

**THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE, EVERYDAY LIFE EXPERIENCE  
& TRANSFORMATION:  
ZEYTINBURNU PEOPLE'S THEATRE**

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& TRANSFORMATION:  
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## ABSTRACT

### THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE, EVERYDAY LIFE EXPERIENCE & TRANSFORMATION: ZEYTINBURNU PEOPLE'S THEATRE

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Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Leyla Neyzi

Keywords: Theatrical Performance, Everyday Life, Youth, Transformation

This thesis analyzes the interplay between everyday life and theatre, and the transformative potential of theatrical performance. The focal point of the study is an amateur theatre group composed of children and young people in Zeytinburnu, a district in Istanbul largely configured of immigrants. Themes involving ethnicity, family, gender and class inform many of the stories performed on stage as the young members of the group have intimately experienced these issues in their everyday lives. The narratives of the young people in the group highlight the transformative potential of theatre activity. This transformative potential is limited in so far as both the contentious group dynamics and the larger social context affect the agents and the community of theatre activity. The alternative mode and political aspects of theatrical performance are discussed, focusing on how youth in the group experience the process of theatrical performance in relation to everyday life experience. This study aims to point out new discussions concerning the function of theatrical performance and the contact between political and theatrical.

## ÖZET

### TİYATRAL PERFORMANS, GÜNDELİK HAYAT VE DÖNÜŞÜM: ZEYTİNBURNU HALK SAHNESİ

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Bu tez tiyatronun gündelik hayatla etkileşimi ve tiyatral performansın dönüştürücü potansiyelini analiz etmektedir. Çalışmanın odak noktasını İstanbul'un göç bölgelerinden biri olan Zeytinburnu'nda, çocuk ve gençlerden oluşan amatör bir tiyatro grubu oluşturmaktadır. Grup üyesi gençler etnisite, aile, toplumsal cinsiyet ve sınıf gibi temalarda oyunlar sahnelerken bir yandan da bu temaların içerdiği meseleleri gündelik hayatlarında deneyimlemektedirler. Gruptaki genç üyelerin anlatıları tiyatral etkinliğin dönüştürücü potansiyelinin altını çizmektedir. Bu dönüştürücü potansiyel hem çekişmeli grup dinamikleri ile hem de tiyatro topluluğunu ve öznelere etkilemekte olan daha geniş toplumsal bağlamın etkileri ile sınırlanmaktadır. Tiyatral performansın alternatif ve politik yönleri gruptaki gençlerin tiyatral performansı gündelik hayat performansı ile ilişkili olarak nasıl deneyimlediklerine odaklanarak tartışılmıştır. Bu çalışma, tiyatral performansın işlevi, politik ve tiyatral olanın ilişkisine dair yeni tartışma noktaları öne sürmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

*Sokaktaki özgürlükçü çocuklara...*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis studies theatrical performance as an anthropological field. Through the ethnographic research conducted with the participants of the Zeytinburnu People's Theatre<sup>1</sup> [ZPT], I analyze the interplay between everyday life and theatre, and the transformative potential of theatrical performance. The everyday life experiences of young people concerning their ethnic and gender identities, family relations and class status will be analyzed in relation to theatrical performance on stage. Focusing on theatrical performance as a process including preparations, discussions and rehearsals, I will discuss the self-reflexivity of participants vis a vis their social conditions and themselves. Looking closely at participants' narratives on the meaning of theatre in their lives and the contentious in-group dynamics, I will be scrutinizing theatrical performance as a transformative process. The discussion of theatrical performance and everyday life is meant to raise new issues regarding subject formation and transformation through self-reflexivity.

My personal experience in the Boğaziçi University Players<sup>2</sup> during my undergraduate years is one of the primary reasons for my interest in studying the points of contact between everyday life and theatre. Theatre became a part of my everyday life in the university, and I was involved in various social and political agendas through theatrical performances. Engaging in a theatrical activity changed, my view of myself and the world.

I was introduced to the activities of ZPT through the organization of the İstanbul Alternative Theatre Platform<sup>3</sup> [IATP]. In the plays, the social, political and daily affairs

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<sup>1</sup> Zeytinburnu Halk Sahnesi [ZHS]

<sup>2</sup> Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Oyuncuları [BÜO]

<sup>3</sup> İstanbul Alternatif Tiyatrolar Platformu [İATP]

of the youth are reflected on stage. The staging of this informal commentary on social and political conditions that the group members experience attracted my attention. What motivated me most was the process by which that commentary on stage is produced and how that process translates into an experience of the participants. Therefore, I began my research by asking: Why do they do theatre? What are the meanings they attribute to theater? How do group members contemplate their own social positions and themselves vis a vis theatre? How does theatre change their lives, if it does so?

### **Some Theoretical Reflections**

Drawing upon the general discussion of art for itself or art for the society; theater literature handles the connection between an artistic product and the social conditions of the people involved in it, that is to say real life, through the notion of the political. The question of what is political in theater has been described in theater literature as the means by which politicization is accomplished through affecting the audience (Piscator, 1985; Brecht, tra. 1990).

Anthropologists, however, when they go to the field and study performances, see them primarily as a source to understand religion, political relations, ethnic identity, and gender relations (Beeman, 1993: 370). In evaluating the interrelation of anthropology and theater, Barba distinguishes between theater anthropology and anthropological theater. The former is the study of human biological and socio-cultural behavior in performative circumstances, while the latter is theatre in which the performer confronts her/his own identity (Barba, cited in Watson, 1987: 23). Closer to the definition of anthropological theater, the more anthropological definitions of theater activity have been developed by theater people. “Third theatre” as the alternative theater in the third world, “lives on the fringe, often on the outside or the outskirts of the centers and capitals of culture” (Barba, cited in Watson, 1987: 18), “environmental theatre” as a description of theater activity not only referring to stage, player or director but to the entire atmosphere (Schechner, 1973), or “theater of the oppressed” (Boal, 1985) are some of these definitions. With the collaboration between anthropology and performance, some works include artistic or ritualistic performances which relate to everyday life experience. Case studies analyzing theatre in terms of its social functions also stem from this anthropology-theater collaboration.

Kidd defines five main strands of popular theater in the third world: struggles for national independence, mass education and rural extension, community or participatory development, conscientization or popular education, popular education or organizing. His main discussion concerns whether theater activity is domestication or liberation oriented. (Kidd, 1984) Developmental theater is defined as a means of consciousness-raising on issues such as hygiene, health and social life in “underdeveloped” regions. Moreover, forms such as community-based theater, applied theater and popular theater are defined as translated forms of social theater (Schechner&Thompson, 2004: 11). In a study concerning psychosocial and theatre activities with Serbian refugees, theatre has been defined as a means of developing relationships, communication and expressions that concentrate on the construction of roles (Schinina, 2004). Nazmul Ahsan studies social theatre in Bangladesh and states that improvisation based on indigenous cultural forms is an excellent way to work in local communities to raise social awareness and accomplish specific program objectives. (Ahsan, 2004: 50) Another case study with refugees discusses performance as a way to develop critical awareness of health programs (Conquergood, 1988). Erlmann, through an ethnographic study with Zulu migrant workers, points out that *isicathamiya* performance enables the powerless to interpret the ideas, attitudes, and actions of the powerful (Erlmann, 1992: 691). In another study, the “theater of the oppressed” workshops, through the notions of interactivity, performing and strategizing, are described as the spaces to name and discuss oppression and empowerment (Karabekir, 2002).

Many of these studies concentrate on theater as a means to develop some awareness about the social conditions of the participants in the theater activity. Whatever the task is, the form of doing theater and the motives of the participants are not stressed, but the aim of the activity as social work is emphasized. Moreover, many writers analyze not the autonomously emerging theater activities but the ones brought by trainers/researchers to these disadvantaged groups (Conquergood, Schinina, and Karabekir). Therefore, even if there are studies including detailed narratives of the participants, most studies reflect the voice of the researcher, or those of the trainers/researchers who brought theatre activity there, rather than the voices of the participants. Therefore, not the meaning of engaging in a performance activity but the functioning of that activity in the broader context of the society is privileged.

Studying performance as a process rather than an event, where individual and collective histories of participants come out, allows us to view theater as a social event

where participants acquire the ability to transform their social lives. Referring to Conquergood's discussion on performance studies, taking proximity rather than objectivity as an epistemological point of departure will lead to a deeper understanding of theater as a social activity (Conquergood, 2002: 149). Thus, research on such a topic with those mentioned privileges will open a space for analyzing theater not only as an artistic form from the perspective of theater studies, anthropology or even performance studies, but also as a cultural formation from the perspective of cultural studies.

This thesis does not claim to discuss the position of the ZPT theatre experience in the history of the alternative-amateur theatre experiences in Turkey, or even in İstanbul, nor does it aim to compare the ZPT theatre experience with the other alternative-amateur theatre experiences in terms of theatrical form, organization and artistic choices. Rather, my aim here is to look closer at the "political" element in the sense of the relation between artistic product and the social conditions of people by analyzing the contact between theatrical performance and the everyday life experiences of ZPT members, focusing on their subject formation processes following the narratives of transformation. However, this research of contact will be more meaningful by thinking it through the notion of alternative-amateur theatre in Istanbul, and the history of theater in Turkey.

For the pre-republican period, it is possible to mention a multicultural theatre atmosphere in İstanbul. It can be argued that the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of Ottoman life had been reflected in the theatrical life of the city. Armenian amateur and professional groups had been the founders of the theatre in Turkey, and also visiting troupes such as French, British and many others, had contributed to the theatre in Istanbul. Moreover, the public forms of theatre such as *Karagöz*, *Hacivat* and *Ortaoyunu* had been the components of Anatolian entertainment culture (And, 1983). However, after the foundation of the Turkish Republic that heritage of diversity of cultures and forms started to be assimilated into a state centered and national form of theatre under the influence of Western national theatre forms. In the 60s, groups claiming to be politically active were engaged in experimental theatrical productions influenced by the theatre of the absurd and existentialism, which were prominent in the West at that time. (Kurhan, 1999: 25) Theatre, like all spheres of Turkish society, had been affected by the 1980 military coup and suffered a period of decline in production. Then in the 90s, the theatre atmosphere in İstanbul started to awake. There is not a coherent academic study on the history and the experiences of the alternative theatre in

Turkey; developing a coherent narrative on the history of non-conventional theatre in Turkey could be the topic of a detailed study. However, here I use my personal observations and information from the theatre field in order to provide a sense of the alternative theatre scene in İstanbul.

Today the theatre atmosphere in İstanbul is composed of many different strands of theatre works and groups. State theatres and the city theatres represent the more conventional tradition of theater. On the other hand, there is an abundance of private theatre companies, some of them claiming to be alternative in the sense that their work is more experimental than the conventional mainstream theatre productions. Amateur-alternative theatre groups, university club groups, workers theatre groups, neighborhood theatres etc. also constitute a large proportion of the theatre groups. The Istanbul Alternative Theatre Platform is one of the collectives founded as a communication and solidarity organization between these alternative-amateur theatre groups.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, there are the recently emerging performance art circles which include the theatrical performances also claiming to be an alternative to the conventional way of doing art, and also theatre. Contemporary Performing Arts Initiative<sup>5</sup> is a communication platform of these performing arts circle.

In an age in which it is argued that theatre is dying; this motley scene tells us that theatre is actually not dying, but becoming something else. The rise in the existence of groups or permanent performances raising claims of feminism, LGBTT movement, Kurdish issue and other democratic rights movements<sup>6</sup> gives us a clue into the idea that people engage in theatrical activity in parallel with their identity belongings and their political stances. Theatrical experience has been come to be an activity of forming, changing and displaying subject and group formations, and expressing ideas about the public culture. How these groups/people experience theatre in relation to their lives and identities would be worth studying in detail. ZPT stands on somewhere in this wide range of theatre activities. Although I neither aim to map this medley nor to situate ZPT in it, I employ it as the background of my analysis of ZPT through which people's

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion on İATP, see Chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> Çağdaş Gösteri Sanatları Topluluğu [ÇGSG]

<sup>6</sup> Some examples are: Feminist Women Circle Theatre Group (Feminist Kadın Çevresi Tiyatro Grubu), A Theatre of One's Own (Kendine Ait Bir Tiyatro), Pink Life Theatre Group (Pembe Hayat Tiyatro Topluluğu), Teatra Bakur.

demands and claims about life and their identity formations have been expressed through theater in İstanbul.

I conducted interviews with the young members of ZPT. Therefore, “youth” as a topic also stands in the background of this study. Neyzi, analyzing the discourses produced about youth in Turkey, marks the object position of the notion of youth and proposes this discourse analysis as a background for an ethnographic study on youth (Neyzi, 2004: 414). Drawing upon Neyzi’s main argument, this study attempts to position the young people of ZPT as the subjects of their narratives on theatre and their lives. The young people I interviewed in ZPT can be included in the youth generation, which is characterized as being “apolitical” and “unresponsive”. Lüküslü analyzes this myth of apolitical youth and argues that it will be worth looking at why traditional forms of politics are not currently attractive for the young people rather than simply settling with the idea that they have chosen not to be involved in it (Lüküslü, 2009: 196). Moreover, she argues that young people have developed new forms of participating or consciously not participating in politics; therefore, even if they do not actively participate in politics, they do produce some political stances. This ethnographic study with young people can also be read as one of the alternative ways that youth produce strategies and therefore in a sense, everyday life politics, even if they do not participate in politics.

## **Methodology**

I had a relationship with ZPT prior to my field research, therefore, it was not difficult for me to enter into the field. I conducted 17 recorded interviews. 13 of them were with the young members of ZPT; 5 of them had left the group and 8 were still in the group.<sup>7</sup> Other interviews were with the trainer, the former trainer, another youth theatre group trainer and the mother, who is also the owner of the canteen located in the building where ZPT rehearsals take place, of one of the former members of the group. I carried out the recorded interviews between March and June 2009. I acted as a participant observer once a week in the rehearsals of the group in May 2008 and from

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<sup>7</sup> Throughout the thesis, I used pseudonyms for my interviewees except the trainer’s name in order to protect the privacy of their personal sincere narratives.

March to May 2009. I also cooperated with them as the stage effect practitioner in the play *Nesini Söylesem*, which was staged in May 2008. I selected my interviewees from both former and current members of the group. Even if some of the former members of the group had experienced the children's theatre activity in ZPT, at the time of the interviews all of my interviewees were young people between the ages of 15-25.

I started my interviews with the trainer. She helped me contact potential interviewees. Following that, every individual I interviewed helped me find other interviewees. Regarding the members, my initial plan was to interview more people; however, it was not possible to contact 6-7 former members of the group due to problems related to their family or due to their departure from the neighborhood

When I started to participate in the group's rehearsals, it did not take them long to know me as 'sister Pınar' rather than an intruder. However, the main tension was not caused by me being an unknown researcher but by me being a theatre person from an acting group they were very familiar with. Because of that situation, my responses, comments, and critiques were overemphasized; it was like a double responsibility. While I would have preferred to be partly invisible, I was at the center of their attention. It was uncomfortable for me because I was not a member of the group, and therefore I would not have wanted my comments to be so decisive.

The group stages its plays in Boğaziçi University under the organization of the Istanbul Amateur Theatre Days<sup>8</sup> [IATD]. Boğaziçi University is a very important place for the group members; they are happy and proud that they can stage their plays in Boğaziçi. Coming to Boğaziçi University is like taking a trip for them. Given their interest in and enjoyment of Boğaziçi University, most of our interviews ended with their questions about life in Boğaziçi, the grades they should have in order to be a student in Boğaziçi and the theatre education in Boğaziçi University Players. Some of my interviewees also challenged me by asking the same questions I recently asked them, like: "Can you introduce yourself?"

The interviews with the former members of the group turned into a history of their engagement with theatrical activity. In the interviews we had in the theater saloon, in which ZPT still conducts its rehearsals, those former members mostly expressed their longing for playing on stage and the general atmosphere of theatre activity. Moreover,

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<sup>8</sup> İstanbul Amatör Tiyatro Günleri [İATG]



some of them had prepared themselves for the interview by watching some of the plays that they had taken part.

Throughout the in-depth interviews, I tried to allow the interviewees to narrate in the way they wish regarding theater activity. The participant's actual view on the performance process and not some abstract truth about the performance process itself was the intended aim of the interviews. The biographical information of the informants, and their narratives about their life stories were crucial in terms of relating their memories, experience and future plans with subject formations. Starting with the personal life information, I hoped to be able to analyze the linkages they made between their daily lives and their activities within theater performances. In terms of the direct theater activity related questions, I asked mostly open-ended questions. My questions concerning their engagements in the theater activity ranged as follows: How did they decide to participate in that theater activity? Do they have any difficulties in participating in that theater activity? How do their neighbors, friends and relatives interpret their participation in a theater activity? How do they choose to stage themes? Do they have quarrels while deciding on the way these themes will be staged? Do they think that they are able to express their ideas and feelings throughout that theater activity? Do they have any problems with someone from the group or do they complain of something about the theatre activity? Why are they choosing to do theater rather than any other arts or sports activity? How participating in a theater activity affect their lives? Do they think to continue with theater work?

Throughout that ethnographic work with the ZPT members and my solitary writing process, I had the invaluable opportunity not only to be involved in and reflect on their theatre experiences, but also to consider my own experience with theatre. This study had helped me to question and scrutinize deeply the meaning and the experience of performing on stage, and the relation of artistic experience with daily life, both in the case of the ZPT participants and me.

### **Organization of the Chapters**

In the second chapter, I will begin with introducing Zeytinburnu People's Theatre. Starting with the story of the foundation of the group, I continue with narrating on Zeytinburnu as the place of origin of the group. I describe the group's relationship

with the İstanbul Alternative Theatre Platform, which had been very influential in the initial years of the group, and then I focus on the plays, themes and the changing conditions of the group. The position of the trainer is contextualized separately, as her position is the one most worth being discussed in detail. The organization of rehearsals and the general working dynamics of the group is another subtitle. Who are the audience of ZPT and their relationship with the group are the points lastly discussed in that chapter.

In the third chapter, I focus on the interplay between everyday life and theatrical performance. I discuss how ethnicity, gender, family relations and class positions have been addressed on stage in relation to everyday life. Drawing upon Victor Turner's definition of liminoid, I conceptualize the process of theatrical performance as an inbetween experience through which the pressures of ordinary life can be inverted and the possibility of being critical can emerge.

In the fourth chapter, I focus on the narratives of the participants, looking to discover in them the meaning of being engaged in a theatre activity. Moreover, their comparisons between the ZPT and two other theatre experiences have been discussed in order to decipher the interviewees expectations and the critiques of a theatre activity. In the second part of that chapter, the inner dynamics of the group have been analyzed to have an understanding of ongoing power relations in the group. I conclude the chapter with the discussion on the limitations of the transformative potential in the light of the participants' narratives regarding the change they had gone through with theatrical experience, their experiences in other groups and the contentious relationships within the group between the participants and with the trainer.

In the fifth chapter, I conclude by discussing theatrical performance as a meaning making process in one's ordinary life and one which is historically understood as external to the routine of daily life. I argue that theatrical performance is a way of developing self-reflexivity, an intrinsic force to the flow of everyday life.

## CHAPTER 2

### ZEYTINBURNU PEOPLE’S THEATER

#### 2.1. Foundation of the Group

Zeytinburnu People’s Theater<sup>9</sup> [ZPT] was established in the Zeytinburnu-Telsiz neighborhood in late 2001. Two women, Fadime Yılmaz and Meryem Sarıkaya, who had been engaged in different theatrical activities before ZPT, were the initiators for the foundation of group. Fadime Yılmaz, who still continues to work with the group, was a member of a theater group called Independent Stage in Beyoğlu; Meryem Sarıkaya who left ZPT after the first two years had been a player in Public Houses. Soon after deciding to continue theatrical activity in their neighborhood in Zeytinburnu, Fadime and Meryem had meetings with associations, the municipality and local people in order to find a place for trainings and rehearsals. The Telsiz Neighborhood Culture and Solidarity Association<sup>10</sup> had answered their request and provided them with the association’s shop-like place for theater rehearsals.

Following the procurement of a rehearsal hall, these two women had announced to their very close circles that they would lead a theater activity in the neighborhood. As a result of this type of an announcement, the initial participants of the ZPT were mostly their relatives, neighbors and friends. Varying in age, occupation and gender, the group was composed of small children, students, housewives and salaried workers. Starting with such diversity, the initiators had designated the group as the “people’s theater”. The makeup of the group from its inception until today has reflected the general social

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<sup>9</sup> Zeytinburnu Halk Sahnesi

<sup>10</sup> Telsiz Mahallesi Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği

structure of the Zeytinburnu district, namely lower class immigrants and a great plurality of ethnic origins and religious affiliations.

## 2.2. Zeytinburnu

Zeytinburnu is mainly composed of *gecekondus*<sup>11</sup>, a feature that makes it a unique district in Istanbul. The *gecekondus* had been built by the migrants settling in different parts of Zeytinburnu, mostly near the newly emerging industrial areas. Zeytinburnu had been an administrative district in 1957; however the migrations started in 1945 and have since continued. Migrants from within Turkey and those from beyond the borders have been coming to Zeytinburnu. The immigrants outside of Turkey have primarily come from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Afghanistan, Romania and other Turkic republics, while those from within have traveled from the Black Sea regions and parts of East Anatolia. The population increase in Zeytinburnu between the years 1990-2000 is remarkable<sup>12</sup> and the main reason for this increase was the forced migration resulting from civil war in the Kurdish region of Turkey. An important datum concerning the population structure is that the young population under age 15 in Zeytinburnu is very high compared to the general population trend in Turkey (Ed. Çeker, 2003). Many children and young people of migrant families in Zeytinburnu are not able to attend school. Instead, they start to work in leather, shoes and textile factories/workshops from very early ages (seven or eight years old) in order to contribute to the family budget or to feed their unemployed family members. Many of these children/youth work in very bad conditions in the underground sweatshops of Zeytinburnu. Similar to other immigrant districts, many other psychological, social and economical problems resulting from migration are strikingly visible in Zeytinburnu. Issues such as poverty, domestic violence and lack of social services, to name a few, play prominent roles in their lives.

This type of picture of Zeytinburnu as an old but still developing immigration district has been reflected by the children attending theater activity in the ZPT in the

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<sup>11</sup> Shanty house

<sup>12</sup> Population increase in Zeytinburnu between these years was %49.5 while the ratio was %37.1 for İstanbul between the same time period. (Ed. Çeker, 2003)

Telsiz neighborhood. As the Telsiz neighborhood is a neighborhood that has been shaped in the last 15 years and that still has *gecekondus* in it, all the children from the neighborhood were migrants, either first generation or later ones. Fadime Yılmaz narrates the social and psychological situation of the children participating in theater activity in the Telsiz neighborhood as such:

Children were really dispersed, confused, separated, broken, those who did not have the conditions to relate facts. That situation was rebounding actually: interference, not obeying, insulting, pushing each other, hindering, humiliation, underestimating, othering...all these concepts were running there wildly.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.3. İstanbul Alternative Theater Platform-Initiative

ZPT has been a component of Istanbul Alternative Theater Platform<sup>14</sup> [IATP] since its foundation, and after the disintegration of this platform, the group continued its contact with Istanbul Alternative Theater Platform-Initiative [IATP-I] which can be considered as a continuation of IATP. The group has staged their plays in the annual theatre festival, Istanbul Amateur Theatre Days<sup>15</sup> [İATD]. Furthermore, IATP has been very important in terms of supporting the group by giving advice, criticizing and helping the trainer in educational issues.

The IATP-I takes its roots from the IATD, the theatre festivals organized in Boğaziçi University beginning in the 1980s. In the 1990s, this theater network, developed during festival times, became a continuing structure, aiming not only to come together during festival times but also to have relationships of cooperation throughout the year, under the title of Amateur Theatres Circle<sup>16</sup>[ATC].

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<sup>13</sup> Çocuklar gerçekten dağınık çocuklardı, kafaları karışık, bölünmüş, parçalanmış, olgular arasında çok bağlantı kurabilecek koşulları olamamış çocuklardı ve gerçekten o yansıyordu o zaman dağınıklık, birbirine sataşma, dinlememe, hakaret etme, itme, düşürme vurma, engelleme, aşağılama, hor görme, ötekileştirme... bütün bu kavramlar orada cirit atıyor...

<sup>14</sup> İstanbul Alternatif Tiyatrolar Platformu [İATP]

<sup>15</sup> İstanbul Amatör Tiyatro Günleri [İATG]

<sup>16</sup> Amatör Tiyatrolar Çevresi [ATÇ]

The group mentioned above as Independent Stage which the trainer of ZPT, Fadime Yılmaz, had been a member of, was a component of ATC. In 2000, some female members of Independent Stage including Fadime Yılmaz had announced to the public that they were exposed to sexual harassment by their director and trainer Mehmet Esatoğlu, and called all sensible people to intervene in this issue and support women in Independent Stage. This issue had been handled in the ATC as an issue of ‘sexual harassment in theater education’ and from it two sides emerged: One side clearly saying no to sexual harassment and the other rejecting discussion of the issue in the platform, believing it to be an internal matter of the group.<sup>17</sup> As a result of this discussion, the ATC has been separated and the IATP has been founded as a new platform.

The membership of the ZPT in the IATP coincides with this new platform’s beginning. Leaving Independent Stage and starting ZPT, Fadime Yılmaz has been the representative of ZPT in IATP. In 2005, another wave of discussions concerning the principles and the necessities of functioning as a platform was held and the proponents of the platform who wanted to sustain this cooperative relationship declared that they would call themselves a platform-initiative, designated as IATP-I rather than simply a platform in order to be able to investigate the ways to build a real cooperation platform of theater people.<sup>18</sup>

IATP-I is a platform which is constituted by commissions such as university groups, workers groups and theatre-trainers. The aim of being structured as commissions is to provide the ground for those amateur theatre people to share their repertoire and knowledge concerning theater and having close relationships of cooperation. Moreover, the members of these commissions are responsible for the organization of festival days specific to their activities. Fadime Yılmaz is one of the members of the theater trainer’s commission, and she relates that mutual support in this commission helped her a lot in forming a trainer identity. The theatre trainer’s commission was founded in 2005, in the third year of the ZPT, and has continued through IATP and IATP-I. However, soon after 2009 festival, due to problems in the organization of the festival, communication problems between the members of the commission and the inability to cooperate, the members of the commission declared that

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<sup>17</sup> See [www.iatp-web.org](http://www.iatp-web.org)

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix A

they could meet the necessities of being a commission and so the theater trainer's commission was dissolved.

#### 2.4. Plays, Themes & Changing Conditions of the Group

ZPT staged Anton Chekhov's play *Düğün*<sup>19</sup> in 2002-2003 and *Ayı*<sup>20</sup> by the same author in the following year. After staging *Ayı* in the festival of the IATP in May 2004, theater people in the platform suggested the group to focus on children's theatre rather than dealing with the difficulties of doing theater with a very mixed group of people. In the beginning of third year, group members Fadime Yılmaz and Ayşe Acar agreed on doing theater with children, and became the trainers of the ZPT children's theater, taking the mentioned suggestions into consideration. Fadime recounts how actually focusing on children's theater was a good decision as such:

...there was an excessive amount of children in the neighborhood; it was not hard to reach them. We had already 5-6 of them present in our rehearsals, at times ten children were watching us under the windows of the shop-like place we were rehearsing. The cast we needed was waiting outside the door, waiting to come in only if we opened the door. There was no need to go far, we had our eyes so closed off, that we were unable to see what was under our' noses.<sup>21</sup>

The first play of the ZPT children group was the play called *Biz Herşeyin Farkındayız*<sup>22</sup>. This play's text was collectively formed by the children in the group as a result of improvisations under the guidance of the trainers. The trainers Fadime and Ayşe were also players on the stage in that first year. What had significantly come out

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<sup>19</sup> The Wedding

<sup>20</sup> The Bear

<sup>21</sup> ... Çünkü yani mahallede istemediğiniz kadar çocuk var. Ulaşmak çok zor değil zaten şey yani, çalışmalarınızı bile en az beş altı tane, abartıyım on tane çocuk, kapattığınız o atölyenin camları altından çalışmalarınızı zaten izliyor, hatta kitle kapıda hazır, kapıyı açsan kitle içeri gelecek, oyuncu kitlesi hani hiç uzağa gitmeye gerek yok, gözümüzün önündekini görmüyormuşuz, öyle gözlerimizi kapattık ki.

<sup>22</sup> We Are Aware of Everything; this play is staged in May 2004.

from the improvisations of the children was domestic violence. When the trainers wanted them to go on the stage and play a story of their lives, nearly all of them started to role play wife and husband quarrels, violence exerted by their fathers on their mothers, or by their mothers on themselves. Even if they differed in details, nearly the same script in all the childrens' performances was enacted: Something/someone comes into the house, it is full of tension in there, and then the child gets sad. Fadime Yılmaz tells the initial improvisations of the children in these words:

A family watching the television, a family quarrel, a father who is coming home late, a mother washing the dishes continuously, a child who is asked to bring the glass, breaking the glass, domestic scenes such as these...Child is driven away from the room, mother leaves the room, father is shouting, grandmother is angry, eventually always a dramaturgy on destruction: You see significantly what kind of living conditions that these children are under...<sup>23</sup>

While before they were only rehearsing in the Telsiz Neighborhood Culture and Solidarity Association's place, in 2004, all the participants had been the members of the association and the group became the company of the association. Continuing the theater activity with children, the trainers became aware of the fact that children have many reasons preventing them from participating in theatrical activity. One of the biggest problems was students' failures in their courses. As a solution to this problem, the two trainers of the group asked their close friends, who generally described themselves as anarchists and were willing to volunteer their time to help the people of the neighborhood to start supplementary English, Mathematics etc. courses for children and young people in the association. By supporting children in terms of their courses, the main obstacle preventing the children from participating in theater activity had been overcome.

In the second year of the children's theater group, hip hop dancers who were all male, started to come to exercises of the ZPT. Okan, who has been a member of ZPT since it was founded, and is a hip hop dancer, invited his dancer friends and they started one by one to come to rehearsals. With their attempt to partake in the group, there

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<sup>23</sup> ...Televizyon izleyen aile, ondan sonra kavga eden aile, eve geç gelen baba, sürekli bulaşık yıkayan anne, bardağı kıran, bardağı götürmesi istenen çocuk, böyle böyle ev içleri geldi... Televizyon seyreden aile sahnesinde çocuk odadan kovuluyor mesela, anne odayı terk ediyor, baba bağırıyor, babaanne kızıyor, sonuçta hep böyle yok etme üzerine bir dramaturji çıkıyor, çocukları çok belli görüyorsun, yaşam alanı dediğin çocukların bu kendisinin...



emerged a girls-boys tension in the group. The girls did not want these newcomer boys to get onto the stage with them –the girls felt that since they did not work as the girls had worked and that they were “only” dancers, what was their aim in doing theater? At that point Fadime as the trainer had been the referee and placed the boys under some conditions:

I will allow your material to be staged independently under one condition: It is prohibited to scuffle with the girls, you will not provoke them, you will not humiliate and upset them. So, my sole condition is that you will not upset the girls. In return for this, I will make your hip hop visible on stage.<sup>24</sup>

After this initial tension was moderated, the hip hop dancers became an inseparable component of ZPT. In every play, the group includes a part in which hip hop, capoevera and break dances are performed. Also, they staged scenes problematizing the prejudices against the young dancers on the street, and the drug problem that these dancer boys themselves or their friends are confronted with.

The themes of the play underwent changes as the children grew into their adolescence stage in the latter part of their second year in the group. They were presented with new problems in the public sphere; the school, the neighborhood and the street, in addition to the difficulties they had inside their homes. The domestic problems started to be harsher. Discerning some clues through the rehearsals about these new problems, Fadime began to separately visit the homes of the girls and boys. She pointed out that those home visits had been very crucial in terms of mitigating some of the public sphere and severe familial problems. As nearly all of the participants, including the trainer Fadime Yılmaz, were neighbors, it was easy for them to get together and conduct these home meetings as natural gatherings; they had fun, ate and talked about everyday life, theater, school... The problem of being exposed to drug dealing circles as a result of their close proximity to the hip hop dancer crowd had come out in these conversations. Also, an in-family rape event had been declared by a young girl in these talks. In accordance with these newly emerging problems of the group members, themes

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<sup>24</sup> Sizin getirdiğiniz malzemeye sahnede özgürce yer vereceğim ama bir şartla, kızlarla itişmek kakışmak yok, onları tahrik etmeyeceksiniz, onları şikayet etmeyeceksiniz, onları aşağılamayacaksınız, üzmeyeceksiniz, yani tek koşulum kızları üzmeyeceksiniz. Ben de size bunun karşılığında sizin hiphopunuzu sahnede görünür yapacam.

in the plays were modified in such a way as to incorporate humiliation towards hip hop dancers, or sexual harassment incidences that women faced on the street.

In the next two years, they had continued to play *Biz Herşeyin Farkındayız-2*<sup>25</sup> and staged a second version of this play; also they had prepared another play called *Sokaktaki Özgürlükçü Çocuklar*<sup>26</sup>. Throughout these three years, a relative continuity concerning the participants of the group had been achieved; a group of five children kept going on with the ZPT. However, many of children had left the group, mostly resulting from familial problems. In 2006, while the children group was rehearsing for the play *Biz Herşeyin Farkındayız-2*, a youth theater as a separate group in the ZPT was established. Some of the third year members of the group were growing up and the need to divide the children from the young people materialized. Serpil Demirci, who was a member of IATP trainer's commission and also a friend of Fadime Yılmaz, volunteered for training the youth group. The youth group first staged a play called *Bekar Odası*<sup>27</sup>.

After ZPT staged *Bekar Odası* and *Sokaktaki Özgürlükçü Çocuklar*, Telsiz District Culture and Solidarity Association had closed its doors to cultural activities. The trainers Fadime and Serpil recounted that this closure was strongly related with the association administration's discomfort with ZPT. As a social activity becoming popular in the neighborhood, the groups' staging themes such as discrimination against Kurds, Romans and Alevis, bad working conditions in sweatshops, or their criticizing the national history courses at school had annoyed the management of the association. Therefore, ZPT was no longer the theater company of the association. However, another association organization, called the Neighborhood Natural Disaster Volunteers Association<sup>28</sup>, was emerging in the neighborhood and Fadime had proposed this association to continue her theater activity with the ZPT as the theater of this association. Being the theater of Neighborhood Natural Disaster Volunteers Association changed the participant profile of ZPT. With drop-outs from the continuing group through the last three years, the new comers to ZPT were not the ones from the particular neighborhood but mostly children of middle class families who were engaged

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<sup>25</sup> This play is first staged in May 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Children of Freedom on the Street; this play is first staged in May 2006.

<sup>27</sup> This play is first staged in May 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Mahalle Afet Gönülleri Derneği [MAG-DER]

with the association. Moreover, related with this type of a changing dynamic in the structure of the group, the themes handled, particularly in the children's group, changed. Fadime describes this change in these words:

The children profile changed about ninety percent. Most of them were from the lower middle class, and had some experience of materialism and their families had more control over their attendance...The majority of the children from the Telsiz District were coming to rehearsals without the permission of their families, and when they finally informed them but it was too late for the parents to interfere. It was a struggle because parents did not allow their children to participate. When I started to work with children again I was happy but I was saddened by the departure of my old cast. These children were not attending rehearsals as enthusiastically as the previous children, making silly excuses to miss sessions; excuses as silly as cutting off of electricity or water in their homes. So what happened? Suddenly the themes changed from the more immediate surroundings of the children to broader social issues such as global warming and environmental politics. Bam! The woman, child and oppression issues suddenly dissolve.<sup>29</sup>

Rather than ethnic discrimination or bad working conditions, these newcomer children were interested in environmental issues. Consequently, that year (2007), the children group staged the play called *Dünya Yok Oluyor Çocuklar Ne Olacak*. ZPT's position as the theater of Neighborhood Natural Disaster Volunteers Association lasted only one year, and from then on Fadime Yılmaz, in the capacity of an independent trainer, carried on the theater activity.

In the initial two years after being founded in late 2001, ZPT was a mixed group with great diversity in terms of age, gender and occupation and staged two plays: *Düğün* and *Ayı*. Following that, the group continued as a children's theater group for two years and staged *Biz Herşeyin Farkındayız 1&2*. Starting in 2006, ZPT has continued as a group of two sub-groups; children and youth. Thus, the plays for each year doubled; one

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<sup>29</sup> Çocukların profili yüzde doksan değişti. Alt orta sınıf çocuklar oldu hemen hepsi bir şekilde, ekonomiye bulaşmış olan çocuklar ve daha ailelerinin kontrolünde gelen çocuklar oldu... Telsiz Mahallesi'ndeki çocuklar ailelerinden habersiz geliyordu yüzde 90 sonra haber veriyordu, ama iş işten geçmiş oluyordu... Mücadele etmiş oluyordu kimse gönüllü göndermiyordu çocuğunu... Ben yine çocuklarla yapmaya başladım ama çok mutsuzum o kadro gitti. Bunları böyle bir tintinin gelen giden çocukların saati belli, böyle tek tek gelen, havayı suyu muhabbet eden hava yağdı gelmeyen sular akıyor gelmeyen elektrik kesintisi gelmeyen böyle tipler çıktı karşıma... Ne oldu? Küresel ısınma çevre politikalarına girdik. Yani sosyal politikan olmayınca çevre politikan mutlaka oluyor yani, kadın, çocuk ezen meseleniz piik değişiyor böyle.

play from the youth group and the other from the children group. From that date, the group staged the following plays as youth and children group respectively: *Bekar Odası* and *Sokaktaki Özgürlükçü Çocuklar* in 2006, *Nesini Söylesem* and *Dünya Yok Oluyor Çocuklar Ne Olacak* in 2007, *Nesini Söylesem-2* and *Çocukça* in 2008 and *Ellerimiz and Öykümüzü Kendimiz Yazdık* in 2009.<sup>30</sup>

## 2.5. Position of the Trainer

Fadime Yılmaz as one of the starters of the group and still working with the group as the trainer, seems to have a very central role in the group. Zeytinburnu People's Theater is seen as "Fadime's group" rather than ZPT in the neighborhood. Based on my interviews with the young people who have been members of the children's or youth group in ZPT, the members' engagement in the theatre activity in ZPT is strongly bound with their close relationship with Fadime Yılmaz. Some biographical information about Fadime Yılmaz will help to evaluate her position as the founder and the trainer of the group and her relationships with children and young people.

Fadime is a Kurdish and Alevi woman from Tokat. Having lived in an Alevi village in her early ages, she had come to İstanbul after high school. She is in her 30s, works as an accountant and is single. On coming to İstanbul, she had been involved in some leftist organizations, mostly those close to the Kurdish movement. Also, she had started to attend Philosophy courses in Independent University<sup>31</sup>. There she had decided to do theater with some other women and founded Independent Stage<sup>32</sup>, which was mentioned above as a member of ATC. Independent Stage is where she had first engaged in theatre activity. Fadime Yılmaz was the representative of that group in ATC, and she was also one of the women opening up the sexual harassment discussion to this circle. Moreover, she took a role in the campaign "No to Sexual Harassment in Art" which was organized by feminist women in ATC. Fadime Yılmaz was one of the

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<sup>30</sup> See Appendix B for summaries of some of the plays of the group.

<sup>31</sup> Özgür Üniversite

<sup>32</sup> Özgür Sahne

victims of that sexual harassment event, and due to these discussions Fadime Yılmaz had left the group. The sexual harassment event and her taking part in the campaign with feminist women made her acquire a feminist identity, a development which would be effective in her work with children and young girls. She recounts:

...we have learned so much in that period. We have learned a lot in that women commission against sexual harassment in theater. We worked with feminists. When you start to discuss this as violence, as a violation of rights, you become confused, but it is a nice confusion.<sup>33</sup>

Having decided not to engage in any theatrical activity in Beyoğlu, she returned to her own neighborhood in Zeytinburnu. She narrates her coming back as such:

Thus, I had forgotten what was happening in my home place, I was totally unaware. People coming to our house, one from The Freedom and Solidarity Party<sup>34</sup> one from The Labor Party<sup>35</sup>, you are greeting people from Democratic Society Party<sup>36</sup>. There is an association in your neighborhood, you meet with people, something is happening around you. But you left your mind in Beyoğlu, leaving that group and coming to Zeytinburnu, I said, one second, ohhh! There are people I say hi to and people I will go and see and I have time, and it is very nice. I grew aware...<sup>37</sup>

Her alienation from Beyoğlu theater circles and her personal sexual harassment experience have been determining factors for her to view theater as not only an art

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<sup>33</sup>...o dönemde biz çok şey öğrendik. O tiyatrodaki tacize karşı yapılan kadın komisyonunda çok şey öğrendik. Feministlerle çalıştık yani orda. Yani bunun bir şiddet olduğunun hak ihlali olduğunun bunların zaten tartışmaya başladığın zaman kafan karışıyor yani, güzel bir karışıklık oluyor.

<sup>34</sup> Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi [ÖDP]

<sup>35</sup> Emeğin Partisi [EMEP]

<sup>36</sup> Demokratik Toplum Partisi [DTP]

<sup>37</sup> Sonuçta unutmuşum şeyi yani ben yaşadığım yerin ne oluyor gerçekten bihaber yani, eve giren çıkan işte birisi ÖDP'den geliyor, birisi EMEP'ten geliyor, DTP'lilerle selamlaşıyorsun. Mahellende mahalle derneği, sürekli görüşüyorsun bir şekilde, birşeyler oluyor senin çevrende, senin oturduğun yer... Ama sen Beyoğlu'nda kalmış aklın sanki orda, ben böyle bir şekilde zorunlu gerekli, ihtiyaç. Mesela o yapıdan ayrılıp Zeytinburnu'na benim gelmem ohh be bir saniye falan dedim yani. Bir saniye ya, insanlar var böyle merhabalaştığım, ben bir gidip görüşeyim, ne güzel zamanım varmış falan. Öyle ben bir fark ettim...

activity, but a social activity in which she also nurtures her relationship with children and young people outside of theater times, making the theater activity a continuous social network of the people in it. She names this position of herself as “social worker”<sup>38</sup>.

Fadime Yılmaz does not have any theatrical education other than the experience in Independent Stage. As she left that group after the sexual harassment incident, she says that this experience in Independent Stage is the one that limits her relation with theatre rather than being the one that develops her in terms of theatrical education. Her education in theater was formed mainly with her participation in the trainings of the teacher’s theater group in Education and Science Employees Union Branch Number 2<sup>39</sup>. In addition to that, she had also participated in some workshops organized by IATP. As she points out also in her narrative, IATP, as a solidarity platform between alternative theatre groups, holds crucial value in both adding to Fadime Yılmaz’s trainer identity and also in sustaining the existence of ZPT as a group.

Based on my observations through the rehearsals of the group, Fadime Yılmaz is not only a trainer who empowers the young people or children to produce scenes on stage, but also in her role as a social worker, she has tried to help children and young people in the group to analyze their oppressed positions through theater. Fadime Yılmaz’s very individual effort to make these young people think critically through theatre can be seen as a reflection of her own political background upon the theatrical activity. However, in the last three years, the picture concerning Fadime and her own definition as a social worker seem to have been changed. She also criticizes herself in that issue:

It is my crazy courage, I was getting permission and taking them to evening plays, now I cannot. Do you see how we have developed while at the same time we are going back? I can bring them now too if I organize, but my works have been intensified. I have many reasons. I cannot bring them. I created the problem from myself and so I criticize myself.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Sosyal işçi

<sup>39</sup> Eğitim-Sen [Eğitim ve Bilim Emekçileri Sendikası] 2 Nolu Şube.

<sup>40</sup> Yine deli cesaretim ailelerinden izin alıp onları akşam gösterilerine götürüyordum. Şimdi ben gündüz gösterilerine götüremiyorum, ne kadar gerileyerek de ilerlemişiz farkediyor musunuz? Yine organize etsem götürebilirim, işte benim işlerim çoğaldı, bir

## 2.6. How ZPT works?

As I stated above, the trainer has a significant role in the formulation of ZPT's theater activities. By the direction of the trainer, plays are produced as a result of collective improvisations. In the beginning of the year, the new comers to the group have a training process, which includes the basic theater exercises with the guidance of the trainer; exercises such as physical action and voice exercises. Then, they start to discuss what will be the theme of the play. In this stage, the trainer and the participants offer some themes mostly about their everyday lives, and then they evaluate and choose what will be the theme/s in the coming play. After that, the trainer wants the participants to study on these themes. The participants start to observe their environment, paying attention to the selected theme in order to see how people relate/react/live with this theme. For example if the theme is the urban transformation as in the play called *Nesini Söylesem*, participants observe their relatives, friends and the people on the street in order to be able see how urban regeneration affect them or how they react to this phenomenon, if in fact they do. They chat with people concerning this issue. After spending one or more weeks with this type of research, they come and share their observations and information, and then they start to improvise some scenes with the background of their research. In terms of finalizing the plot of the scenes and the text of the play, the trainer has a more determining role than the participants.

Fadime Yılmaz told me that at the very beginning, when they were a very chaotic group, composed of paid workers, housewives, children, young people etc., they had great difficulty in systematizing the rehearsals. When they started to work with children, their experience of unsuccessful systematization of the theater activity, gave the trainers, Fadime and Ayşe, an overly disciplinary attitude towards the children. They had tried to limit the children always scolding them with: Don't run, don't shout, don't speak while your friend is speaking etc... However, Fadime confesses that in retrospect they were unaware of the fact that it was impossible for children to express their ideas/feelings and perform while you are trying to make them obey the restrictive rules.

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sürü de bir gerekçem var benim. Götüremiyorum, kendime yaptığım bir şey bu, kendimi eleştiriyorum.

Frankly, we had seen the children through a culture of discipline; we had seen them as they were not listening to us. They were not listening actually, but it cannot be a complaint for us, there is another solution for this. I understood that it was not the situation afterwards; children do not listen if you speak to them. You should make the exercise with children that will encourage them to ask questions while talking, asking questions through a critical perspective; you should get the child to that point. It is not like that now, now the children cannot stop themselves from asking questions; therefore something happens on the stage, there is no need for any commanding measures for making them obey.<sup>41</sup>

The regular exercises of the group take place in the weekends, mostly one day with the youth group and the other with children. Towards the performance day, rehearsals are carried out more often. In terms of the starting and ending times, the group determines some certain hours, however these are not so strict that the ones having different conditions cannot extend these hours. For example the ones working at weekends come to rehearsal one or two hours late, but it is not a problem for the group and the trainer because of the fact that the group agrees upon the flexibility of rehearsals to some extent in order to provide people having different conditions the ability to still do theater together. Nevertheless, late arrivals or coming to rehearsal only from time to time becomes a serious problem when these attitudes start to be continuous and become obstacles for carrying out rehearsals. At those times, if the problem cannot be solved, even after warnings to the participant, her/his role can be cancelled or substituted by someone else.

For the last three years, the group has carried on all the exercises and rehearsals in the theater saloon in Atatürk Culture Center<sup>42</sup> [ACC]. This saloon is a small one, with a capacity of nearly 80 chairs and with simple lighting. ZPT shares this saloon with three other theater groups, which are organized as paid courses or school activities. In the same building, there are Zeytinburnu branch offices of institutions such as: Education and Science Employees Union, Association in Support of Contemporary

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<sup>41</sup> Biz açıkçası çocuklara orada şöyle baktık, çocuklara disiplin kültürüyle baktık, bizi dinlemiyorlar diye baktık, gerçekten dinlemiyorlardı ama, biz bunu şikayet değil, yani onun başka bir çözümü var, konuşun da dinlesinler sizi, öyle olmadığını sonradan anladım yani, çocuklarla konuşarak, çocuklar dinlemez. Çocukları, konuşmaya değil soru sormaya, konuşurken eleştirel bir perspektifle soru sormaya iten çalışmayı vermelisin çocuğa, çocuğu, o noktaya getirmelisin, zaten mesela şimdi öyle değil, şimdi çocuklar sorup, soru sorarak konuşmadan kendilerini alamıyorlar, dolayısıyla sahnede bir şey oluyor, onları sahnede hizaya sokma gibi polisiye önlemlere ihtiyaç yok.

<sup>42</sup> Zeytinburnu Atatürk Kültür Merkezi [AKM]



Living<sup>43</sup>; and also Zeytinburnu Social Center<sup>44</sup>. The group does not have a significant relationship with those institutions; rather they seem to be only neighbors in the same building.

Resulting from the experience of theater not only as an isolated art activity but a socializing environment, a field of discussion and an expression of oneself; the notion of time and space very often seem to lose their determining effects in rehearsals at ZPT: They give a break, go to the seaside near ACC for a picnic and they continue their rehearsal there, or they come in the very early morning and spend the whole day in ACC with lots of discussion about the themes on the stage.

## 2.7. Audience

ZPT stage their plays mostly two times a year, one for the annual festival of IATP-I, and the other one in Zeytinburnu for the local people to see the play. As an amateur theater group, they do not have a purpose of gaining money from their performances; rather they only try to meet their technical needs such as costumes and decoration with ticket incomes of annual performances. This choice of staging the plays only two times, to some extent is a result of the participants different conditions, making them hard to get together for more performances or their being not professionals aiming to tour their plays. However, that situation of exercising for nearly the whole year but staging only two times, demonstrates that it is more valuable to focus on the exercise and rehearsal process for ZPT rather than the staging times. Related to this, I will not be restricting the audience only to the people watching the performances of the group but anyone outside the group, including those having contact with the group through exercises, rehearsals and performances: Family members of the children, friends, relatives, neighbors, and people working in offices in ACC. Defining the audience as such and giving attention to their contacts with ZPT is crucial in order to be able to analyze the group's relationship to the outside world as a local structure speaking about their problems

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<sup>43</sup> Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği

<sup>44</sup> Zeytinburnu Toplum Merkezi

As the group was a member of IATP from the very beginning, people from the other member groups have been consistent audiences of the group. Other than these IATP audiences, the existence of other audiences -families, neighbors etc- and the extent of their contact with the group, have changed owing to the changing conditions of the group, such as rehearsal place, affiliation with associations or participant status.

At the very beginning, starting as a neighborhood theater, the residents of the Telsiz neighborhood were the audience of the group. As they were rehearsing not in the theater saloon but in the neighborhood association's place, people walking on the road could stop and have a look inside and they therefore became the natural audiences of the rehearsal. Becoming the group of the Telsiz District Solidarity Association, most of the people related to this association became the audience for the group. Moreover, the mothers of the children had been coming to the associations' place during times of theater exercises and this also made them develop a network of mothers/relatives of the theater children in the neighborhood. Again, in that network of women linked to theater activity, Fadime Yılmaz had an important role. Mainly arising from her feminist tendency, she had attempted to develop solidarity relations with the mothers. Nurten Hanım, whose girl was a member of the children's group, met with Fadime in these tea meetings in the associations' place and described the mothers' gatherings in the association and Fadime's relation with the women as such:

We were going in Sundays to the association like going to a tea garden, we made our tea, we were watching the students and also serving them, it was so nice.<sup>45</sup>

...our dialogue [with Fadime] was good, especially for women like us who did not open up much, at the same time, it was good for children. For example we have a lawyer problem, when I talked about this to Fadime Hanım, she supported me and helped me as much as she could.<sup>46</sup>

When the group continued its activities under the other association, Neighborhood Natural Disaster Volunteers Association, then people from this

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<sup>45</sup> Gidiyorduk yani Pazar günü sanki çay bahçesine gider gibi gidiyorduk o lokalde, çayımızı yapıyorduk, hem öğrencileri izliyorduk hem onlara hizmet ediyorduk yani güzeldi.

<sup>46</sup> ... iyiydi yani diyalogumuz çok güzeldi. hele bizim gibi böyle dışarıya çok açılmamış hanımlar için, çocuklar için aynı zamanda iyi geliyordu. Mesela bir avukatlık işimiz oldu, ben bunu Fadime Hanım'a anlattığım zaman bana destek oluyordu ve her türlü yardım ne yapabiliyorsa yapıyordu yani.

association became the main audience, while the people in the Telsiz neighborhood started to not constitute such an important part of the audiences.

For the last two years, ZPT has continued its theatre activities as an independent group, and they are using only the theater saloon in the ACC. This position caused a significant change both in terms of participants and the audience. The group is no longer a neighborhood theater and therefore, children and young people not from the neighborhood but from the central part of Zeytinburnu mostly attend the activities. Moreover, differing from the Telsiz Neighborhood Culture and Solidarity Organization's shop-like place, group rehearsals are not naturally open to the people walking on the street in ACM, as the theater saloon is located on the fifth floor of the building.

In the last two years, the group has only staged its plays once for each of the annual festivals of IATP; they could not make any performances in Zeytinburnu. This situation has much to do with the groups' loss of organization power; they have more difficulty getting together, experience more people leaving the group after the initial performance or suffer the lack of motivation by performers having to perform outside of their local environment. In need of a detailed analysis for this organizational dissolution, it can be argued that this situation of being unable to stage their plays in their own environment demonstrates a significant loss of the groups affect in its own district.

## CHAPTER 3

### EVERYDAY LIFE & THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE

#### *WE ARE AWARE OF EVERYTHING*<sup>47</sup>

*Whatever its origins, which probably vary from society to society, drama tends to become a way of scrutinizing the quotidian world... (Turner, 1987: 27)*

The notion that there is a strong relationship between reality and theater –as a fictional artistic story told on stage- has existed since the very first research was made on drama. Aristotelian drama relates real life and theatre activity by staging fictional but can-be-experienced events, events relating to real life values and issues, by which it drives the audiences to feel the *catharsis* and learn what to do and not to do in real life.

However, in this research I discuss the contact between everyday life and theater as a dialogic one through which everyday life and on stage performances act together in a two way relationship, rather than one affecting the other. Therefore, my main reference points will be the works which conceptualize theater as a genre of cultural performance, rather than handling it as solely an artistic form. Thanks to performance studies and also the anthropological discussions on the anthropology of performance, theatricality can be thought of as a part of everyday life and the theatrical performance as an interpretation of everyday life, as a way to understand ourselves. (Carlson, 1996: 6) The valuable work in performance studies, which has widened our scope on thinking about theatrical performance, has been extremely nourished by the critical discussions in social sciences regarding the structuralism phenomenon. Anthropology is one of the disciplines in which a noticeable shift in theoretical emphasis from structure to process, from competence to performance, from the logics of cultural and social systems to the dialectics of performance has occurred. (Turner, 1987: 21) Victor Turner, through his

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<sup>47</sup> Translation of the name of the play; *Biz Herşeyin Farkındayız*.

critique of structural anthropology, develops the notion of anthropology of performance, through which he proposes to analyze the process units of culture which cannot be analyzed within the narrow categorization of structures.

For me, anthropology of performance is an essential part of the anthropology of experience. In a sense, every type of cultural performance, including ritual, ceremony, carnival, theatre and poetry, is explanation and explication of life itself...An experience is itself a process which is “pressed out” to an expression which completes it. (Turner, 1982: 13)

Inspired by Turner’s view of every type of cultural performance as an explication and explanation of life itself, I frame my study on ZPT as an attempt of anthropology of performance, through which I take close look at the lives and theatrical performances of the participants, focusing on the explication and explanation processes between these areas. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, the theatrical performances in ZPT are shaped to a great extent in parallel with the everyday life experiences of the group members. Rather than trying to prove that they are performing their daily life experiences on stage, I will try to analyze the relation between socio-cultural processes and the theatrical performance as a reciprocal and reflexive one in the sense that the performance is often a critique, direct or veiled, of the social life it grows out of and an evaluation (with lively possibilities of rejection) of the way society handles history. (Turner, 1987: 22)

Conceptualizing the theater activity in ZPT as a social phenomenon, I utilize Victor Turner’s notion of “liminoid” as the main reference point. Liminality and inbetweenness are some of the key concepts for the theorization of performance. These terms point to the potential of performance to rearrange and reevaluate the social event, where the very notion of critical possibility of choosing in one way or another emerges. (Baumann, 1986: 4) Moving from Arnold Van Gennep’s work on rites of passage, Turner develops the concepts of liminal and liminoid by studying the conceptualization of *limen* (threshold), which refers to “transition between” in Gennep’s terminology. While liminal applies to primary social organizations and their ritualistic cultural performances, liminoid refers to the genres of cultural performances taking place within industrial societies. Within both of these phenomenon, the participants of the processes are in a sense separated from ordinary life in terms of time and space, and in the flow of liminality, they create the possibility to invert the structural functioning of ordinary life.

What is specific to liminoid in that sense is that it is a leisure time, optional and entertaining activity freed from the structural limitation of ordinary life. Moreover, rather than the community experience in the liminal, in the liminoid, it is the individual performing and therefore, she/he has the possibility to subvert as well as to invert social structures and social roles in the ordinary life.

Framing the theatrical performance processes of ZPT within liminoid phenomenon, I analyze the narratives of participants vis a vis theatrical performance in order to develop an understanding of how they themselves describe and live through this process of social life and theatrical performance together. I focus on how individuals through entertainment and play within the collective theatrical performance deal with their roles and experiences in ordinary life.

The theatre activity in ZPT is one mainly based on rehearsals rather than the staging of the completed productions. In addition to focusing on the group's organization of theater activity, I also focus on rehearsals; because the rehearsal process is the unique part during which an individual experiences the doubleness of performance. Repetition and the ambiguity of the rehearsal period serve to make the performance a "restored behavior". The player has various chances to play her/his score in one way or another, because the score is not a natural event but a model of individual and collective choice. (Schechner, 1985: 37) Therefore, I explicate the performances of the group and the players as choices developing through the rehearsals.

The narratives and the theatrical performances of my interviewees in ZPT share some common themes. These are: Ethnic identity, family, gender and class.

### **3.1. Performing Kurdish Identity**

Considering the multi-ethnicity of Zeytinburnu as a migration district, the members of the group have different ethnic/religious belongings as stated in the previous chapter. Kurdish identity is one of these that have played a prominent role in ZPT. This is both related to the trainer's political stance against discrimination of the Kurdish identity in Turkey and also to the existence of Kurdish young people in the group. The ways the participants perform Kurdish identity on stage vary depending on their experiences of Kurdishness.

Berfin is a Kurdish girl originally from Mardin who came to İstanbul at the age of 4. Her awareness of her Kurdish identity was remarkable as evidenced through the interviews. In addition to her experience of being a Kurd in Zeytinburnu, her Kurdish identity seems to have been loaded with post generational memory she had inherited from her parents and relatives. I did not ask her questions directly demanding her position and thoughts/feeling about her Kurdish identity. Rather, starting our conversation by talking about the “Mother Tongue Scene” in the play *Nesini Söylesem*, we had a chance to discuss ethnicity.

The “Mother Tongue Scene”<sup>48</sup> takes place in the house of a Kurdish family in Zeytinburnu. At the very beginning of the scene, the young girl (*Ciran*)<sup>49</sup> who is a university student, and her mother are sitting together and having a conversation. While the mother speaks both Kurdish and Turkish, the girl speaks only Turkish. Watching that conversation, we as the spectators learn that these people were subjected to forced migration; they came face to face with operations, their houses being set on fire. Then the night comes and they fall asleep. While the mother is sleeping, she has a dream. In her dream, her mother (the grandmother) comes. They sit together; the grandmother reprimands her daughter for not teaching her mother tongue to her children. The mother says it is because of the conditions in the city and also because the language is forbidden. The grandmother interrupts saying that all those are excuses. She should teach Kurdish to her children, otherwise the grandmother will not give her blessing.<sup>50</sup> She advises her to start with ballads and lullabies, and also she gives her daughter a Kurdish book. After that dream, the mother immediately starts to try to teach her children Kurdish. It is not so easy, her daughter refuses at the beginning, arguing that speaking Kurdish makes no sense because all her friends in the university speak Turkish and also her education is in English. But after searching for a place to learn Kurdish at school, the daughter witnesses the bad attitude towards the Kurdish language and Kurdish people and her mind starts to change about learning Kurdish and also being a Kurd.

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<sup>48</sup> See Appendix C for the full text of the scene

<sup>49</sup> Name of the character

<sup>50</sup> *Sütümü sana helal etmeyeceğim*

Berfin was playing “the Kurdish mother” in that scene. While narrating how she had prepared for the role, she told me about the stories she had collected from her family members about being a Kurd.

(My mother) told me about her mother, in the 80s and in previous years, for example in the period of Kenan Evren, Because of the pressures, it was prohibited to speak Kurdish, they had been hiding everything. They had been trying not to speak Kurdish, the soldiers had been attacking the Kurdish houses... Then she told how difficult things were... My grandmother had experience about Kurdish and how she had tried to teach her children Kurdish... My aunt also told me about... Because of the pressures many people had run away to mountains... And also I had talked with my ex-boss, their house had been burned, they were obliged to sell their farms before coming there. That is, if a village has been there, it has disappeared. When I asked my father about that village, he said: “My daughter, such a village does not exist now”... Mevlüt Abla tells the story very well, she says that, when the soldiers had burned their house, they first had walked in, they had thrown Mevlüt Abla to the floor, she was a child so when she asked “What are you doing?”, and defied the soldiers, they faced the soldier’s pressure, their house was burned.<sup>51</sup>

The period she was preparing for the scene became a process through which she had learned more about her Kurdish identity. She asked various people about her mother tongue, the evacuation of Kurdish villages and the migration from East to West, and she had collected stories on these issues. In that sense this period became a self ethnographic experience prior to the stage experience. The stories she had collected show that her relatives and parents do not restrain themselves and their children from refreshing the historical and social memory of Kurdish identity in Turkey. Rather, the detailed stories they shared with Berfin reveal that they have a stance in choosing to transfer the history of discrimination and exclusion of the Kurdish people in Turkey to

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<sup>51</sup> (Annem) kendi annesini anlattı, 80 dolayları ondan daha öncesi mesela Kenan Evren dönemleri falan, o dönemde baskılar olduğu için, o dönem Kürtçe konuşmak yasak olduğu için hani, herşeyi sakladılar. Kürtçe konuşmamaya çalışmışlar, askerler Kürt evlerini basmış falan... Sonra annem o Kürtçe konusunda neler çektiğini falan, onlara öğretmeye çalışırken neler çektiğini falan anlattı... Halam da şey anlattı bana... Baskılardan sebep birçok insanın dağa kaçtığını... Bir de şey eski o patronumla konuştum, onların evi yakılmış buraya gelemeden tarlalarını satmak zorunda kalmışlar. Yani öyle bir köy varsa, öyle bir köy yok olmuş. Hani babama o köyü sorduğumda da babam bana dedi ki, kızım artık öyle bir köy yok... Mevlüt Ablam var benim o çok güzel anlatır, şey diyordu bizim evimiz yakıldığında askerler evimizi yaktığında, ilk içeri girmişler, ablamı yere fırlatmışlar, o da çocuk ya hani napıyosun falan diye biraz askerlere karşı çıkınca bu sefer de şey baskısı görmeye başlamışlar asker baskısı, evleri yakılmış.



their youth. Therefore, her families' appropriation of their Kurdish identity seems to be the main basis that serves for Berfin's awareness of her Kurdish identity. In terms of her own relationship with her mother tongue, she recounted these words, which is also a reflection of her familial political background.

(My mother) says,: "What great efforts I had made to bring you up, look at you, you do not even know your language, people come to our house and you are faltering." Well, when a visitor comes and some of my sisters and brothers cannot even say welcome to them, because they do not know Kurdish yet. This is because of their schoolmates. My mother says something in Kurdish but they reply in Turkish... For example, my father prohibited us to speak Turkish with him, so I cannot chat with my father, I cannot tell him something. But, as I usually talk to my mother in Turkish, Turkish is easier for me.<sup>52</sup>

Berfin said that she took her mother as the role model for the Kurdish mother character. In addition to the stories she had heard from her mother, she also says that she had observed her mother carefully as a Kurdish mother and that she had tried to contribute these ideas to the improvisation of the scene and also to her own role making use of these observations. While the group was in the process of rehearsing for that scene, I was there also participating as a guest in those rehearsals. What I witnessed was that Berfin experienced real difficulty in playing that role. She was depressed that she was not performing well enough and she was having some quarrels with the trainer and the other members of the group as a result of that tension. Her mood in those rehearsals seemed to be related to the group's atmosphere, as it was on the verge of dispersion. However, her difficulty in that role also reveals her feelings concerning the intensity and heaviness of her performing a Kurdish mother. The trainer interprets Berfin's difficulty and disorganization in that period in these words:

....We had given her a responsibility toward her own culture. Of course, Berfin had difficulty in that responsibility. Because staging herself created a complex... Berfin did not want to open the atmosphere she is living in, did not want to take

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<sup>52</sup> (Annem) ben ne emeklerle büyüttüm sizin halinize bak daha dilinizi konuşmayı bilmiyorsunuz, insanlar geliyo kekeliyosunuz diyor. Hani misafir geliyor, bir hoşgeldin diyemeyen kardeşlerim oluyor, diyemeyen. Daha Kürtçe bilmedikleri içim. O da okul arkadaşlarından kaynaklanıyor. Annem Kürtçe birşey söylerken onlar Türkçe cevap veriyor.... Mesela babamın bir yasağı vardı benimle asla Türkçe konuşulmayacak diye, hani babamla oturup da sohbet edemem ben o yüzden hani oturup da birşeyleri anlatamam babama. Ama anneme daha çok Türkçe anlattığım için Türkçe kolayıma geliyor.

that responsibility. This might have disturbed her, she might have got stuck. She might have become confused...<sup>53</sup>

I explain her confusion about the role with the reality of performance. She was making, not acting, therefore the rehearsal process may have caused painful moments of revelation for her (Turner, 1982: 93). Her attempt to stage a Kurdish mother similar to her mother and all the stories she had collected overloaded her in terms of her performance, and rather than having an unwillingness to take responsibility, she seemed to feel the responsibility to represent a Kurdish mother without any error.

... I had tried, because it was a very difficult role. As I said, she is a character whose family had been dispersed, also one of her daughters is in the mountain, the other is going to university, she is devoid of her own language, she is underestimating her own language... I tried to play such a woman; I mostly take the inspiration from my mother. I know very well what my mother had lived.<sup>54</sup>

Sinem is a Kurdish girl who was born in İstanbul but her family is originally from Malatya. She first started to talk about her Kurdish identity while she was commenting on the alternative quality of the theater activity in ZPT. The theatre activity seems to have caused a change in her relation with her Kurdish identity. Before, being a Kurd was not an important part of her identity, rather, she narrates, that her tendency was to make a distinction between herself and the other Kurds, the uneducated, and the underestimated ones.

In our house, my mother and father had forgotten Kurdish; my father says “*kapıyı kapamışka*”, what is this? Turkish. While they are in such a situation, I was not underestimating anyone but, I was ashamed. “Why are they like this,

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<sup>53</sup> ...Berfin çok yoruldu desteksizlikten bir de ona kendi kültürüne yönelik bir sorumluluk yükledik. Berfin tabi bu sorumlulukta çok zorlandı. Çünkü aslında kendisini oynamak kompleks yarattı. Bu benim fikrim de hani bu değişebilir yüzde yüz doğru demiyorum bunun için, benim gözlemim Berfin içinde bulunduğu şeyi, atmosferi öykülemek, görünür kılmak konusunda kapalı davranmak istedi, yani o sorumluluğu almak istemedi. Bu onu rahatsız etmiş olabilir. İçinden çıkamamış olabilir. Kafası karışmış olabilir...

<sup>54</sup> Çabalamaya çalıştım, çünkü hani çok zor bir tipleme. Dedim ya, ailesi dağılan bir tipleme, ayrıca bunun bir kızı dağda, bir kızı zaten üniversiteye gidiyor, kendi dilinden yoksun kendi dilini küçümsüyor... Öyle bir kadın canlandırmaya çalıştım ben en çok annemden şey aldım. Annemin yaşadıklarını ben çok iyi biliyorum.

why are they not educating themselves, why are they not being educated?”, the situation was like that...<sup>55</sup>

Sinem played the daughter (*Ciran*) of the Kurdish mother in the mother tongue scene. When I asked her about the scene, she said, “Actually all of us played ourselves”<sup>56</sup>. She was playing the girl who does not know or give any importance to speaking Kurdish while her mother encourages her to learn Kurdish. In that sense, it was very much like Gaye. She describes her relation with her role as:

Maybe I have found all the lines of my character on my own. I am not exactly like the girl at the scene but I am not so far from her also... All of us had played ourselves in a sense. During the play, I acted as *Ciran* in the way I thought in the past and as the person I was. Maybe the change was long ago, but I played in that way just because I thought in that way once upon a time and still there are people thinking in that way.<sup>57</sup>

Her relation with her Kurdish identity seemed to be modified in time through the critical distance she had developed on her own with the support of theatrical activity. That scene was not a revolution for her in dealing with her Kurdish identity, rather she explains the change in her attitude as the one nourished from the discussions and the general atmosphere of the group. However, her playing of herself and composing the lines of the character based on her past attitude, as she said, “once upon a time”, towards Kurdish identity points to a significant process of re-performing and criticizing. The process of that scene can be interpreted as a significant process through which she had become aware of her critical distance to herself through theatrical performance.

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<sup>55</sup> ... yani arkadaşım hani sen şusun bak, biz de annem babam unutmuştur Kürtçeyi, benim babam "kapıyı kapamışka" bu ne Türkçe, yani onlar bu durumdayken, bende de şey vardı hani tamam aşağılama, kimseyi aşağılama gibi bir durum yok, ama şey vardı, iyyy bunlar niye böyleler ya niye bunlar kendilerini eğitmiyor, eğitilmiyor falan durumum vardı.

<sup>56</sup> Aslında hepimiz kendimizi oynadık.

<sup>57</sup> Belki de bütün repliklerimi kendim bulmuşumdur, tam olarak değil belki ama evet orada yansıttığım tipe çok uzak değildim... Herkes hani biraz kendini oynadı filan, ama oynarken ben bir zamanlar düşündüğüm şeyleri, bir zamanlar olduğum Gaye'yi belki *Ciran* olarak yaptım öyle. Çok daha önce belki değişti ama yani, bir zamanlar öyle düşündüğüm ve hala şimdi öyle düşünen insanlar olduğu için öyle yaptım.

### 3.2. Family: Obstacle and Rich Material for the Stage

Family, as a theme, has emerged through the interviews on the parents' preventive and skeptic attitude towards the theatre activity. I had stated in the previous chapter how the Telsiz District Solidarity Organization became a socialization space for the mothers of the group members and a contributing factor in the children's continuation with the theater activity. Moreover, in terms of overcoming the players being prevented by their families, the individually good relationships the trainer had developed with the families, particularly with the mothers, had been effective.

Aslı tells how in the beginning her family was the biggest obstacle for her to participate in theatre activity in ZPT, but then goes on to tell how the situation changed and how even her mother became a player:

... At the very beginning, the biggest obstacle was my family. My family did not want to allow me to go to theater because it was a little bit far away. Zeytinburnu was a place I did not know very well. They did not allow it, because it was dangerous. Also, since people regard art in a material way, as they do not know this activity in any other way, that is, they do not know what theater is, my family did not allow me to go to theater. But I escaped, I escaped from home constantly, I went outside by lying all the time. By lying I escaped and escaped. Then, when they understood they could not insist any longer... [Fadime Abla<sup>58</sup>] of course, she intervened; she really wanted me to come to theater. After that, since Fadime Abla visited us frequently, my mother got used to it... and eventually, she grew to like it, and got to the stage a few times herself.<sup>59</sup>

Hale is one of the players who started to participate in theatre activity in 2009. She also has some problems with her family concerning theater, however, she does not seem to have found a solution for this, and theater itself, as a matter of tension, continues between her and her mother. Describing her conflict with her mother about

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<sup>58</sup> "Sister Fadime"

<sup>59</sup> ...En büyük engelim ilk başta ailemdi. Ailem biraz uzak olduğu için göndermek istemiyordu... E Zeytinburnu zaten bilmediğim bir yerdi. Tehlikeli olduğu için göndermediler. Bir de genelde insanlar sanat, şey farklı gözle baktığı için, sürekli maddi gözle baktığı için, bu işin de böyle olduğunu bilmedikleri için, yani tiyatronun ne olduğunu bilmediği için insanlar ailem beni bırakmadı tiyatroya. Ama ben kaçtım sürekli kaçtım evden, hep yalan söyleyerek çıktım evden. Yalan söyleyerek kaçtım kaçtım. Ondan sonra tabi anlayınca direnemediler... [Fadime Abla] tabi girdi çok istedi benim tiyatroya gitmemi ondan sonra zaten baktık Fadime Abla bize gele gide gele gide annem de alıştı... Sevdi o da hatta bir kaç kez annem sahneye falan çıktı.

theater, she does not talk about it as a problem that can be solved but a source of depression. Surely, her mood about this is related to individual reasons such as her age, her relation with her family etc. However, her narration of this also reflects that the background social relations of the trainer with the families are not organized in such a way so as to contribute to the availability of the theater activity for young people, as was the case in the initial years of the group.

Especially in these days my mother is bothering me a lot. For example I say to my mother :“In theater these things will happen like that....”, she starts to shout, she says : “You do not think of your courses, what is theater”, she has started to come down on me in such ways in recent days...<sup>60</sup>

While the families’ attitude towards the theater activity, one of the most important problems, was emphasized especially by the trainer, most of the interviewees hesitated to discuss that issue. It is understandable that they may not want to talk about their families with me. Even though I thought that I had overcome the stigma of being a stranger amongst them I might be still too distant for them to share their family issues. Ashlı and Hale were two of the exceptional interviewees that openly talked about their families’ involvement in their participation in theater. While hesitating to talk about themselves and their families vis a vis theater, most of my interviewees said that they have so many friends in the group who are not allowed or who are prevented from coming to theatre by their parents. Berfin and Okan, being two of the oldest members of the group narrate that family problem as such:

Berfin: Some have left the group because of bad reasons. There always emerged familial problems. I have a friend named Gül. Her mother was a bit... She was going to TV programs, she was gathering people to bring them as audiences to TV programs, and she was organizing those kinds of things. She wanted her daughter to play in the films...Then my friend was obliged to leave the group because of that familial pressure.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Annem hele şu son günlerde beni çok sıkıyor. Mesela ben anneme diyorum ki anne böyle böyle olacak tiyatrodaki, bağırıma başlıyor. Sen diyor ne tiyatrosu düşünüyorsun hiç derslerini böyle düşünmüyorsun bilmem ne, son günlerde o kadar üstüme gelmeye başladı ki...

<sup>61</sup> ....bazıları çok kötü sebeplerden dolayı ayrıldı, hep ailevi sorunlar oldu. Bir arkadaşım vardı Gül diye, onun ailesi biraz şeydi hani programlara falan gidiyordu, programlara gelen seyirciler var ya hani onları toplardı, organize yapardı. Kızının filmlerde, bak o da kızının filmlerde oynamasını istiyordu.... Öyle daha sonra arkadaşım ayrılmak zorunda kaldı o yüzden aile baskısından dolayı.

Okan: Girls always have problems; their families do not allow them to come to theater, pretending that they are failing in their courses. Most of them were failing in their courses and their parents see theatre as the reason... For example Deniz's family, they were saying that she was not paying attention to her school because of theater...<sup>62</sup>

As Okan mentioned, girls have relatively more difficulties with their families. Thus, the preventive attitude of the family also emerges as a gender issue.

The theater activity in ZPT is one of the places that the participants can have the opportunity to be relatively independent from their families. Employing that opportunity with the support of the trainer in framing the young people's critiques concerning their families, they had staged the play *Sokaktaki Özgürlükçü Çocuklar*. The main theme of the play was the girls who are not allowed to go to theater rehearsals by their families. Their mothers, fathers, brothers... all have different reasons for not allowing them to go to theater. Then, these girls chose to perform on the street and at the end, they had succeeded and, they started to perform.

This play stages the very everyday life materials of the participants concerning their families and theatre. The period wherein this play was rehearsed and staged is important. It was the period when the groups had strong relationships with the neighborhood and the families were getting in touch with theater through the association. So the ZPT had a large portion of the audience composed of mainly the families of the members. Staging that play, the young participants of the theater group sent the message to their families who were preventing them from engaging in an activity by the very means of that activity. Theater became a means of communication between their families and them. The children's experiences with their families came to the theater saloon, had been re-discussed, reshaped, reformed and staged. In the liminoid process of theatrical activity, by having fun in replaying the social roles and attitudes in the ordinary life of their parents, relatives and themselves, with the critical power of humor, they subvert the power relations in the real life on the stage, in a way that will affect their everyday life representations also.

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<sup>62</sup> ... Kız arkadaşlarımızın hep sorunları olurdu işte ailesi göndermiyordu, işte okulda derslerinden falan geri kalıyorlardı. Çoğu işte derslerinden zayıf aldıkları için annesi babası hep tiyatroyu şey yapıyordu... Mesela Deniz vardı hep onun ailesi yapıyordu. Sen okula gidiyorsun ama tiyatroya gittiğin için de okulu önemsemiyorsun falan diyorlardı...

The families' preventive attitude towards theater does not take place as direct interventions all the time. Most of my interviewees narrated that their families expect them to "gain" something from theater activity. This gain can sometimes be money or sometimes a certificate that will be useful for them. This situation is very much related to the fact that most of the participants of ZPT are from lower class families in which nearly all the members of the family have to work to earn money. However, even if the young person is working at the same time, the families' criticism of their children, because of their participation in a financially non-productive activity, continues. If their children will not derive any benefit, they usually want their children to spare as little time as they could, therefore not to waste time. A hobby, and pleasure giving activity if it does not contribute financially, is not accepted:

Ali: They say that you should have a future in the financial sense, you are going to theater, you should have an income in the future, do not make useless attempts, do not make it as a hobby, as a pleasure, it will not make you a gain financially.<sup>63</sup>

Turner, in his discussion on liminoid as a leisure time activity, argues that leisure time is not always independent of the values of work life. Leisure, from its conceptualization through the industrial revolution onwards, is accepted as meaningful if it is functional in terms of the work activity (Turner, 1982: 20-61). Analyzing children's discussion on theater with their parents, Turner's description of the tension between leisure and work is beneficial. As it does not promise a professional theater career, it does not add to their school life nor does it add something in terms of their work life; families see theater activity in ZPT as an activity that does not deserve to be in the category of leisure activity. As the time the young people spare for theater activity increases, their lives revolve around the theater activity. They do not want to miss any rehearsals and activities related to theater. The families' anxiety concerning theater activity rises because that no-gain, time wasting activity becomes one of the much liked activities for their children. Fırat, who had participated in ZPT activities for one year and then left the group, narrates her mother's attitude towards theater in these words:

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<sup>63</sup> Hani diyorlar geleceğin olsun da maddi anlamda, hani gidiyorsun da ilerde bir gelirin falan olsun, boşuna uğraşma. Hobi için yapma diyorlar hani zevk olsun diye, maddi anlamda birşey gelsin ki yap diyorlar.

I said to my mother: “Mom, look, theater is so nice”, she supported me a lot actually, but then she thought that there is no money in theatre. They see only from the economic side, it is natural in a sense, in this era money doesn’t grow on trees, people work for 20 hours 24 hours a day in order to eat their fill, for a soup.<sup>64</sup>

The values attached to work or the economic system does not only become valid for the families. Some of my interviewees also narrated their reasons for leaving ZPT and attending other theatre activities and also their complaints about the process in ZPT of repeatedly emphasizing the notions of time and progress. For sure, their approaches to theater activity were different from their families; they were not blaming the theater activity for not supplying them any gain. However, their conceptualization of their own relations with theatre through stressing the importance of time and progress appeared to be coming from the very repertoire of the work life values. In that sense, theatre became a profession to be developed rather than an area of freedom to be played within for them.

Fırat whose narrative I quoted above emphasized his quarrel with his mother on the financial value of attending ZPT, left the group in 2009 after his one year period participation and then started to attend acting courses in Müjdat Gezen Arts Center [Müjdat Gezen Sanat Merkezi]<sup>65</sup>. He emphasizes that from the very beginning, since his primary school years he has dreamt of being a theater man and has wanted to perform professionally. He describes the process of leaving ZPT and starting to attend the courses in Müjdat Gezen Arts Center in these words:

We talked and discussed a lot with Fadime Abla, I said to her: “Sorry”. We had separated unhappily. Then I went to Müjdat Gezen... It was bad because the theatre is not cared about by some friends... We spared so much time, we came here at 09.30 and we were here till 2 or 3 pm. The time was going; there was nothing more valuable than time. Time is passing and they, some of them, are not coming, there are the ones persisting, discussions took place. I was at a loss.

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<sup>64</sup> Ne güzel annecim dedim bak tiyatroya, o beni çok destekledi aslında tiyatroya ama hani baktı bu işte para yok.... Onlar sırf para yönünden bakıyor ekonomik yani sadece doğal olarak, bu devir ekmek aslanın ağzında yani millet karnını doyurabilmek için bir çorba için belki de 20 saat 24 saat çalışıyor orda.

<sup>65</sup> Müjdat Gezen Arts Center is a private art education institution which is founded by the famous theatre man Müjdat Gezen which organizes courses in various artistic areas such as acting, play writing, playing different instruments etc., also incorporates a conservatory.



I decided in that way, I thought that it cannot go in that way... Progress in theater does not start immediately. You start little by little then you reach the peak. It is not easy to ascend in theater, at the beginning you play on the stage to fifty audiences, then to 300-500 people.<sup>66</sup>

Aslı is also an old member of the group who had participated in theater activity in ZPT for two years. At the beginning of her third year, she also wanted to attend another theater group called the Blue Faces Company [Mavi Yüzler Kumpanya]<sup>67</sup> as well as ZPT, and this attempt by her caused a conflict between her and the trainer. Her narrative including the reasons of her willingness to attend a theater activity besides ZPT is explained:

...I wanted, not to stop where I stand but to go one step further, one wants to proceed when the time passes... Actually my aim was not to leave that group, it was such that, as I was not working and also not attending to school, I was free also in the weekdays and I got bored in the weekdays at home. In that period I had familial issues, bad times, I did not want to stay at home. Since we didn't have rehearsals in ZPT in the weekdays, I wanted to continue with another group, but I would not leave my own group, I did not have such an idea in my mind. They were looking for someone for their group. Auditions were held; I went and tried my chance. I thought I would not be successful, I guess because there were too many people, many people had come from various walks of life. I was chosen, good luck smiled at me. I don't really know if it smiled or cried but I was chosen. Then when I said this to Fadime Abla, she replied that this is impossible. But I also said: There is no way to turn back.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Çok konuştuk baya tartıştık ben de dedim Fadime Abla dedim kusura bakma yani. Öylece işte mutsuz bir şekilde ayrıldık. Sonra ben Müjdat Gezen'e... Öyle oldu yani kötü oldu yani. Yani tiyatroya önem verilmiyor diye arkadaşlar tarafından ... O kadar zamanımızı alıyor sonuçta geliyoruz burada saat 9 buçuk, 2'ye kadar 3'e kadar burdayız. Zaman gidiyor, zaman kadar değerli olan hiçbirşey yoktur. Zaman gidiyor onlar gelmiyorlar bazıları, gelmiyorlar inat edenler oluyor, tartışmalar oluyor. Ben de ne yapacağımı şaşırđım. Bu kararı aldım dedim yani böyle ilerleyemez...Tiyatroda ilerlemek ufaktan başlar. Ufak ufak başlarsın yani bir anda böyle zirveye varırsın yani, kolay kolay yükselinmez tiyatrodaki, ilk önce elli kişilik sahnede yer alırsın ondan sonra 300-500 kişiye çıkarırsın.

<sup>67</sup> Blue Faces Company is a private course type theatre company which also play their rehearsals at the same stage with ZPT in Atatürk Culture Center in Zeytinburnu.

<sup>68</sup> ...Ben şey istedim yani her zaman yerimde oturmak değil de yani yerimden bir adım daha önde olmak istedim, zaman geçtikçe insan ilerlemek istiyor... Aslında benim amacım o grubu bırakmak değildi, şöyle bir şeydi, ben çalışmadığım için okulum da olmadığı için, hafta içi de boştum ve haftaiçi evde canım sıkılıyordu, zaten hani bir ara ben ailevi bir süreç yaşadım hani kötü bir zamanlar geçirdim, evde durmak istemiyordum. Ben de haftaiçi tiyatro olmadığı için başka bir grupla devam etmek istedim aslında ama kendi grubumu bırakmıyordum çünkü öyle birşey aklımda hiç

Both Fırat and Aslı emphasized time and progress. They had started to feel that they were wasting time in ZPT. This feeling seems to emerge simultaneously with the dispersion and the problems in the group. This period seems to be really the one where the group experienced problems in group solidarity, discipline and also artistic creativity. That is to say in Turner's terms, the participants started to not be in the very flow of the performance. They had difficulty in entertaining, creating and understanding each other. I interpret this situation as one of the reasons lying behind some of the group members getting closer to the work values and distancing themselves from the group.

### 3.3. Gender in Performance

In the first two years in which ZPT become a group of children's theater, the number of the girls were significantly more than boys. Considering that the main materials staged were from the real lives of the young participants, this intensity of female population was also reflected in the gender sensitive themes in the plays. In that sense, the feminist tendency of the trainer and her attempt to make discussions with the participants concerning their gender roles is important. Particularly the female participants of these initial years have developed a gender sensitive eye concerning their own identities and also the gendered power relations in their families and their environment. Moreover, girls came closer to feminism through the experience of theatrical activity in ZPT and with the affect of the trainer's positive stance towards feminism. Gaye, while narrating how she had changed through the theater activity, told how she had got closer to feminism:

...That was the period I was performing in *Bekar Odası*, thanks to Fadime Abla, she was bringing me to the 8<sup>th</sup> March Meeting in Kadıköy. Ok, there is

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yoktu. Ben de onların, işte onlar da eleman bir şey arıyorlarmış, gruplarına eleman arıyorlarmış. Seçmeler falan yapıldı işte, ben de gittim şansımı denedim. Olmacağını biliyordum, olmacağını tahmin ediyordum, çünkü hani çok iyi insanlar vardı yani bir sürü kanaldan bir sürü insan gelmişti. Ben seçildim, şans bana güldü. Güldü mü ağladı mı bilmiyorum ama ben seçildim. Ondan sonra ben Fadime Abla'ya bunu söyleyince böyle bir şey olmayacağını söyledi bana. Ama ben de geri dönüşü olmayacağını söyledim.

something like 8<sup>th</sup> of March as International Women's Day, women are gathered, but these women have real problems, I see these types of things...<sup>69</sup>

The play that was mentioned above, *Sokaktaki Özgürlükçü Çocuklar* addresses the family pressure over girls and serves as one of the examples of the gender sensitive productions of the group. *Biz Herşeyin Farkındayız* and the two scenes of that play are also good examples of how the group dealt with the gender issue. The first scene of the play stages a quarrel between the mother and the father at home, performed in a humorous representation of the wife and husband. The scene ends with the beating of the woman, which also raises issues about domestic violence. Gül is the actor in that scene who played the role of the mother. In the rehearsal period, Gül had difficulty in performing the role, particularly the quarrel scene. The trainer describes this process as such:

I asked her: Why do you have such a difficulty? Don't you have such quarrels at home? Your mother and father do not have such quarrels? She said that: "No Fadime Abla, I did not see such a thing at home, may be because of this I cannot perform." She is playing the woman who is exposed to violence and she has real difficulty. One day, her mother came to the association, I asked "Gülnur Abla, don't you have any quarrels at home? Gül is playing, I am very surprised...", she said: "Of course we do not, because if I say anything when her father says something I cannot imagine what will be thrown to my head, that is I cannot guess what type of a violence I will be exposed to, so I do not speak at all. Therefore, we do not have any quarrels."<sup>70</sup>

This anecdote shows that it was very difficult to perform such tension on the stage. When the trainer tells Gül that her mother told her about their family, Gül said nothing. But after a while, when they were searching for a name for their play, Gül proposed the

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<sup>69</sup> ...benim o *Bekar Odası* sahnesinde bulunduğum zamanlar, işte Fadime Abla saolsun 8 Mart'ta Kadıköy'e götürüyor. 8 Mart Dünya Kadınlar Günü diye birşey tamam var ama, hani böyle kadınlar toplanıyorlar, bu kadınların problemleri var gerçekten, böyle şeyler gördüm mesela...

<sup>70</sup> ... Dedim sen niye tıkanıyorsun sizin eve böyle kavga falan olmuyor mu Gül, senin annen baban hiç mi kavga etmezler falan? Yok ya Fadime Abla ben hiç görmedim falan belki ondan olabilir falan diye... Anneyi oynuyor şiddete uğrayan anneyi de çok zorlanıyor çocuk. Bir gün annesi geldi derneğe, dedim Gülnur abla sizin evde hiç kavga olmuyor mu? Çok dedim şaşırıdın Gül oynuyor da... Dedi ki tabi olmuyor olmuyor çünkü ben babası konuştuğunda bir çift laf konuşursam kafama neyin geleceği belli değil, yani nasıl bir şiddete uğrayacağım belli değil, onun için ben hiç konuşmuyorum. Böylelikle bizim evde hiç kavga olmuyor.

name *Biz Herşeyin Farkındayız*, and this was chosen as the name of the play. The trainer interprets this as, “she was silent, but she also wanted to express that she was aware of everything”.

The last scene of the play is the one that address sexual harassment, in which two women, one is a middle class and the other is a lower class migrant woman, meet in a public garden. They keep a distance at the beginning but then they start to chat, and after the sexual harassment they both experienced, they get closer with the effect of solidarity. The two analyze the situation in these words on the stage: “It is not a trouble to be a woman, but the inhuman men are the real trouble”<sup>71</sup>. At the end of the scene, all the female participants of the group come to the scene, and sit near these women; they all together sing the traditional song *Dağda Belimde Odun* which has a significant feminist tone.

Gender being performed on stage in ZPT, with the great effect of the background relationship of the trainer with the female participants particularly, changed the relationships of these young women with their identities as women. I argue that similar to the discussion on Kurdish identity, the process of theatrical performance provides them the chance to think and perform critically through their gendered identities both individually and collectively. Gender has also a specified position in terms of the doubleness of the performance. Judith Butler’s theory on the repetitive character of gender as a construction is very valuable in that sense. Butler, analyzing the functioning of regulatory norms of sexuality, theorizes gender as performance that is, gender being continuously produced through performativity. She argues that “performativity is not a singular act, for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms...” (Butler, 1993: 12). Young women, experiencing repeatedly the gender roles attached to them in real life, had the chance to re-repeat and re-interpret these gender roles in alternative ways while rehearsing on the stage and so had the possibility to try the alternative gender roles in the very liminoid process of theatrical performance.

In 2006, the male hip hop group started to participate in the theater rehearsals in ZPT. In all the plays since 2006, there has been a scene including a hip hop show. Their participation had occurred with the prompting of Okan. He started to dance and then his dancer friends came to ZPT, also with the invitation of the trainer. The initial groups of dancers were young males from the neighborhood and the dancers and the others in the

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<sup>71</sup> *Kadınlık başa bela değil insan gibi insan olmayan erkekler başa bela.*

group had mostly known each other. Four of my interviewees are the ones still dancing in the ZPT hip hop group which they call “ZPT Break Brothers”. They are Okan, Serkan, Mustafa and Ali. Okan is a high school student and also works in a part time job delivering the flyers of a company at the weekends. The others are working in full time jobs in the shoe and jewellery workshops. They all narrated that they started to dance while they were hanging out. They have seen the others dancing, learned how to dance in the street and then formed their group. They dance in the theater rehearsals as well as in a club which they hire for an hour in order to develop their techniques. They describe dancing as a very entertaining and also a relaxing activity through which they get rid of the stress and also the feeling of violence:

Serkan: We sometimes have stressful days but we compensate for this by dancing... When we get angry, we are discharged with dance, at these times we dance better, we find vent through dance in order not to harm anyone, it develops well.<sup>72</sup>

Hip hop dancing functions both as an escape and resistance in terms of the stressful atmospheres they are living through (La Boskey, 2001: 118).

The trainer told me of two boys who wanted to dance with these dancers; but they were drug addicts and the hip hop dancers in the group told them if only they gave up taking drugs they could dance, and actually, they had given up. Also, none of them are smokers because of the bad effects of smoking on dancing. They portray an image of the good, healthy dancer who chooses clean environments in response to the widespread prejudice about the hip hop and break dancers as vagrant, drug addicted and dangerous. They themselves mention that they have friends, who hip hop dance and also engage in “dirty” things, like taking drugs, behaving in bad manners towards people etc. They are attempting to be on the “clean” side. Ali narrates:

You can either choose the clean or the bad environment. As we do not have bad habits we like the clean environment, we see lot of things, there are variety of environments, and every environment has dirty things. Our environment also has them but we try to stay on the clean and bright side.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Bazen stresli günlerimiz oluyor ama biz bunu dansla kapatıyoruz... Sinirlendiğimizde danstan çıkartıyoruz daha güzel dans ediyoruz o sırada, bütün hırslımızı ondan alıyoruz çünkü başkasına zarar vermemek için, güzel oluyor.

<sup>73</sup> İster temiz ortamı seçersin ister pis ortamı seçersin. Bizim kötü bir alışkanlığımız olmadığı için temiz ortam seviyoruz, hani çok şey de gördük hani çok ortam var ya, her

Hip hop dancers had been included in the plays as parts of the scenes in which the everyday life experiences of the hip hop dancers had been staged. The main emphasis in these scenes was generally the critique of those prejudices highlighted above in the attitudes of the ordinary people concerning the hip hop and break dancers. Thus, theatrical activity acted also as a medium for these dancers to voice their critiques about their mainstream representations on the street and to develop an alternative representation.

Serkan: Our people generally see dancers as awful. They think of them as sniffers, we want to show in theatre that this is not true. Actually, dance is a sport and, to put it in a nicer way, a healthier life.<sup>74</sup>

Sarah La Baskey explains it as the functioning of body, manner and appearance; hip hop dance is the one where male identity as an ego is constructed and women are not preferred to enter this male space; they can only be the viewers or the rewards for the winners of the hip hop dance. Parallel to Baskey's argument, hip hop dance shows have been the area of males within ZPT, in which only males display their virtuosity and no female member had taken part with them until 2009. Moreover, in the very initial stage, the coming of the hip hop dancers' male group seems to have caused a discomfort for the girls. Even if they were mostly from the same neighborhood and knew each other, nevertheless, a tension emerged between the girls and the boys. As I noted in the previous chapter, that tension has been moderated by the attempt of the trainer, but it seems to continue in the sense of a girls-boys quarrel. Aslı narrated those quarrels as such:

“Look, you are made from our backbone, you emerged after us, you are not so strong, see, and you will fail in a fight!” There was continuous talk on power, fighting, beating. That is, we have discussions but it was a nice discussion, it did not result in conflict.<sup>75</sup>

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ortamın pisliği vardır. Bizim ortamında var ama işte biz berrak temiz tarafında kalmaya çalışıyoruz.

<sup>74</sup> Halkımız genellikle hiphopçuları dans edenleri kötü görüyor. Balici tinerci gibi düşünüyor, biz bunun gerçek olmadığını tiyatrodaki göstermek istedik, aslında dans gerçekten bir spor ve daha sağlıklı bir yaşam diyelim, o daha hoş.

<sup>75</sup> ... Bak siz bizim bel kemiğimizden olmuşsunuz işte, siz bizden sonradan olmuşsunuz, işte, ya siz o kadar güçlü değilsiniz bir dövüşte bile yenilirsiniz, sürekli bir güç sürekli

In 2009, after the group had gone through a dispersion period in the summer, the trainer proposed that Okan lead the dance theatre activity of ZPT and call people to continue the group. Then, with the new comers, the group started to conduct rehearsals under the training of Okan. In that period, female participants also started to dance in the hip hop scenes. However, the new organization of the group in such a way caused new tensions of gender within the group.

Ali: Ezgi and Dilek cannot get along with Okan, they are continuously in a dialogue, in a discussion, girls talk a lot... Because Okan is like the trainer, they argue with him, otherwise they do not have a big problem with Okan, there is only this minor argument thing, other than that, we have good relations with the girls.<sup>76</sup>

### 3.4. Class: Consciousness on Stage

A significant part of the members of ZPT are workers. Some work as well as attend school. They work in part time jobs such as delivering flyers and distributing questionnaires; and others work in textile, shoes or jewellery workshops in Zeytinburnu and in other workshop areas of İstanbul.<sup>77</sup>

Berfin has been working in textile workshops during the summers since she was 10. She considers herself fortunate in the sense that she has been working in these workshops only during the summer months. Nonetheless, her observations concerning the workshops are very detailed, and her awareness of her and the other workers conditions and violations of their rights is significant.

Berfin: ... According to worker rights, it is in that way. Actually, seven o'clock is even late, some, for example my elder sister leave at seven thirty, some people I know, even at nine, they sometimes stop work at nine that is not counted as

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bir daya sürekli bir dövüş muhabbeti vardı. Öyle biz de tartıştık ama tatlı tartışmaydı tabi, kavgaya falan yol açmazdı ilerde.

<sup>76</sup> Ezgi'yle Dilek pek anlaşıyor Okan'la, devamlı bir diyalog tartışma içindeler, devamlı, kızlarda dil maşallah dil pabuç kadar....Okan biraz hoca gibi orda durduğu için biraz tartışmaya giriyorlar, yoksa Okan'la de büyük bir sorunları yok sadece böyle tartışma olayı var, yoksa kızlarla gayet rahatız.

<sup>77</sup> Yeni Bosna, Merter

extra work period. But, for example when we work till nine, it is counted as the extra work period; it should be in that way.<sup>78</sup>

In 2005, in the second version of *Biz Herşeyin Farkındayız*, they staged a textile workshop scene. Problems such as general working conditions, children's bad working conditions and sexual harassment incidences in these workshops were addressed. Berfin had been working as an *ortacı*<sup>79</sup> in a textile workshop and so had played the *ortacı* role in that scene.

...I was a normal *ortacı*, but this one that I was playing in the performance is the type who loves reading. She reads her book whenever she is free, but at one point she is caught by her boss. The mechanist calls her, "Come here!" and, orders her to bring some hair dye and then orders her to tidy up. There is something like a struggle here. I had played myself there; I will never forget that role...<sup>80</sup>

Berfin narrates the real atmosphere in the workshop as:

... The atmosphere in the workshop is so distinct, you get such a scolding. Sure, everybody gets scolding. Everyone from the architect gets scolding to the one who is superior to him, including the accountant also. But this is so different, you are really oppressed, not because you do your work inadequately but because of everything you are oppressed. Already there is the frustration caused by working in that environment. I mean, you look around, there are only working people, people shouting at you, their superiors shouting at them and others shouting to another and so on and so on. That is to say, they are such hard-hitting things...<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> ...mesela işçi hakları bakımından öyle. Yani yedi bile geç ama işte bazıları mesela benim ablamlar yedi buçukta, işte tanıdıkların dokuzda bile yani, mesai dışında dokuzda paydos ettikleri oluyor. Ama biz mesela dokuza kadar çalışsak mesai olarak geçiyor, ki öyle olması gerekiyor.

<sup>79</sup>Mostly the child worker in a workshop that carries things around to the other workers and does what is ordered.

<sup>80</sup> ... Hani ben normal bir ortacıydım ama bu ortacı okumayı çok seven bir ortacı, boş bulunduğu anda oturup kitap okuyor, ama patronuna yakalanıyor falan. İşte makinacı onu çağırıyor gel buraya falan, işte soruyor git bana boya al falan, git ortalığı topla falan, orda bir mücadele şeyi falan. Orda kendimi oynamıştım, o rolü zaten hiç unutamıyorum...

<sup>81</sup> ...Çok farklı atölye ortamı ya, öyle bir laf yiyosun ki hani şey gibi, tabi yani herkes laf yer, mimar da laf yer bir üstünden, muhasebeci de ama bu çok farklı resmen eziliyosun böyle, işini kötü yaptığın için değil her şey için eziliyosun. Zaten şeyin verdiği bir eziklik var yani, ortamda çalışmanın verdiği bir şey var. Yani etrafına bakıyorsun hep



In the play *Nesini Söylesem* in 2008, they also made a scene staging a shoe making workshop. Mustafa, who has been a shoe maker for 10 years in a workshop, was playing the boss and describes this scene as such:

...there was the shoe workshop, may be you remember the boss and the workers, you see the boss continuously scolding the workers. We had staged this. How he fires the workers when the things are going bad, how he does not pay their wages, we had staged even how he beat the workers; we had produced such a scene...<sup>82</sup>

What they do in these workshop scenes is the critique of the power relations in sweatshops, in a humorous sense. They act out their own life on the stage as workers just as Berfin and Mustafa. They perform the role of their bosses by caricaturizing them and thereby make a critique of their class based relations in the workshops by making fun of the dominant power figures they are faced with. This type of critique can be read with reference to liminoid process's giving people the possibility of inverting the existing power relations in ordinary life by creating their own representations of these figures.

### 3.5. Conclusion

I argue that the theatrical performance as an experience including collecting data, discussions and rehearsals had been a process through which the participants created the moments of the possibility to invert the structure of their ordinary lives. Surely, they, at the same time, reproduced much of the dominant functioning of power relations in real life; however, I focused in this chapter on the moments of inversion. Through performance, they reviewed their positioning vis a vis their ethnic, gender and class identities. In that liminoid area, they had a chance to re-play their social roles and re-think the conditions they are living in the everyday life. Therefore, they developed a self-knowledge of themselves. Self-knowledge created at the liminal area within

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çalışan insanlar, sana bağırın insanlar, onların bir üstü ona, o ona falan. çok can alıcı şeyler yani...

<sup>82</sup> ... Ayakkabı atölyesi vardı, belki hatırlıyorsun, patron ve işçiler, patron işte devamlı azarlar işçileri, biz bunu sahneledik. İşler bozukken böyle kovduğunu, ne bileyim parasını vermediğini, hatta dövdüğünü bile sahneledik yani, böyle bir sahne çıkardık...

performance is the notion that points out the possibility of the political through theatrical performance. Narratives of participants regarding the process of experience becoming performances display how they created meanings concerning theatrical activity in relation to their everyday life experiences. Self knowledge emerges as experienced meaning. In that sense, the ZPT theatre experience is more life-like art rather than art-like art (Kaprow, 1983).

The meaning production process concerning themselves and the world around them takes place through the creative power of play and entertainment. All of the interviewees revealed that they were having so much fun and such a good time in rehearsals.

Entertainment is liminoid rather than liminal, it is suffused with freedom. It involves profoundly the power of the *play* and the play democratizes. (Turner, 1982: 120)

At this point, the theatre experience in ZPT also makes us think of Bakhtin's work on carnival. Bakhtin in his writing on "Rabelais and His World" discusses the blend of art and life through the notion of carnival. Referring to the medieval era public carnivals, he depicts the carnival spirit as a utopia in which people develop the immanent critique of the existing order through the humorous folk culture. With the freeing effect of carnival laughter, all the hierarchies disappear and people construct a second life in which they get rid of the existing norms of the official life. This occurs as an organic part of the lives of people, shaped in the form of art.

But the basic carnival nucleus of this culture is by no means a purely artistic form or a spectacle and does not; generally speaking belong to the sphere of art. It belongs to the borderline between art and life. In reality, it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain pattern of play. (Bakhtin, 1984)

This second life, the liminoid area of theatrical experience that has been made possible through humor, laughter and entertainment opens a way to individual and collective reevaluation and thus subversion. However, as the very process of theatrical performance is a part of real social life, it also creates its own power relations and tensions. That is, the freeing effect of performance is neither continuous nor static. Therefore I emphasized the moments of subversion.

## CHAPTER 4

### THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE AS GROUP EXPERIENCE: TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL AND CONTESTATION

#### *WE WROTE OUR STORY BY OURSELVES*<sup>83</sup>

In this chapter, I focus on the process of theatrical performance experienced by the members of the ZPT. In the first part, my aim is to discuss how ZPT theatrical experience has contributed to subject formations of the participants of the group. In relation with the discussion on the theatrical experience as a liminoid process through which the possibility of criticism emerges, here the possibility of formation of alternative subjectivities will be addressed. Therefore, I study the descriptions of change experienced through theatrical process by the members of the group as well as comments on their experiences in theatre groups other than ZPT. In addition to individual experiences, what emerged throughout my field work with ZPT people is that the theatrical activity is a collective community experience. Hence, in the second part, commenting on the narratives of the group members on the inner functioning of the group, including their critical comments concerning each other and the trainer, I analyze ZPT as a community through which not only an ideal type of transformation occurs but contested relationships come into play through theatrical production process.

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<sup>83</sup> *Öykümüzü Kendimiz Yazdık*

## 4.1. Experiencing Theatrical Performance

### 4.1.1. A Process of Change and Transformation

Nearly all of my interviewees told me that being engaged in the theatre activity in ZPT has motivated a change in their lives. Some of the participants emphasize the transformation they experienced individually while some others mention how the way people perceive them had changed. Deniz narrates how theatre affected her life in these words:

... Before engaging in theatre activity, for example, even if someone grabs this, we would not challenge and defend ourselves. That type of thing, we could not speak up and say something. Well, we expressed ourselves; we started to express ourselves so well... I was a quiet and obedient child before going to theatre, you know, one who does not have a sense of anything, I even did not know theatre, and did not enjoy. After starting to engage in theatre activity I started to enjoy theatre. Theatre had affected my life so well.<sup>84</sup>

Her narrative depicts that she had found an opportunity in theatrical experience to learn to express her. That sense of freedom in self expression is not limited with the theatre activity but has affected her attitude in everyday life. Rather than repeating the norms by being an obedient and quiet girl, she felt the power to challenge. Her words recall the discussion on liminoid in the previous chapter: Being more capable of expressing oneself, challenge the others and defending one's own ideas.... I interpret her words as she feels the possibility of creating the critical distance to herself and also to her environment. She got aware that she was obedient and quite, and she started to challenge the others around. Aslı also made similar points with Deniz:

... Imagine that you are in a tunnel, there is a light coming at the end, and you are running and running to reach that light. I thought that, it means that I had run and run for 16 years to reach that light, when I met with theatre after 16 years, that light had came to me. I had opened myself, I had seen my eyes, I had been

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<sup>84</sup> Biz mesela tiyatroya gitmeden önce, bir konuda hani şunu benim elimden alsalar bile hani niye alıyorsun diye savunamazdık. Öyle bir şeydi, ağzımızı açıp birşey söyleyemezdik. Hani kendimizi ifade ettik çok güzel ifade etmeye başladık...Tiyatroya gitmeden önce sakın salim bir çocuktum ben böyle. Hani pek birşeyden anlamayan, tiyatroyu bile bilmezdim hani zevk bile almazdım. Gittikten sonra işte baya bir tiyatrodan zevk almaya başladım. Hayatımda çok güzel etkilerde bulundu.

freed from the blinkers, and that is to say, I have no more blinkers on my eyes. I can see everything objectively with a clear and critical look. Theatre is indispensable for me... I will not be fooled again, Aslı who has been accepting everything had gone, she is replaced by Aslı who is questioning the reasons and asking “Why it is in that way?” “Why is this so?” like the child who has recently started to read, she asks like “Mom, why the ‘a’ is like that?” I also live like that, why is it so for Kurds, why this and that, I started to search for why and how’s.

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In terms of the change she had gone through with theatre, Aslı emphasizes that she has started asking questions. She sees her situation similar to a little child who is learning to read. I interpret her using her own metaphor of going back to a position of the subject not yet subordinated by the social norms, not taking life as “given” yet.

Both of the narratives above make me think of Judith Butler’s discussion on subject formation. She analyzes the functioning of power not only in social, but also in the psychic dimension. Rather than defining social norms through which one is being subjectivated, she also discusses how these very social norms make that subjectivation possible through psychic topography. She argues that internalization of these social norms and the very notion of the distinction of one’s her/his social and psychic makes her/his vulnerable to subjection. That internalization itself is being realized through reiteration and repetition. She argues that political agency can be possible through exceeding the conditions of subordination. (Butler, 1997: 29) Deniz and Aslı narrate their experiencing of theatrical experience as a process of realization of social norms that they are attached to. Theatrical performance and acting, opening an area of repetition and reiteration with various possibilities, function in creating the possibility of exceeding the social norms. They did not only realize but also started to challenge, question and defend themselves within these norms. Explaining how this transformation occurred, they refer to the inquiries and discussions they have made within the activity of theatrical performance.

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<sup>85</sup> ... Kendini bir tünelde hisset, ucunda bir ışık var, koşuyosun koşuyosun koşuyosun o ışığa yetişmek için. Ben şöyle düşündüm ben demek ki 16 yıl koşmuşum koşmuşum o ışığa ulaşmak için 16 yılın sonunda tiyatroyla tanışınca o ışık bana gelmiş. Kendimi açmışım, gözlerimi görmüşüm, at gözlüğümü atmışım, yani gözlerimde artık at gözlüğü yok. Herşeye net ve eleştirel gözle bakabiliyorum objektif bakabiliyorum. Benim için tiyatro vazgeçilmez birşey... Maymun gözünü açtı artık hani herşeye evet tamam olur falan diyen Aslı gitti, ya neden bu böyle hayır sebebini sorgulayan Aslı geldi. İşte neden bu böyle neden şu, okumaya başlayan çocuk gibi. Anne neden a harfi böyle mesela, hani öyle sorar ya. Ben de mesela bu halde yaşıyoruz, neden Kürtlere böyle yapıyorlar neden bilmem ne böyle hep neden niçin araştırmaya başladım.

Narratives of the members of the group in terms of how engaging in a theatre activity affected their lives also depict that the experiences of the process of change and transformation differentiate in terms of gender. While the female participants tell the change they experience through focusing on their individual feelings, attitudes and behaviors; the male participants, as well as referring to what theatre add them personally, emphasize how their representations as individuals had changed after being engaged in theatre and dance activity. Serkan who is a dancer and player in the group tells the change he experienced with theater as:

You can express yourself more easily. You have friends. It prevents you from bad habits. At least, you have information about many things, for example we do not know about the world, by favor of the inquiries we can learn through theatre... You can see the realities better... I feel different, anyway I enjoy it, it is a good thing, to display yourself is creative. Passing through the neighborhood, such talks “Ooo, brother Serkan is here, our dancer, and our theatre man” pleases me.<sup>86</sup>

Serkan ’s narrative reflects the particular condition of the hip hop dancers. As discussed in the previous chapter, being engaged in the theatre activity also stands as a proof of that they are in the clear side of the dance environment. Serkan’s words on the “bad habits” recall his definition of the hip hop and break dance environment having both clear and dirty circles which is quoted in the previous chapter.

Being engaged in a theatre activity also provides the members with the basic theatrical formation that can be shared with the others; therefore, they became the names to be called when help is needed. Okan tells how being a theatre person affected the perception of him by others as:

...For example I was not considered as an important person before coming to theatre, now, as I do an important thing, people behave like “he is a player, we can ask him”, for instance, they are doing theatre at school and they ask me to

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<sup>86</sup> Kendini daha rahat ifade edebiliyorsun. Arkadaşların oluyor. Kötü alışkanlıklardan uzak tutuyor. En azından bilgi sahibi oluyorsun birçok şeyden bilgi sahibi oluyorsun, dünyadan haberiniz olmuyor mesela, araştırmalar sayesinde tiyatro sayesinde öğrenebiliyorsun. Gerçekleri daha iyi görebiliyorsun... Kendimi farklı hissediyorum hoşuma gidiyor bir şekilde, iyi bir şey, yaratıcı kendini göstermek, mahalleden geçtiğimizde “Ooo Serkan abimiz geldi, dansçımız geldi, oo tiyatrocumuz geldi” böyle konuşmalar hoşumuza gidiyor.

cooperate with them, well, it (theatre) provided me with some type of superiority.<sup>87</sup>

I instrumentalize Erving Goffman's theory on presentation of self in everyday life in order to explicate the narratives of male participants which highlight the representational aspect of the change they go through. Goffman argues that we live by inference (Goffman, 1959: 3). In the very flow of everyday life, we have the motivation to make inferences about others and also to control the inferences of others about us; there emerges the performance:

A "performance" may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants. (Ibid: 15)

Members emphasize that their being engaged in the theatre or dance activity had influenced the inferences of others concerning them. They do not particularly perform to influence others; however, on stage performance functions as the background of their everyday life presentation of themselves and becomes a part of everyday performances. Therefore, beyond the inferences of the others, they themselves feel self confident and the claim on superiority point to that self confidence.

#### **4.1.2. ZPT Compared to the Other Theatre Groups**

Some of my interviewees have participated in the activities of some other theatre groups after or prior to their engagement with ZPT. These narratives, as well as including comments on different theatre activities/groups, reflect the individual expectations of the members regarding a theatre activity.

Fırat, who had left the group after one year participation and then started the acting course in Müjdat Gezen Arts Center, prioritizes the professionalism in a theatre

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<sup>87</sup>...Mesela işte tiyatro yapmadan önce o kadar önemsenmezdim, şimdi hani önemli birşey yaptığım için mesela o tiyatrocudur, işte ona soralım yok böyle yapalım, mesela okulda tiyatro yaparlar, soruyorlar işte bize yardım eder misin, destek sunar mısın gibi şeyler de hani biraz daha üstünlük sağladı bende.

activity. He attaches himself to a more professional way of doing theatre rather than an amateurish one and values the acting course in Müjdat Gezen in that sense:

...People in Müjdat Gezen (Arts Center) are naturally professional; they are really professional and qualified people. Well because they know the education and the origin of that activity, they dedicated themselves to that activity; they are proceeding in that way... All in all you get an amateurish training in one, professional in the other.<sup>88</sup>

Firat uses the term amateurish to refer to theatre activity's being a second engagement for oneself, rather than a profession or a job. Focusing on the profession of education and the dedication of one's to only theatre as a job, he does not point out any critical points about the possible power relationships ongoing in the professional theatre sphere. Hence, he does not make any comment on the emancipatory aspect of the amateur theatre activity. Rather, his demand from a theatre activity seems to be shaped within the calculation of the contribution of that activity to his personal theatre career.

Aslı, who had started to attend the rehearsals of the group Blue Faces Company; introduced the advantages and disadvantages of both of the groups, and concluded that her choice would be ZPT. Her main problem with her new group stems from the positioning and the attitude of the director:

...Both of them have positive sides separately, but if you ask me to choose one, honestly I prefer Zeytinburnu People's Theatre. Because, frankly, I feel a bit limited, restricted here (Blue Faces Company). It is maybe something related to the director... Like, I am obliged to do something. For example, Fadime Abla never... I do not like to take directions, it is not right in some situations but, I am a person who does not like to take directions, and I feel disturbed when someone continuously give directions to me, I am annoyed when the truthfulness of something is overemphasized...<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> ...Müjdat Gezendekiler doğal olarak profesyonel, gerçekten profesyonel çok kaliteli tipler... Yani çünkü bu işin eğitimini biliyorlar nerden geldiğini biliyorlar artık ona adanmışlar kendilerini bu yolda ilerliyorlar... Birisi sonuçta amatörce birinde profesyonelce bir eğitim görüyorsun...

<sup>89</sup> ... İkisinde ayrı ayrı pozitif yönleri var, ama şimdi dersiniz ki hangisini tercih edersiniz valla ben Zeytinburnu Halk Sahnesi'ni tercih ederim. Çünkü açıkçası söylemek gerekirse burada (Mavi Yüzler Kumpanya) biraz kısıtlı, kısıtlanmış hissediyorum kendimi. Birazcık herhalde yönetmenimizden kaynaklı birşey... Birşeylere zorundaymışım gibi. Mesela Fadime Abla bize hiç böyle... Ben emir almayı sevmem, yani bu yanlış birşey ama bazı yerlerde, emir almayı sevmeyen bir insanım ve sürekli bana emir verilmesi hani birşeylerin illa ki doğruluğunun vurgulanmasını sevmiyorum...



The director of Blue Faces Company is a man who is engaged with arts and entertainment market. He introduces himself as a young artist candidate<sup>90</sup>. The group and the trainer-director seem to imitate the professional model of theatre group; they do not make a claim on being alternative. In that sense, Aslı's narrative on the attitude of the director derives from the general picture of the group which is driven by the very market values: The director directs the general aspects of the theatre activity within the rules of arts market, and she/he can limit the players in some sense for favor of the play and the group. Aslı also comments upon the audience aspect of the theatre activity. Blue Faces Company is the one that stages plays for children, and generally they choose to play the written texts of children plays. Aslı, comparing Blue Faces Company with ZPT, clearly sets her idea on what a theatre performance should stage and to whom as:

... So boring, because, our aim here is to entertain children with new plays. What changes if my aim is to entertain children or not. The child can have fun by watching a film or by listening a song. However, we had actual issues in ZPT. We had important problems such as urban regeneration which leded families to cry and go leaving their families here. Urban regeneration, becoming homeless, not hiring houses to Roman people and Kurds, Kurdish issue, exclusion of Kurds... All these are more important for me because of these are both current and disappointing events. What of it I make a child pleased or not. All in all, there are many things to make him/her please. But there are not so many things to make the people whose houses are destroyed pleased or there are no other things to express them. Therefore, my plays in ZPT were better and more qualified. And also we were writing the play, well that is a better thing, my lines were my own sentences, not the thoughts of another person but what I thought, thus it was better according to me.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> See, <http://sites.google.com/site/maviyuzler2/yalcınözbe>

<sup>91</sup> Çok sıkıcı. Çünkü burda amacımız bizim amacımız yeni oyunlarımızla çocukları eğlendirmek. Ya benim amacım çocukları eğlendirmek olsa ne olur olmasa ne olur. Bir film açıp çocuk orda da eğlenebilir ya da bir şarkı açıp çocuk orda da eğlenebilir. Ama bizim Zeytinburnu Halk Sahnesi'ndeyken güncel sorunlarımız vardı. Kentsel dönüşüm gibi insanların uğruna ağladıkları, uğruna göz yaşları döktükleri, ailelerini burada bırakıp gittikleri önemli bir sorunlarımız vardı. Kentsel dönüşüm projesiymiş işte ev bulamama, Çingenele Kürtlere ev vermeme, Kürt sorunu, Kürtlerin dışlanması bunlar benim için daha önemli, çünkü bunlar hem güncel hem de üzücü olaylar. Hani benim bir çocuğu sevdirsem ne olur sevindirmesem ne olur. Sonuçta çok şey var onu sevindirecek. Ama hani o evi yıkılan insanı sevindirecek çok birşey yok, ya da kendini ifade edebileceği başka birşey yoktu. O yüzden Zeytinburnu Halk Sahnesi oyunlarım daha iyiydi, daha kaliteliydi. Hem kendimiz yazıyorduk, yani bu daha güzel birşey, kendi ağzından çıkan bir cümleydi o söylediklerim, başkasının düşündükleri değildi benim düşündüklerimdi, o yüzden bana göre çok daha iyiydi.

Asli in her narrative opens up a discussion on the relationship of the performance-performer and the audience in a theatrical performance. She finds boring to stage already written plays in order to entertain the children. Instead, she values her experience in ZPT, because ZPT as a groups deals with the current social and political issues, and also the plays are written by the group members themselves. Rather than staging plays to be consumed by the others, she sees the audiences and the performers being called for a discussion on current issues important.

It seems hard to describe the theatre activity in Blue Faces Company as a cultural activity. The attitude of the director, participation of the members in the production process and also the themes issued draw that theatre activity as a market place artistic activity through which the owners attempt to have financial gain by entertaining children. Through the discussion on liminoid process as a leisure time activity, I had discussed the functioning of the values of workplace in the liminoid process of cultural performance. There, Blue Faces Company, and Asli's experiencing of that activity is a clear example of how a cultural activity, a theatrical experience, which can be a process of developing anti-structure critical moments, can also be a process at which work values are reproduced and the members experience the everyday life subordinated positions of themselves in a different way, within the activity of theatrical performance.

#### **4.2. ZPT as a Group**

The members of the group, while narrating on ZPT, also addressed the inner discussions, tensions and problems of the group. I analyze these narratives here not to draw the picture of the relationships in ZPT, but to have a sense of the power relations and the group dynamics on the background of the theatrical activity.

#### 4.2.1. Criticizing Each Other

Having prior relationships with someone in the theatre group or developing good relations after participation emerged as an important factor to continue with the group.

Ali narrates:

...One may be interested in theatre but if she/he cannot come and go with the people she/he wants, she/he will leave after a while. Friendship is important in these things; it is better for someone to come by favor of a friend. For example, I was attending the theatre activity last year because Serkan was here also.<sup>92</sup>

Mustafa had stopped to participate in the rehearsals for a while and then came back to the group. His narrative depicts that the attitudes of his friends in the group become important in his decision to come back or not:

.... But after all I did not want to leave... I wanted to come back, but some of my friends did not want me. It might be because of a kind of distrust and jealousy. Our trainer had left the decision to friends, like if you want we can call him back, but my friends...Of course, this made me sad.<sup>93</sup>

ZPT is one of the social groups that they belong to in their ordinary life. The members of the group in terms of their attachment and the identification with the group differentiate from one another. In relation with this, their participation in the discussions on the problems, rules and the values of the group vary. I frame the positioning of the group members within the notion of “star group” that Turner develops through his theory on social drama. He argues that within the groups we are attached to in the ordinary life, people choose a group which they feel most belonged to, as their star group:

It is one’s star group that one looks most for love, recognition, prestige, office, and other tangible and intangible benefits and rewards. In it one achieves self-

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<sup>92</sup> ... İster istemez tiyatroya merakı olabilir ama istediği insanlarla gidip gelemeyince, bırakır bir yerden sonra. Arkadaş önemli bu işlerde, bir arkadaş vasıtasıyla gelmeleri daha iyi olur. Mesela ben tiyatroya geçen sene Serkan var diye geliyordum.

<sup>93</sup> Ama ben yine bırakmak istemedim... Tekrar geri gelmek istedim, ama arkadaşlarımdan bazıları istemedi. Bir nevi güvensizlikten veya çekememezlikten olabilir. Yine bizim hoca arkadaşlara bırakmış yani çağırılım falan, arkadaşlarım... Tabi bu beni bir de üzdü.

respect and a sense of belonging with others for whom one has respect. Now every objective group has members some of whom see it as their star group, while others may regard it with indifference, even dislike. Relations among the “star groupers”, as the first category may be called, are often highly ambivalent, resembling those among members of an elementary family for which perhaps, the star groups is an adult substitutive. They recognize one another’s common attachment to the group but are jealous of one another over the relative intensity of that attachment or the esteem in which another member is held by the group as a whole. (Turner, 1982: 69)

Many members had seemed to have been attached to ZPT as her/his star group for a while because it is not a loose group structure but the one that supports to produce collective identity. Star groupers, as they are a big group, have seemed to be circled around the trainer. However, those who had get out of this circle, and distanced themselves from the group had made comments about the rest of the star groupers, and vice versa, the rest comments on the drop offs from the group. In both directions, the narratives include the rules and the right position of the group according to who is narrating. Fırat states that the most important problem in the group is indiscipline:

.... You see that all the problem is indiscipline, you know, because of the indiscipline of friends, we, that is to say I, frankly got alienated from here (the group), they do not come, well, incompletely, one should do well by such things. For instance you attend and make an effort through the whole year, then there were people who cannot come a few months to staging the play, I don’t know, they are like don’t minding in a way. Hey brother, you should come if you are a theater person.<sup>94</sup>

When I had the interview with Fırat, he had already left ZPT and was attending the acting course in Müjdat Gezen Arts Center. His critique of indiscipline about the group may be true or false, but his emphasis on discipline is worth to pay attention in the sense that he seem to develop his critique on ZPT moving from an ideal professional, so a disciplined theatre activity model.

Deniz narrates her disappointment about the role distribution and actually about the newcomers, and she relates these directly to her breaking with the group.

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<sup>94</sup> İşte yani bütün sorun disiplinsizlik yani, arkadaşların disiplinsizliği yüzünden biz de yani ben de soğudum açıkçası burdan soğudum, gelmiyorlar hani yarım yamalak yani biraz da insan hak verir böyle şeye. Mesela sen gidiyorsun bu kadar emek veriyorsun bir sene boyunca, sonra bir kaç ay kala gelmeyenler oluyor, ne biliyim işte sanki böyle önemsemiyorlar. Yahu kardeşim tiyatrocuyun sen geleceksin.

New people came to the theatre group, after all, when they came, such things like disorder had occurred. For example, someone older than me came, I played in the theatre for about two years, and I had played fairly a long time. I said Fadime Abla that I should be in a more prior position, because I was coming for years but she was coming for two months. She had more scenes than me. But Fadime Abla said that two months or two years make no difference. But eventually, I had endeavored for two years; I should be in a prior position. She should be also but since I had endeavored such that, in a scene in a part... It happened like some sort of discrimination, and we left the group. I tried to do what the others cannot do, because I was a senior. But it cannot be in that way that I compensate all the deficiencies of the others. I did not participate the theatre by making the others to compensate for my deficiency, I learned by practice, and I want them to learn by practice. It cannot be in the way that I jump for all lacking. It was like I was behaved unfairly there. We had quarrels and discussions with the newcomers. So I left then on...<sup>95</sup>

Deniz had left the group three years ago. Her narrative including the dislikes and critical points about the group and the newcomers to the group points out an aspiration of her “own” group which had changed through time by the newcomers and the changing position of the trainer. She argues that to be a senior in the group should be important in the distribution of responsibilities in the group.

Sinem had started to participate in the rehearsals of the group in 2008, and then she has been positioned as the assistant of the trainer. She had supported the trainer in the rehearsals of the children group and also she took responsibility in the front stage in the rehearsals of the youth group. She argues that the other members of the group are disappointed with her trainer-like position.

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<sup>95</sup> Tiyatro grubuna yeni kişiler gelmişti, onlar gelince zaten düzensizlik bilmem ne falan filan oldu. Mesela benden büyük bir kişi gelmişti, ben tiyatrodaki iki sene oynadım baya bir oynamıştım, ben hani benim daha çok ön planda olmam gerektiğini Fadime Abla'ya söylemiştim, hani ben iki yıllığıma o iki aylık. Benden çok onun sahnesi var. Ama Fadime Abla dedi hani burada iki ay iki yıl önemli değil. Ama hani ben sonuçta orda iki yıl emek etmişim benim daha çok ön planda olmam gerekiyor. Onun da olması gerekiyor ama ben o kadar emek ettiğim için benim bir sahnede bir bölümde... Biraz ayrımcılık gibi oldu işte, daha sonra da çıktık tiyatrodan. Yine eskiyim diye herkesin yapamadığı şeyi ben yapmaya çalışıyorum da herkesin açığını ben kapatırsam olmaz yani. Ben de, hani başkaları da benim açığımı kapatarak girmedim ama tiyatroya, bir şeyleri yapa yapa öğrendim ben de onların birşeyleri yaparak öğrenmesini isterim. Her eksik ben atlarsam olmaz yani. Orda hakkım yeniyor gibi birşey oldu. Kavgalarımız tartışmalarımız oldu yeni gelen kişilerle. O yüzden çıktım daha sonra da...

...they were the senior members of the group compared to me, and I was bit older than them in age. I have never had an attitude towards them such as “do that in that way”, since I express my opinion, they behaved in a way that “don’t we know these things?” Surely you know but if I was on the stage, I would ignore something also. Why is there an outsider look? No, they could not accept this. No one other than Fadime Abla can say that group that “that cannot be like this”.<sup>96</sup>

#### 4.2.2. Trainer

The trainer has an important role in the group. Her attempts to make children and young people to participate in the theatre activity by developing trust relations with the families and also personal close relationships with most of the group members as their “Fadime Abla” has seem to be very contributory in such type of an experience becoming possible. However, changing of her position in the group also affected some of the members’ participation in the activity. Deniz narrates her position as:

I want to continue but I cannot find the old atmosphere, Fadime Abla is not there. It’s no go, for instance when I get on the stage, Fadime Abla had used to do hand and face movements, there are not such things, hence, when the group is not there, it does not become possible any more.<sup>97</sup>

Through the end of the rehearsals of the play Nesini Söylesem, the group had started to experience problems. As I was a participant observer in some of those rehearsals, I also witnessed the tension in the group prior to the staging of the play. Some of the members of the group had problems especially with the trainer, and this seems to affect the participatory atmosphere of the group in a negative sense. Ali concerning the dispersion period in the group narrates that:

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<sup>96</sup> ...onlar benden biraz eskilerdi ya, ki ben biraz onlardan yaşça büyüktüm. Ki benim onlara karşı hiçbir zaman siz de şunu yapın böyle birşeyim kesinlikle olmadı, fikir beyan ettikçe, ya biz bunu bilmiyor muyuz, gibi bir tutum içine girdi. Ya biliyorsunuzdur muhakkak da ben de oraya çıksam benim de göz ardı edeceğim şeyler olur muhakkak. Niye bir dış göz vardır değil mi? Yok onlar bunu kabul edemediler. Fadime Abla'dan başka kimse o gruba şu şöyle olmaz diyemez.

<sup>97</sup> Yapmak istiyorum da işte o ortamı pek bulamıyorum, Fadime Abla da yok başında. Olmuyor, mesela ben sahneye çıktığımda Fadime Abla karşımda el yüz hareketleri yapardı, onlar yok, işte grup olmayınca bir türlü olmuyor...

Dispersion, that is, disagreement in the group, everyone was not in a harmony, in the last month, when Fadime Abla started to get angry, girls could not get along with, when they could not perform and the trainer got angry with them... The trainer Fadime cares everyone like a friend since its one month to the play, but then when there is nothing in terms of production in the last month... Finally something should be produced, she is right.<sup>98</sup>

As Ali mentions, the members who are having problems with the trainer were particularly girls. Rather than the girls being not capable of getting along with the tension, I think that this tension is related with the trainers changing position in terms of her close relationships with the female members of the group. She seems no longer having a positive effect on managing and facilitating the participation of female members to theatre activity.

Moreover, the trainer's attitude seems to convert to a directing position in that period. Aslı tells the situation as such:

....The last rehearsals of our play.... Something happened on the stage; Fadime Abla said that "I will cancel that play". Then we challenged like "You cannot cancel we had worked for it". Then Fadime Abla decided to cancel the play, and then we said that "You did not found this group on your own, that is, we worked a lot, and you cannot make such a decision on your own". We had some other disputes before. Then on, big events had happened, some had left and we continued with the rest. We experienced such a process; it was a process of dispersion actually. Indeed, we were a very good group, we could do better things, we did but such a process of dispersion occurred.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Dağılma, yani tabi grup içinde anlaşamamazlık, herkes anlaşamıyordu, son bir ay falan Fadime Hoca kızmaya başlayınca kızlar kaldıramıyordu, yapamayınca Fadime Hoca onlara kızınca... Fadime Hoca hiç hani oyuna bir ay kalaya kadar falan herkesle arkadaş gibi ilgileniyor, ama son bir ay falan birşey çıkmayınca... Sonuçta birşey çıkarması gerekli ona da hak veriyoruz.

<sup>99</sup> ...Oyunumuzun son provaları...Ya birşey oldu sahnede, Fadime Abla dedi ki ben bu oyunu men edicem, çıkmıcağ bu oyun dedi, çıkarmıcam ben bu oyunu dedi. Ondan sonra biz de işte nasıl çıkarmazsın bu kadar emek verdik falan gibi bir dava oldu. Ondan sonra Fadime Abla karar verdi ben bu oyunu çıkarmıyorum dedi Biz de dedik ki işte yani burayı sadece sen kurmadım biz de yani bizim burda çok emeğimiz var. Hani kendi başına böyle bir kararı veremezsin dedik. Ondan sonra, Fadime Abla daha önce de hani aramızda birkaç sürtüşme geçmişti. Ondan sonra bütün olaylar patlak verdi sonra giden gitti kala sağlarla devam ettik. Öyle bir süreç yaşadık dağılma süreciydi hakaten. Aslında biz çok iyi bir gruptuk çok iyi şeyler yapabiliydik. Yaptık da ama öyle bir dağılma süreci oldu tabi.

The position of the trainer is particularly worth to be studied pedagogically in detail. However, within the limitations of my study, I interpret the positioning of the trainer referring to the work of Paolo Freire on the pedagogy of the oppressed which also functioned as the inspiration for the theatre man Augusto Boal to develop the notion of the Theatre of the Oppressed. Freire develops his methodology, “The Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, in the beginning of 1960’s with the aim of teaching literacy to agricultural workers. Freire mainly based his methodology on the notion that; the existing patterns of teaching reproduce the oppressor-oppressed relationship in the society and this reproduction affects and actually shapes the oppressors’ patterns of perceiving the world. (Freire, 2000)

Aslı’s narrative makes me think of the trainers’ position in the group as the one converting to be a dominant one. The challenge from the members came in that point. I would not argue that the relationship between the members and the trainer reproduces the oppressor and the oppressed relationship. However, there is a corruption in the position of the trainer through the process of the group which also leads a corruption in the participatory functioning of the group. The change in the functioning of the group and the dispersion process they went through led the participants to feel in the way that the play was the prior responsibility of the trainer, not a collective one including themselves. Hale says:

...For example, Fadime Abla mostly gets angry when we forget to bring our accessories, there are problems such that. Moreover, we pause when we forget our lines and look to Fadime Abla like she will rescue us, that is, we leave it totally to her. Fadime Abla wants us not to stop and continue but we get bored and stop in those situations, we laugh, she also gets angry with this, this a problem... Actually she is also stressed, she is right also, because finally she is the director of the play. When anybody does not enjoy the play, they will comment to her, not to us.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Mesela Fadime Abla şeye çok kızıyor, mesela aksesuar falan getirmiyoruz ya ona kızıyor öyle sorunlar oluyor. Sonra işte biz mesela çok şey oluyor duraksıyoruz takıldığımız yerde Fadime Abla'ya bakıyoruz sanki o bizi kurtaracakmış gibi tamamen ona kalmış oluyoruz. Fadime Abla hani kesmeyin devam edin diyor ama biz sıkılıp kesiyoruz orda, gülüyoruz falan ona da kızıyor hani o sorun... Ya aslında o da çok stresli, ona da hak veriyoruz biz şimdi, sonuçta oyunu yöneten o. Oyunu beğenmeyecekler lafı bize değil ona söyleyecekler..



### 4.3. Conclusion

The experiences of the members depict that ZPT is a transformative process. However, the inner dynamics of the group may emerge as one of the most important limits on transformative potential as discussed above.

The role of the trainer has been important through the contestations in the group. However, the corruption of the transformative atmosphere and the change in the functioning of the group cannot be evaluated only with reference to the agency of the trainer. The conditions, decisions and choices that the young members of the group made are also crucial.

Many factors might be effective in the choices of young people. Their individual experiences from childhood to youth and also their families' expectations of them seem to have been determining factors in some members' breaking apart with the group. Moreover, the experience of young people as migrants and the children of lower class families add them a double burden in their way to becoming adults, therefore affect their possibility to participate in the theatre activity.

Professional art market stands as an alternative choice for the young people who are interested in theatre. They are also supported by their families when they attempt to find a way to enter the professional arts market. Choosing an acting course may emerge as an easier way rather than dealing with inner dynamics of an amateur theatre group.

The transformative and emancipatory effect is not a static mode of being. Rather, it is a moment of a tactic act challenge the strategy. (De Certeau, 1984) The sphere of the theatrical performance is the one that new possibilities of tactics as the weapons of the weak could be rehearsed and acted both on stage and in real life. Individuals one by one and also as a part of collective are important. What is valuable in this case is that the members of the group developed the critical look regarding themselves and the world in some moments through theatrical experience; while they were writing their stories themselves. Therefore, they know that there is the possibility to write it again.

To conclude the discussion on the transformative potential and the functioning of the inner dynamics of the group in that process, I would not point out an ideal scenario of a collective theatre experience through which a long lasting transformative potential can be succeeded. Rather than the guidelines for an ideal and political theatrical experience, what emerges through the discussion in this chapter is the intimate

relationship between theatrical performance and the everyday life. The narratives of the participants on their experiences prove that the theatrical experience is not a segregated area of artistic production but the very part of everyday life, with all of its tensions and contestations.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

*...arts is a weaving of meaning-making activity  
with any or all parts of our lives.... (Kaprow,1983: 216)*

This thesis discusses theatrical performance as a part of everyday life. Focusing on the case of Zeytinburnu People's Theatre, I studied on how theatre function in the meaning-making activity in our lives and how the self-reflexive critical potential emerges through that meaning-making process. I studied on theatrical performance as an anthropological field through which the everyday life; the social, political and the economic conditions, and the theatrical performance act in a two way relationship in affecting the subject formations of the individuals. Moreover, conceptualizing theatrical performance as a group activity, I focus on the relationship of the individuals in the group as a dynamic in the very formation of this everyday life and theatrical performance' two way relationship. The description of the participants on how the theatrical activity affected their lives have been adressed in order to understand their experiences in relation with performances.

In this thesis I focused on mainly the relation of everyday life and theatre in the individual level regarding the narratives of my interviewees. This case study might be studied in many other ways, as a neighborhood experience by focusing on the space and community relations through more of a sociological perspective or by focusing on the forms of the theatre experience through theatre studies perspective... Moreover, analyzing the formation and the process of ZPT focusing on its relations with the theatre circles and people might contribute the perspective concerning the alternative-amateur theatre scene in İstanbul. Being aware of the limits of my study, I hope this study to function as a contribution in literature for any other above mentioned approaches by both its weaknesses and strengths.

The main problematique underlying the discussions in this thesis is about the externalized position of the artistic performance and genres of cultural performances in the daily life. Arts has been historically concerned as decorations and the hobbies as additions to the real life. However, concluding my discussion on the theatrical performance and everyday life experience, I argue that theatrical performance can be a very part of one's ordinary life, therefore contributes the self-reflexivity of one's vis a vis her/his own life conditions and the world going around her/him. Theatre is a way of *being aware of everything* and *writing our stories by ourselves*.

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## APPENDIX A

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İATP'den İATP-Girişim'e

İATP grupları bir yıldır platform ilkelerinin işletilememesi ve İATP'de oluşturulmuş alt platform ve komisyonların altının boşalmasıyla ilgili bir tartışma süreci yürütmektedirler. Bu tartışma süreci devam ederken çeşitli İATP grupları farklı nedenlerle platformdan ayrıldılar. Geride kalan gruplar, kuruluş nedenleri ve ilkelerini daha önce kamuoyuyla paylaştığımız İATP'nin hala savunulması ve gerçekleştirilmesi gereken bir proje olduğuna inanmakla beraber şu anki yapılanmanın İATP olarak adlandırılmasının doğru olmadığı görüşünde birleşmektedirler. Bu nedenle şu anda İATP'yi oluşturan gruplar faaliyetlerini bir girişim olarak sürdürme ve önümüzdeki pratik süreci değerlendirme kararı almışlardır. İATP'yi yeniden tanımlama ve yeniden yapılandırma yolundaki bu girişim, İATP'nin 2000-2005 yılları arasındaki beş yıllık sürecine ilişkin tarihsel verileri ileriki dönemde kamuoyuyla paylaşmayı düşünmektedir.

Beş yıldır İATP tarafından düzenlenen ve organizasyon planında katılımcı bir çerçeveye sahip olması hedeflenen ancak özellikle geçtiğimiz yıl temel hedeflerinden uzaklaştığı tespiti yapılan İATG'nin (İstanbul Amatör Tiyatro Günleri) şu anki İATP-Girişim tarafından gerçekleştirilmesinin gerçekçi olmayacağı saptanmıştır. Gelecekte yeniden hayata geçirilmesi bir hedef olarak saklı tutulmak kaydıyla orta vadede İATG'nin organizasyonunun askıya alınmasına ve önümüzdeki dönemde daha gerçekçi bir yaklaşımla İATG yerine bir "Alternatif Tiyatro Buluşması"nın örgütlenmesine karar verilmiştir. Gösterilerin yanı sıra alternatif tiyatroların sorunlarının ele alındığı etkinliklerin de planlandığı bu organizasyonun ayrıntıları ilerleyen günlerde tiyatro kamuoyuyla paylaşılacaktır.



## APPENDIX B

### Summaries of the Some of the Plays by Zeytinburnu People's Theater

- **2004 – *Biz Herşeyin Farkındayız (We Are Aware of Everything)***

The play opens with a grandmothers' complaints about television. Her granddaughters (Zekiye&Dicle) demand whatever they have seen on television, moreover they want them from their grandmother! What is more, their school grades are so bad, that the grandmother thinks it is because of they are watching too much television. The grandmother does not know what to do with that television, she thinks of casting it away, and she decides to open it one's more before making a final decision about it.

We see different scenes from different channels and her comments on those when she is zapping. The first one is a sausage advertisement, the other is the bank advertisement which is called "Oyukbank", and there is also a women's program called "Women's Suffering"<sup>101</sup>. Her daughter and granddaughters came, they comment on an event on television going on at the same time. Dialogue:

Zekiye: Look mom how he is beating the woman while everyone is there!

Dicle: The women are watching, they do nothing!

Mother: Can he beat her if the women do not watch but do something!<sup>102</sup>

Daughters then start to watch "Sevda Masalı". Boys and the father came to the scene as football fans. There is a quarrel between wife and husband. These are the very humorous representations of wife and husband stereotypes. The scene ends with a beat attack of the husband.

#### School Scene

The teacher says that the topic of the day is War&Peace. Then on the students start to take the floor one by one in order to express their ideas about war and peace. There exists also a discussion on ethnic identities. The scene ends with the inspector's coming to class and threatening the teacher by being appointed for the Southern region.

#### Public Garden Scene

There are the two girls playing on the ground. Then the two others come near them. One of them tells her story as a migrant and who has the cooking and servicing responsibility at home. Then on a stereotyped middle class working woman come with her daughter, because of she is working, she can only bring her daughter to the public garden on Saturdays. A dialogue starts between this middle class woman and the other migrant

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<sup>101</sup> *Kadının Çilesi*

<sup>102</sup> Zekiye: "Anne bak o kadar insanın içinde kadını nasıl dövüyor!"

Dicle: "Kadınlar da seyrediyor."

Anne: "Kadınlar seyretmese dövülebilir miydi?"

lower class one. The latter tells a story about how she has dressed as a man in order not to be harrassed on the street. There is also a disturbing man in the public garden that is looking to these women. When these women starts to quarrel with the man because of he was harrassing them; the man refused that he was looking at them and attacks the women as they were actually looking to him. Then daughters of the women make that man to leave the public garden by the play “Önümüze gelene yüz tekme”. At the end of that scene, the lower class woman told the other about an association in the neighborhood, in which women from neighborhood come together, have fun. The scene ends with the song “Dağda Belimde Odun”, with all women of the group on stage.

- **2005 – *Biz Herşeyin Farkındayız 2 (We Are Aware of Everything 2)***

This play is a reproduction of the one staged in 2004. In addition to the scenes summarized for *Biz Herşeyin Farkındayız 2004*, some other scenes had been added. (These scenes had been added between the school and public garden scenes)

#### Textile workshop Scene

Problems such as general working conditions in these workshops, children’s bad working conditions, sexual harrassment while working had been staged.

#### Hip-Hop Dancers Scene

In that scene we see the prejudices of people concerning the hip-hop dancer young people. Some people does not know dances other than zeybek, some does not like this dance because sees it as the degenerated dance of the city, some says that they will investigate about that dance... A Roman woman asks dancers the name of the dance and when and who can do this dance? The dancers answer that any one can do this dance, they do it on the street but on every street and they do in on friends birthdays etc.

- **2006 – *Sokaktaki Özgürlükçü Çocuklar (Children of Freedom on the Street)***

Young girls are not allowed to engage in theater activity. The participants of the group with their own names (Şefika, Gizem, Berfin, Deniz) appear on the stage and we see one by one their family members (sister, brother, mother...) not allowing them to participate in theater activity for various reasons. Girls emphasize that the theater activity is in the neighborhood, free and the trainer is a woman in order their family members to allow them to go. They all finalize their parts with such phrases:

“I should go to theater! I should make a plan! I should think and find something, I should certainly go to this theater, you allow me or not, I will go to theater”<sup>103</sup>

Then they come together, tell each other about the situations with their families and then they decide to go to the association and demand a place and a trainer to do theater. They went, but the association did not give them anything. Finally, they decided to do theater

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<sup>103</sup> “Tiyatroya gitmem lazım! Bir plan yapmam lazım! Benim düşünüp birşey bulmam lazım mutlaka bu tiyatroya gitmem lazım, sen izin versen de vermesen de ben tiyatroya tıpış tıpış gidicem.”

there, that is to say where they were standing. In that point the on stage and reality comes together. People from neighborhood came to look at what is happening.

“Druggies” scene

In that scene a school atmosphere is staged in which drug dealers are going around and the many of the students buy those drugs at very high prices, even if they are lower class people. They tell each other that those drugs are very nice things that made them “fly”. After staging that atmosphere, a scene in which all these dealing/buying/using drug young people came to the scene and they start to fall on the ground one by one. So this drug addiction is being criticized harshly.

*Gecekodu* Neighborhood-Urban Regeneration Scene

We see the officials in the area at the very beginning of the scene, they are talking about how to deconstruct and built new structures in that area. Then three women from neighborhood come and chase them.

In that scene, we see different cultures coming together; Kurds, Romans, Laz people... Discrimination against Kurdish migrants have been staged by a dialogue between a middle class Turkish woman and the Kurdish woman.

## APPENDIX C

### Text of the Mother Tongue Scene

*Sahne açıldığında anne ve kızı konuşuyorlar. Vakit akşam. Anne kızına seslenir.*

ANNE: Cirannnn...Ciranım! Keçamın raba raza derang bu.

CİRAN: Tamam anne yaaa! (*Ciran ders çalışmaya devam eder.*)

ANNE: Ciran tamam ana dersin hep geç yatarsın. Sabah seni kaldırayım derken akla karayı seçiyorum. Tuwen ax wa sar da bitina (*Kızının onu dinlemediği fark eder dikkat çekmeye çalışır*) Keçamın iro çıbu tu zani.

CİRAN: N'oldu anne sizin partiyi mi kapatıyorlar?

ANNE: Ya kızım iyi ki bu partiye oy verdiğimi söyledim. İkide bir başıma vurup durma pişmanım zaten ölürüm de bir daha onlara oy vermem. Hem bize öyle mi demişlerdi? Demişlerdi ki köylerinize geri döneceksiniz, operasyonlar olmayacak güven içerisinde yaşacaksınız demişlerdi...

CİRAN:Eee n'oldu peki anne? Her söylenenlere inanıyorsunuz. Şimdi size müstahak!

ANNE: Bak kızım Ciran bir daha bu konuyu açarsan, azete kujim ha.

CİRAN: Tamam anne yaa... Bir daha söylemem.

ANNE: Sana bir şey anlatacaktım ama ısrar etme anlatmayacağım.(*Kızının ilgilenmediğini fark eder*) Ciran, kız bugün pazara gittim. Dedim ki size ıspanak alayım içli börek yapam dedim. Aben sever bilirsin. Gezinirken bi de baktım birini gördüm çıkaramadım. O mudur değil midir o mudur değil midir...

CİRAN: Kim kimdir ane ya?

ANNE: Hani bizim köyün aşağısındaki köyde bir Koçer Hala vardı ya, sana bakardı hatırladın mı? Hani ıspanak satardı. Koçer Hala...

CİRAN: Heee bildim bildim, ıspanakçı Koçer hala!

ANNE: Hee o, oymuş yüzündeki çiziklerden anladım. Çok yaşlanmış.

CİRAN: Eee n'olmuş anne niye gelmişler buraya?

ANNE: Hani bizim köyü yaktıkları zaman onların köylerini de yakmışlar. Koçer Hala da ıspanak tezgahını kaptığı gibi buralara gelmiş. Onu görünce öyle sevindim, öyle sarıldık ki sanki anam mezardan çıkmış gelmiş Ciranım o kadar ki sevindim...

CİRAN: Eee tutunabilmişler mi bari alışmışlar mı buraya?

ANNE: Valla kızım tutunmuşlar mı tutunmamışlar mı bilemiyim. O da benim gibi ayrılmış yerinden yurdundan. Çok mutsuz görünüyodu. Bak Koçer Hala arayı soğutmuyak, bırakmıyak birbirimizi en kısa zamanda eve bekliyim senin dişine göre bir börek açam dedim. Seni sordu, o küçük sümüklü kızın napıyı dedi. Ohoo Koçer Halası büyümüş üniversitelere gitmiş de bilim kadını olacaktı, seni beni beğenmiyi valla dedim. Eve davet ettim öbür güne geliyi. Dersin erken biterse hemen gel emi kadıncağızın sende çok emeği var.

CİRAN: Erken çıkarsam gelirim ane.

ANNE: Seni çok tebrik ederim kızım yine beni lafa uttun. Kendin uyumuyon beni de uyutmuyon he, konbaba gibi oturuyom. Hadi benim çiçek kızım sende yorma kendini akıllı kızım sırma saçlı kızım ben yatıyom.

CİRAN: Ya anne ne ders çalışabildim, ne uyuyabildim her yönden zarardayım yani.

ANNE: Ciran kalbimi kırısen he. *(Işık söner)*

*Sahnedede anne vardır. O da herkes gibi uyumaktadır. Yavaş yavaş uyanmaya başlar, ölmüş annesini karşısında bulur ve korkar.*

ANNE: Daye, sen misen? Yok yok ben rüya görürem heralde bizim kız uykumu kaçırdı hayal görürem en iyisi yatam... *(Yatacak gibi olur vazgeçer tekrar doğrulur)* Daye bu sensen. İn misen, cin misen yoksa hortladın mı?

BÜYÜKANNE: Korkma kızım korma!

ANNE: Daye, rüya mısın? Hayal misin?

BÜYÜKANNE: Farz et rüya düşün ki gerçek ne fark eder? Seni görmeye geldim kızım. Gel yanıma korkma! (*Kızına bakar iyice süzer onu*) N'olmuş sana kızım, niye böyle solmuşsun?Saçlarını taramamışsın, boncuklarını takmamışsın; kınalarını yakmamışsın. Kızım niye kendini bu kadar bıraktın? Çiçeğim benim.

ANNE: Daye, yerimden yurdumdan oldum. Evimin direğini, gözümün bebeğini aldılar. Artık ben eski ben değilim ki nasıl kına yakayım.

BÜYÜKANNE: Senin göreceğin daha çok güzel günler var. Kendine kendin için bakmalısın. Bak güzel kızım görüyorum ki benim sana öğrettiğim dili, ananın dilini kızlarına çocuklarına öğretmiyorsun, sebebini öğrenebilir miyim?

ANNE: Daye, köyde baskılardan kurtulup bir gün yüzü göremedik. Buraya geldiğimizde her günümüz kargaşayla geçti. Kendimize geldik diyene kadar Cıranımla Civanım kocaman olmuş. Cıran okula gidiyo orada dalga geçerlermiş. Hiç üniversitede okuyan Kürtçe konuşurmuş... Felankesin kızı üniversiteye gidiyor hala Kürtçe konuşuyo diye ayıplarlanmış. Oğlan konuşmak istiyi ama çalışırken konuşamıy. Zaten bide yasak ana yasak.

BÜYÜKANNE: Bütün bunlar bahane kızım. İnsan mekanını değiştirdince dilini değiştirir mi? Anadil evrenseldir nereye gidersen seninle gelir. Sonra anadil adı üstünde annenin dilidir. Ben sana öğrettim. Sen kızlarına öğreteceksin ki kızların da kızlarına ve diğer çocuklara öğretsin.

ANNE: Daye, sanki benim öğretmemle iş bitiyi mi? Bana gelene kadar akşam oluy. Cıranım yığınla bilgi öğreniyi, benim söylediklerim arada gümbürtüye gidiyi.

BÜYÜKANNE: Bak kızım aklını başına topla. Sana söyleyeceklerimi kulağına küpe edesin. Dilden anlayan okumuş adamın biri demiş ki her on beş günde bir dil yitip gidiyo demiş. Ama bir halk yeterli iradeyi gösterip diline sahip çıkarsa, o dille okuyup o dille yazarsa nesilden nesile aktarır varlığını yüzyıllarca sürdürür demiş. Bir zamanlar bayramdan bayrama konuşulan İbranice bile İsrail devletinin kurulmasıyla kıymetlenmiş. Şimdinin İngilizcesi, Fransızcası geçmişte Latincenin baskısı altında 'köylü dilleri' diye küçümsenirmiş. Hele kızım Türkçe ne demişler bilirsin. Mevla'na ve Osmanlılar denmiş ki 'etrak-i bi idrak' (anlayışı kıt olan) kişilerin dili. Diyeceğim şu ki kızım eğer sana öğrettiğim ananın dilini çocuklarına öğretmezsen sütümü sana helal edemeyeceğim.

ANNE: Sen ne dersin daye, o nasıl söz? Tamam hemen öğretirim. Ama nereden başlayacağımı bilemiyim. Anam değil misen bana bir yol göstersen.

BÜYÜKANNE: Ninnilerden başla. Benim sana öğrettiğim ninnilerden. Gör bak onlar nasıl hatırlıyorlar dillerini. Sonra manilerden, deyimlerden, dualarda, övgülerden başla. Eğer çok sıkışırsan al bu sana yardımcı olur *(Elindeki kitabı kızına uzatır ve ayağa kalkar)*

ANNE: Peki anne sütünü helal edecek misin?

BÜYÜKANNE: Valla kızım bu senin performansına bağlı... *(der ve kaybolur)*

ANNE: Daye gitme! Performans. Benim performansına bağıymış sütünü helal edip etmemesi performansına bağıymış. *(Işık söner sabah olmuştur anne elinde kitapla oturur)*

CİRAN: Ya anne niye uyandırmıyorsun geç kalıyorum okula. *(Hazırlanmaya başlar etrafta eşlerini arar)* Anne bari saçımı öröver!

ANNE: *(Anne saçını örmeye başlar)* Bak kızım seninle önemli bir konu konuşmam gerek. Bundan sonra ananın dilini öğrenip konuşacaksın.

CİRAN: Ya anne nerden çıkartıyorsun bunları, Seda Sayan seyrederek bir dil bir insan iki dil iki insan felsefesi mi edindin kendine? Bize zaten okulda ikinci üçüncü dil öğretiyorlar hem zaten başka bir dil öğrenmek istersem bu kesinlikle Kürtçe olmazdı. Ki Kürtçe beni ileri değil bir adım geri götürür. Üniversiteye gidiyorum Kürtçe konuşuyorum sence de garip durmaz mı? Ayrıca zaten kuş dili kadar kıymeti yok.

ANNE: *(Kızının kafasına hafifçe vurur)* Kızım sen ne diyorsun? Seni okuttuk ki eşitlikçi olasın. O gün bana insan haklarından bahsediyordun hani nerde kaldı senin dil hakkın? Sen önce kendi dil hakkını savun.

CİRAN: Anne dil insanlarla anlaşmak için değil mi? Ben kimsenin anlamadığı dille nasıl insanlarla anlaşayım?

ANNE: Sen yine onlarla onların dilini konuş kendi dilini de unutma. *(Annesinin kendisine yaptığı jestle)* Eğer ananın dilini öğrenmezsen sütümü sana helal etmem.

CİRAN: Geç kaldım anne ben gidiyorum erken gelirim *(Aceleyle çıkar)*

*(Anne elleri havada donar kalır, oğlu hazırlanmak üzere yanına gelir)*

CİVAN: Ya anne kalırsın işte öyle ellerin havada. Zamanında sana söyledim kızına anadilini öğret diye sen ne dedin zamanı gelir öğrenir dedin. Bu yaştan sonra biraz zor öğretirsin ana dilini. Kızın bu aralar kuş dilini öğrenmiş o modaymış. Çık çık çık çık çık ben aşığım daldan dala... Bunun için bi mucize gerek ane mucize.

ANNE: Ne mucizesi oğlum ne mucizesi; mucize mümkün olmayan içindir. Sen bilmiyorsun benim annem nasıl öğrenmiş. Zamanında köylere askerler baskın yaparlarmış. Anneannemde Kürtçe kasetlerini şalvarına saklarmış. Sırf Kürtçe şarkı dinledi diye insanlar zindanlara atılmış. Şimdi öyle mi? Dilimiz var kültürümüz var sen varsın ben varım. Şimdi öğretmeyecez de ne zaman öğretecez dilimizi?

CİVAN: Ane, ben düşmüşüm iş derdine sen düşmüşsün dil derdine hayırlısıyla bi iş buluyumda sonra bakarız çaresine. *(Oğlu çıkar)*

Anne: *(Dualar)*

*(Anne oğlu çıkar çıkmaz eline annesinin rüyasında verdiği kitabı alıp oturur ve başlar okumaya. Akşam olur, oğlu tekrar girer, anne elindeki kitabı saklar.)*

CİVAN: Merhaba ane!

ANNE: Hoş geldin Civanım. N'oldu? N'aptın bugün iş bulabildin mi?

CİVAN: Yav ane sorma iş çok zor olmuş artık. Eskiden form doldururduk bi ay sonrada olsa ararlardı şimdi nereye gitsem daha kapıdan tipime bakıp nerelisin diye soruyorlar, doğuluyum diyince hemen lazım değil diyorlar.

ANNE: N'oldu oğlum bişi mi oldu?

CİVAN: Bugün arkadaşım Hüseyin'in yanına gittim eleman ihtiyacı varmış ben de başladım. Öğleye kadar çalıştık. Bir ara arkadaşla dalmışız Kürtçe konuşmuşuz. Hemen ordan ustabaşı bağarmaya başladı. "Ooop n'oluyo? İkinci kanal yasak oğlum, ikinci kanala geçme" diye bağırdı. Ben de sinirlendim çıktım geldim.

CİRAN: Selam ben geldim anne!

ANNE: Hoş gelin Ciranım. Günün nasıl geçti?



CİRAN: Hiç sorma anne valla hiç iyi şeyler olmadı. Sabah söylediklerin önce hiç aklıma yatmamıştı ama gidip arkadaşlarla paylaştım ve verdikleri tepkiyi görünce kendimi çok ezilmiş hissettim. Kürt olduğumu öğrenince bana karşı tavırları değişti.

ANNE: (*Şaşkınlık içinde*) Vişş...sen nasıl Kürt olduğunu saklarsın!

CİRAN: Ya anne saklamak değil de hiç sırası gelmemişti ki söyleyeyim. Düşündüm bu dili en iyi Edebiyat Kulübü'nde araştırırım dedim Edebiyat Kulübü'ne gittim. Yani anne inan kuş dili bile var, dünyada belki on kişinin konuşmadığı dil bile var ama Kürtçe yok. Bi de benimle dalga geçtiler, git hakkını Hukuk Kulübü'nde ara dediler. Ben de Hukuk Kulübü'ne gittim. Hukuk Kulübü ise daha büyük bir faciaydı. Türkiye'nin anadili Türkçe'dir. Anadil hakkı diye bir şeyin saçmalık olduğunu, dil hakkına gelene kadar bir yığın hakkımızın yendiğini söylediler. İşte o zaman dedim ki ben bu dili kesinlikle öğrenmeliyim, n'olur öğret bana bu dili. Ama nerden başlayacağımı bilmiyorum.

ANNE: Kızım ben varım, abin var. Ama çok sıkışırsan al sana bu kitap yardımcı olur.

CİRAN: Nerden çıktı anne bu kitap? Yayınevi neymiş bunun? Aaa yayınevi yazmıyor. Neyse anne sabah demiştin ki dilimi öğrenmezsen sütümü sana helal etmem demiştin. Peki anne öğrenirsem sütünü helal edeceksin dimi?

ANNE: Valla Ciran o senin performansına bağlı.

## APPENDIX D

Some photos of Rehearsals

1. Rehearsal of the play *Nesini Söylesem* by youth group



## 2. Rehearsal of children's group

