fact that the majority act otherwise make the lone king's message any the less right or true ? Thus the audience listens to its own conscience with great unease, the gap between what is honest and what is practical resounding with many and constant, disquietening echoes.

Accompanying the treatment of the main theme is the insistence on the underlying axiom that without freedom to form and express an individual opinion, spiritual growth and maturity are impossibilities. Such freedom is necessary in the search for self-definition, for the ultimate recognition of one's own faults and virtues

78. "Midas'ın Kulakları" , Scene 6, p.46. "bu yargımı ... nice olur ?"

and one's acceptance of the same. From Recognition of what one is, one advances through correction to an improved condition. Only then do doubts and fears give way to inner peace; only then can the individual's fullest potential be tapped. Without achieving this, society can never be a decent, worthy concept. While people smother, or are forced to smother, what in their hearts they feel to be right, society is doomed to meanness and stunted ugly spread rather than healthy growth.

Throughout the play, the voice of Midas, isolated and distant, echoes more and more hollowly. Those of his courtiers and attendants murmur more and more soothingly and familiarly. Yet at the end of the play, it is Midas who stands forth as the individual, the complete human being, for good or bad, while his companions have merged into one faceless face, one meaningless voice with nothing to say ; trite, cliché-ridden, empty. When Midas finally makes up his mind to reveal his ears, he says :

"I derive the happiness from them that one derives from all new things. My ugliness - nonsense ! My beauty rather... !" 79

Güngör Dilmen bends the myth to his purpose with few changes. The main adaptation is in the ending he chooses. The Midas of mythology dies for grief when his people find out his secret and the barber digs a hole in the ground in which to put out his mind. Out of

79. "Midas'in Kulakları" , Scene 16, p.70. "Heey çirkinliğim... hooy güzelliğim."

this, only one read springs to perpetuate the story. Dilmen's main adaptation of the original idea lies in the way he develops his characters so that they best project his line of thought. Action in his play is of two kinds. Pantomime is used to carry forward the physical story from scene to scene, but the main action is on a mental plane. Constantly, Midas demands to be looked at and listened to from different, often contradictory angles. It is too easy to see him always from the standpoint of the barber, which one is encouraged to do, since, dramatically speaking, both characters are linked by their sympathy with telling the truth. In this way, the barber and Midas mirror each other's development in the story. Midas makes the barber suffer with his secret and in turn the king suffers because the barber might reveal the royal secret. It is through the barber that Midas comes to a realisation of what he is and almost defeats Apollo. In character, the king and the barber are alike, though often the barber is the better man of the two. Whereas Midas is proud, the barber is humble. In the contest scene, where everyone is pretending to hear Apollo's music, it is only the barber who speaks the truth :

"Lies, lies lies ! Nobody hears Apollo; not one. God is playing to deaf ears. It is all lies. They do not hear. Stand forward those who hear the instrument of apollo. Neither this one nor that one, nor this one, nor I ! " 80

The barber, like Midas, suffers under the burden of the secret. His

80. "Midas'in Kulakları", Scene 2.p.17. "Yalan.... ne bu,ne ben!"

master's threats are useless. He feels he must speak out or burst.

"Ah, has anyone heard ? If only I might tell it to one person !
And if that person should only promise not to carry the tale
further thus no one should tell no one and no one would know."81

The relationship of the barber to Midas is reminiscent of Tom's to Lear. The barber might be read as a foolish facet of the king's character ; that part of Midas which is laughed at for its clown-like quality, the king with his ass's ears. However, the barber only knows Midas on the surface - that the king has ass's ears. He has no idea as to how far-reaching the change is to prove. Afflicted as he is by the ears, is Midas still a king or has he been reduced to the role of a commoner thereby, or is he, indeed, an 'esek' ? Isolated as he is by this mark of god-given distinction, a great deal of attention must be given to how Midas sees Midas.

" Do we turn into 'him' by our resemblance ? Even more like him than he is ? It is the merging of two apprehensions. The result is neither he nor Midas. It is a creature somewhere between the two - Midas at the bottom in the disguise of a donkey and at the top a half-caste." 82

Midas, looking for himself, lends an extra dimension to the fable. His conflict in seeking to assimilate his secret with his new-found sense of truth is a great source of action on a mental plane.

"This is a slippery thing that does not stick in the mind. I am my own gaoler watching myself be tortured. I should try to get to know - whatever knowing is - this...." 83

In his mind, Midas, looking for the ultimate solution to his problem, eventually hopes to provide an apology for

81. "Midas'ın Kulakları", Scene 8,p.51. "Ah, kimse işitti mi?.. kimse bilme."

82. ibid , Scene 15,p.72."Benzemekle 'o& mu... bir melez görüntü."

83. ibid , Scene 15.p.72." Kaypak bir giz.... bu gizi."

his answer. He seeks to justify his position and, at length, anger and revolt give way to a kind of serenity.

" What is this feeling of secret happiness that springs from my anger and lingers like a warm sweet song ? It's the sadness of being a victim of debasement driving me to nostalgia. I must rid myself of it, for the happy sadness of the oppressed is not for me." 84

Midas has passed through mental chaos to a rebirth of the spirit. He accepts his ugliness. He admits he has been deflated by Apollo and this acceptance is his real triumph. His shame is his pride which at all costs he refuses to give up. It is in this element of pride that his tenacity takes on the colour of obstinacy. When he is to lose his ears, he suddenly experiences a deep sense of deprivation and seeks to use them as a weapon to belittle the authority of Apollo. It dawns on him that his ears have won for him universal attention as a wronged man, a victim of misfortune. There is a certain comfort in this cheap kind of recognition and when he is threatened with a cure for his affliction, he panics. What can he put in its place ? What will serve him as well ? The ears have become a badge of his fortitude, a thing of which he has become so proud that he will not ride in his chariot lest those of his horse compete with his own for attention. In his acceptance of his affliction in the first instance, Midas was great, but his pride in the scar is unworthy. It is this foolish pride which prompts the second

84. "Midas'ın Kulakları", Scene 15, p.73. "Ofkemin derinliğinde
... benim için değil."

visitation of Apollo. Midas is to be laid low. The king's greatest fear is always being laughed at. Apollo decided to subject him to this as a punishment. It is noticeable that people mock Midas, not when he is seen to be the victim of a god's sport, but when he is restored and his pride is laid low.

Other characters in the story apart from the king and the barber are three figures who represent the 'crowd' in their various guises - as Wise Men of Gordium, as attorneys and as commoners. They chatter nonsense, and the more they say, the more they stray both from the point and the truth. They discuss all points of the action but cannot determine causes or reasons for what they see. For example, when they seek to discover why the king wears a funny cap, they are unable to go beyond mere musing as to the colour of the garment. The first bearded elder says :

"Look ! The skull cap ! The red skull cap ! Now why not a yellow or a purple or hyacinth one ? If you ask me, this should be thought upon !" 85

The very fact that these men have beards brands them as reactionaries, yet here they are pointing out the cap of Midas, his 'takke', under which he hides the truth, as a sign of reaction. While they seek to dissociate themselves from the foolish king, the audience sees both the king and the bearded men as one. The wise men of Gordium satirise leaders of nations and governments. Like the bearded characters,

85. "Midas'in Kulakları", Scene 4, p.36. "Takke düşünmelidir!"

these too see themselves as elder statesmen, yet are always seen to be preoccupied with petty problems. They approach every problem in a tortuous manner, never really defining it past its surface appearance and never coming up with a solution to it. They are also struck by the cap's design.

"This is a thought now ! Why does he put on a skull cap ? Skull cap on skull cap on skull.... " 86

The wise men's nonsense rattles on the air like children playing with words or Karagöz yattering on to Hacevat.

Speculation as to the meaning of the 'field of reeds' is interesting. When the king finds they are whispering in secret, he orders them to be cut down. Are they representative of the millions who have been persecuted by kings and leaders for perpetuating the beliefs of false prophets ? This scene is usually played in red light. Is the colour here significant ? Humble plants of the country side, especially weeds, are often taken by leftist groups as their symbol. One thinks of the importance of the thistle as a symbol to Fikret Otyam and Yaşar Kemal, for instance.

"Upon the order of Midas, there starts a massacre of reeds in the blood red air." 87

In form, the play adheres to the demands of the Greek classical theatre. Unities are observed. The play is in one act which is

86. "Midas'in Kulakları", Scene 4, p.39. "Takke düşünmelidir."

87. ibid. , Scene 11,p.61. "Midas'in emriyle... hava içinde."

divided into seventeen scenes. The multi-roled chorus of three adopts different masks to speak as goats, wise men and lawyers, piecing out the action which takes place off stage by describing what happens ; to describe a change of scene and to deliver satirical comment on what is happening. Themes are treated in broad outline, by suggestion rather than in detail. Perhaps this is also a way of avoiding the censor's too keen attention ? Rather than adhere to a realistic development of action, pantomime has been resorted to to carry the play forward, leading one set dialogue into another.

Certain features of the language and form remind one of the traditional 'orta oyunu'. The commentary of the wise men with its repetition and sound play is reminiscent of Karagöz-Hacevat dialogue, as mentioned above. The rhythms are those beaten out on a drum as accompaniment for folk-lore dances. Other passages are reminiscent of the folk poems of Karacaoğlan and Emrah :

"The thin empty passage inside the reed, the life water going up and down in small tides, could not hold the secret inside it.... and as the wind blew... as the wind blew...." 88

During the last pantomime, on the walls of Gordium is written the slogan : "For asses only." This is the sign to be found on the walls of many Turkish public conveniences where the

88. "Midas'ın Kulakları", Scene 11, p.61. "Sazın ince boşluğu.... yel estikce."

behaviour of the clientele does not always restrict itself to expression where china fittings have been provided. It is hoped that the insult contained in the slogan might exercise a certain restraint on users.

Restraint is the quality the play is seeking to promote in its audience; restraint in reproducing traditional responses to current situations because it is comfortable and easy to do so. It seeks to present no finished or didactic answer but makes a plea for re-thinking and revaluation of the place of individual responsibility within the smothering confines of a society drifting from day to day, as if under anaesthetic, accepting the practical and ignoring what it is not convenient to look in the face.

"Kurban"⁸⁹ is a tragedy. It is a simpler play than "Midas'in Kulaklari", mainly because its material was well-known by the time it came before the public. There was no need for its author to cloak reference to current happening behind a mask of antiquity. Here, the use of classical form has been employed to ennoble a familiar, yet desperately tragic personal problem. Given an informal treatment, Zehra's tragedy might have sounded commonplace. Dilmen's utter sympathy with her suffering causes him to seek out the uniqueness of her experience, as on a personal level it is unique, heightening it and ennobling it by bestowing upon it a classical treatment.

89. KALYONCU, Güngör Dilmen. "Kurban", Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara, May 1967.

"Kurban" unfolds with severe economy. There is no waste of effort, no diversion into sub-plot. If anything, there is introversion. Being bare of physical action apart from entrances and exits and Zehra's final killing of herself and her children, one relies on the mental struggles and internal dialogues between Zehra and her faithless husband to provide interest and arouse response. With Aristotelian precision and economy, the theme, plot and characters are introduced, driven to a climax and, further on, to a conclusion, completely unrelieved by extraneous matter.

The theme is universal, though more the subject of tragedy in an eastern society than in a western one. It states simply that a woman, no matter what the context into which she is born, has certain rights which are sacred and ought to be treated as such. These are her rights as a wife and a mother. These rights are not debated in the play. They may be talked about, challenged and denied but they exist above and out of reach of all attackers, absolute and unassailable, Zehra's increasing strength in her insistence on them in the face of opposition, project this fact. Her passionate, possessive, intelligent, positive, active pursuit of her career underscore again and again this right of hers and of all women to a home, the loyalty of a husband and the love of her children.

Zehra lives with her husband, Mahmut, and their children in a village. She has been sick and Mahmut, physically a very active man, casts about for a substitute. His eye falls on young G^uls^um. At first, Zehra attempts to fight this by blowing on the ashes of their old love, hoping thereby to lure Mahmut away from the girl. She makes all the traditional pleas for him to consider what and who he is throwing away. Having at first announced his intention to marry G^uls^um, Mahmut reverses his decision. Zehra's efforts to win him back are thus rewarded - temporarily.

Then, just as spontaneously and irrationally as he turned from the girl back to his hearth, he about-faces once more, marries G^uls^um and arrives in Zehra's home with the new bride. Refusing to accept the situation, Zehra brings the only force she understands to bear. She kills her children and then herself.

An analysis of this play as a classical tragedy will reveal how close it is in conception to the "Medea" of Euripides. The text of "Kurban" shows it to have been divided into three acts. This, however, is merely a convenient division of the theatre evening into three parts. It obviously was conceived as a continuous action. It is a particular talent of G^ung^or Dilmen's that while preserving the unity of action, he managed to build each act to a climax in accordance with the demands of the Ibsonian tradition. His first act ends with Mahmut ordering Zehra to have the house ready for G^uls^um's arrival. The second act ends with Zehra, pinned against the wall by a hostile family welcoming the new bride, blaming her husband and children for the wrong they are doing her. Both these acts have strong curtains. The third act ends calmly and, by

contrast with the other two, is the more powerful. The conclusion is arrived at in the middle of this act where Zehra takes the law concerning her rights into her own hands and the play finished with the lamentation of the villagers. At the end, there is a great sense of waste. Zehra has made her point but her triumph is in another world. This fate, of course, is in line with the tradition of classical tragedy; yet at the same time, the position of Turkish village women being what it is, Dilmen underscores the harsh social message, that this in fact is the only possibility of triumph for women such as Zehra. While before the law, women all over Turkey are equal to men, their domestic situation restricts their putting the law into operation. This play reminds the audience that legal statutes do not necessarily mean personal freedom. The play, then, succeeds on two levels : as an artistic entity and as a realistic social document.

In the prologue, Mahmut is introduced to the audience as a man who greatly loves his children and his home, yet whose passions are so strong that, during the extended sickness of his wife, Zehra, they threaten the stability of that home, driving the father lusting after Gulsum, a girl of fifteen. At first, Zehra suffers silently when she learns of Mahmut's desire, but gradually her pain becomes articulate :

"A stepmother will behave like a stepmother... I will not let anyone touch my children." 90

90. "Kurban" , Act I, p.24. "Üvey ana..... el süremez çocuklarıma."

It is noticeable that both parents seem to think of home in terms of the children rather than of each other. At this stage, they seem simply to accept unquestioned the sickness of the one and the roving eye of the other. In short, their grief is not for themselves or each other. They do not show any personal regret for the weakness of the other. The action has now reached its first 'peripetie', that crucial point in the tragedy where fortune of the main character changes as a result of some important decision having been made. In this case, it occurs when Mahmut decides he will marry Gulsum. Mahmut is no beast. A conflict in his mind rages between his love for his children and his lust for Gulsum. Mahmut the lover gets the better of Mahmut the father except in one respect. He now vows not to let his lust trespass on the material rights of his wife and children. There is no mention of moral rights or ethics. In this scene, Mirza, Gulsum's greedy brother, has his eye on Mahmut's property and wants to know who owns the field with the mill.

MIRZA : One could still count Gulsum a child, but all of a sudden she's blossomed out.

MAHMUT : So it would appear.

MIRZA : She's become so shy as if what God has given her were a shameful thing.

MAHMUT : (pensive) Gulsum.....

MIRZA : How many acres is that field of yours with the mill ?

MAHMUT : I cannot eat into Zehra's possessions.

MIRZA : The field with the mill..... ?

MAHMUT : I cannot appropriate what belongs to the children. 91

Zehra's inner conflict begins from this point. She wrestles with her illness knowing that as a sick woman she will never win back her husband. She goes to the elder women of the village asking their advice, having first made up her mind to submit to what looks like being her fate. At first, they insist that this is what is written for every woman everywhere and the only weapon a woman has is to try to outdo the new attraction on her own ground. Zehra confronts her husband. Behind the patient struggle between husband and wife arguing the matter out is the inner struggle of each character with his or her own self. Zehra is convulsed between her intense desire to win back her man and a will to give into the sickness which is devouring her. Mahmut is torn between his lust and his common sense.

- MAHMUT : Am I the first man in the village to have brought a new woman into the house ?
- ZEHRA : I won't let her in
- MAHMUT : (decisively) Gulsüm will come tomorrow
- ZEHRA : (pointing to the two rooms) You two in there and me out here ? Like that, eh ? I'm to listen to your murmurs and sensual moanings each night ? I suppose you intend to put my pillows under her buttocks, do you ?
- MAHMUT : (with finality) She's coming tomorrow. It's said when a man gets rabies, he looks for his loved ones to bite first. If you have the strength which you urge me with your heart to find, then control yourself. I cannot do without her. I cannot rid myself of this fire anymore. 92

At her first attempt, Zehra is successful in winning back her husband. Mahmut announces that he will not, after all, marry the

fifteen year old girl. Zehra has won first the villagers, then her children to her cause but she does not rest easy in her triumph. In fact, she has a dream in which she sees Gulsum dead, then risen again. It becomes clear to her that once she lets this young girl into her home, events will take the course of those in her dream.

The second 'peripetie' arrives when, as quickly as he reverted to his wife, Mahmut once more reverts to the girl. From this point, Zehra takes on a much more active role in defense of her rights. From having at first tried to woo him away from his attraction to Gulsum, she now declares herself in open opposition to his designs.

- ZEHRA : I wish I had been able to keep myself away from it all.
 MAHMUT : Let's have those deeds out for awhile.
 ZEHRA : Which deeds are those ?
 MAHMUT : The deeds of the fields. I'll have another talk with Mirza.
 ZEHRA : Just what do you see as being my role in this house ?
 MAHMUT : I cannot do without her. Gulsüm runs in my blood. 93

Through all her suffering and all the stages of her fight, Zehra never loses the concern of her audience. Sympathy grows with her struggle because this woman is suffering not through her own fault but because of something she cannot control. Her failing health cannot be held to her charge, and it is when she tries to ignore its effect on her in her attempt to win back Mahmut's love that the tragedy reaches out to the audience. There is complete identification between the women in the

audience and the heroine on the stage. Compared with this, the audience's reaction to Mahmut. There is absolutely no sympathy with him and a great deal of antipathy is heaped on his head when he pleads he cannot help his lust. The result of Zehra's plea is complete identification by the audience with her in her plight. The result of Mahmut's explanation is total alienation.

The third act differs in two ways from the previous ones. In the third act, there is more physical action and less surprise. In the previous acts, Mahmut's spur of the moment changes of mind shocked the audience into the realisation of just how insecure Zehra is. In the last act, even before she has made up her mind, Zehra's fate becomes clear. The village women hint at previous cases of this nature, while Zehra's behaviour is seen to be driving her to a point from which there is either complete victory or no return. The meaning of the word 'kurban' is taking on a more literal meaning for her as her situation worsens.

ZEHRA : In the place of the ram you've let go, I sacrifice two (her children). And such beautiful sacrifices they make. Nowhere can the like be found. 94

Compared with the above, the following has a much more positive ring, almost as if she were beginning to see herself as God's appointed agent on earth :

ZEHRA : Manhood has sunk so low in Karacaören. It has been let down so badly. Oh, that my little Zeynep should never be a woman ! Oh, that my little Murat, who has mercy on the sacrificial ram, should never grow into a man. It is more fitting that they should remain as two half-grown stars in the blue bosom of God. 95.

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94. "Kurban" , Act III, -.100. "Saliverdigimiz ... benzeri."

95. ibid , Act III, p.116. "Erkeklik öyle.... mavi bağrında."

Once the climax is reached and Zehra has dispatched her children and herself, the audience is left with a sense of deep deprivation, put into words by the chorus of village women. Their lament articulates the desperate loss and restores calm.

- MUHTAR : Go and tell the village that the wedding procession has turned into stone with the curse that flows out of their door. The bride and the villagers about her have been frozen into paralysis.
- VILLAGERS : We are turned into stone.....
- WOMEN : With the red curse that flows out of this room, in the heart of Mahmut.
- ALL : Happiness has been turned into stone. 96

The chorus of villagers and women reflect two conflicting opinions of the situation and its possible outcome. The first is the widely held fatalist attitude, "Allah'in dediği olur" meaning "What God says, will be." Zehra's fate has been the fate of many women in the past and undoubtedly she will not be the last to suffer in such a predicament.

- 2nd WOMAN : In thousands of Karacaörens, thousands of women have this written on their foreheads. Are you going to change it ? 97

The second is each member of the chorus of women speaking personally, reacting according to the emotions in the breast of every women, mirroring the way that Zehra felt.

- ZEHRA : There is another wound in my heart which I must pursue. To share him with Gulsum is worse than to lose him for good.98

96. "Kurban" , Act III, p.122. "Ulak iletin kasabaya..... sevinç."

97. *ibid* , ACT III, p.80. " Binlerce değiştireceksin? "

98. *ibid* , Act III, p.80-1. "başka bir yara beter."

The chorus also predicts what is going to happen today as if pushing Zehra's thoughts further along the line they have begun to take.

HALİME : So something is going to happen today. The scream which has for thousands of years choked up the heart of the Anatolian woman might ring forth out of your heart. 99

By referring to the famous rock at Manisa shaped like a suffering woman, Niobe, the chorus underlines the timeless agony of Woman at the hands of Man. Thus the village women continue, speaking at one time with Zehra in her determination, and at another reiterating the fatalistic view; sometime talking about the future and sometime the past, generalising on events past and predicting things to come.

Aristotle emphasises that in tragedy, the language should be 'artificially heightened', that is, it should be expressed in verse, complete, compact and intensely emotional. A stage direction at the beginning of the play says no regional dialect will be employed by the actors. Obviously this is intended to avoid any attempt by the audience to identify what they are seeing with any particular locale. Like the language, the setting contains nothing to indicate that the action belongs to any definite region. The only properties are those which are necessary to denote the scene as a living space. There is a door, a window, a hearth, a divan and a roof. The bareness of the scene and the studied careful simplicity of the language, in their modest place as second to

99. "Kurban" , Act III, p.81. "Bugün bir seyler fişkirir."

the main issue, seem even more beautiful because of this. The text is not in verse but in a very delicate, meaningful, rhythmic prose. While bare of image, the language of "Kurban" is rich in emotional depth. It has the warmth of everyday utterance : it can reach excitement through stychomythia :

MIRZA : God will show us those days.
 MURAT : The ram, father
 MAHMUT : What ?
 MURAT : You were telling us about the ram ?
 MAHMUT : It seems there's no getting away from it..... 100

Perhaps an even better example of this excitement comes in Act III, p.121.

It can also assume the mystery of omen and predestination :

ZEHRA : I am filled with God; I am filled with the damnation of God; I am filled with God like a purple light within me..101

As with the language, so with all other aspects of this play. Nothing is there by chance.

In "Kurban" , Gungör Dilmen Kalyoncu has written a village play devoid of sentimentality, patronage and situation exploited for its humorous possibilities, at a time when village plays were exceptionally popular for those very reasons. Zehra is a village woman with stature and dignity, who can define and articulate her suffering. She is a deep profound woman who is intelligent enough to be able to tap every source of emotion. Perhaps most remarkable of all, she has a problem which is universal and a strength in the handling of it which puts her ahead of many of her sisters to East and West from the point of view of conviction about and commitment to what she believes in - her rights.

100. "Kurban" , Act I, p.13. "Tanrı o günleriKurtuluş yok."

101. ibid , Act III, p.118. "Tanrı doluyor içime... bir ışık gibi."

" Kızım, sana söyleyorum; gelin, sen anla! "

a study of two published historical plays :

"Hürrem Sultan" by Orhan ASENA and "Deli İbrahim" by A.T. OFLAZOĞLU.

The title of this chapter derives from the Turkish proverb which translated and filled out means : " I am having a sharp word with you, daughter, not that you have in any way transgressed the rules of this household but because your sister-in-law, our new bride, has. Now, for all of us to live in harmony in this house, she has to learn and, to make this easier for her, this must be accomplished without her pride being hurt. For this reason, I chide you knowing that she will overhear, note the lesson and mend her ways without my having to be more direct. Thus strain, tension and the loss of face may be avoided."

The main feature of this chapter, then, will be to examine the reasons for the writing, production and success of two very entertaining but extremely complicated history plays. These are "Hürrem Sultan" produced by the State Theatre in their 1959-60 programme, and "Deli İbrahim" produced by the Kent Oyuncuları in February 1967 and later taken up by the State Theatre in the season 1967-8 and carried over into the following one. Are they simply 'violent holidays' offering Lucretian pleasures, 102 or are they in fact 'tactful words to the

daughter' carrying a meaning that might not be otherwise acceptable in an actual contemporary context ?

There is a great deal in print by Turan Oflazoğlu and Kemal Karpat to suggest that Turkish historical plays may only be intended as pure escapism. On the other hand a close examination of both works betrays a deliberate moulding of history to some purpose other than that which is the usual province of the historian. It might be argued that this is valid, since the drama is necessarily the dramatist's first concern. Yet it seems in reading Turan Oflazoğlu's explanation as to why he wrote "Deli İbrahim", "because the conflicting moods in Sultan Ibrahim's heart have always hypnotised me,"¹⁰³ is not entirely satisfactory. This cannot be the whole story. In the following examination, then, by setting the plays against the current social and political background, the true meaning of these works to the Turkish audience will be sought after and explored.

The plot of "Hürrem Sultan"¹⁰⁴ is mainly the story of the career of Hürrem, Suleyman the Magnificent's second wife, and her attempts to gain precedence for her sons over Mustafa, the sultan's son by Gülbahar, the first wife, now dead. Mustafa and his dead mother ride high in popularity with the sultan and his subjects, having reputations for honesty and incorruptibility. Hürrem has to go to great lengths to blacken their characters and involves her eldest son Selim, and her daughter's husband, Rüstem Pasha, to effect Prince

103. See State Theatre programme, 1967-8.

104. ASENA, Orhan. "Hürrem Sultan", Milli Eğitim Basımevi, Ankara 1960.

Mustafa's downfall. Her main motive is fear of the Ottoman way of life. She explains :

"This is the law of the Ottomans, my daughter. What can be done about it ? It is necessary to kill not to be killed... listen to my story."¹⁰⁵

As a foreigner by birth, it is not for her to change the rules but to use them to the advantage of herself and her offspring. In her schemes, her main ally is Suleyman's old age, growing weariness and openness to suggestion :

- HÜRREM : We hear most enthusiastic and reassuring talk about our Prince Mustafa, my lord. (She looks sweetly and innocently at the sultan.)
- KANUNÎ : (without a flicker in his countenance) That is true.
- HÜRREM : It is said that heaven-abiding Selim Khan has risen from the grave and buckled on his swords again.
- KANUNÎ : That is true.
- HÜRREM : (more endearing) They say that your son's strength and countenance is so like Selim's
- KANUNÎ : That is also true.
- HÜRREM : God preserve us, let's hope the similarity stops there.
- KANUNÎ : What do you mean ?
- HÜRREM : Oh, nothing, my lord. We women are simple creatures. Our minds do not grasp things so quickly. That is why we have these groundless worries about the life of our sultan Otherwise, as Allah is our witness, we have neither seen nor heard anything ill-intended by our prince (Mustafa) against his sultan *106

Another great aid to her plans is Prince Mustafa's arrogant detachment from the political scene. This is brought out by his good friend, the poet, Yahya, who advises the Prince to fight his step-mother, saying his pride is folly and a weapon in the hands of his enemies. The Prince, however, persists in his ways.

- YAHYA : Why not go to your father and rid yourselves of this misunderstanding ?
- MUSTAFA : I cannot.... He finds it necessary to question us. He puts people like Rostam between us. 107.

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105. "Hürrem Sultan" , Act I, Tablo 1, Scene 1. "Osmanlı kanunu....
..... Dinleyin."
106. ibid. , Act I, Tablo 1, Scene 5. "Şehzademiz.....
..işitmiş değiliz."
107. ibid. , Act II, Tablo 3, Scene 3. "Niçin babanızla
.... gibileri koyar."

Once the sultan's doubt about his son's loyalty is aroused by the conspirators, he is the plaything of Hürrem and her gang. He has to decide whether to show the softness of a father towards the haughty prince or the harshness of a ruler. When Mustafa refuses to prove his loyalty, the choice is made. The sultan considers the threat to his happiness to be less important than the possible threat to peace within the state, and Mustafa, when lured to the palace from Amasya province, is put to death.

This is not a matter for rejoicing among Hürrem's faction though. Süleyman, now retreated into himself, seems even more of a threat to her schemes since he recognises in her the source of his bereavment. The poet Yahya sees to this by losing no opportunity of speaking out on the subject from Mustafa's point of view.

Prince Beyazit, who has remained aloof from his mother's designs, chides her for her treachery and interprets to her in exact terms the implications of Mustafa's death.

"Do you know what will happen now? Do you ? Your very own children will fall out with each other. We will be at each other's throats. Till yesterday, I felt safe and secure. The name of Mustafa was a guarantee of our lives. Who are we to trust now ? Tell us that? To whom can we turn ? Our father ? Perhaps you suggest I trust to Selim's good nature, that yellow snake Now

....., it will be Selim who kills me or I who shall kill him at the very first opportunity. What have you done, woman; what have you done ?" 108

He simply refuses to believe that she did it all, as she asserts, for her children's sake. In the end, the poet, unable to contain himself any longer, gets himself arrested by Rüstem's men and is hauled before Süleyman. Even his august presence has no silencing effect upon this righteous man. He blurts forth all he knows about the truth of the matter and insists upon Mustafa's innocence. To Hürrem's utter dismay, the result is that the sultan pardons him. The biggest shock, however, lies not in his pardon but in the desperate admission made by the sultan concerning the need for spies such as Hürrem and Rüstem pasha. He says :

"We need frank, alert people like the poet among us as much as we need watchful vizirs round the throne. They must be allowed to write. Let them write so that we may read what they've written. Let us see how our deeds are viewed from the other side - for good or bad. Let the poet free - both him and his friends. They hold up mirrors to us, Rüstem. If your face is clean, take a look at your reflection; if not, run from it. I have held up a mirror to my face several times, Rüstem. I know what it says. Fetch me some light - quickly." 109.

108. "Hürrem Sultan" , Act III, Tablo 5, Scene 5. "Şimdi ne olacak.....
... ne yaptın ?"

109. ibid. , Act III, Tablo 5, Scene 8. "Tahtımın etrafında....
... bana getirin."

At the close of the play, Hürrem confesses to Rüstem that the situation is even more frightening than before. Such people as they, feel safe only in a world of schemers and intriguers playing a game similar to their own. But when freedom of speech and public opinion is allowed, they have to take care.

To those believing implicitly in the patriarchal nature of the Ottoman State, "Hürrem Sultan" is a revelation, in that the main agent in the play is a woman. Her ambitions, fears and follies are the elements which bring to near destruction men whose reputations as warriors, statesmen and politicians had spread far beyond the confines of the Ottoman world. It is more remarkable still that in such times when ruthlessness and ferocity in the treatment of one's foes was taken for granted, despite her scheming and downright ill-will to so many of Kanunî Sultan Süleyman's dearest relatives like Beyazıt and Mustafa, Hürrem Sultan lived to strike again, perhaps a more fearful yet undaunted spirit.¹¹⁰ This is a feature shared by the play, "Deli İbrahim",¹¹¹ which might easily have been called Kösem Sultan. In this play, in spite of her undoubted implication in the vilest intrigue and her guilt concerning the removal of the state's ablest and most incorruptible officers, Kösem Sultan is left at the end of the action successful and in the ascendant. History tells us that the span separating the end of the play from this lady's death was some fifty years during which she enjoyed unchallenged control of the fortunes of the empire. In both pieces, these women represent a government unchosen and unloved by these people whose rule is based on fear.

110. Historical background to this chapter was obtained from CREASY, Sir Edward S. "History of the Ottoman Turks," Athena, London (1951?)

111. OFLAZOĞLU, A. Turan. "Deli İbrahim" , Kent Yayınları, İstanbul, 1967.

Another feature which both plays share is the theme of ineffective goodness as already mentioned in Chapter II. Both Prince Mustafa in the first play and Kara Mustafa Paşa and Silahtar Yussuf in the second are men of undoubted good character, desperate in their goodwill towards the state and insistent - at least in word and theory - about their concern for the commonweal. Yet one's reaction towards them is strangely inverse to what one would appear was the author's intention. Established as the pillars of the Ottoman State and society by their creators, who ensure for them maximum respect and sympathy on first acquaintance where they are introduced coping with great efficiency in the most taxing court posts, one feels that sympathy and respect gradually slipping away as one gets to know them better. As the play proceeds, these men persist in refusing to protect themselves against powerful threats to their safety from potent forces of evil, intent upon the destruction of such integrity. Strutting like peacocks, they flaunt their moral superiority, vainly proclaiming the inherent worth of their beliefs, ambitions for the common good, and values ; till at length, one comes to condemn them for their pride. It is difficult, by the time Prince Mustafa delivers himself up to his father's wrath for execution, not to blame him as a man whose first concern in life is the public parading of his undoubted virtues, and whose hitherto unblemished character has

developed the indelible stain of one who jealously guards his image of himself in his own, as well as in the eyes of his people, not so much for their good as for his own satisfaction. It is hard not to blame him for not mustering a little guile and cunning in the treatment of his enemies in the attempt to protect a life which undoubtedly would have benefitted the empire had it been prolonged till the opportunity to serve had presented itself. In following the prince through the play, especially in comparing him to his friend, the mad poet, Yahya, one becomes aware that in the eyes of the Turk, to live for one's country is eminently more difficult than to die for it. This too would appear to be the case with Kara Mustafa Pasha in "Deli Ibrahim".

"Hürrem Sultan" was written about the same time as Robert Bolt's "A Man For All Seasons"¹¹² and is set in a comparable milieu. By contrast with the English play where issues arising at court between individuals fan out till they assume national importance, the Turkish play shows what an exclusive, in-facing group the ruling society in Ottoman, as well as in modern, Turkish times, is. There is no conception, whether in Empire or republican times, of the nation as an entity. The position of Sir Thomas More is not unlike that of Prince Mustafa under pressure from the sultan. Both have the attention of the state thrust upon them ;

112. BOLT, Robert. "A Man For All Seasons". Heinemann, London, 1960.

both are men of great principle who are famed for that principle throughout the land and believe fondly that having done nothing illegal their innocence will protect them; both are confronted by a state not in the least interested in innocence, merely in the ostentatious parade of loyal obedience. However, these two men differ in their handling of, and reactions to, such a challenge. Sir Thomas More, accused of arrogance in the defense of his principles at the expense of all else, acquits himself by persuading us that, in his estimation, nothing else matters so long as the faith of a nation is not destroyed by one man's cowardice; that the damage to his body is of little import if the damage to his soul and the souls of all English Roman Catholics can be evaded. What the state accuses Sir Thomas of —disobedience to the king— he is guilty of; what Suleyman accuses Prince Mustafa of —disloyalty to the sovereign's person— he is innocent of. And it is sheer unbending arrogance which propels him, through disobedience, which his enemies invest with all the trappings of disloyalty, almost singing towards his doom. Fortunately, his trial is swift and his death precipitate, so that he is gone before it is decided whether his motive was indeed integrity in the upholding of his principles, or merely some less admirable sort of death-wish. It is clear from the reception the audience awarded to such conduct that

the majority saw the prince in martyr's robes; yet the doubt remains, especially in the philosophy of the poet Yahya, if, perhaps, in his creation of Mustafa, Orhan Asena did not intend some criticism of such passive goodness. The loss of Mustafa was undoubtedly a waste which could have been avoided.

Sir Thomas' stands were made in the knowledge that his integrity was a beacon to the nation, a guiding light. In this, his sacrifice of self can be viewed as a selfless act. Mustafa never once mentions any connection with the popular cause in this respect. It is his worth in his own eyes and his reputation as a man above meanness which is the deciding factor. His, therefore, must be read as a very introvert, selfish sacrifice.

The reign of Ibrahim was fraught with the same domestic intrigue and corruption as the latter part of Süleyman the Magnificent's rule. The previous monarch to Ibrahim, Murad IV, had been a wise and capable ruler. The plot of "Deli Ibrahim" proceeds as follows :

The death of Murad IV, a wise, wary, severe but just sultan, is the signal for Kösem Sultan to bring forth her deranged son, Ibrahim, to rule a a figurehead behind which she may control the destiny of the empire. To achieve this, she employs Cinci Hoca, by whose magical powers she seeks to enslave her son. Ibrahim has emerged from his prison, to which Murad had confined him, impotent. However, by the agency of the Hoca's potions, he discovers new physical power and pleasure. Thus enslaved to the Hoca's ministrations, he is more than glad to leave the manipulation of the empire to his mother.

One by one, Kösem Sultan isolates the pillars of Murad's reign and marks them down for destruction. Honest men like Sadrazam Kara Mustafa Pasha and Silahtar Yussuf, well able to see what is happening about them, but prevented by their aloofness and pride from stooping to deal with this woman on her own level and with her own weapons, are hastily forced into a position where they have to openly defy the sultan to save their honour in their own eyes and rapidly dispatched to the headsman.

Kösem reigns supreme while İbrahim is under the influence of Turhan Sultan, the wife his mother has selected for him, but it is not long before his lust leads him to the new pleasures offered by Hümaşah, an ambitious young girl with schemes of her own. Kösem's wrath is soon drawn and she knows of no other way of dealing with the situation than by harnessing the ever-jealous Janissaries to a campaign to depose İbrahim. The sultan and Hümaşah are imprisoned and strangled, and the play ends with the court on its knees before Kösem Sultan.

Both plays, then, intelligently researched, the most having been made of the drama inherent in the situation, leave open the question as to why they were conceived in the first place. Are they mere historical exercises? If so, they are bad history. Are they excursions into escapism, peepshows where the senses are titivated by Lucretian pleasures? Or are they politico-historical moralities? Modern plays, in fact, where the history is purely incidental, the setting having been adopted simply because production was sought in the State Theatre where political subjects are taboo?

Pronouncing judgement on Turkish literature dealing with historical subjects, Kemal Karpat writes :

" 'I' is branded onto every page : an 'I' which is rebellious, that is feudal in spirit, rejecting any discipline (from without and within): an 'I' who purpuses the path to its own happiness through conscious superiority and the inflicting of the same on the lives of more inferior beings." 113

In short, it is this 'I' that provides us with out 'violent holiday.'

The questions raised about these historical plays have not been original ones. Generations of writers, who have turned to historical themes, have been faced with similar criticism. The fate of "Deli İbrahim" at the hands of some Turkish critics can be compared to the way Ibsen suffered at the hands of William Archer reviewing "The Pretenders". This play is based on a passage of Norwegian history, and its action is the rivallry between certain pretenders to the crown. There are obvious elements of contemporary Norwegian nationalistic politics in it, but it cannot be read as a mere politico-historical play. Archer wrote about it as if he were reviewing a history book. He said :

" I cannot find that the bishop played any such prominent part in the struggle between the king and the earl as Ibsen assigned to him. " 114

Perhaps the best comment on such criticism is Raymond William's' adaptation of J. Middleton Murry's well-known remark :

"Poets are not tragic philosophers; if they were, they would have written tragic philosophies." 115

Mr. Williams has rendered this passage from "The Problem of Style" as :

"Poets are not Norwegian historians; if they were, they would have written Norwegian history books." 116

Turan Oflazoğlu has employed the same defense in the face of his own critics

113. KARPAT, Kemal. op.cit. p.³⁸, Vol.14, Winter 1960, No.1. p.33

114. WILLIAMS, Raymond. "Drama from Ibsen to Eliot", : On Ibsen : p.57.
Peregrine Books, London, 1964.

115. ibid. p.57.

116. ibid. p.57.

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When "Deli İbrahim" was put on stage in Istanbul, for some reason, very few people considered it a play at all. Most of them concentrated on looking at it in the search for anachronisms. One writer critic used his discussion of it to prove how much of his country's history he knew." Turan Oflazoğlu complains thus in the State Theatre programme, 1967-8 season, and goes on as follows :

"The title of his article was "Deli İbrahim through the eyes of a historian". Doesn't the title somehow invalidate everything he has written? Previous to production, I had published an article stating that I had sought to write a play, not a history book. I also stated that I would consciously ignore historical fact to serve the interests of my own drama. I went out of my way to give illustrations of where this had been done in the script and why I thought it necessary. The idea I hoped to put over was this ; the realities of everyday life as well as the facts of history are nothing but raw material to the writer. Events in the past seem at times to suggest the content of tragedy, but it takes a tragedian not a historian to write it up for the theatre. History is the consecutive listing of one fact after another, but a good historian will select and arrange and juxtapose his facts to make sense out of them rather than slavishly list them in order. Any historian with an opinion and a thesis

" cannot simply be content with listing the facts. And as for the dramatist, by nature of his profession - his dealing with human beings not simply units - he has more rights than the historian. This particular critic had a primitive, emotional approach which I found intolerable. He wrote : 'We should be more respectful towards our history,' posing as sole guardian of the nation's heritage. However, had I wanted to make fun of Sultan İbrahim or debase him, I should have written a comedy, not a tragedy. The Sultan İbrahim in my play is more worthy of respect and is much superior to the Sultan İbrahim of Ottoman history.

"Before writing "Deli İbrahim", I read all the histories available on the subject, however, most of these simply repeated the event. Not so Reşat Ekrem Koçu's work, 'Osmanlı Padişahları', though. This is not a dry history book but a real treasure for playwrights. In this work, one sees the sultans as human beings with their individual idiosyncrasies and peculiarities. However, my most useful source of information were the royal mandates of Sultan İbrahim. His spiritual personality reveals itself through these mandates. We find him bellowing, "Aren't I the sultan of seven climates?" in an unreasonable answer to some official or other, "Let me crush the heathen just to let him see what I am capable of." Then he appeals sensitively to his Grand Vizier saying : "Has there been some error ? Was there any unpleasantness? You seem a little sulky. Is anything

wrong?" At other times, he is concerned for the people when part of the city is in flames. "You are the Grand Vizier. Didn't you see the fire ? Where were you ? " And in yet another place, we find him demanding the most unbecoming conduct of the same vizier. All these moods, together with his enforced enthronement and dethronement, and his deep melancholy which raged eternally in his heart, have always hypnotised me."

While one sympathises and agrees with Turan Bey about the invalid nature of his critic's objection; while one also does not doubt his sincerity in claiming that his motive for writing his play was the hypnotic quality of Ibrahim's moods, one cannot somehow dispense with the possibility that, being so involved with his subject, the playwright might also have been too close to identify the deeper motives driving him on in his study. Certainly, the claim to have been hypnotised seems a little over-simplified. The play as it reads is too intelligent by far, too scored through by unmistakeable parallels with current event and personality for it ever to be assumed that no part or adaptation of the historical story is intended on a more immediate level.

It is possible that the findings of Raymond Williams concerning the historical dramatist's relation in regard to his work, might also be applicable to both Turan Oflazoğlu and Orhan Asena.

"Even at the simplest levels of literature, a writer is hardly likely to concern himself with a story or character unless these have some meaning to him and seem important in his general experience of life. We do not pick our favourite stories, of any kind, any more than we pick our favourite historical personages or our preoccupying abstractions, by chance. We pick them because they represent aspects of experience which, however submerged the connexion, are relevant to our own experience. By most people, and by most writers at the simpler levels, this fact goes generally unnoticed.... The story, the personage, the abstraction will be accepted, that is to say, at their face value, and it may even be sincerely believed that their capacity to hold one's interest is contained in something intrinsic to them, unconnected with more general experience." 117

"Similarly, with characters, the important dramatist is concerned, not necessarily to simulate 'real, live people' but rather to embody in his personages certain aspects of experience ... our judgement depends not on whether the characters are lifelike, but on whether they serve to embody experience which the author has shown to be true." 118

Mr. Williams goes on about Strindberg :

" Strindberg, like the maturing Shakespeare, took a series of historical events, not so much for their own sake, as for their potency to recreate the texture of an experience which the author might have also communicated directly. I mean that Strindberg took such stories as those of Master Olof, Gustavus Vasa and Eric XIV partly because they were legends of his own history, but mainly because when they were communicated with his unique vigour and immediacy, they became an embodiment of tangible contemporary qualities : fidelity, power, intrigue, ambition and loyalty. The historical events provided an objective dramatic discipline." 119

However, while the claims Mr. Williams makes for Strindberg might be applicable to these Turkish historical writers, nowhere in their commentary on their own work do they give a hint that this is the case.

117. WILLIAMS, Raymond. op.cit. p.100. Page 19 of his text.

118. ibid. Page 21 of his text.

119. ibid. Page 112 of his text.

If we are to consider the playwrights' intention solely, then the examination of these two plays must cease here; but if one is to continue to explore, assuming Mr. Williams' findings are general to all authors rather than particular to Ibsen and Strindberg, then there is much more to be said.

Orhan Asena is a man in his prime : Turan Oflazoğlu is in his early thirties. Both grew up in the strained atmosphere that came into being when rivalry between the two main parties in Turkish politics was becoming daily more and more pronounced and a head on collision more and more inevitable. That Turan Bey's play came so late after the event is accounted for by the fact that it is only now that his style is maturing and hardening into a disciplined, acceptable form. It is impossible that the years round 1960 should not be of critical importance in the lives of both writers. It is impossible that anything they write as men interested in their country's history should be completely free of reference to such.

Both were born into a country which, from having only a one party system and a totalitarian regime, had evolved a working two-party system, a point of political sophistication unknown in any other middle eastern state except Israel. They grew up in a Turkey that had

forced its revolution to work, in a Turkey where the promise of real democracy was anticipated in the near future. And then, in the late fifties, one as yet a young man, and the other as little more than a boy - they witnessed the idea foundering.

The revolution had been established by the army and the police in the twenties and thirties, suppressing reaction wherever it raised its head. It was from this military totalitarian section of the community that the core of the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi evolved. While the revolution was insecure, this group pursued an uncriticised policy of ruthless persecution of all enemies of the new republic.

Another triumph of the CHP was that they established a system of party government with their own organisation as a model. It is from this that the 1960 trouble is seen to directly spring. The other party, the Democrat Party, was an off-shoot of the CHP, made up of members whose ideas were less of a totalitarian nature and more geared towards the ideal of the governing powers being awarded to a party elected by majority vote. In 1946, the Democrat Party was founded. With the revolution accomplished and the Second World War safely behind her, Turkey was faced with the difficult task of fitting

herself into an industry-orientated Europe, and found in the code of the DP that interests of trade, industry and agriculture were well represented. One of the principles of the new DP was its willingness to accept foreign aid and open its doors to foreign enterprise, a policy which only few of the CHP people had considered and most distrusted as smacking of treason, since one of the very cornerstones of Atatürk's revolution had been the freeing of Turkey from foreign interference.

In 1950, the DP won the election and continued in power till 1960, incurring towards the end of this period, financial and economic troubles. By 1960, Turkey was well on the way to economic ruin, though much had been done in the development and expansion of trade, industry and agriculture. The economic mismanagement was one of the facts governing the CHP in staging their coup of 1960. Brought about in the name of democracy, the CHP soon discovered that the only way they could remain in power was by flagrantly ignoring election results and a ruthless suppression of opposition interests. This was because the CHP had inherited a Turkey no longer the Turkey of the thirties, because their organisation was still geared to the totalitarian tones of the government two decades previously and they had failed to cater for the ever-expanding business, trade and industry interests, their supporters being largely of a military and bureaucratic disposition.

The result was in the next free elections after the revolution, 1961, the new Adalet Partisi, (which had assumed the mantle of the old DP with reservations), emerged as the principle opposition party, eventually to get in with a healthy majority in 1965 and again in 1969. And as long as the winning of an election depends on the vote of the majority, it seems that the AP will retain their power. This is because at the moment the voters who have business, trade, industry and agriculture interests far outnumber those with military, police and bureaucratic ones.

In all this activity, the political historian, governed by statistics filed away in archives, will tend to discount the personal aspects of this party rivalry, but the dramatist, more sensitive to human relations, will recall the unity of purpose in the Independence War; he will trace the division of interest between those who wished to maintain military control over the nation and those men who wished to dispense with force at the earliest opportunity and replace coercion with peaceful, democratic ways of government. He will remember the private enmities and the family feuds which sprang up at the time, and which have not to this day been successfully resolved, and in his treatment of politico-historical themes, he will lament the part these elements have played in the past and are playing in the present.

In both plays, loyalties are bought and sold for material gain. Interests are grouped according to promises of reward should such and such a conspiracy be successful. In actual politics, votes are cast according to persuasion of the heads of families or the 'muhtars' of villages. A man might vote for a particular party simply because his enemy voted for the other side. It is not a wild assumption to make the claim that, in all probability, the authors of these plays saw in the current political and social situation all the weaknesses in the Turkish character combining to add to the chaos breaking forth on all sides.

Of the two plays, "Hürrem Sultan" is the simpler. It moves forward after the manner of a pageant play, where the inter-relation and inter-action of the characters drive the play on to its cynical conclusion. Though the title of the play happens to be the name of one of the characters, probably because that character's ambitions provide the main spring of the plot, there is, in a manner of speaking, no main personage. The most important element in the drama is not character but intrigue, and the consequences of that intrigue. Basic attributes of the Turkish character, then as now, in the lowly as well as the great - namely pride, suspicion, ambition, nepotism, pathological fear of rivalry, and a hate of those so obviously above the meanness of the general system of values, - provoke action and catastrophe as a result of accepting these follies as part of the way of life.

At every stage in the development, a character who holds himself above the plane of conspiracy sums up the enormity of the situation thus being created. Such a person is Beyazit, Mustafa and the Poet Yahya. Of the two plays, this is the more ^{ba} balanced. It is as if Orhan Asena were looking down on these ants from a mountain peak, observing with sadness the evil that is allowed to propagate itself unchecked, and the goodness that holds itself aloof and detached. There is criticism of sorts meted out to everyone in this play, except perhaps to the poet, the representative of the 'free Press'. The big surprise of the play is that a character, as important in the history books as Süleyman the Magnificent is, should ^{be} be seen as an ageing, weary warrior completely inadequate in his dealing with the corruption of his court. His final speech is the climax, the complete acquiescence with the fact that the system is as it is and is indestructible :

" While it is necessary to have alert, cautious men like the pasha round my throne, it is equally necessary to have frank, bright people like the poet among my subjects." 120

Orhan Asena 's conclusion, then, seems to be that while it is good to have the free thinkers and the free press, it is sadly necessary to have the police spies and the extra alert censor to see that freedom is not misused and misapplied.

120. "Hürrem Sultan" , Act III, Tablo 5, Scene 8. "Tahtimin etrafında...
... bana getirin."
- a translation and condensation of this passage.

The Sultan's last speech speaks out over the barriers of time to a Turkey ripe for revolution ; a revolution which on the surface was a bid for democracy yet harboured under its banner some who were motivated by the same meannesses as Orhan Asena's characters. "Hürrem Sultan" , then, would appear to be a sad, withdrawn, god's eye view of recent discontent in Turkey.

"Deli İbrahim" is a much more complicated play. As has been said above, it might well have been titled "Kösem Sultan"; yet from another point of view, it would not have been inappropriate to have named it "Murad IV", for it is his strong personaility, and his admirable virtues as a leader, which provide the yardstick against which every action in the play is evaluated. Consider the way the Sadrazam throws the deceased sultan's name in the teeth of his unworthy successor. Though Murad is dead before the actiön begins, all good influence in official life harks back nostalgically to the peaceful order of his reign, comparing it to the unsatisfactory, unstable nature of İbrahim's administration : that is, if his tenure of office can be described as an administration.

The subtitle of the piece is "Conscious Madness", the paradoxical state by which Turan Bey claims to have been hypnotised. Yet beside Kösem Sultan, his presentation of his main character is weak,

while that of Murad must be among the most strongly delineated of that genre of character who never appears yet without whom the action could not proceed.

"Deli Ibrahim" is not a tragedy in the Aristotelian sense of the word. There is no tragic flaw in Ibrahim's character. His flaw is a physical one. When he is introduced he is mad, and during the action his madness neither develops nor changes course in any way. It is true he does waver between being more or less mad. His madness, however, always manifests itself in the same way. He is a slave to his passions and fears. It is difficult to amass for Ibrahim more sympathy that could be spent on a dog with rabies tied to the stake waiting to be shot. Whatever stature he has, springs solely from his tenure of that most exalted of positions, the sultanate, lending to his ravings an importance they otherwise would not have had if vested in a person of lowlier station.

While, then, in our estimation, Ibrahim is the third in importance of those involved in the action, his presence is necessary to illustrate the precise nature of the excesses that do result when a government proves inadequate in the assuming of its responsibilities and the execution of its duties. It appears, then, that one might be justified in reading this play as an affirmation of the fact that the strong rule of one man, no matter what his methods, is preferable to

the rule of a weak one, or of a group, who consult and cross-examine in the name of democracy, and generally talk themselves into deadlock. It is noticed how İbrahim solicits approval of every action and thereby opens the door to interference from anyone who cares to accept the offer. One who avails herself of every opportunity, bending his weakness to her own interest, is his mother, Kösem Sultan.

Kösem Sultan is the only positive force in the play. Held in check by Murad in his time, she dominates his weak successor, being in herself the representative of complete and unabashed corruption and ruthlessness. She is amoral; almost a morality figure in her singleness of purpose. She knows no love and no loyalty. She is completely without feminine interests of any kind. All she lives for is to control the sultan, "to control the fire by wielding the tongs."

Characterisation in the play is extremely weak. Characters take up a stance on being first introduced and act predictably according to the first impression they give. In case the audience fails to focus on their stance as obviously intended by the author, they declare their hopes, fears and ambitions in lengthy, self-relevatory soliloquies, and sum up their progress towards the realisation of their private schemes.¹²¹

Perhaps the best drawn character of them all is Murad IV. From beyond death, he enigmatically exercises control and judgement on

121. Kösem Sultan does this in Act I, Scene 3, and in Act III, Scene 2. Kara Mustafa Paşa listens to his own voice revealing his most cherished dreams in Act II, Scene 2.

the action as it is revealed to us. Sympathies and attitudes need constant adjusting according to his promptings. We are always aware of his ruthless and often cruel judgement, and feel a sense of frustration that he is no longer able to walk in on the scene, assess the situation with his keen and practised eye and mete out justice according to the nature of the crime. Perhaps no one appreciates the dead monarch's work more than the chorus of Istanbul people who comment on the action of their peers from time to time. Every now and again, they meet on a street corner and pause in the business of the day to laugh, quip and pun about the mismanagement of affairs from the palace. Sometimes the comment is veiled as they feel that perhaps they are being overheard by palace spies, at other times they are daringly, bluffly forthright in their condemnations. On the whole, their negativeness, cynicism and disinterested detachment can be justified by the fact that they feel they are too distant from the seat of power to be of any influence in effecting a change. There is a feeling among them that even if it were possible to change the sultan, who, among the mob at court, is there better than İbrahim to do the job? It seems that there is a choice between self-centred evil and ineffective good. Anyhow, they console themselves, that the responsibility for any

catastrophe in affairs of state is not theirs. They feel their fate to be no better or worse whether their destinies be controlled by a wise or a foolish man. Among the things they cheerfully admit to are :

"Sultan Murad was a great king. If he had not resorted to violence, or flown above us like a sharp-eyed eagle, how could he have saved the country from chaos, how could he have cleaned up the bandits ? But whether it be Murad or İbrahim, whether Ali or Veli, as long as we have someone reigning over us, what does it matter if he is sane or insane ?" 122

"Long live darkness ! Long live darkness ! " 123

All in all, they come to the conclusion that while Murad was a harsh ruler, his ruthlessness was necessary to prevent them stealing from each other. In other words, they have no faith in the inherent worth of themselves as people or as members of the system with a responsibility for making it work. They prefer to be brow-beaten.

Here, then, is flat statement of the advantages and disadvantages of both kinds of government, without moral judgement, without preference for either, other than for the welcome ease and relaxation they bathe under in İbrahim's negligent rule. Is this the feeling of the populace under the coalition government following the 1960 revolution? A feeling of apathy that such violent measures had been resorted to to such little effect on the general good ; that the superhuman achievements of Mustafa Kemal were in danger of being negated by politics that were

122. "Deli İbrahim", Act I, Scene 2. "... büyük padişahı... ister deli."

123. ibid. , ACT I, Scene 6. " Yaşasın karanlık....."

becoming each day more petty and mor petty still ?

To İbrahim, then, Murad is a very alive and constant threat; to the Sadrazam, he is a great law-giver and effëcient ruler - a demi-god; to Kõsem Sultan, he is a blight, a blemish, an obstruction to the realisation of personal ambitions; to the people of Istanbul, a necessary meter out of harsh justice whenever they step out of line. A combination of these attitudes toward Murad is not unlike the prevailing attitudes in certain quarters towards the regime of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

However, much of what has been claimed in this chapter must remain within the bounds of hypothesis. There is no written evidence that either Orhan Asena or Turan Oflazođlu intended their works to be taken as contemporary political moralities ; certainly none in their own hands. It would be strange, though, if it turned out to be pure coincidence that su much wealth of meaning and richness of thought in these plays were completely there by accident. The main support of the above claims must in the last resort be, if not to be read from a contemporary standpoint, then why at all?

"New Interest In Village Life And Culture."

The use of the village scene as a setting for the drama is a fairly recent innovation. The serious treatment of the village as an entity with problems worthy of dramatic treatment is a yet more recent discovery. In this, the play has followed the novel, while the releasing in the novel form of this new energy and the broadening of the novel's horizons to include subjects other than those of pure romantic interest must be traced directly back to the influence of the Halk Evleri programme of the 1930s. As a particular guiding light to the new village novelists and dramatists, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu and his work in the periodical, 'Kadro', (1932-4), was perhaps the greatest influence. However, charged with reorientating literature towards progressive goals which, in his reading, meant social and nationanalistic, Kadri Bey was ordered to close his office in 1934. This is a dilemma which has faced his disciples till quite recently - at least till 1965. It is a particular facet of Turkish nationalism that it has deemed patriotic only that which either reflects past achievements or which turns an approving, or at least a blind, eye, to what are the defects on the current national programme. Strength through criticism has never been a feature of national thought till the advent of the last few years. Hence, it is a narrow line which separates detached social comment from downright sedition in the eyes of the censor.

It is in this way that Yaşar Kemal and Mahmut Makal have had trouble with the authorities from time to time. It is the gradual acceptance of social criticism in the drama which forms the basis of this chapter.

When Professor Karpāt wrote : "Upto the 1930s"....latter day literature "regarded the village and Anatolia as just part of a setting in which some sensitive soul from the city took refuge or played out the last act of some drama..."¹²⁴ he was referring to that brand of romantic work to which Reşat Nuri Güntekin's "Çalılıkusu" belongs. Dramatised for presentation by the State Theatre in the 1962-3 season, it was seen to be a celebration of the new Turkish woman leaving the city to serve as a teacher in a village community. While in intention and emotion, this play was desperately conscious of the need for the educated to make such a sacrifice in the interest of deprived communities, the situation of the story was conceived on an entirely fanciful plane. While saying such a movement from the cities to the villages of Anatolia of skilled persons is the answer to many problems facing the rural community, the play has nothing at all to say about how such a movement might be got underway. Because of this, one cannot claim for Resat Nuri any reforming zeal as a motive for his writing of the novel and the play. The experience of the heroine is a personal one; a personal solution to her personal problem.

124. KARPAT, Kemal. op. cit. p.38. Vol.14, Winter 1960, No.1. p.36.

The interest of the audience is directed inwards to the heroine's particular solution and not outwards towards a general application of her example being a step towards the closing of the gap between city and village culture. In "Çalikuşu", the village is a backcloth to the main action. In the stage presentation, this was made abundantly clear, since no attempt was made at a realistic presentation of scene by use of scenery. The set was an enormous book which filled the proscenium opening, and each scene was marked by the turning of one page on which the basic scenic features were lightly sketched. This perhaps is very appropriate considering the unreality of the play. Even today, a woman teacher from a Teachers' Training School would never be assigned to a community without rigid research into the conditions she would face in that area having first been made. Even then, women teachers have frequently had to be rescued where their presence has created a hostile situation. Because of its social conscience, "Çalikuşu" must be considered as a serious work, but because of the romantic nature of its conception, it must be relegated to a minor place in the ranks of socially orientated literature.

Village novels which do embody a broad, general experience come from the pens of Yaşar Kemal and Mahmut Makal. Much of the reason for this lies in the nature of these novelists' experience. Reşat Nuri

is a man from a fine Ottoman family with an essentially city background. While his feelings might place him among those who wish for a joining of city and village cultures, his works do not patently reflect this. Mahmut Makal is a village boy, a graduate of the village institutes, who is desperately aware of the misery from which he has risen by virtue of education. Reading his work, it seems as if to him the very point of that education has been to acquire sufficient literacy to publicise the very deprivation from which he has sprung. It is this involvement which gives to his work a dimension that Reşat Nuri could never have attained.

As with novels, so the distinction between plays which merely exploit the village scene and those which are written from the sole purpose of exposing the yawning gap between the ease of life in the cities and towns and the excessive hardship of life in the village. It is a great disappointment that the plays of Necati Cumalı do not rank alongside the novels of Makal and Kemal as serious social documents. The background of Cumalı is also a village one, but perhaps it is significant that his environs, rather than being those of Central Anatolia with its extremes of climate and agricultural conditions, were Aegean in nature, that is softer and kinder. His literary career began with his work as a poet and his dramatic talent (his first play being written in 1949 and his second, "Mine", played by the İstanbul Şehir Tiyatrosu), was directed permanently stagewards by the interest shown in his work by that extremely

active and talented Actress-manager, Yıldız Kenter, whose KentOyunuuları have done so much to take the city entertainment to the village. While playing in villages, she has ever been on the look out for talent which she might harness and train in an attempt to bring fresh blood into the city theatre which has been redolent with 'alafranga' playing since the inception of the State Theatre in 1948. Her searches have revealed and developed such talents as Kamran Yüce and Şükran Güngör, to whom she is now married. Şükran Bey is a person who went to see her play in the small town of Çine and showed special interest in taking part rather than in simply watching. It is indicative of her overwhelming succes in spotting what is good theatre that this actor has expanded from village roles to the creation of Sadrazam Kara Mustafa Pasha in "Deli İbrahim" in 1967 and in this most recent season, the role of Claudius in "Hamlet" which opened her new theatre in İstanbul.

While in the area of Çine, Yıldız Kenter met Necati Cumalı and encouraged him to write for her a play, "Nalinlar". Since its first performance in 1962, it has been revived as a great entertainment success on three occasions, the latest being in the summer of 1968 at the İzmir Trade Fair. Now, perhaps it is due to this actress-manager's interest in his work, that Necati Cumalı as a

social dramatist must be restricted to a place below that of Cahit Atay and Fikret Otyam, a discussion of whose work comes later in this thesis. Without Miss Kenter perhaps he never would have turned to drama, yet because she has created each time his heroine, Döndü Karakuş in "Nalinlar" and the girl in his second play, "Derya Güllü", somehow the balance of anything he might have been trying to say has been relegated to second place, Miss Kenter's tornado performance claiming first attention. In the plays of Atay and Otyam, the characters exist to project the social problem; in Cumali's, situation and characterisation seem to be superimposed upon a background which harbours a social problem. Part of this may also be due to the fact that coming from the Ege coastal region, life for the peasants that Cumali treats is not so cruel as it is to those with whom Atay and Otyam deal. In the south west, the land is more productive, food in summer and autumn at least is more plentiful and cheap, while the weather all the year round is more clement than in the central regions. Had his locale been further along the south coast in the region of Adana and the Çukurova, where the peasants are exploited by the cotton magnates, or perhaps in the far south east where Otyam's peasants are drawn into smuggling in order to exist from day to day, his temper might have been keener. It is interesting to note that Yıldız

Kenter seems to have rejected Fikret Otyam's "Mayın";¹²⁵ whether because of its formlessness, its too great insistence on social messages or its relegation of the importance of the players to the general situation can but be guessed at.

"Nalınlar" is a village love story which tells of Osman Yavaş and his wooing of Seher Akkuzu. It is a light-hearted exposition of one of the main occupations of any Turkish village, and like so many plays in this mode, it deals with the inherent problems by exhibition rather than by direct criticism. It is not unfair to say that this play aims at entertainment first and foremost, but it is born of a serious movement which aims to close the gap between city and village by popularising with the former the drama and humour of the latter. In a succession of rapid scenes, carved for playing purposes into three acts, the audience witnesses the self-motivated machinations and intriguing of Döndü, the financial manoeuvrings of her brother contemplating the market value of his sister's hand, and Seher's deception of her mother. Local colour abounds and involves the leaving of love letters in cracks in the wall, meetings by the village well and the signalling to lovers at windows with pieces of mirror.

Yet behind the sheer fun of the plot, one is constantly aware of elements from which tragedy could spring at any moment.

125. See Otyam's article in 'Ulus' on March 23rd, 1968, reproduced in translation, pp/xxxii- xxxiv of this text.

Osman's insistence on taking a girl whose brother opposes the match is following a course of behaviour from which feuds have been known to develop. Perhaps had this theme been worked out in a Black Sea locale instead of in the warmth of the İzmir summer, had the writer been Cahit Atay instead of Necati Cumali, Osman would have been hunted down by Ömer and Ömer in his turn hunted down by Osman's nearest male relative. In fact, the very situation in one of the "Karaların Memetleri" plays.

There is the meat of serious drama in Ömer's cold appraisal of his sister's worth in hard cash. Complaining of his father's recent death, Ömer tells his mother that Seher may not marry, thereby causing further weight on the family purse. He cold-bloodedly assesses Seher's physical worth and decides he can safely settle on her as a dowry a worthless piece of land, her physical charms being sufficient to draw the interest of any suitor before he can coldly weigh up the financial gain to be had in the taking of her. He insists that she must marry at a time convenient to the family's purse and to a man whose wealth certainly exceeds that of Osman. Seher, then, is neither considered as a person with feelings ; nor as a sister or daughter. She is currency, goods chattels, a means of enlarging her family's wealth. Yet, we have to wait for "Sultan Gelin" for this situation and its consequences to be treated with the seriousness it deserves.

His second play, "Derya Gülü", is the story of fisherfolk; of a woman caught between two unfeeling men. She is seen to be a pawn between a disinterested husband and an equally disinterested lover, to both of whom she means nothing more than a possession over which they may work out their personal animosity. While intended as a tragedy and played as a melodramatic piece, the focal point of which is Miss Kenter's excellent performance, this work of Cumali's is lacking in stature because the personal, private fates of the characters are not sufficiently attached to the general case. In their cabin along the deserted coast, they are physically cut off from neighbours which somehow emphasises the private nature of their problem. In dealing with a woman who is married to a drunk and cannot choose between him and an equally patently untrustworthy lover, one feels that the answer to her problem lies too much in her own realisation of their worth and it is only the very practised dramatist that can convince us that her inability to do this is not simply wilful self-deception on her part. Cumali cannot rise to this and this is how he fails.

This disappointment one feels with his work arises from the fact that it was seen after the release of new critical strength in village drama as first seen in Cahit Atay's "Pusuda". However, one cannot deny the main value of the work which lies in the way the playwright

treats the villagers with dignity. One may laugh at the strangeness of their dialect. The İzmir dialect is very funny. But to the villager, the pretensions of the towns are equally full of mirth. So the humour works both ways. Generally speaking, though, in the plays of Necati Cumali, one is laughing with the villager and not at him. In short, they increase the understanding by inducing a familiarity of one culture with the other.

"Concern"

deliberate attempts to involve the city person in the problems of the villager.

A study of three published plays by Cahit ATAY and one unpublished play by Fikret OTYAM.

As stated in the previous chapter, much of the urgency about the plays of Cahit Atay and Fikret Otyam derives from their sense of involvement. Both writers have a village background and know their subjects at first hand. Both have considerable journalistic experience which helps them to isolate the problem of their choice and deal with it with severe economy. In the plays of both, it is the problem and not the characterisation which claims first the attention of the audience. Much of the success their work has enjoyed on the stage therefore, has been due to the skill of the theatre people involved in production, who have managed to single out and highlight the dramatic aspects of their scripts.

In dealing with their work, then, one can do little but to relate the stories they tell. The criticisms they make are as boldly and baldly salient as journalistic narration of some news that happened yesterday. In "Pusuda",¹²⁶ a play which opened in the tiny Oda Tiyatrosu, belonging to Ankara's State Theatre, in 1961, the action is solely the manipulation

126. ATAY, Cahit. "Pusuda", Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara, 1962.

of the simple Dursun by Ağa Yılanoğlu and the counter manipulation of him by his childhood friend, Yaşar, an intellectual who has pursued his education in the city to return to his village, there to use it for the good of the community among which he grew up. The names of the characters are, of course, symbolic and clearly show where the sympathy of the playwright lies. It is a failing of these journalist playwrights that they do overload the case they are making, thereby robbing their work of dramatic surprise. However, despite this, Atay manages to raise his play to poetic levels in the final scene.

The central character is Dursun. It is in his thoughts, all of which he puts into words, that interest is centred. It is the way this simple, innocent and well-meaning character can be made to do evil acts by ill-intentioned forces that gives this play its strength. It exposes the iron power of the 'ağalık'. Hitherto, the situation of this play had been met with only in the barest outlines in the many daily reports of provincial killings which litter the pages of such newspapers as 'Hürriyet'. In "Pusuda", Atay fills in the space between the lines and shows his audience the motives it could never discover for itself in the press reports.

By subtle flattery and a manipulation of what he knows to be simple Dursun's modest ambitions in life, Ağa Yılanoğlu engages this peasant to ambush Yaşar, a city-educated villager who has returned to his birth-place full of new ideas which are sure to challenge the ağa's authority. Dursun wants a little land and a little of people's respect; no more. The ağa previously persuades him how all this will be his as a result of his murdering Yaşar. So well does he put his case that Dursun kisses his hand in gratitude to be given such a chance. The ambush, however, is in jeopardy when Dursun discovers that his victim is an old school friend who was extra-protective when others mocked him - Dursun - for his simplicity. Torn between his loyalty to Yaşar and the rewards promised by the ağa, he wrestles with his sophisticated problem.

It is interesting that as this play develops and Dursun is seen stooping to rationalise what is inherently evil, nothing but pity is ever felt for him. Atay keeps well before the audience the utter poverty and deprivation suffered by this ignorant fellow. The feeling that anything he can grasp at by way of pulling himself up the social scale is forgivable. Never once is sympathy withdrawn from him.

Once the dilemma is explained, Yaşar seeks to help Dursun reason out the situation, confident that the fellow's natural nobility will lead him eventually to sort out the evil behind what the ağa has requested of him. Dursun empties his rifle into the air and paper flowers cascade from the muzzle. Yaşar goes free. Dursun, wondering at this miracle, tries to explain it to the ağa, who is furious to learn of Yaşar's escape. Pointing the muzzle at Yılanoğlu, Dursun fires once more to illustrate what happened, but the flowers have turned once more to lead and the ağa dies. The natural justice of the universe has asserted itself and sorted out Dursun's problem for him.

At first, shocked at what he has done, a realisation slowly steals over Dursun that in effect the rewards the ağa promised him for killing Yaşar - that is, awe from the people who so openly scorn him - should be the greater since Yılanoğlu is much more important than Yaşar. He sighs with satisfaction and sheer pleasure lights up his face. At last his life will begin to open out.

He says :

"He's dead - the great Yılanoğlu! (He wants to run away) Yılanoğlu is dead. We came out to hunt pheasant and look what happened to us. That Dursun, the gardener should slay Yılanoğlu the Ağa... ! (Pulling himself together, his pride returns.) And why the hell shouldn't he ? Isn't he a man also ? Dursun, you've brought down the ağa like a branch off a tree. That's what you've done, old son;

"no joke, no doubt about it. Anybody could shoot Yaşar, but the ağa ! (He leans over the body and strips the ağa of his watch chain, tobacco box, cigarette holder etc. Throwing his own hat away, he dons the ağa's although it comes down to his ears.) I tell no lies. What I claim to have done, I have done. You can see the watch, the tobacco box and all ; once the property of Yılanoğlu. There's the evidence. (With the hat round his ears and the gun slung across his shoulders, he walks more erectly and goes off.) If you don't believe me, just walk along with me to the police station. His carcass lies by that mound. (He exits like a hero.)" 127

So the conclusion is arrived at that the power of the ağa is no more than a donning of effects and all the privileges that go with the position can be acquired by banditry. To the end Dursun is the fool of power. He honestly believes that he will be praised for the murder, that power and respect are natural rights for anyone who cares to make them so. And who can say that he is wrong while the position of 'ağalık' exists ?

The final emotion is one of complete sympathy for this lost human being as he stumbles from one ignorance to another in search of a better life; lacking direction, at the mercy of anyone with a tongue glibber than his own, his only guide being his blind faith that God will reveal to him what it is right for him to know, as indeed He did when the bullets were turned to flowers.

The next work on village themes by Cahit Atay to reach the stage was "Karaların Memetleri"¹²⁸, a group of three playlets

127. "Pusuda", pp.31-2, "Yılanoğlu ölmüş..... Leşi orda yatar."

128. ATAY, Cahit. "Karaların Memetleri", Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara, 1965.

treating with sympathy and humour some problems common to the Black Sea regions. The situations are extremely funny by exposed beneath the humour is the raw meat of tragedy and the author's unrelieved insistence on the responsibility of the educated for the uneducated. While laughing at the utter ridiculous happenings on the stage, the audience cannot help but wonder that such a state of affairs is allowed to exist in a civilised country so near to the capital. The area treated is the Black Sea which is by no means as remote as many other areas and does boast quite sizeable towns.

At the centre of each playlet is a man call Memet. They all belong to the village of Karalar.

The first is called "Ermis Memet"; that is, 'gifted Memet', gifted in the way of his being able to prophesy. In his dreams, Memet is told to kill his best friend, Ali, in order to save his friend's soul. Doing this, he is denounced to the police by Ali's wife. The humour of the story lies in his ability to convince the wife, the visiting sheep-shearers and the police of the religious nature of his act. In the end, he has the entire group kissing his hand in the hope that some of his holiness might rub off on each of them.

Watching this play, the audience has difficulty in remembering that it is not watching a fairy take but a set of religious superstitions in which human beings repose deep belief. Memet is convinced in the supernatural power of the 'hoca' who has given him a 'muska' which he keeps tied about his neck; this being a charm or prayer wrapped in a cloth bag.

Memet learns that İlyas was sent to gaol for a killing, and his term there has ruined his health. The theme of the play lies in İlyas' speech:

"What I say is, is it the fault of the killer or the killed?" 132
 Where, in fact, does the blame lie? With the killer or the killed?
 The confusion exists and should act as a deterrent to the feud, yet the killing goes on, the reason for it having been lost in antiquity.
 Struggling to discover how the feud began. 133, they manage to trace it back to one grandfather having said his cow was better than the other's.
 In pursuing this, İlyas and Memet almost find themselves embroiled in an equally stupid argument. İlyas' wife returns and almost kills Memet herself, screaming insults at her husband and slighting his honour. When the grandmother, the wife of one of the initial feuders, arrives, İlyas defends Memet by hiding him in his bed. However, asleep at night, the suspicious old lady comes in to have a good look at the 'guest' and hears him rambling on about the feud. This is because a fever has started as a result of his having been knocked about by İlyas' wife. However, the grandmother reads into the rambling a religious significance; Memet must be gifted, and thus is allowed to escape with his life.

Perhaps the most shocking thing about this play is that when İlyas and Memet are talking about why the feud should be ended, they completely miss the stupidity of such hostility. All they can offer in the way of an excuse for bringing it to an end is that feuding is bad economics: İlyas says:

"She should enjoy her Memet before he rots in the prison house. What with prison and military service following close on each other's heels, a man is late in starting his family. The wife and her sixty year old mother-in-law can work together in the garden with knee-high Ali. On top of them that, the wife has another child inside her though I don't suppose I'll live long enough to see it. This business of working from day to day requires a lot of hands, son.....!" 134

"Kerpiç Memet", Memet, son of the bricklayer, is a mild little man, who, incensed by the injustice of the rich against the poor, flees to the hills to become a bandit. As an outlaw, he maintains a

132. "Karaların Memetleri", 'Yangın Memet', p.56.

133. ibid. , p.57.

134. ibid. , p.54. "Mapuslarda ... adamlar olur."

a strict code of robbing only the rich and dispersing his spoils among the poor. His exploits however cause no stir at the police station till another fiercer set of bandits move into the area and begin to rob both rich and poor indiscriminately, hiding their activities behind Kerpiç Mehmet's name. Memet has a girl in town. In the beginning, she is only mildly interested in him, but when it gets about that he is responsible for these fierce indiscriminate robberies - that is, both his own crimes and the crimes of the other bandits, her heart swells with pride at his new image in the eyes of the populace.

Hearing of what he is supposed to have done, Memet comes into town to confess to the police. He is utterly thrown when they take one look at him and laugh him out of countenance. Even the police have more than a sneaking respect for the 'great bandit' and simply refuse to believe that Memet is he.

This sad little tale says more about the secondary characters than it does about the hero manque. Its sorry message is that people are more impressed by deed good or bad, than they are by intention and thought. It is the big, the fierce, the cruel and the wicked that capture people's imaginations, not the just and public spirited. People want excitement, not justice. One fares better if one is an outright villain. There is no sympathy for the petty thief.

These plays in dialect deal with the vital situation, which, like that at the centre of "Pusuda", can be read in skeleton form on the front page of any daily paper, and that in triplicate. There is more exploitation of situation for humorous value than in the former play, yet Atay manages to achieve his object by this very means. Our laughter shocks us. We laugh at these people on stage, especially for the way in which they are quite unable to pursue one line of thought to a conclusion.

Even when such serious things as feuding and murder are under discussion, these characters go shooting off at tangents about all sorts of irrelevancies. To them, the situation is commonplace ; to us in our laughter it is equally of little import because of our distance from it. It is only when the laughter has died and the stage play is matched against the journalistic reality that it is realised how responsible for the education of these deprived persons the city people really are.

In the first two works in this chapter, tragic elements are glossed over with humour. Dursun is not aware that his behaviour contains elements of social failure on a large scale. He swings happily off to the police station to confess his crime believing it will lead to his betterment. Ermiş Memet believes that his crime - murder committed in the name of God - will ensure for him his place in God's good grace. Kerpiç Memet also escapes through the farcical situation whereby others refuse to attribute massive crime to such a weedy specimen as himself. Fun is never far from Atay's pen, but it is not laughter wasted on the air. The thought, which follows close behind, throws into relief the inherent unfunniness of the action. That the audience have laughed at all is a shock to them on reflection and this is the strength of his work. This can not be called satire. It is one stage removed from satire.

The audience does not see itself on the stage. It depends on whether they recognise their social responsibilities towards the Anatolian peasants who provide the fun, whether, in fact, they stop to criticise themselves for their failure to prevent such situation as those on the stage arising in real life.

In his most recent work, "Sultan Gelin",¹³⁵ presented in 1965 by the Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu, there is humour but it is much blacker than that which has been witnessed in his earlier plays. This is mainly due to the fact that the main character, Sultan Gelin, is completely excluded from it. Whenever she is on stage, the scene is intensely serious. The first words inside the first leaf of the printed text are :

"I am neither a girl nor am I a bride. I have merely burnt myself up, without ever having enjoyed the privileges of either state." 136

In many respects, "Sultan Gelin" resembles Güngör Dilmen Kalyoncu's "Kurban". In that Zehra can articulate her trouble and define some positive action, no matter how tragic, to deal with it, "Kurban" is the least heart-rending of the two plays. In her inability to help herself in any way, Sultan Gelin is the more tragic figure. From the first, she has given herself up as a lost soul, a sacrifice to the criminal values of her society, and at best, all she can do is to help another character escape the fate to which she accepts she is condemned. In Act III, she helps Veli elope with his young girl friend.

135. ATAY, Cahit. "Sultan Gelin" , Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara, August 1965.

136. "Ne kız oldum ne gelin
Odlara yandım ancak."

The title of each act is suggestive of the world of cattle breeding. The first act is called "Open Auction", the second is called "First Night" and the third is called "Second First Night". This, of course, refers to the first night of the marriage. The suggestion is that the wedding of souls is relatively unimportant and of no concern to the families of the bride and groom. The celebration is of the physical union and what produce it gives rise to. It is the blood on the sheet thrown out of the window of the bridal chamber that sets the guns off in salute, proving the virginity of the bride at the time the bargain was struck and the virility and effectiveness of the groom when called upon.

Having said before that Atay is a journalistic playwright; that the inherent social comment unfolds with the story; one can do no better at this point than to outline the plot.

In "Open Auction, Ali and his wife, Hacer, need some ready cash. Finding their oxen too precious to part with, they put their daughter's hand up for sale to the highest bidder. Kazım Ağa wants the girl, Sultan, for his son Osman, and agrees to pay four thousand liras for her when she successfully illustrates her strength by executing the thousand and one tasks her parents heap on her to show her worth. Much mirth results from the timid suggestion of a neighbour that Sultan's wishes in the matter might be solicited.

In "First Night", Osman's aunt, while preparing the bridal bed with Sultan's help, explains that Osman has a weak heart, which is why he was excused from national service. Kazım Ağa, ashamed of his son's "weakness", omitted to mention this fact at the auction. The aunt begs Sultan not to over-excite the boy. Accordingly, Sultan takes pity on him and fakes the consummation, staining the bridal sheet with blood drawn from her arm. Even so, Osman is taken with a heart attack and dies. Sultan expects to be sent home but Kazım Ağa, reminding her of the price he paid for her, announces that she

will be married to Veli, his second son. To cover Osman's Reputation, it will be put about that he left her pregnant but that she lost the baby due to grief over Osman's passing.

In "Second First Night", Sultan looks forward to the freedom her marriage to Veli will give her, but just before the ceremony, he confesses to her that he is in love with a girl of his own age. Sultan feels cheated but even so cannot stoop to ruining his life as hers has been ruined. She helps him to elope and, confronted by her determined father-in-law, says the boy escaped. Expecting at last to be sent home, once more she is due to be disappointed. At that moment, Kazim's wife bears a son and the aga firmly announces to Sultan, "Here's another for you. This time don't let him escape."

During the course of this play, the focal point is Sultan, yet never does she utter more than ten or twelve words at a time. Most of her sentences are either questions or simple responses to the questions of others. The conversation is conducted by secondary characters in the action, the arrangers, the buyers, the sellers, the hands that put the young people together to breed. Terms most commonly used are those involving the acquisition of goods and chattels, of animals and fields. Bartering, value for money, fair exchange are the subjects which echo within the walls of the bridal chamber. It is hard to believe that animals are not the main concern of the play. One might easily substitute a prize bull or cow for Sultan and her various husbands.

The humour in this play is humour at its cruellest. This is because it is totally at the expense of ignorance, particularly Sultan's.

The instance that comes to mind is the placing of the pillows in the bed,¹³⁷ the reason for which Sultan is ignorant of. Because of the embarrassment the provision of an explanation would cause, she is left in the dark.

Critics have fixed Cahit Atay's reputation among the premier Turkish dramatists of the contemporary scene on the strength of "Pusuda". In my opinion, his dramatic ability in "Sultan Gelin" is far superior. To retain sympathy for a silent character is difficult. Wh^{en} that character is negative, it is even more difficult. By comparison, Murad IV in "Deli İbrahim" was relatively easy to create. His stature is written into history and is cemented by the reference given by the finer characters in the play. Sultan, on the other hand, is virtually ignored and does little to protest. Her last words are : " I will take care of children no longer."¹³⁸ Yet the final speeches of Kazım Ağa assert that the contrary will be her fate. Sultan's strength, then, arises from the fact that by law, her situation does not legally exist. Yet this is also the source of her tragedy, for what good is the law when it is so remote and a woman's livelihood is provided by the man to whom she is immediately responsible? Law for women like Sultan goes no further than this. The rest is 'Lâf!' It is to situations like Sultan's that Professor Karpát refers when he writes : "What is required is not more reform, which can all too easily remain on paper, but systematic and thorough education to win acceptance for the existing ones."¹³⁹

137. "Sultan Gelin", Act II, pp.31-36.

138. *ibid.* , Act III, p.72.

139. KARPAT, Kemal. op.cit. p.38. Vol 14, No.2, p.161.

As can be seen very clearly in the differing tone of each author introducing his work to his audience, so it is with their plays. Fikret Otyam's "Mayın", lacks Cahit Atay's humour. The journalistic approach is more pronounced and his total commitment to the case of his peasant subject is all important. Another distinguishing feature is the amount of temper each playwright expends. Atay is more withdrawn in his enlistment of his audience's sympathy. He allows his characters to recruit a great deal of it alone. Otyam's anger demands our concern by reaching out between his characters and audience and by dragging them closer together, deliberately loading the case he is making till withdrawal of sympathy would seem like a crime against fellow creatures. While this is, dramatically speaking, a weakness, it is totally in keeping with his intentions. It might be said that Atay is consciously writing a play with social themes while Otyam is harnessing dramatic form to perpetrate a social message.

Yaşar Kemal writes of his own technique in writing a novel thus :

" I write my reports after long research. I remain for a long time among the people in a region which I do not know. I become closely interested in everything - the trees and birds, folklore, gossip, ways of living, the dead and the alive. I learn their dialect and try to be one of them Good reporting is done by good artists. Reporting is a branch of literature; one in development and a difficult one." 140

The above might equally have been said by Fikret Otyam of his own work. Professor Karpat writes :

"The vital dependence of the villager on his land and his struggle to acquire and preserve his own property, and hence his economic independence against greedy landlords, has been a source of constant inspiration for folklore literature. The 'eşkiya' (bad man) is one of the heroes of folklore literature who dramatises the struggle for land ownership... Karaođlan is an 'eşkiya'.... 'İnce Memed' is an idealised and modern form of bad man." 141

The problem of the bad man seeks to solve is generally one concerning the sharing out on a fair basis of arable land and the profits derived therefrom; also the solving of the question of insufficient water supply.

Fikret Otyam sees his role as that of the 'eşkiya' of the drama. His main concern is for the dignity of the peasant. He can see no dignity for a man if he is not his own master, the owner of land and independent of the local ağa. His brief chapter extracted from his notes on his travels in south east Turkey, tells the fatal of one such unfortunate he came across in the early 1960s after the closing of "Ulus" newspaper on which he had been working.

Mustafa Erikcan, young father of three children, follows a wayward sheep in an attempt to bring it back to the fold and unwittingly wanders onto a minefield. He is blown half to death. The villagers follow the sound of his screams and line up along the edge of the minefield unable to help him and tortured by their inability to help him. At once they send to the army engineers to come and rescue him and shout half-hearted encouragement to the dying man. Birds of prey gather. Mustafa calls for water but his want cannot be provided for. As his

141. KARPAT, Kemal. op.cit.p.38, Vol.14, No.2, p.157.

142. OTYAM, Fikret. "Gide Gide 3", 'Mayın', pp.98-102, Forum Press, Ankara, 1960.

fever mouths, his moans turn to screaming. Eventually he dies and the vultures settle on his corpse as the villagers howl in their misery at the indignity. Even stones thrown at the carrion birds do not prevent the defiling of Mustafa's body. The smell of rotting flesh is borne on the breeze to the village. At last, the army plane arrives and drops lime on the corpse. Only Mustafa's dog braves the danger of the area and hunts out his master, returning to the village with Mustafa's leg which is all there is left to bury.

Such are the plaintive experiences steeped in misery and personal tragedy from which Fikret Otyam builds his plays. Unfortunately, the script of the play, "Mayın" is not available. Fikret Bey tells us in his newspaper article that it was not solely from the above anecdote that the play arose but from "Topraksızlar"¹⁴³ and "Gâvur Gölü"¹⁴⁴ also, the former providing act one and the latter act two.

"Topraksızlar" is the story of two villages; İncecik, whose inhabitants support the Democrat Party and are Sünnî Moslems, and its rival village, Aktıl, where political loyalties are attached to the Republican Party and religious affiliations are to the Alevî sect, followers of the prophet Ali.

The rivalry ends in the authorities' decision against the people of Aktıl. Punishment is to be in the form of five houses to be pulled down and five to be evacuated. All in all, the 'jandarma' in their enthusiasm for their task wreck twenty three houses and loot the entire village.

Otyam gathered this material from old men and women who want to carry their complaint to the Büyük Millet Meclisi. They are defeated by all the red tape that is bound to smother such a project. Even in getting relief from Kızılay (the Turkish Red Cross), who by definition are

143. OTYAM, Fikret. "Topraksızlar", Gide Gide 5, Yedi tepe Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1963.

144. ibid., pp 51-72.

are bound to render immediate and impartial relief, they are blocked by formalities which are too intricate for simple minds to solve.

The second act derives from the story of land reclaimed reclaimed by the government in the area of Maraş. It seems between 1943 and 1953, the Government drained a lake called Gâvur Gölü. 2,555,000 Turkish liras were spent in drying out 40,000 hectares. This was distributed generously among people known to be registered supporters of 'the party'. 8,000 men, women and children from the area, who had lived in hope of some land award, gather to claim their-share in the rain, but were dispersed by the 'ağas' and 'jandarma'. Some were trampled in the ensuing flurry; among them, children. Otyam complains about the line taken in the press, that these people were illegally trying to acquire what they had no right to.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Otyam's work is that he deals unflinchingly with his material, much of which many people responsible for village welfare would love to sweep under the carpet. He holds no care for his own advancement or safety. His sole concern as a dramatist is to make people feel uncomfortable by exposing to them the misery that undoubtedly exists in the rural scene of the east.

As a dramatist, he makes little pretense as to his ability. He does not flinch at the criticism that he uses the stage first and foremost as a platform, leaving it to actors and directors to make a visual drama of his text. This, he knows, to be there because he has seen it and it has prompted the passion with which he writes. It is no difficult task he imposes on technicians since the drama lies in the author's passion which simply has to be condensed and projected across the foot lights.

Perhaps this very passion is in part a hindrance to his development as a dram^{at}ist. It leads him to be too one-sided in his view of his subject. All 'ağas' are bad; all dignified poor men are 'thistles, ^tough, beautiful, natural, wild and ^durable. One recalls in this connection the importance of the 'thistle' image in Yaşar Kemal. One cannot help thinking that it would have added greatly to his thesis if he could have pointed out the difficulties even the most well-meaning of the authorities must face in dealing with this area where the smallest matters and differences lead to the most violent bloodshed. Where Kurds, Armenians, Alevîs, Sünnîs, Syrian Christians, Arabs and various nomad tribes of no particular persuasion, each with his own distinct cultures being at variance with one another, intermingle; it can be no easy or rewarding job to try and main^{tain} the peace. Not least of the frustrations must be the geographical conditions and the matter of maintaining communications with the seat of government in Ankara. It would not have complicated the direction of sympathies for him to have pointed out these facts. If, however, his omission of these mitigating circumstances is deliberate, and if one is to read into the omission that he suggests each local culture ought to be dealt with locally and permitted to exist independent of the national Turkish culture, then he proposing a reversal of the basic concept of Atatürk's revolution, the

welding of this polyglot nation into one. Considering the national forces which exist on the boundaries of Turkey to the south, east and west, none but the foolish would attempt to propose this as a solution to the problems of the south eastern regions of Turkey.

All in all, his case is emotionally over-weighted. His prose style points to this. It abounds in rhetorical questions repeated with dirge-like persistence. All sufferers are adopted into his bosom. Possessive suffixes are frequently employed. One has but to consider the first paragraph of "Mayın!"

"I do not know Mustafa .. my Mustafa is the father of three... my Mustafa is young... my Mustafa falls into the minefield one day... into the minefield... the mine is a trap ... the mine means death... my Mustafa... my Mustafa puts his foot down and lifts it up... why, my Mustafa, why did you lift it up ? It is then that the mine explodes... not when you step on it.... but when Mustafa lifts up his foot.... Mustafa has three babes. Like three roses they are ... one cannot say 'mama' yet... They wait, these children, and his wife waits... my Mustafa." 145

His writing proceeds thus, in shattered thoughts, half spoken emotions and half written sentences.

It is a certain failing that he cannot castigate what he loves. A little of Atay's distance to show us to what degree the suffering of the Eastern Anatolian is inherent in his character might not have gone amiss. Their fatalism, albeit brought on by the ^{un}rewarding nature of the basic material God has bequeathed to them to work, is one

145. "Gide Gide 3", 'Mayın', p.98. "Mustafa'yı da tanımam çoluk-çocuk-kari... Mustafam."

such failing. It might have done much to strengthen Otyam's case to point occasionally at that. As his work stands, the full blame for the deprivation in the eastern provinces is to be borne solely by the western-based administration. His appeal then is entirely emotional and humanistic. Yet when dealing with an area and a population as diverse as that he moves among, it is hardly right to judge so violently from such premises. It is good that he has done so; writers like Otyam are needed, if for nothing else than their work as publicists. They show that action is needed but have little value as indicators of what that action ought to be.

Yet on no account let anyone denigrate the courage and uprightness of the artist who does not hesitate to harness every branch of the arts to expose what he thinks to be a social evil. The purpose of drama is twofold : it is by nature bound to entertain but it also has a duty to instruct. A play which loses its audience and does not seek or care to entertain is a weak one. However, a play which leaves its audience without having added some dimension to their comprehension of the topic which was the subject of that play is equally failing in its task.

In dealing with the work of Fikret Otyam, the most recent period of Development of Turkish drama, in which the playwright feels free to say exactly what he wants to with impunity, is being entered upon. He may at the moment be forgiven for disgorging in one violent exhortation all the truths he had for generations to smother. After all, it is less than four years since such freedom was acquired.

"The Race To Get Things Said."

This chapter is, to a large extent, compiled of unpublished work, information on which has been gleaned from actual performances. The plays dealt with in this section are very new and very exciting to watch; however, their true worth as pieces of dramatic entertainment and thought cannot truly be assessed since only time will show their permanence. At the moment, these plays express the fever of the new-found freedom that Turkish writers enjoy, but such is their energy that it is more than possible that clear reason has been submerged by enthusiasm in many cases.

It is a fact that "72. Koğuş"¹⁴⁵ is available in story form and that "Sarıpınar 1914"¹⁴⁶ can also be obtained in novel form as "Değirmen" by Reşat Nuri Güntekin, and that "Keşanlı Ali"¹⁴⁷ has also been printed. "Yalova Kaymakamı"¹⁴⁸, however, has not. Yet, in the case of the first two, so greatly have they been adapted and pointed for stage presentation, that to consult the novel text is of very little help in dealing with the play, while the third play mentioned above exploits and distorts the social material which forms the basis of its loosely woven plot that it hardly merits serious treatment at all.

145. KEMAL, Orhan. "72. Koğuş", presented by the Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu, 1967-8 season.

146. ÖZAKMAN, Turgut. "Sarıpınar 1914"; from "Değirmen", a novel by Reşat Nuri Güntekin, İnkilap ve Aka Kitabevi, İstanbul, 1966. The play was presented by the AST, 1967-8.

147. TANER, Haldun. "Keşanlı Ali"; publication details not known. The play was presented by the AST, 1965-6.

148. KEMAL, Orhan. "Yalova Kaymakamı", presented by the Ulvi Uraz Tiy.'68

"Devri Süleyman" was serialised in 'Ulus' in April and May 1968 but has so far proved unobtainable. It is after stating these limitations that assessment may now be attempted.

"72. Koguş" by Orhan KEMAL.

Orhan Kemal wrote this piece in 1954 as a long story to expose a side of modern Turkish life hitherto unknown to most Turkish people. His realistic treatment of prison life verges on the brutal, yet in the midst of apparent hopelessness, the author sings a triumphant song to Man's endurance and indestructible sense of humanity. The story was based on the sufferings of the writer who was imprisoned during World War II. Rewriting it in play form, he states in his introduction to the work in the theatre programme,¹⁴⁹ that he now believes in the basic goodness of human beings and therefore will treat his subject 'from a more positive angle!' "No matter what you do," writes Orhan Bey, "you cannot beat him. Let him sink down to the mire; let him creep in the mud, but he will at one point arise and show you he is human." The following extensive quotation from the author's introduction illustrates his thesis and belief in Man's indestructible, indomitable spirit. A prisoner of the State he may be and worthy of punishment, but first he is a man, and if he can rise above what he has been subjected to, whether justly or unjustly, his praises must be sung.

149. Reproduced from the programme of the AST, 1967-8 season.

" The prisoners who have been conveyed to this 72nd Block as a result of the unbalance in our society, have fallen into the abyss of misery, poverty, disgrace and indignity; none of them of their own volition, mind you, but still they have fallen there and have lost much of their humanity. There is nothing they wouldn't do for a piece of bread. They can easily kill each other through dirty tricks once they know that by so doing they can obtain some money. All this is true, not only for the 72nd Block but for all over the world ; 'a hungry cur burns the bakery'. It is my firm conviction, however, that the goodness present deep down in Man is never completely destroyed no matter where he is nor under what circumstances. Even the vilest person remembers a good deed. The Captain, one of the prisoners, shares the money that comes from his mother, with the hungry, dirty, miserably wretched, cell mates; he holds their need in esteem. He provides them with clothes to wear and a bed on which to sleep, and raises them to the level of relatively well-off people. These men who have fallen deep into the horrible abyss of poverty and hunger are saved and there is born within them an admiration for the man who has saved them. There is love in this admiration; there is friendship and a feeling of wanting to make sacrifice for this person who has helped them for the sake of the goodness shown towards them. Eventually the day dawns when the Captain who helped them is brought to ruin and destruction; then these men rise without hesitation whatsoever and give what they possess for this man to whom they are tied with unbreakable bonds. Moreover, they feel ^{fear} towards Berbat, another prisoner in the block, but this fear turns into an active hatred on behalf of the one who has caused such a disaster in the life of their captain. Th^{is} Berbat, when beaten in gambling, had not paid his debts, but when the Captain lost in a similar game, Berbat sought to take possession of everything the Captain had, from his bed to the very shoes he had on his feet. If these people had lacked the goodness present in humanity, they would have left the Captain to his own devices and would have gathered round their new chief and shared his comfort. But no ! They see an unbearable injustice about Berbat's new position; he does not deserve the prerogatives he has taken unto himself. They are unable to eat the bread he gives them; nor can they smoke his cigarettes. He is unjust, unfair; he is harsh, inhuman ^{and} cruel towards the unfortunate. He loses no opportunity to set himself apart and above the rest, to scorn them, ridicule them and boss them about. Though at first they put up with the rich

- " Berbat's insolence, these feelings of hatred well up in the prisoners, who, though cold, barefoot and hungry; who, by virtue of their humanity, find themselves under obligation to the man they despise. These feelings accumulate and fester in the prisoners till the death of their beloved Captain causes them to break out and overthrow the vile Berbat. Everything he owns is destroyed before his eyes and he is forced to beg in his turn.
- " I consider '72 Block' an abstract as well as a concrete dream. Not only does it sing the ballad of the Captain, Berbat and others, but of the pride, dissent and revolt of Man despite his dirty and reduced status. Or at least I have tried to accomplish such a thing."

In the first act of Orhan Kemal's play, the ragged prisoners of Block 72 are seen to be in a desperate state, sleeping on cement bags, drawing one loaf each per day, half of which they have to trade to get other provisions, spending their time squabbling and cheating each other. Among them is the Captain from Rize, a fine man who says little but whose behaviour inspires in those around him the will to overcome and rise above the meanness of the prison situation. In this, he is opposed by Berbat, a vile creature whose attitude to degradation is to meet the situation by exploiting it to his own mean advantage, at the expense of all others.

The rehabilitation of the prisoners begins when the Captain receives two hundred liras from his mother. Instead of keeping it to himself, he shares it and the food it buys among his fellows, sending a hundred lira to Fatma, a woman in the women's block who does his laundry and with whom he has fallen in love. At once, their spirits rise. But Berbat comes upon them and entices the Captain into a game of chance in progress in another block. Tempted by the dream of further gain with which he might lighten the load on his colleagues, the Captain accepts Berbat's invitation. He plans to use part of his winnings to buy a house for himself and Fatma, not knowing she has been removed to another prison by this time.

But his luck is out. He loses all and the whole block finds itself once more without adequate food or warmth. The Captain withdraws into himself and retreats to the window from which he can look across the quad to where he believes Fatma to be. Berbat arrives and gloats over the whole community. The prisoners feel sorry for the Captain and defend him against Berbat's insults. However, when the Captain is discovered the next morning, frozen to death by the window, they rise up in indignation and beat Berbat half to death. By his suffering, the Captain has brought the prisoners' respect in themselves. They vow never to sink so low again no matter what happens to them.

Though the Captain is yet another example of ineffective goodness in that he does nothing to win the prisoners over and is helpless before such organised evil as Berbat, his example achieves very positive results. Distorted social values led him to commit murder as his part in a blood feud, but in effect, he has in him all the love of his fellow-men and care for their suffering of a saviour.

It is a particular skill of the dramatist that he can plot from scene to scene the return of the prisoners along the path of humanity, the transformation of their misery into joy, their meanness into honour, without drawing off into sentimentality or melodrama.

The language is dialect and slang. The raciness helps to keep the story away from the melodramatic. The story has unity of purpose. Every action leads to the one conclusion. The head warder brings to a close each scene. His conversation heavily underlines the official attitude to the in-mates which is one of lack of understanding and sympathy of any sort. Cracking his whip, he reminds the prisoners that they are vermin as far as the outside world is concerned. But, himself being a representative of the world he speaks of, little difference can be detected between the two. In fact, by the end of the play, the prisoners have achieved a new dimension of nobility that the head warder had failed to recognise. To him, all prisoners are as Berbat.

As a piece of though put on the stage, the play is a success. The author had a mission in writing this play. He wished to publicism a dark side of life of which most of his audience was ignorant. Perhaps he has even introduced a theme of which the courts are ignorant. The fact that a man may retain in his character many admirable qualities while having transgressed the law of the land in some singular situation. Prison reform is still in its infancy in Turkey, and Orhan Kemal may have done much to prompt new thought by presenting his play.

"Saripinar 1914" by Turgut ÖZAKMAN.

While the novel from which this play is drawn treats in a realistic fashion one of the basic problems of that era indicated in the title, the play takes considerable liberties and seeks to present a timeless experience. The theme concerns the enormous gap between the legislators and the legislated in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. Özakman, in his adaptation of the novel, takes liberties with the tone of the original and presents the action in an epic theatre style making its message more universal and immediate thereby. He chooses to change the name of the play to "Saripinar 1914", being the name of a district and the date of the action we see on the stage.

The play starts with the narrator coming onto the stage ringing a bell and pulling a tripod camera on wheels along side

of him. There is no curtain and the stage has been prepared ahead of time. On the stage there is a small platform with a screen set above it and seven candles are arranged symmetrically along its edge. Further to the right of the platform can be seen a table and three chairs. The left part of the stage is bare. Brown and white are the dominating colours. The screen is white and all the rest is brown. Arabic handwriting in white decorates the brown walls of the set. The simplicity of the setting does not draw one's attention from the action in any way.

With the entry of the narrator ringing the bell, the lights fade in. On the screen are seen four pictures of men living in caves ; Stone Age men or men leading Stone Age lives perhaps ? One is brought to think of the cave-dwellers who still exist this way in Afyon, Ürgüp, Erzincan and other parts of the east. The narrator introduces the time and place of the action but his manner of speech makes it quite clear he is referring to modern Turkey. He insists, as if the very idea were incredible to the audience, that in those times people did live in caves, cut off from their government, ignored and brutally treated - all quite different from the ways we know today ! As he goes out, he places the camera on the right side of the stage.

At this point, the Kaymakam and Hurşit, a soldier in his service, are seen to appear. The Kaymakam, bandaged all over, is lying

on an iron bed. They tell us that the previous night there had been an earthquake in which the Kaymakam and many others were badly wounded. Their language, not always clear but very alive and amusing in the way of old dialects, is sprinkled with Ottoman argot.

Niyazi efendi, commander of the military, arrives to announce that he has relayed the news of Saripinar's earthquake to the editor of Nida-yi.Hak, the Istanbul newspaper. He expresses his fear that he will lose his post for 'troubling higher authorities'. The Kaymakam is horrified. He confesses that what he has passed off as an earthquake is something quite different. The previous evening he had been a guest at a rather disreputable house party where a Bulgarian girls called Naciye had done a belly-dance. In the excitement of the moment, one of the guests thought there had been an earthquake and in the rush for the door, the Kaymakam had been trampled underfoot.

News of the 'disaster' annoys the Mutassarif, who is more concerned with his own illness than with his responsibility to his province in this time of disaster. He too is worried about the security of his post. With great fear and reluctance, he passes the news onto the Vali, conscious that he stands to be blamed by this higher authority for an accident, whether natural or unnatural, in that province.

Huseyin Rusuhi, the editor of Nida-yi Hak, on the other hand, is pleased to learn of the news, and, like the others, is completely

unbothered about any suffering that might have befallen the people of Sarıpınar. He sees in this an opportunity to display his literary virtuosity, and the result of his moving article is that Sarıpınar becomes famous; a government collection is set up by the annoyed officials of the city, who get in touch with the Vali and tell him to settle the whole thing.

The Vali, being a realistic man, orders an enquiry into the earthquake and the Mutassarif brings in a group of seismologists, who confirm that there has in fact been no such event. But by this time, the government in İstanbul is in trouble. Material help is pouring in from all over the world; seismologists of all nations are teaming into the country. To tell them the truth would be to acknowledge the lack of organisation and communication -(of that time?) The Government insist that the Vali 'do something.... '

The Vali decides to visit Sarıpınar. The Kaymakam panics fearing the Mutassarif as the Mutassarif fears the Vali. Then, just as this group think they have the situation in hand, it is learnt that the Crown Prince, Şehzade Şemsettin Efendi, is about to arrive with a train of foreign newspapermen. The panicking officials hold conferences about what shall be done. Kazım, an engineer, suggests that he and a group of peasants could actually create an earthquake scene by swinging a few

hammers and bringing down a few houses. Daring is not a quality that the Vali is noted for, so he prefers to turn down this offer and wait in trepidation for the arrival of the fearsome party.

The fatal day arrives; the Crown Prince staggers half drunk and nine parts stupid into the 'belediye' on the carpet specially laid out for him. He is shocked to see the district in ruins ! In the mind of the visitors, there is no doubt whatever that an earthquake has indeed taken place. The Vali praises the Kamakam to the Prince for not having left his post in the hour of danger. Everyone praises everyone else. Desperate to get away from such squalor, the Prince makes the appropriate noises, issues medals to the entire gaggle of officials for their heroism in the course of duty, and leaves post haste.

Except for the dramatic pointing, the play has remained in the main faithful to the novel. In the novel, the engineer is ordered to take down the houses of Saripinar; the reasoning of the petty officials is given; their indifference, their bungling and lack of response to the people they are governing is dealt with in detail. When their problems in governing are explained thus, some understanding of their despair, leading to their inefficiency, can be mustered. But in the play, these men are presented only from a functional point of view; they help the story to move. There is no opportunity to see them

other than as officials failing in their responsibilities because of too great a concern for private ambitions. The end of the play is more bitter than that of the novel because the Prince actually thinks the township has been the subject of an earthquake. The play, then, is more didactic and the people's problem more heavily underscored. From the scenes which show symbolically the lives of the peasants, poverty, ignorance and the incredibly cruel way they are treated, stand out. Perhaps the bitterest comment is that the peasant is seen not to know that the treatment he receives is excessively cruel.

The theme of the play is nothing new. The gap between legislator and legislated; the indifference of the ruling classes to the problems of the commons is well-worked, but Özakman, through use of the epic theatre tradition, has said more energetically.

In the staging, the influence of Brecht is unmistakable. The camera which is always focussed on the actors, symbolically proving the objectivity of their actions and that what is witnessed is a series of snapshots of actual happenings, is a well-worn expressionist ploy. Together with this constant reminder of objectivity, one is always reminded that what is being seen is a play. The narrator steps in and

out of the story, having played various different parts. The scene is shifted in full view of the audience; the characters hold their pose a few seconds after the lights have been faded in, photograph-like in their stance.

Writing about the objectivity of the epic theatre, Brecht has said to the effect that the epic style must turn the spectator into an observer. It must awaken his energy and demand of him decisions. This it will do by distracting dramatic experience and breaking the hypnotic spell that realists and symbolists alike cast upon their audience. Thus, by being constantly aware of themselves as observers, the audience does not directly participate in the play. Minds and not hearts are bestirred.

In "Sarıpınar 1914" , one is not so much aware of a problem of Ottoman times, as one which is currently being experienced. The lyricism in the play, the long ballads spoken aloud by either the narrator or the three peasants who represent the common man, give their message a universal quality. They are heard to say :

"Hail the newcomer and curse the out-goer."

and

"We're only minor government clerks,
Who is there to look after us ?"

and

"It passes from one director down to the other,
till the fault lands in the lap of the minor clerk."

and

"The important thing is not so much to manage the work,
but to manage the manager." 150

In each of these three comments, it is clear to the audience, that Özakman is not referring to times past. The compact quality of the rhyme lends to them everlasting quality of proverbs.

It is impossible to identify with any of the characters. They are not presented to us as people with histories and personalities. They are mouth pieces for certain types in particular situations. This is a certain lacking in Özakman ; his characters never have personality. A good epic can still have individualism that leaps out at the audience. One has but to think of "Mother Courage," by Bertholt Brecht, so it is not the fault of the medium. Even though, Brecht, in theory, was hostile to the audience being moved emotionally by the play, he too, as Eric Bentley recalls, it is quite permissible within the framework of the genre for the spectator to be moved by the individual fate of the characters so long as the moving quality is one general to the type. ¹⁵¹

The production of the play was quite successful, the mixture of realism and impressionism being quite impressive. The dialect and clothing were realistic; the development of the plot, impressionistic. Throughout the lighting was flat; no trick of the spots drew attention to any one personage or group. Equal emphasis to word, object and gesture was maintained during the entire play. The initial setting never varies; nothing is added or subtracted from the scene except the Kaymakam's iron bedstead. Even the pictures which appear on the screen accompanying

151. BENTLEY, Eric. "The Playwright as a Thinker", Harcourt, Brice and World Inc., New York, (1953?)

the appropriate action on stage blended unobtrusively, welding the experience into a whole, the first pictures of the evening being the last.

"Keşanlı Ali" by Haldun TANER.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about "Sarıpınar 1914" is its carefree irreverence and frankness. This irreverence was not entirely new in the 1968 play. It had been noted before in the play-revue, "Keşanlı Ali." However, whereas in "Sarıpınar 1914" the irreverence was closely tied in with accurate comment, heavily underscored by the use of actual film, in "Keşanlı Ali", the wildness of the comment and fun was accompanied by a similar wildness in the treatment of detail. This has had a devastating effect on the worth of the play. If it had been intended as a satire, it was received merely as an entertainment. It seems to have been an attempt to harness the old 'orta oyunu' format to a vehicle for comment on the 1965 socio-political scene. In this, it has failed. It has spread its net too widely and only glanced at problems it should have scrutinised.

"Keşanlı Ali" is more of a revue with a social purpose than a play per se. It is a succession of separate scenes loosely connected by a plot which is almost incidental to the entertainment.

Each scene treats a problem confronting modern Turkey. The title of each scene is flashed onto a screen and an action commenting on that title is played out. It is only on reflection that there seems to have been a plot at all. All in all, forty seven characters are involved in a welter of event. At the heart of each scene is a song crystallising each theme and the comment made upon it.

The title of the first episode is "Sineklidağ'da
152
anarşi devri. Sefalet! Rezalet! Cinayet!" The action is then worked out in rapid movement and dialogue, culminating in Şerif's song, summarising and generally applying the theme. The song itself tells of people's attitudes to the job they do, stressing their general selfishness and failure to work as part of a team towards some single national enterprise; in short, the 'nine-to-five' attitude :

" Everyone has one thing at which he excels.
All right; we accept this ! Fine !
The bandit in a hold up,
The banker signing cheques,
The whore fixing her hair,
The despot frowning down on you " 153

Thus comment is made by this conscious juxtaposition of unlikely - or apparently so - trades and professions. In the third scene, the inhabitants of the slum prepare for the elections. Deciding on Ali for mayor, they sing the following folksong embodying a generalisation of folk psychology in such a situation.

152. "In Sineklidağ, the reign of anarchy has begun ! Poverty ! Shame ! Murder !"

153. Translated from rough notes taken during a performance.

"We have a leader now
 To rid us of all trouble.
 If you have a leader, you may relax ;
 You can feel safe and secure;
 If you have a problem, don't let it bother you.
 Forget all about it; wipe it from your mind.
 It is an old habit we humans have,
 To make an idol for ourselves.
 It's always been a rule,
 To set up gods and worship them." 154

The first scene of the second part deals with Zilha taking lessons in the behaviour of high society. When she sings her song, she is seen to be taking on the role of chorus, stepping outside her own behaviour and commenting adversely upon it, in the manner of Şerif. However, in order to comment effectively on the sickness of society, each character used for this purpose has to assume an intellectual ability and awareness far beyond that which he has exhibited during the action to that point. Once the song is over, he steps back into his humbler role inside the general action.

While Haldun Taner seeks to cast as widely about as he can in Turkish society for his targets, among socialites, politicians, policemen and scientists, the price he has had to pay for this luxury is vast. No single problem is fully dealt with. His treatment is necessarily too shallow. His many digressions from the central theme in each episode further dilute his comment, destroying the natural flow and confusing the audience. As if having realised this, he feels bound

to line up his key figures at the end of part one and make them repeat the salient points of the action as if by way of an aide memoire for the audience. They do this again at the beginning of the second part.

Again, as individuals, the characters do not exist. They are types who, at best, are accurately observed, but when the pressure of time and the complication of the action get on top of the playwright, his sights get confused and he retreats into caricature more worthy of the music hall. His depiction of the bourgeoisie in the characters of Ahsen and Nevarre, speaking their mixture of French and Turkish, is on the same level as the spoofing of such by the 'Orta oyunu' playwright who gives us the character of 'Celebi'.

- AHSEN : My appetite seems to have been whetted by having
visited foreign places. It's my nature, I suppose !
- NEVARRE : Je ne vous aucun rapport.
- AHSEN : Mais voyons, cherie. When you were Bulent's wife, 155
you didn't look like a very 'appetisante' creature to me.

Now while this may have been true of bourgeoisie conversation a hundred years ago, it is certainly not true of that strata of society today. If Taner claims to have been purposely aiming at producing 'orta oyunu' echoes for purposes of local colour, then he is still guilty of upsetting the tone of the work. Is it meant to be satirical or is it purely fun ? This is a small point but indicative of the confusion that reigns in Taner's mind. Jumping on the current bandwagon, he equates poverty with

worthiness. Slum dwellers are seen to be innocent of complicity in their own fate, merely exploited by the rich. It is things like this that rob the work of seriousness and turn it into fable.

Humour, which occasionally moves the audience to hilarious laughter, is achieved through situation rather than through wit and observation. This, of course, is in the tradition of 'orta oyunu' but it is certainly not in the tradition of satire. One scene achieves its comic effect by its being played in front of a public toilet. It is not so much the dialogue but the visual context which backs it which provokes the mirth.

"Keşanlı Ali" is an attempt to haul the old popular street entertainment upto date. In this, it is successful because it is enjoyable. But in that it tries to infuse sophisticated and intellectual social comment into a medium that never pretended to seriousness. There is something rather cheap about bending social deprivation to comic treatment; that is not to say that humour is out of place in treating social shortcomings, only that when the result of levity encourages the audience to make light of the problem some serious disservice to the community has been made. It is the measure of the success of this play as a piece of dramatic thought that four years after its first performance, people remember the tunes while few retain a coherent idea of the plot or the satirical intent.

"Devri Süleyman" by Aydın ENGİN. 156

Despite the propagandist intentions of this entertainment with a political motive, this work is first and foremost an 'evening out'. This phrase has been resorted to since none of the strict terminology denoting conventional genres of the drama seem to fit it. Perhaps it is a burlesque? Yet while it certainly burlesques chosen targets, it takes its own loyalties in deadly seriousness.

The purpose of this entertainment is to publicise as widely as possible criticisms of the government as perpetrated by writers of the Left. It goes as near as it dares to naming names by building up such a desperately obvious analogy to current situations that more would be crude overstatement. Even as it stands, the dullest member of the audience could not fail to register the reference. Yet, as if unsure that their message has been taken, the cast sing a song ironically underscoring the point that there is absolutely no intention on their part that the audience should read into the Süleyman of the title any reference to another well-known public figure by that name !

The information from which the script has been compiled derives from popular reading into newspaper articles. Its tone is no more than that of cartoons in government-recognised newspapers with which the nation has been familiar for the last eight years or so. Nothing presented

on the stage is new to the audience. They are aware of the ideas and criticism before they go into the theatre. Because of the millions of liras' worth of publicity given to the show by its being at first banned by the police and censor in March-April, 1968, one might even suppose that the audience knows what its reaction is supposed to be in advance. "Devri Süleyman" during the season had turned into a sort of "East Lynne". The audience's greatest enjoyment stemmed from the belief that it was partaking in forbidden fruits and from the fact that its own participation in the way of cheers and hoots of derision were welcomed by the cast.

Yet this work is intended as a serious warning. Its final purpose after the fun has died down is deadly serious, though, it is debatable whether its audience, mob-like in their demonstration of political allegiance during the performance, considers it as such. It can, of course, be forgiven for this because the whole thing takes place on a very low plane of intelligence. It is as if Joan Littlewood had been called on to reproduce faithfully on stage the sixth form revue. It exhibits all the adolescent broadside of sixth form wit and all the vitality and controlled exuberance of a Littlewood production.

The seriousness of the work is driven home in the last lines of the evening. The cast lines up after the fun has died down and chants an address to the audience. Led by the player who features as

Çetin Altan, who beats a drum in the manner of night-watchmen of old İstanbul announcing a fire to the people of the 'mahalle', the entire cast recite : "The drum will be beaten nightly for those who understand its message." Immediately a chord is struck in the minds of those who hear as they remember the old proverb : "To those who understand, the sound of the fly is as loud as the saz; to those who do not, even the drum sounds faint."

The main theme of the entertainment is that patriots should mourn the passing of Turkish Independence in the face of the United States Middle Eastern policy. The 'kompradors', foreign firms floated as Turkish enterprises backed with foreign capital, are no more than the arms of colonisation and do not represent home industry. Among those mentioned in the entertainment by name are Pirelli, Pepsi-Cola, Vita Margarine and Uni-Royal Tyres. The 'komprador's' chief ally in perpetrating the new colonisation is one, Süleyman, the new 'muhtar' of Sülemaniye.

The performance takes place on an open stage. At the back is an enormous book painted in primary colours. Its pages contain appropriate cartoons from political life which fit the scenes which are to be played before them. A narrator figure turns these as the story proceeds. Among the salient props are a 'red Telephone' on which the

'muhtars' of Süleymaniye are wont to call up their 'Uncle' (the United States) for instructions as to how the 'mahalle' should be run; a box to represent a desk, a speaker's platform and a wall. A smaller platform represents the ever-decreasing sphere of Turkish self-determination onto which the common people are beaten by a truncheon-wielding American soldier.

Beginning on a humorous note, as the intensity of the message grows, the humour drops away, till what is left is a savage exaggeration and a nationalistic ra-raing. Needless to say, the most pertinent satire is embodied in the more accurate and quiet beginning; when tempers are lost, the whole thing explodes in ridicule which rebounds on itself. It is interesting that whereas during the early part, the applause, enjoyment and participation was evenly distributed throughout the audience, by the final scenes, one half of the audience was almost silent while the other half was on its feet cheering. Perhaps the most interesting feature about this was both halves of the audience resembled each other; there was no identifying İşçi Partisi supporters by sex, age, or dress. The company chose to read the fact that the entertainment was finally passed by the authorities, as a victory forced out of the censor by public demand. It is no wild guess to assume that it was the very ferocity of the ending which eventually persuaded the censor that this was, in fact, no more than a harmless 'night out'.

The plot, if it can be so called, proceeds as follows : The old deaf Muhtar of Süleymaniye (İnönü) has retired because the Uncle complains that he only hears what he wants to hear. A new 'komprador' must be found since the old one was too wary by far. He was known to remark, "These uncles come easily, but they are slow to leave." So Uncle arrives to hold a contest for the post of 'muhtar'. To win, contestants have to define successfully the term 'komprador'. Süleyman wins by cheating. He reads his answer from a 'muska', a charm given to him by the 'hoca'.

So Süleyman is sent to the States where his brain is washed and his eyes are blinded by the greenness of the dollar, which he confuses with its significance as the colour of the Prophet, reading his conditioning as an American lackey as a work of Allah. Through Süleyman, Uncle brings prosperity to the village he has bought. Factories with the names of Singer, Coca-Cola and Pirelli spring up in the environs. The poor, grateful for the work thus provided, are puzzled when the machines made in these factories break down. While they think they have bought 'American efficiency', they discover that the end product is very Turkish behind its American name. Great point is made that the new Turkish car, 'the Anadol' has an Austin engine, Fiat rods and American tyres.

The leader of discontent is a youth called Çetin Altan. Süleyman tries to appease the people with gifts of money, but Çetin's fierce pride prevents him taking his. Then a fight breaks out in 'Mibris Sokak' (Cyprus) and the whole neighbourhood clamours for the 'muhtar' to put an end to it. Süleyman watches the action through glasses and a periscope, reminiscent of the design of those used by Atatürk, watching the expulsion of the Occupation Armies of 1923. Does the 'Muhtar' not see the same dangers that Atatürk saw ? But even when shown how to use the equipment, he cannot see anything. In disgust, they sneer at his being neither a soldier nor a politician, only a college professor. (Until this last holder of office, all leaders of Turkey have been either army- or politically-trained.)

The people demand action in Mibris Sokak, but they are beaten to silence by an American soldier. Trying to break out of his grip, they find that they are hemmed in. They cannot go anywhere without trespassing on American property (air bases). All at once, they realise Süleyman has sold their heritage for dollars. One by one, they are beaten onto the smaller platform, Çetin being the last to hold out. Eventually, even he has to submit. It is then that the action is closed by the beating of the drum.

If at this point one can leave the theatre on the same note that had been struck by the close of the first act, it is because of the

energetic team playing of the cast. It is because one has forgotten the trite warning which, in all seriousness, must be judged to be false. Where is the shame in accepting foreign help to tap resources you haven't the capital or the technique to tap on your own ? One recalls what Ereğli was fifteen years ago before opened up by foreign enterprise. Is it wrong for the foreigners to expect some sort of remuneration in return? Surely it is a fallacy to connect business enterprise as a quid pro quo for American air bases ? If Turkey chooses to be a participator in NATO, this providing of air bases is her contribution to the scheme, and if she is to vest the blame for this in anybody, it must be in all the member countries of the treaty because decisions are a joint responsibility.

To cite a case in point where aid and politics are not tied up, one considers the U.S. shipments of grain to the U.A.R. While Nasser was publically blaming the United States for backing Israel in the 1967 war, American ships were unloading free grain in Alexandria. Could it be maintained that Turkey's relations with the U.S. are as strained as those of the U.A.R.?

In respect of Çetin Altan being cited as the champion of Turkish freedom, an examination of his financial status, of the fact that his daughter is a pupil in an American college when the nationalist movement is for closing foreign educational institutions, is

enough to claim that most of his social and political conscience is in his mouth rather than his brain and heart. One recalls the heavy subsidie to Turkish educational enterprise given by the Ford Foundation. It is impossible to walk through the univerisities of Hacettepe and the Middle East Technical, where most activity against the Americans is based, without noticing that almost all equipment is stamped with American brand names, most of it given freely under an aid programme too. Then, of course, one remembers the ever-flowing stream of Turks who leave for the States on fully paid scholarships under the Fullbright Scheme. Surely it is, in the end, a case of cutting one's coat according to one's cloth? Nationalism ^{has} a price that few countries can afford to pay these days. Where is the shame in accepting someone else's surplus goods and talent, when one's own stock are over-taxed ? When it becomes a case of a qualified Turk being displaced by a foreigner, when that foreigner is actively intent on drawing off more profits than the aid he is prepared to pump into enterprise, then the situation demands closer review, However, this is hardly the case in Turkey today.

Bearing in mind that the entire audience must in their saner moments be fully aware of these facts, this leads one to suspect that the popularity of the piece is founded on some fond, nostalgic

yearning for the world when it was other than it is, or a looking forward to some future time when it will be possible to throw out the foreigner yet retain the standard of living his grants have made possible. "Devri Süleyman", then, is an escapist entertainment.

"Yalova Kaymakamı" by Orhan KEMAL.

Once more, in this play, this author is expounding his faith in the inherent worth of the poor and underprivileged. Presented in the season following the success of "72.Koğuş", it illustrates how quickly an author with only a message to broadcast and little interest in the theatre and drama as a story-telling art, can fall into a rut where he is predictable to the point of monotony. This play is grossly engineered. Conceived in terms of black and white, it is in turn naive in its exposition and development of character, and totally disregarding of form.

Since the days of "Köşebaşı"¹⁵⁷, presented by the State Theatre in the 1947-8 season, the Turkish dramatist has shown a preference for writing an impression of some ^{theme} rather than a full treatment. He likes to take a certain neighbourhood, liberally sprinkled with colourful easily identifiable characters. These he allows to wander on and off the set, philosophising in turn, the whole work beginning and ending

157. TECER, Ahmet Kutsi. "Köşebaşı", translated by Nüvit Özdoğru, published by the Turkish Centre of the Institute of International Theatre, Ankara, December, 1964.

on the same corner being the main link between the characters, hinging on the flimsiest of plots. The entire action passes between sunrise and sunset, the nightwatchman introducing the locale in the first scene as he puts out the street lamps, and winding up the story, commenting on the characters as they really are rather than as they see themselves, as he once more puts on the lights and darkness comes to the 'mahalle'. The Turks were deeply impressed by Thornton Wilder's "Our Town"; and indeed, very exposed to it, the United States Information Service seeing in it great propaganda value and sending Helen Hayes to play it all over the Middle East. In translation, it has been played frequently, the latest time being the 1968 season, when it was done by the State Theatre. It has given rise to its languid, reassuring tone. However, much of the reason for its success with playwrights may be due to the fact that it is an easy type of play to write. Those not aware of Wilder's purpose might read into his style a license to sprawl, an excuse for rambling and formlessness. Many plays are guilty in this respect and the latest is "Yalova Kaymakamı". True, it does have a plot, a very familiar one, which at every turn proceeds predictably. In "72. Koğuş", Kemal was dealing with a singular set of circumstances and his assertions about life in those straits were fresh and enlightening. In this play, however, the milieu he has chosen is routine and his insistence on the rights and wrongs

of the case ring stale. He has chosen a well-worn plot and nothing new is said about its situation. On examination, "Yalova Kaymakami" will be found to share many features of plays already treated in this thesis.

The lesson to be learnt is that once as a writer one has been allowed to stand up and shout at people, one then has to sit down and work out a way of adapting one's material to forms and patterns which will render it fresh, interesting and attractive. This lesson has to be learnt by so many Turkish dramatists of whom Orhan Kemal is one.

In a family of six living in a one-roomed 'gecekondu' in Kasımpaşa, Erol is the white-hot hope for the future. His one talent is his physical appeal and, though in love with a neighbour's daughter, he is aware of his attraction for Hülya, plain daughter of the vulgar rich merchant, Zülfikâr. His family are confident that he will do the right thing by them and choose the rich girl.

Hülya arrives with gifts for Erol's family, and, when the betrothal is effected, a flat for the family in the basement of Zülfikâr's apartment block and a job for Erol in the merchant's office. The family is obsequiously grateful, while inwardly boiling with rage at the injustice of the system.

Starting work at the office, Erol falls foul of İlhami efendi, the merchant's oily major domo, who sees the son-in-law as a threat to his position. By skilful manipulation of the merchant and Erol, İlhami deviously provokes the boy's pride causing him to stage a scene and a walk out after insulting Zülfikâr. Needless to say, Erol's family find themselves reduced once more with alarming rapidity to living in their old 'gecekondu'.

By this time pregnant, Hülya, distraught at the desertion of her husband, falls down stairs and loses her baby. Swallowing his pride, Zülfikâr begs Erol to come to his wife's death bed, which, swallowing in turn his pride, he does. Over the dying girl, a reconciliation of sorts is effected between the two families. Erol's people are full of pity for the merchant but suggest that his misery is a sort of divine retribution for the rich manipulating the poor as they do.

The noticeable feature of this play is that in production the least important element is the theme and the second is the plot. Both are well-word and poorly developed. Nothing new is said on the subject of poverty, and what appeal there is for action is purely emotional. The points of comparison between the characters of the rich and the poor are blatantly obvious and grossly over-simplified, deriving in inspiration from the 19th century melodrama. Erol's family sit down to a meal consisting of one loaf of bread between six, while Hülya's family parade diamonds at breakfast, furs in hot weather and chandeliers in the kitchen. Their purses bulge with notes. A coffee house group exist to underline this difference in case it has not already been noticed.

The central character in the story, Erol, whose choice and motivation carry the theme of the play, is hopelessly lost among a plethora of similarly one-sided characters. This boy, in most of his appearances is angry that he should be confronted with such an unfair choice, bemoaning it from time to time when he stand forward to harangue the audience, intoning his speech like an Anatolian lament. He makes one decision to help his family and another, equally emotional, to retract his promise of marriage to Hülya and preserve his pride. The other 'poor' characters are seen to be poor and passive, or poor and active. The first

group comprises Erol's family; the second, Silo and Çigene from the coffee house, whose positiveness shows in a life of petty crime dressed up to sound like honest revenge against a society geared to satisfying the desires of the rich.

The rich are seen as blameworthy, largely on account of their lack of concern for the poor. One is left to condemn them for their coarseness and pretence, and presumably, because they do not open their purse to everyone who asks; though Zülfikâr did appear to hand over a job and a suit of clothes to his prospective son-in-law, albeit unwillingly, with very little persuasion from Hülya. But one gathers it is mainly for her that he did so, and that it is by no means understandable that he should feel upset that his daughter is making a match with a man of no means whereby to support her. Indeed, perhaps the only blatant exploitation is not on the part of Zülfikâr, obviously intended as the chief villain, but on the part of the daughter who 'buys' the boy's sisters in front of Erol's real girl friend. Here Hülya gloats over her victory in true 'scarlet woman' fashion.

Perhaps there is one subtlety in that the exploiting rich, as represented by Zülfikâr, are in turn exploited by the clever poor, represented by İlhami, but in the way this thread is left unworked, it is highly unlikely that such irony was intended, considering the nature of the last speech of the poor by one of their number in the

coffee house. This is a straightforward elegaic lament at the eternal defeat of the poor. It boasts their inherent incorruptibility and pride, but makes no recognition of the fact that the poor, as represented by İlhami, can beat the rich at their own game.

The interest in this play, then, is not a mental one but a visual one. It is as if the excuse for the presentation of "Yalova Kaymakamı" by the Ulvi Uraz Tiyatrosu, is solely the performance of Ulvi Bey as İlhami. His observation of the character type; tone of voice, delivery and movement is exceedingly funny and bitterly accurate. Other set scenes which stand forward from the general drift of the action are the exceedingly clever 'tavla' game in (Act) I, Scene 2 , and the well-rehearsed duel of words between Zülfikâr and Eynur, in Act II, Scene 1.

So the scenes which carry the evening as an entertainment are those least concerned with the main plot and the the^me. This is an example of the exploitation for purposes of entertainment of the current fashion for social drama which is filling Ankara theatres regularly each performance. As theatre, it shows that in their taste for melodrama spiked with a problem, emotionally and sentimentally pursued, the preferences of the Turkish audience has not changed in a hundred years.

In the main, this thesis has been a short examination of the way the theatre in Turkey has developed since the revolution of 1924. Because of the paucity of records and texts available for consultation covering the early decades of this period, little in the way of conclusive comment can be assayed. However, it is no inaccuracy to say that many dramas from that time were escapist by nature with little in the way of social or political comment.

Escapism can be achieved in two ways. The first is by drawing on material having nothing to do with the contemporary situation. The second is by treating the ideal and the unattainable, which is what Niyazi Aki considers the theatre between 1923 and 1959 to have taken as its main concern. He writes that most plays of the period treat themes wherein "the individuals melted in the cauldron of the community"¹⁵⁸, which depict the happy individual as being the one with the greatest community spirit, whose behaviour shows dedication to the common good and hostility towards selfishness; people, in fact, like Murtaza in "Paydos".

Nor is it too wild a statement to assert that between 1924 and 1948, the year in which the State Theatre was founded, theatrical activity was spasmodic and in the hands of private, semi-professional groups

158. AKI, Niyazi, op.cit. p.xiv. 'Conclusion', p.113.

whose economic status was very restricted. Perhaps the most advanced of these groups was the İstanbul Municipal Theatre, under the direction of Muhsin Ertuğrul, which inherited the mantle of the Darubedayii Theatre of Ottoman times as the centre of official theatre activity. Still, if not cramped by financial difficulties, state and local government having little to spend on cultural activities in the early years of the Republic, Ertuğrul was certainly hampered by the attitude of society towards players and playing. The inception of the State Theatre did much to boost the status of acting as a profession. Yet even today, the finer families, (from the stand point of intellect and social standing) would never encourage their children to train for the stage. Hence, in the last twenty years or so, the finest writing and interpreting talent has been denied the theatre.

At the time of writing, there is a movement afoot among younger talents in the State Theatre to deal with yet another handicap faced by writers and actors in Turkey. There is tendency among the powers controlling the State Theatre to cast plays from a select group of actors and actresses, and to reserve stages for predictable writers whose work is well-known by audiences and whose opinions are non-controversial. It is interesting to count the number of great acting talents who have been

forced outside the State system to find adequate scope for expression of their skill and the number of writers who have had to trim their style and expression in order to become acceptable to State Theatre dramaturgs. One wonders whether it was the learning of this discipline that caused Turhan Oflazoğlu to write about "Deli İbrahim" in terms as heavily guarded as to state his chief interest in the character of the sultan was in his 'conscious madness'? No one could blame a writer for becoming enigmatic if it ensures for his work official recognition.

It was never envisaged at the outset how little in the way of tradition or heritage the Turkish dramatist has had to draw upon. The discovery of this handicap necessitated the length examination of pre-revolutionary theatrical activity in Parts I and II of this work in order to try and exculpate him to some extent from having achieved such a restricted amount in comparison to his western counterpart. In effect, the contemporary Turkish dramatist is helped only by what he can glean from his colleagues and adapt from richer cultures to the west. Perhaps it is too early to accuse him of not having been able to evolve as yet an essentially Turkish mode of expression and presentation.

It would greatly assist in the development of the Turkish drama in the period of its expansion as a social and political vehicle, if the dramatist's work could command the attention of a body of well-disposed, serious and able critics. It is, however, most

unfortunate that, as the playwright tends to present to his audience an impression of some theme or problem rather than concentrate on an exhaustive treatment of a single particular aspect of the same, the critic seems content to confine his opinion to all-embracing but shallow accounts of activity over some wide span of years. ¹⁵⁹ It ought to be

impossible for the serious critic to attempt to describe the activity of the Turkish Theatre between 1923 and 1967 in ninety one pages, devoting far short of one full page to any single play while mentioning upwards of two hundred. It ought to be impossible for him to contemplate, as Niyazi ¹⁶⁰

Aki does, the inclusion of sentences which unhelpfully group together plays having only the most superficial, surface similarities, as is the case in the second paragraph on page eighty of his book, which likens "Pusuda" to "Pembe Kadın", and in the third paragraph on page 116 of the same work likening "İçerdekiler" to "Bozuk Düzen".

Even taking for granted that the Turkish critic might consider the theatre of the Republic period as deserving of no more than a 'toplu bakış', without detailed reference to either author or play, there is little excuse for his making correct assumptions while ignoring to mention the more salient evidence that gave rise to those assumptions. Niyazi Aki divides theatrical activity into two main periods:

159. The influence of Veysi and Nergisi perhaps ?

160. AKI, Niyazi. op.cit.p.xiv. 'Conclusion', pp.113-117.

1923-1959 and 1960-1967; he subdivides the first period into 1923-1946 and 1946-1959. The main activity in the first subdivision he deems to be the celebration and insistence upon the positive virtues of the Revolution, and the idealisation through story and characterisation of revolutionary concepts. The choice of the year, 1946, is left unexplained and would seem to be arbitrary, while the reason why 1960 is chosen as the beginning of the new era of theatrical forthrightness and temper is left blatantly unstated, which leads one to ponder over the motives of the particular critic in compiling his text. The attitude of the contemporary censor is ignored. Aki makes much of the obvious growth of tolerance after 1960 towards social outcasts, the localising of their guilt and allowing to them a nobleness of character which might exist unscathed outside the area responsible for their crime. Wrongly, however, he leaves the reader with the impression that this new, sophisticated approach was discovered in 1960 by the authors rather than permitted from that time by the censor.

Throughout this work, it will be noted how much the censor has restricted the free expression of the artist, a fact which also goes to lighten the onus the modern Turkish dramatist has to bear in the way

of his having achieved such a restricted amount. In effect, it is only since 1965 that he has enjoyed complete freedom to say what he wants to. While the government of Süleyman Demirel might be held to account for many things hurled his way by contemporary writers, he will never be accused of forcing them underground. This, in itself, is a magnificent achievement and stands as a monument to that leader's worth and honour.

However, one thing the dramatist must be held responsible for is the fact that so seldom does he achieve any real depth of treatment. For example, when he deals with sex and religion as motives, he never goes beyond surface observations of the one and exposing the superstitious aspects of the other.

In Chapter VI, it is seen how Cahit Atay has exposed for purposes of fun the superstitious nature of the peasant in regard to 'muskalar' and 'hocalar'. In the plays, "Pusuda" and "Karalarin Memetleri", he has been more concerned with showing his city audience that such beliefs exist, and in glossing them over with a layer of broad comedy, he entirely denies the evil nature of those who perpetrate such theories. To discuss the evils of the 'ağalik' is one thing, but to treat with the system that allows the 'ağalik' to exist would be quite another. Surely they deserve harsher treatment than they are allowed? To a country so desperate to modernise, they ought to be seen as an

anathema rather than as a foible. Reşat Nuri Güntekin's play, "Hülleci" 16 similarly exploits the comic aspects of religious convenience. In his introduction to the play, the author states that "it is a simple action written only for the purpose of amusing people, especially those living in the provinces, who are not looking for deep thought but simply an entertainment that is easily followed and comprehended" 162 in terms of sight and sound. He devotes more words to explaining why he employs an 'orta oyunu' technique than he does to why he chose his subject. It is noticeable that as with "Değirmen", he sets his play in Ottoman times; yet just as "Değirmen" lends itself to modern application when turned by Turgut Özakman into "Sarıpınar 1914", so does the story of "Hülleci" have something to say to the modern Turkish audience. Why else should the audience in Konya riot in the streets after its production there in 1965 is the story is pure historical escapism? Fikret Ötyam, in "Gide Gide 3 and 5" mentions men with more than one wife, suggesting that the 'hülle' and his convenient trade is very much a reality in rural community life. It ought to be impossible for an intelligent writer to mention the word 'hülle' without mentioning that the existence of the 'hüllelik' is a blatant use of religion for irreligious purposes.

Similarly, when the modern Turkish dramatist treats with sexual topics, he either evades or misses completely by failing

161. GÜNTEKİN, Reşat Nuri. "Hülleci", İnkılap ve Aka Kitabevi, İstanbul, 1965.

162.

ibid. , Introduction to the play.

by failing to recognise the main issue. In Melih Cevdet Anday's play, "Içeridekiler", a prisoner is broken down by an inquisitor who manipulates his victim's sexual instincts and desire. Arousing the prisoner's desire for a woman, the gaoler confronts him with a particular woman, the victim's sister-in-law, by way of torture. At that point, an interesting situation degenerates into sentimentality showing the victim overcoming his lust and refusing to force himself on his wife's sister. What could have been a poignant analysis of the place of sex in the life of the Turkish male is almost wilfully avoided, reducing the play thereby to being a hymn to one man's self-control. The situation is exploited for its surface thriller quality and peep-show value. No attempt is made to get to the roots of the problem. Few people have known what to make of the play. The second number of "Theatre in Turkey"¹⁶³ assesses it as follows :

"A taut (sic) three character play set in a prison involving a sadistic prison governor (sic). a sex-starved political prisoner and the prisoner's young sister-in-law."

When one examines the play, "Yalan", the misery that drove the girl to suicide likewise contained all the elements needed for a general denunciation of society's values in respect of sex and marriage, yet the author allows his play to degenerate into weepy sentimentality. The girl blames; she does not attack; one wonders what Strindberg would have made her do. ?

163. "Theatre in Turkey", No.2., compiled by Tunç Yalman, the publication of the Turkish Centre of the International Theatre Institute, Ankara.

It is reasonable to contend that sex as a motive in the drama can only arise when parity and equality between men and women as human beings exists and intellect is at least pretended to. It is not untrue to say that in Turkish society, this is by no means the general practice. Albeit, before the law the sexes are equal, but what does this mean unless that equality is carried over into the home situation? The play, "Sultan Gelin", exposes the extreme case of inequality between the sexes in backward rural communities, yet elements of her fate exist in the lives of many so-called emancipated Turkish women, albeit heavily glossed over by a veneer of western sophistication which might fool a casual observer. In such a society, how can a "Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?" be conceived? It is interesting that when Yildiz Kenter played this piece in Istanbul, it was received very coldly by that most sophisticated of audiences. By the time she had toured Ankara with it, she was glad to drop it from her repertoire. Occasionally, the State Theatre presents Strindberg, which, one is tempted to say, is probably a prestige choice. Even Ph.d. students at Hacettepe University could not apply Strindberg's situations on a personal level, and were driven to mouthing the findings of western critics. The conscious, articulate, superior woman in revolt is a character that has yet to appear in Turkish dramatic literature.

The nearest to "Hedda Gabler" is Zehra in "Kurban" and her protest is not because her equality has been denied, but because her inferior role beneath her husband's sway has been usurped.

For generations, the modern Turkish dramatist has been crying out for free expression. The lack of it has protected him from too violent criticism of his work. Now, however, with all restrictions lifted, he is exposed to the same critical judgement to which dramatists everywhere are submitted. This leads one to conclude that the best of his work is yet to come. At the moment, he is enjoying the intoxication of hearing his own unrestricted public voice. In the coming years, it is hoped he will revel in the greater, more satisfying luxury of unrestricted thought which will result in the greater enrichment of his dramatic treatments.

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