

Hasibe Kalkan

# On the Role of the Rockefeller Foundation in Establishing Theatre Education Programmes and Transnational Theatrical Spaces in Turkey during the Cold War

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## Abstract

This article focuses on the American impact and, in particular, that of the Rockefeller Foundation on the theatre landscape of Turkey, especially on its educational programmes. In the years of the Cold War, Turkey played a strategic role for the United States. In order to establish an ideological base against the nearby Soviet Union, the Rockefeller Foundation was used to build up and fund a network of artists and academics, which included theatre professionals and academics in Turkey. The article also attempts to show the transnational spaces that have emerged for some artists as a result of the opening to the US.

## Keywords

Cold War, Rockefeller Foundation, Theatre Education, Theatre Studies, Playwriting

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## Introduction

The foundation of theatre education programmes in Turkey was clearly shaped by the modernization and Europeanization process in the country following the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923. However, it must be remembered that the move towards the West had begun much earlier. The leadership of the late Ottoman Empire, beginning in the 18th century, turned to the West to adopt military and, later, technocratic achievements in order to halt its steady decline and return the empire to its former strength. Since the decline of the Empire could not be prevented, it was Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, who realized the westernization project much more radically after the Ottoman Empire, as an ally of the German Empire, lost World War I, and the subsequent war of independence under Ataturk's leadership ended successfully.

The founding of the Turkish Republic did not involve simply copying the western format, but instead constructing an imagined community while dealing with the cultural and historical values of Anatolia in order to develop a unique national ideal (Anderson 2014, 129). In the construction process of nation states, intellectuals play an important part in the social and political order because they try to fulfil their duty as technocratic and cultural engineers. The young republic was in desperate need of such engineers who had a good education and could build bridges with the West. By then, foundations like Rockefeller and Ford had been playing an important role in supporting the need for well-educated and progressive intellectuals in Turkey. These foundations focused their attention on the region after the Second World War, when the Middle East became indispensable for the global power politics of the US and the competition against the Soviet Union for economic, political, military and strategic reasons. In the period of deepening ideological polarization in world politics during the post-war years, the young Turkish Republic also began to play an important role for the US, and as the pressure from the Soviet Union increased, Turkey opted for the western bloc.

Although Turkey was largely neutral during World War II, the situation changed in the post-war years. In 1925, Turkey signed a 20-year non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. This pact determined Turkey's foreign policy and was a sign of friendship between the two countries. However, the atmosphere changed after the treaty expired and the Soviet Union made outrageous demands for the renewal of the treaty, such as a change in Turkey's eastern border to the advantage of the Soviet Union, the revision of the treaty of Montreux<sup>1</sup> or the establishment of a Soviet base in the Bosphorus (Sander 1989, 232). As early as 1947, the US had begun to support Turkey with the Truman Doctrine, which brought relief to the Turkish leadership in the military sphere. This was followed by the Marshall Plan in 1948, which aimed to provide some financial assistance to help the recovery of the Turkish economy. Subsequent developments in Turkey, such as the change of government in 1950, led to a new political orientation. Turkey's accession to NATO in 1951 brought the US and Turkey closer. Aware that military and financial support would not be enough to build an ideological wall against communism, the US, as a rising world power, expanded its radius to a wide variety of fields, including the humanities. A large number of American organizations were created for this reason, such as the Fullbright Program, or reoriented, such as the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations.

Thus, the humanities and the social sciences began to play a vital role for the Rockefeller Foundation. David H. Stevens, an influential staff member, refocused the Foundation's efforts on creative fields and international cultural exchanges. He believed strongly that only through the humanities was it possible to create a new, i.e. a better type of human being and to contribute to a better intercultural understanding between people. He noted:

...the reach of the humanities should be as great as the sciences in discovery or in application of knowledge...thanks to those expelled scholars brought to the United States mankind could stand against "war" and "barbarism." (Stevens 1946)

During this period, however, the foundation's administration was mainly concerned with establishing an ideological line of defence with the help of the humanities (Erken 2015, 122).

Two works address the role of the Rockefeller Foundation in the field of humanities. One is a comprehensive book by Ali Erken, in which he examines the role of the US in the cultural and scientific fields in the formation of modern Turkey. Another source is the lecture by Kenneth W. Rose, Assistant Director Rockefeller Archive Center, which he gave at a Turkish university in 2003 and which gives a historical outline of the work of the

foundation in Turkey. In contrast to the works mentioned above, the aim of this article is to examine how the changing political conjuncture in Turkey in the postwar years affected the Turkish theatre world, and specifically what role the Rockefeller Foundation played in this. Since it was the intention of the Foundation to support the necessary human resources, not only with scholarships and trips to the United States and Europe, but by also establishing or strengthening the training institutions, the focus of this article will be the influence the Rockefeller Foundation has had on theatre people and on theatre education.

## The Rockefeller Foundation in Turkey

Kenneth W. Rose states that American charitable and philanthropic work in Turkey dates back to 1820, when the first Christian missionaries from the United States arrived in present-day Izmir. Based on Roger R. Trask's *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform. 1914- 1939*, Rose states that by 1914 the work they began on behalf of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had grown to include seventeen major mission stations, nine hospitals, and 426 schools serving 25,000 students. Religious work among the Christian minorities, education, and general relief of distress and sickness occupied much of the missionaries' charitable efforts in Turkey during this time. Christian minorities were mainly Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Syrian Coptic people of the Ottoman Empire. The founding of new foundations like the Rockefeller Foundation in the 1920s brought about changes in charity and philanthropy in the US, which were also felt in Turkey, where the more scientific and secular approach to philanthropy met with greater approval from the leaders of the new Turkish republic than did the older model of Christian charity.

According to Rose, between 1925 and 1983, the Rockefeller Foundation provided fellowships that allowed a total of 155 Turks to undertake a period of study outside of their own country, most often in the United States. He continues with the fact that the Foundation invested a total of nearly \$2.4 million in institutions and individuals in Turkey for a variety of purposes. The Rockefeller Foundation thus invested substantial money and time in the modernization of Turkish society in the twentieth century, working quietly behind the scenes, for the most part, to develop and support institutions in key segments of Turkish society: in public health, in medical care, in education, in the humanities for the advancement of the arts, and in the social sciences to help policy-makers better understand the forces that shape the economy and social and political relations (Rose 2008, 4).

In 1948, the Rockefeller Foundation hired an Anglicist named John Marshall to accomplish its goals in the Middle East. From this year onwards, he made regular and extensive trips to countries such as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Turkey to develop knowledge networks in these countries.

By an international knowledge network is meant a system of coordinated research, results' dissemination and publication, study and often graduate-level teaching, intellectual exchange, and financing, across national boundaries. The international networks may also include official policymakers and international aid and other agencies (Parmar, 2002).

After several trips to the region, Marshall began to believe strongly that "constructive change" within Islam was possible. The Rockefeller Foundation explicitly avoided discussion of Islamic backwardness, which was a prevailing prejudice of the missionaries they supported under the Ottomans. Marshall envisioned a change in Islam "from within",

as seen in the example of an educated small group of scholars, intellectuals, business and industry experts and bureaucrats driving this change. According to Marshall, the very fact that Turkey used the Latin script alphabet moved the country closer to the West than the other countries in the Middle East. Access to necessary materials in the mother tongue and a good command of English were sufficient to lay the foundation for this. Marshall noted that such a group of intellectuals already existed in Turkey, but was still emerging in the other countries of the Middle East. (Marshall, *The Near East*, 1951)

The most promising element which I saw in Turkish life was the marked discontent at the lack of more rapid progress on the part of the truly liberal group of Turkish scholars and intellectuals. Perhaps the most valuable outcome of my visit in Turkey is a certain sense of confidence (I hope not misplaced) in the small group of this character. (Marshall, *Rockefeller Archive Center* 1948)

He assumed that the so-called minority would have a greater influence on society in the near future and would take over the political leadership in the region.

John Marshall paid his first visit to Turkey in 1948. After that, he came to Turkey almost annually until 1960, met Turkish scholars and intellectuals and familiarized himself with various institutions in the country. Although Turkey was classified by the Foundation as a Middle Eastern country, Marshall found that the European influence that was felt there militated against it:

Returning from Damascus, as I did for the major part of my visit in Istanbul, gave me an entirely different view of that city from what I had had on my way through Beirut. Against the background of Damascus, Istanbul for all its Oriental flavor seemed much more of a western city than when I had seen it before. Indeed Istanbul and Ankara on this return seemed to me far more European than Asiatic. This is only a reflection of the fact that Turkey is without doubt the most westernized of the Middle Eastern countries. (Marshall, *Rockefeller Archive Center* 1948)

Marshall's aim was to build up a network of western-oriented specialists, starting from the Robert College in Istanbul<sup>2</sup>, which was founded in 1863 by missionaries, the first and still the oldest continuously operating American school outside the United States. As the graduates there were particularly culturally and linguistically suited to realizing the Foundation's goals, this college was an important base for the Rockefeller foundation in Turkey. Other important starting points for building networks were the Ministry for Education in Ankara, directors of several universities in Istanbul and Ankara, and various associations such as the Turkish American Association in Ankara, which was founded in 1951. The main objectives of the Turkish American Association were to promote understanding between the people of America and Turkey, to strengthen the bonds between the two countries and to realize the activities of its members in educational, cultural and social fields.<sup>3</sup>

## The Rockefeller Foundation and Theatre

Marshall was convinced that the dissemination of their values to a wider audience was best achieved through the arts, such as literature, fine arts, theatre and music. During these years, young artists in theatre, opera, ballet and painting had very little exchange internationally. They had very limited opportunities to travel abroad and to learn from experienced artists and respected institutions in the West. The Rockefeller Foundation therefore supported the training of young Turkish artists and donated a total of over \$

792,000 to purchase new equipment and to develop human resources. The aim of the Foundation was to help the country build an artistic tradition that considered its own cultural sources. This had been a critical point in the cultural life of Turkey for many years, which, with the founding of the Republic, completely cut itself off from the Ottoman past and created a founding narrative based largely on pre-Ottoman Anatolian history. The absolute turn of educational and administrative institutions toward the West, which denied their Ottoman traditions, was addressed and criticized by many political and cultural figures, but the field of music seemed to have solved the problem better. Thus, as early as 1948, on one of his first visits, Marshall noted that “there is a good deal of activity in Turkey in the field of music: most Turkish composers have had good European training but are using Turkish themes in their compositions” (Marshall 1948).

The theatre, on the other hand, was consistently westernized in those years. During his stays in Ankara and Istanbul, John Marshall saw a large number of theatre and opera performances and found that, on the whole, they were very well done. However, he thought that the set and lighting design was not competent or as desired.

John Marshall was very successful in selecting talented individuals who had the ambition and the language skills to continue their education in the US. One of his greatest supporters in the selection of suitable artists was Muhsin Ertuğrul, the most important actor in the Turkish theatre world at that time and a key figure in modern Turkish theatre life. Ertuğrul had started his career in the theatre at the age of seventeen and travelled to Paris shortly after, in 1912, to further his education in Western acting. There he made contact with André Antoine and invited him to Istanbul to help structure the newly founded acting school. Because of World War I, however, Antoine had to leave again after two months. Further journeys led Ertuğrul to Germany, where he studied Max Reinhardt's theatre and founded a film company, in which he produced and directed films such as “Samson and Devil Worshippers”. Later, his stays in the Soviet Union gave him the opportunity to tackle the works of Stanislavski, Eisenstein and Meyerhold. Muhsin Ertuğrul also met the famous Turkish poet Nazım Hikmet there, worked with him in the theatre and founded a production company for films as well. After making three films, “Tamilla” (1925), “Spartakus” (1926) and “Five Minutes” (1926), he returned to Istanbul (And 1969, 59).

John Marshall and Muhsin Ertuğrul came together several times, and with Ertuğrul's help Marshall tried to build a network of talented artists who would help realize the goals of the Rockefeller Foundation. Furthermore, Marshall encouraged Muhsin Ertuğrul to go on a one-month research trip to the United States to learn about new stage technologies and to see some plays, although he did not speak English very well, but spoke French, German and Russian fluently. Muhsin Ertuğrul was exactly the right man for John Marshall, because he was open to all artistic influences from different countries and the American context was completely new to him. Muhsin Ertuğrul aimed to establish a national theatre identity based entirely on Western values and was capable of competing with western theatre. Yet, the founding ideology of the Republic of Turkey had demanded a radical break with the Ottoman heritage, and Ertuğrul, following its footsteps made this break in the theatre. He shaped the western theatre not only as an actor and director, but also through the publication of magazines with his own texts on theatre, the founding of acting schools, and his teaching activities, both as an artistic director and the founder of various theatres.

Actually, Western theatre in Turkey does not begin with Ertuğrul. At the beginning of the 19th century, at the court of the pro-Western Sultan Mahmud II, a theatre was built on the Western model, which was mostly used by European touring groups. A few decades later, more and more Anatolian Armenians founded theatres in which they performed

plays not only in Armenian but also in Turkish. These theatres enjoyed great popularity among Ottoman bureaucrats and officers in major cities such as Istanbul, Bursa, and Izmir and existed alongside the traditional forms until the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. As early as the 1870s, Turkish actors, such as Ahmet Fehim, who would later work with André Antoine, were merged with the Armenian theatre groups. Ahmet Fehim represents a theatre tradition called Tuluat, which is a mixture of European content with improvisational elements from Turkish traditional theatre such as Meddah or Ortaoyunu (Karaboğa 2016, 153), with which Muhsin Ertuğrul grew up. Nevertheless, he designated this theatre as inferior. He was firmly of the opinion, despite all the criticism, that one had to educate the audience aesthetically through European classics, instead of adapting to the tastes of the audience (Gürün 1992, 120).

John Marshall describes the historic role of Ertuğrul for modern Turkish theatre in his diaries with an anecdote recounted by Ertuğrul:

In 1930, he brought to Ankara a small company from Istanbul, including his wife, the first Turkish Muslim woman to appear on the stage. To their surprise, Ataturk attended each of their ten evening performances. On the next evening Ataturk asked Ertuğrul to call on him, and asked him, "What do you want?" to which Ertuğrul replied: "a conservatory." Ataturk immediately summoned the then Prime Minister, Ismet İnönü (later President) and said, "Give this man what he wants, a conservatory. You know I ordinarily drink from seven to midnight. "While this company has been here, I have not drunk. The effect on my health is so good that we ought to see to it that the country has a theatre." Ertuğrul' s company tasked him with asking for something remote. He replied, "what we most need is successors. (Marshall, Rockefeller Archive Center 1955)

Paul Hindemith was invited to consult on the implementation of this newly founded Conservatory in Ankara, today the Hacettepe University State Conservatory. He recommended Carl Ebert as the head of the conservatory. Carl Ebert, who fled the Nazi regime in Germany and was working in Buenos Aires at the Teatro Colon at that time, was invited to teach in Ankara during the 1935-36 academic year. But between 1935 and 1944, he acted as the director of the State Conservatory in Ankara, which ultimately led to the foundation of the Turkish State Opera and Ballet. Ebert established opera and theatre departments at the Conservatory, as well as a "practice theater hall" where opera and drama students could appear in public performances.<sup>4</sup> Since he was a student of Max Reinhardt, the training at the Conservatory under Ebert was strongly influenced by this tradition.

That changed, slowly at first, due to the influence of the Rockefeller Foundation. John Marshall decided to encourage the promising young talent, Yıldız Kenter, an actress who, because of her anglophone mother, was one of the few artists who could play in English, to go to New York for a year to attend theatre performances and take acting classes at Columbia University. Kenter, once in the States, also worked on new techniques in acting and teaching of acting at the American Theater Wing, Neighborhood Play House and the Actors Studio. Upon Kenter's return, Dorothy Sands, director and teacher at the American Theatre Wing, was asked by the Rockefeller Foundation to support Yıldız Kenter in developing the drama department at the State Conservatory in Ankara and teaching acting there. Kenter left the State Theater in 1959 and founded the Kent Actors Community with her brother Müşfik Kenter and her husband Şükran Güngör, where they started to apply the acting techniques they had learned in the United States in productions of contemporary Turkish, European and American drama texts. In the following years, she constantly developed their acting methods further, regularly taking part in training courses on "Changing Education Methods" and "Acting Methods" in the United States and the

United Kingdom. In his lecture on the activities of the Rockefeller Foundation in Turkey, Kenneth W. Rose states that Marshall saw her performance in the “Rainmaker” in March 1957, and with some pride he reported comments that her acting “has greatly improved, and the improvement attributed by all to her American stay” (Rose 2003, 14).

As mentioned above, the Foundation was primarily concerned with supporting educational institutions. Therefore, in the fifties, Marshall was also keen to enable the directors of Turkish state theatres and conservatories to visit Europe and the United States to give them an insight into the latest developments in their field. For example, he offered Fuat Türkay, Director of the State Conservatory Ankara, the opportunity to spend some time in the UK and the United States to learn about the latest developments in the American music industry. Since music was without language, it was easier to establish a mutual exchange here, such as the Dizzie Gillespie Jazz concert in Ankara organized by the Turkish American Association, which was received with great enthusiasm (Gökatalay 2018, 224).

Conservatory directors were all to be exposed to American culture, even if it was for a short time, such as the short-term fellowship that was offered to Eşref Antikacı, the director of the Istanbul Conservatory that was founded in 1914 as a school of performing and musical arts, and allowed him to spend two months visiting schools in the United States. Nurettin Sevin, director of the drama department at the State Conservatory Ankara, also expressed his wish to visit the United States to give more space to the American theatre tradition. The American influence on Turkish theatre increased steadily in the following years, also through a series of actors and directors, such as Şirin Devrim, Çiğdem Selşik, Ayla Algan and Beklan Algan, who had studied acting in the US and were hired by Muhsin Ertuğrul at the Municipal Theater. Genco Erkal, a graduate from Robert College and a very successful actor and director to this day, who has played a leading role in Turkish political theatre, argues that these artists, in the wake of their return, brought a breath of fresh air to the Turkish theatre scene (Erkal 2020). This generation of theatre artists not only translated and directed American texts for Turkish stages, but also introduced a style of acting and directing that was strongly influenced by new acting techniques such as Strasberg’s Method Acting.

One of the few actors who succeeded in creating a transfer of knowledge in both directions was the actor, director and translator Tunç Yalman. John Marshall had a very high opinion of him and his parents. He was the son of Ahmet Emin Yalman, a well-known journalist and publisher of the newspaper Vatan. Tunç Yalman, was a graduate of Robert College and had lived in the United States for several years with his family as a child. Marshall believed that he was one of the best educated people in his field and, perhaps as the future director of the State Theatre, he could be one of the leading actors in the development of Turkish theatre (Marshall 1956). Yalman was awarded two Rockefeller scholarships, in 1956 and 1962, so that he could get to know and study American theatre more intensively. With each of these scholarships, Yalman spent one year in the USA, worked temporarily with the MacDonald Company and studied with Jean Rosenthal, a leading theatre lighting expert of the time (Marshall, Rockefeller Archives Center 1956). In 1957, Tunç Yalman returned to Istanbul and founded a theatre with his fellow student from Robert College and Yale Drama School, Haldun Dormen, which staged mostly French vaudevilles and musicals. Yalman was responsible for the more sophisticated part of the theatre. However, as this part did not prove to be profitable, he went to France in 1959 as an assistant director. Yalman used this time abroad to write texts about festivals and contemporary productions that appeared in the theatre magazine published by the municipal theatre. One of the goals of this theatre magazine was to keep readers informed about developments in contemporary theatre in Europe and in the US. Later, when his greatest mentor Muhsin Ertuğrul appointed him in 1960 as an actor and director at the

Istanbul Municipal Theatre, Yalman continued his work as a writer for this magazine. At the Municipal Theatre, Yalman performed and directed mainly contemporary English and American plays, such as "Both Your Houses" by Maxwell Anderson or "Roots" by Arnold Wesker, in addition to classics such as Shakespeare's "Timon of Athens" (IBB Şehir Tiyatroları Kütüphanesi 1960).

In 1965, the Istanbul Municipal Council decided to abolish the chief director position and thus also Ertuğrul. The "Muhsin Ertuğrul incident", which caused great reactions in the public, parliament and media, was interpreted as a blow to the Turkish theatre. Tunç Yalman decided to resign and return to the United States. On 27 May 1966, the following news appeared in the *New York Times*:

The Milwaukee Repertory Theater today hired a Turkish-born actor, playwright and director as its new artistic director. He is Tunc Yalman, who signed a three-year contract and succeeds John A. McQuiggan, new co-director of the Trinity Square Playhouse, Providence, R.I.

Yalman's appointment as artistic director of an American theatre was hailed in the Turkish press as a great success for a Turk in America. In fact, from then on Yalman was able to create a transnational space that moved mainly between the United States and Turkey. According to a news item in the Turkish newspaper *Milliyet*, Yalman staged no less than seven plays in his first season at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater (1966, *Milliyet*). In contrast to his predecessors, he increased the proportion of plays by European authors at the expense of American ones, which is why one can also speak of an opening up of the Milwaukee Repertory Theater in this context. In a *TDR Comment*, Tunç Yalman responded to the accusation that regional theatres were not innovative enough by saying:

I can only speak for myself and our company. To cite a few examples, in the past two years we have done Sophocles' *Electra* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, totally adapting them to present-day visual and auditory sense perceptions; we have presented the most satisfactory productions of *The Physicists* and *Waiting for Godot* I have ever seen; we produced the Professional American premiere of Brecht's *Pantula and His Servant Matti*, as well as the World premieres of four new American plays (one of them by Rosalyn Drexler) with the help of two special grants from the Rockefeller Foundation (Yalman, *The Regional Theatre; Four Views* 1968).

Just one year after his appointment as artistic director at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, his production "The Trial of Lee Harvey Oswald" by Amram Ducovny and Leon Friedman (director: Tunç Yalman) was performed at the Anta Playhouse, Broadway New York (Internet Broadway Database 1967). While Tunç Yalman established himself in the USA as a director, actor and translator of contemporary European plays, he always kept in touch with Muhsin Ertuğrul. In a lively exchange of letters, they shared information about the repertoires of their theatres, the latest productions of various European countries and sent each other texts and other materials they needed for their productions. The letters also included their disappointments, fears and hopes as well as their ideals.

Yalman's contract was renewed after three years, proving his great ambition and his success at the Milwaukee Repertory Regional Theater that was founded in 1954. In the following years, Yalman also staged plays in various cities in the United States, such as "Stuck", "The Executioners", "A Disturbance of Mirrors" at the O'Neill Theater Center in Connecticut in 1972 and "The Liar" by Goldoni at the Cleveland Playhouse in the same year. Further productions he staged were "A Conflict of Interest" by Jay Broad at the Urgent Theater, in NY (1973) and "Joe Egg" and "The Trial of the Catonsville Nine", both at the American Conservatory Theater in Seattle (1973-74) (Film References, 1968). In



1974, his mentor and good friend Muhsin Ertuğrul asked Yalman to return to the municipal theatre in Istanbul, where he, in the following years, mainly staged classics, contemporary American and European plays and occasionally Turkish plays, such as "Genç Osman" by Musahipzade Celal, a play about the life of a persecuted Ottoman crown prince. Tunç Yalman had developed into a prototype of a transmigrant during this period, because shortly after his return to Turkey he took leave from the Istanbul Municipal Theatre to return to the United States. In the following years, Yalman not only worked as an actor and director, but also began teaching at the North Carolina School of Arts. During the summer holidays, he came to Turkey to direct plays. An anthology about the Turkish theatre in English describes those years as follows:

In the 1980's, he was a professor of drama at the prestigious North Carolina School of the Arts, where he also directed numerous plays. He spent fifteen of his last years in New York City, where with a voracious appetite he saw many hundreds of plays, adding this number to his presumably unparalleled record of several thousand he had seen in Turkey, Europe, England, and the United States before he fell victim to a relentless disease that kept him incapacitated in Turkey.(Halman S. and Warner 2008)

During these years, Yalman was regarded as a specialist in international theatre, who had seen a large number of performances all over the world and was far ahead of the local theatre in terms of aesthetics. Genco Erkal says that Tunç Yalman's knowledge of international theatre was so immense that they always asked him whenever they needed information about it (Erkal, 2020). Given that the sources of information were so limited in those times, Yalman's help was hugely important. With his reports on American theatre and his interpretations of various theatre texts, Yalman also ensured that American theatre became known in Turkey alongside the traditionally influential European theatre and gained increasing influence.

Tunç Yalman was one of the few who also saw himself as a transmigrant, i.e. he moved back and forth between the country of origin and the country of residence and was able to position himself in both countries. Transmigration is a term that was used by Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanton in the 1990s to describe the activities of migrants, in both their countries of origin and the countries where they settle.

Transmigrants are immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state. They are not sojourners because they settle and become incorporated in the economy and political institutions, localities, and patterns of daily life of the country in which they reside. However, at the very same time, they are engaged elsewhere in the sense that they maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they emigrated.(Glick Schiller, Baschve Blanc-Szanton 1995)

However, it is important to emphasize that although Tunç Yalman was described by the American public as Turkish born, there is no evidence that his Turkish origins were reflected in his work. Since Tunç Yalman lived in the States as a child, attended an American college and studied in the USA, he was very familiar with American culture and language. In the States, it seemed more important to Yalman to internationalise American theatre than to clearly incorporate his Turkish identity. In this context, it can be stated that Yalman, compared to other influential theatre artists who had studied abroad, was not looking for a new Turkish theatre language that would unite both cultures in a synthesis or that would be mutually enriching, but that his influence on American theatre was more European than Oriental and vice versa.

Despite their international successes and the knowledge that Muhsin Ertuğrul and Tunç Yalman brought to Turkish theatre, Ertuğrul in particular felt that modern Turkish theatre was still not on a par with their Western models. In addition to the training of actors, Ertuğrul believed that a theatre of the desired quality could only be achieved with the establishment of theatre schools that produced good playwrights and critics in addition to actors.

I would heartily wish that "Theater Institutes" could finally be founded at our universities, especially at the faculties of letter, where playwrights are trained and we don't stay behind Europe and America anymore, and now Asia either (Tuncay 1970).

Muhsin Ertuğrul's desire to found a theatre institute was realized in Ankara, the Turkish capital, in 1958, at the Faculty of Language, History and Geography, i.e. at the Faculty of Humanities.

## The Founding of Theatre Institutes in Turkey

At the instigation of Prof. Dr. İrfan Şahinbaş, also a fellow of the Rockefeller Foundation and the head of the American Literature department of the university (founded in 1957 by Şahinbaş), a Theatre Institute that considered theatre as a science, conducted research and provided education on this subject was established. The head of the institute was Prof. Dr. Bedrettin Tuncel (Professor for French); Prof. Dr. İrfan Şahinbaş became his assistant. The institute was closed at the end of the 1962 academic year on the grounds that it was not possible to teach within the scope of an institute. When retraining started under the name of Theatre Department in 1964, students underwent a four-year education and graduates were given a university graduation certificate. Prof. Dr. Melehat Özgü, who was Professor for German, was brought in as the head of the department. The first institute for theatre studies in Turkey set itself the task of researching World and Turkish theatre, making Turkish theatre history and plays known at home and abroad, carrying out analyses and research under this umbrella, and, above all, teaching young authors the techniques of writing for the stage.

Muhsin Ertuğrul was touched:

I believed from the beginning that this institute with its inconspicuous beginnings would bring about a revolution in Turkish theater. (...) Until now, we expected our authors who were left alone, to develop and write their plays in an unproductive atmosphere. (...) I sincerely believe that at this institute, those interested in writing for the stage will teach technical know-how and produce many good authors.(Ertuğrul 1975)

The Rockefeller Foundation financed the stay of the theatre professor Kenneth MacGowan in Ankara, where he taught playwriting. He had two assistants at his side (Refik Erduran and Özdemir Nutku) who translated for him into Turkish. MacGowan was profoundly impressed by the lively theatre scene in Ankara, and, in an article about the Turkish theatre, wrote that about fifteen percent of the productions on the city's five stages were of American origin. He believed that the audience's reactions to comedies and tragedies were equally naïve, but that they would read the 40-60 page long programmes with great interest, based on the German model (Murat 1970). A year later, Prof. Kenneth MacGowan left and Prof. Grant Redford continued the seminars, in which a key figure in Turkish theatre participated as a student: Metin Teyfik (Çavdar) also known as Metin And. He was one of the most active Rockefeller scholars in the development of Turkish theatre,

especially in theatre criticism and theatre studies (Kenneth W. 2003). He studied theatre and dance criticism in New York and, after his return to Turkey, took part in courses in playwriting at the newly founded Institute for Theatre Studies in Ankara. According to John Marshall:

And is to play a more and more constructive role in the arts in Ankara. On this visit, it became clear that he is more and more respected by everyone for his impartiality, lack of any personal ambition, and desire to make himself and his money as useful as possible. At home and abroad he has certainly been taken with the idea of a philanthropic role and is beginning to play it. (Marshall, Rockefeller Foundation Archive 1958)

Metin And was the son of a rich family of winemakers (Kavaklıdere). His father had already established a foundation for polyphonic music in Ankara. He began his theatre career with theatre reviews, which he wrote for a newspaper for 15 years, and taught theatre and cultural history at the theatre institute. In the following years, And not only carried out extensive research into cultural and theatrical sources with his standard works on Turkish theatre and its development, but also made it known abroad. With his more than fifty books, he created a foundation for the emerging theatre studies in Turkey, which is undeniably not surpassed to this day. Unlike Ertuğrul, he campaigned for a theatre that not only copied the West but also focused on its own theatre tradition. Accordingly, he was also critical of Ertuğrul's strict adherence to Western theatre. However, And's interests were varied. He researched and wrote books on various forms of plays and rituals, Ottoman miniatures and wedding feasts and made a very important contribution to Ottoman and Turkish theatre history with his detailed research and publications, which are still standard works today. He was also known as a very good speaker and in 1978, during a tour of the USA, he gave 30 speeches in different cities in 40 days. He was, moreover, able to expand his academic horizon internationally by teaching Turkish theatre at the Institute for Applied Theater Studies in Giessen, as well as at the universities in Tokyo and New York. And's work was not about making Western theatre, especially American theatre, known in Turkey, but trying to historiographically reappraise the influence of Western theatre on Turkish theatre. He also tried to make traditional Turkish theatre, such as shadow theatre, meddah, or play in the middle, known abroad.

The Rockefeller Foundation was also aware of this problem that came with the radical break with the Ottoman past and the strict turn towards the West.

But Turkey has clearly now come to a stage of national development where its faculty members are needed in national thinking. To take an example from the humanities, Turks sadly need clarification as to their past, and particularly, their recent past. They have emerged now from the dogmas ... of the regimes of Atatürk and the one party system; in a sense, the advantages of the break with the past that those dogmas allowed have been realized. Increasingly evident now is a psychological hunger to come to terms with all that went before. How good and how bad, to put it bluntly, was the Ottoman Empire after all? How true and how untrue are the things one is told of its relations with Europe and the Arab States? What is there in the literature of Turkey before romanization, from which Turks educated since are literally cut off, because of their inability to read Turkish written in Arabic characters and in an older vocabulary? A people without a history may be theoretically happy; but as complete a break with history, ... leaves elements of at least psychological unhappiness (RF 1955).

In the sixties, the discussion about the need for a Turkish theatre, which would have to be a synthesis of Western and traditional elements, increased. After the military coup in 1960, a liberal constitution was adopted that allowed Marxist literature, including Brecht, to be

translated into Turkish. The Brechtian alienation effect was, for many Turkish artists, nothing less than a confirmation that they should deal innovatively with traditional theatrical forms, which have inherently alienating qualities.

One of the most prominent figures in this context is the director, author and scientist Özdemir Nutku, who was one of the first assistants at the Theater Institute in Ankara and a graduate of Robert College. Nutku was convinced that the development of an innovative national Turkish theatre was only possible through a broad education. After a trip to Munich, during which he visited some of the subsidized theatres, the drama school and the theatre institute of the Ludwig Maximilian University, he claimed that neither acting training at conservatories nor the largely theoretical training in theatre studies could achieve an integrated and unified language of theatre. Since theatre is a collective art and the individual areas produce their creativity in mutual contact with one another, the training should include different areas of theatre (Nutku 1992). Hence, he preferred the American model, which allowed him to teach all areas of the theatre under one roof. The institution he created from scratch in Izmir in 1976 included the areas of drama, scenic writing and stage design. Özdemir Nutku was one of the few actors who succeeded in creating a transfer of knowledge beyond the borders of Turkey. In 1965, he gave lectures, conferences and seminars in many universities such as Yale, Washington (Seattle), Chicago, Pittsburgh, Northwestern, Minnesota, Southern California, UCLA, Carnegie Technology School and North Carolina, and participated in workshops there. In addition to staging a large number of plays on different stages in Germany and Turkey, he published over thirty books on world theatre and theatre theory, as well as the translations of a multitude of plays, especially those of Shakespeare.

As mentioned above, one of Nutku's most important aspirations was, very much in the spirit of Metin And, to create a national Turkish theatre that is influenced by other cultures, but still reflects its own national culture.

In order for people to maintain their freedom and sovereignty, they have to develop an integrated and unified narrative form. Each nation has its own special narrative form. This is the reason why different nations influence each other, but still have their own culture. And that's why only cultural independence can guarantee national independence. (Nutku1969)

Public discussion about a national theatre language has continued up to the present. But at the same time, the search for a theatre language of its own reflects how a radical break with its own past has led to a kind of loss of identity in the theatre. Although this was a point of criticism from the beginning and was expressed repeatedly, it was taken on a different aspect with the strong politicization of the population in the sixties. "Thought clubs" emerged at universities, theatres with political ambitions were established which tried to free themselves from the elitist corset of their predecessors. This is precisely a point for which John Marshall might be blamed, because all the fellows nominated by him in the years from 1950 to 1961 came from the Turkish upper classes.

## Conclusion

Theatre based on a Western model was, for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, entirely in the spirit of the European Enlightenment, a moral, socio-political and aesthetic institution, a place of enlightenment and a place of popular education. Therefore, in 1930, by law, he made it the task of city administrations to build and cover the costs of the theatre. The Western theatre in Turkey during that time was

mainly influenced by French, German and Russian models, as can be clearly seen in the works and writings of Muhsin Ertuğrul. This changed partly during the years of the Cold War, because Turkey began to play a political and strategic role for the United States for the reasons stated above. The formation of a network of ideologically loyal intellectuals who would later occupy key positions in various institutions gained strategic importance. Since the social sciences and humanities including the theatre, especially in the fifties, played an important role for the Rockefeller Foundation in establishing a part of this network, it was worthwhile focusing on the key players in it. One of the key figures in this network was clearly Muhsin Ertuğrul, who assisted John Marshall, the Rockefeller Foundation's representative in the Middle East, and who had a major influence on the belief that actors should be supported. Other key figures were Metin And, Yıldız Kenter and Tunç Yalman.

Among them were a new generation of talented artists and graduates of Robert College, which ensured a growing influence of American theatre on the contents and forms of Turkish theatre. Not only were texts translated into Turkish and performed, but also the acting style started to be affected. To the common Stanislavski oriented acting style on stages and conservatories came American method acting styles. The study of theatre studies at the Institute in Ankara also showed an American influence, at least in the first years, since the Rockefeller Foundation financed the American teaching staff, such as Prof. Kenneth MacGowan and Prof. Grant Redford. Özdemir Nutku expanded this influence by founding a theatre institute covering as many as possible areas of the theatre that could be taught under one roof.

It can be stated that the US turn to the humanities between 1948 and 1961 led to an increasing interest in American culture and strongly influenced the theatrical landscape in major cities such as Istanbul and Ankara. However, the influence was not so great that one can speak of an Americanization of the stages and educational institutions, as long-time theatre critic Dikmen Gürün, who also studied theatre in the US (Gürün 2020), confirms. In the above-mentioned period, only about eight people from the theatre field received a scholarship, because after 1961, the foundation lost interest in the humanities and in the following years turned its attention to agriculture.

Nevertheless, the seeds were sown for an intensive exchange between the countries. As early as 1956, the Middle East Institute of Technology was founded in Ankara and a faculty of literature and social sciences was added in 1959. As is evident in the university's name, it is an American foundation that has contributed to the development of Turkey and Middle Eastern countries, especially by training people in the natural and social sciences. In 1963, Bosphorus University was added; as mentioned above, it emerged from Robert College. Undoubtedly, organizations such as the Turkish American Association and the Fulbright Commission continued to provide a lively exchange and growing influence on economic, social and cultural life in Turkey.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Montreux Convention, (1936) agreement concerning the Dardanelles strait. In response to Turkey's request to refortify the area, the signers of the Treaty of Lausanne and others met in Montreux, Switz., and agreed to return the zone to Turkish military control. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Montreux-Convention>, accessed: 10.06.2021

<sup>2</sup> In the 1960s, Robert College left its buildings on Hisar Campus to merge with the American Girls' High School and left all the historical buildings to the Turkish state, which founded the Bosphorus University in its place in 1971.

<sup>3</sup> Compare: <https://www.taa-ankara.org.tr/dernek/tad-tarihce>, accessed: 10.04.2021.

<sup>4</sup> The practice theatre hall was closed in 1949 with the establishment of the State Theatre and reopened only in 2013 as a private initiative.

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