

ENCOUNTER, MIMESIS, PLAY:
THEATRICALITY IN SPATIAL ARTS

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF
ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
AND THE DEPARTMENT OF GRAPHIC DESIGN
OF BILKENT UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN ART, DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

by

Çetin Sankartal

September, 1999

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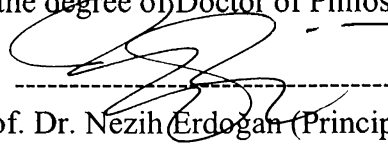
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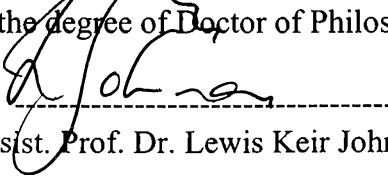
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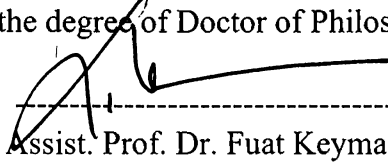
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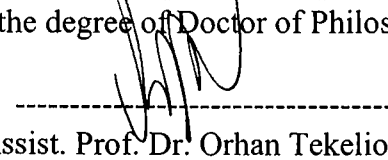
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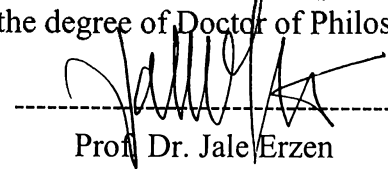
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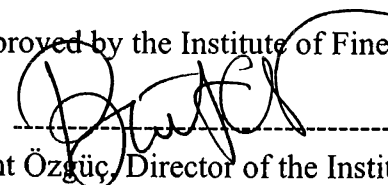
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ABSTRACT

ENCOUNTER, MIMESIS, PLAY: THEATRICALITY IN SPATIAL ARTS

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Ph. D. in A.D.A.

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Nezih Erdoğan

September, 1999

On the basis of the experience of four works from Turkey, this study attempts to reveal that actual experience of spatial arts (traditionally called visual arts) is also theatrical. During the study, it is observed that the fundamental factor behind the experience of spatial artworks is an uncanny encounter with them in a specific space-time. The study further argues that the enactment of the audience in the space-time of the work involves an intermingling of pre-rational and rational modes of mimesis and play. In this context, a theoretical study can be based on sensuous bodily affection by the works, following the traces of practical logic, which is effective during such experience.

Keywords: theatricality, uncanny, mimesis, play, space-time, body, contemporary art in Turkey.

ÖZET

KARŞILAŞMA, MİMESİS, OYUN: MEKANSAL SANATLARDA TİYATRALLİK

Çetin Sarıkartal

Sanat, Tasarım ve Mimarlık Doktora Programı

Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Nezih Erdoğan

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Bu çalışma, Türkiye’den dört iş üzerindeki deneyime dayanarak, mekansal sanatların (geleneksel deyimle görsel sanatlar) somut deneyiminin aynı zamanda tiyatral olduğunu göstermeye çalışır. Çalışma sırasında, mekansal işlerin deneyiminin temel olarak onlarla özel bir mekan-zaman içinde tekinsiz bir karşılaşmaya dayandığı gözlemlenmiştir. Çalışmada, ayrıca, izleyicinin işin mekan-zamanındaki icrasının, ön-rasyonel ve rasyonel türden mimesis ve oyunun bir karışımını içerdiği tartışılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, kuramsal bir çalışma, bu türden bir deneyim sırasında temel olarak etkin olan pratik mantığın izlerini sürerek, duyuşsal beden etkilenimine dayandırılabilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Tiyatrallik, tekinsiz, mimesis, oyun, mekan-zaman, beden, çağdaş Türkiye sanatı.

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‘Will to Truth’ do you call it, ye wisest ones, that which impelleth you and maketh you ardent? Will for the thinkableness of all being: thus do I call your will!...

Your will and your valuations have ye put on the river of becoming; it betrayeth unto me an old Will to Power, what is believed by the people as good and evil.

(Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra)

1. INTRODUCTION

In this study, I will try to examine the theatrical character of the encounter of the audience with ‘spatial’ works, relating my argument with my own experience of four contemporary works from Turkey. The works I will examine in this context are: 1) Kurşun Uykusu (Heavy [Lead] Sleep) by Selim Bırsel, Ankara, 1995; 2) Pilav ve Tartışma Yeri (Rice and Discussion Place) by Sarkis, Istanbul, 1995; 3) Dışarı çıkmadık, çünkü hep dışardaydık, İçeri girmedik, çünkü hep içerdeydik (We didn’t go outside, we were always on the outside; We didn’t go inside, we were always on the inside) by Hale Tenger, Istanbul, 1995; 4) Fani Olan (One [that] who [which] is transitory) by Cengiz Çekil, Ankara, 1997. The works are listed in chronological order.

1.1. Research problem

According to the mainstream modernist art criticism, the relationship between an artwork and its audience is generally approached in terms of an 'aesthetic experience'. The work is regarded as an example of a special class of objects, exhibited to be seen and contemplated upon. Depending on the visual perception and recognition of the formal qualities of the work, the audience is supposed to have an aesthetic experience. Accordingly, the audience is regarded as a subject-spectator who is capable of having such an experience. However, concerning my own experience, certain common characteristics of abovementioned four works made it highly problematic to approach them from the perspective of a spectator. Although it was still possible to conceive of those works as art objects exhibited for beholders of art who would perceive and contemplate on them, this would inevitably exclude some very significant aspects of the way the audience was confronted with them.

The most important of those aspects was the role of spatial and temporal elements in the relationship between those works and their receivers. In the modernist theoretical framework, the place of exhibition is assumed to be rather neutral, not to have a significant impact on the reception of the work. It is an ideally organized space where the object of vision is perfectly presented to the eye of the beholder¹. Furthermore, the time of reception is assumed to be an eternal 'present tense' that can be separated from the course of daily life, and thus, can be reconstructed later for other subjects under identical conditions. However, such a conception of space and time did not

¹ O'Doherty (1976) has convincingly explained that the so called 'ideal' gallery space, too, is far from being neutral, and has a decisive role on the reception of artworks.

seem to be suitable to examine any of those four works. The spatial qualities of the works themselves were so interactive with the actual places of installation, which were also conceived by the artists as continuations of a specific geography, that any attempt of neutralization would exclude almost the entire experience of an audience. As for the time of reception, it was far away from being a 'present tense' of the modernist aesthetic discourse, but rather a 'continuous tense' with a certain duration determined by the spatial qualities of works. Moreover, it was evident that the possibility of interaction with the works was limited by their specific period of exhibition. Finally, the artists strongly related the time of experience of their works to the historical time of actual life in that geography.

The second aspect incompatible with the modernist scheme is related to the identity of the audience. The concept of a universal, or transcendental subject as spectator seemed not to be helpful to examine the situation of the audience of those works. Since the artists had installed their works with so emphasized gestures of historico-geographical awareness, each audience felt to be invited to locate her/himself in the specific space-time of works, if always in relation to the exterior life. Therefore, her/his response to the artistic gesture would develop in relation to the habitual experiences of her/his daily behaviour and consciousness, though the assumed habitus² would be questioned

² I use the term 'habitus' in the sense put forward by French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu to understand some forms of behaviour in the cultural field in general (1977; 1990) but also in the literary and artistic field in particular (1984; 1993). Habitus is "a durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations" which "produces practices which in turn tend to reproduce the objective conditions which produced the generative principle of habitus in the first place." Bourdieu posits that "because the habitus is an endless capacity to engender products -- thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions -- whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioning and conditional freedom it secures is as remote from a creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from a simple mechanical reproduction of the initial conditionings" (1977: 95).

during the experience of the work. Under such conditions, a more specialized, and maybe a more 'subjective' concept of the subject seems to be more useful to give a better account of the encounter with the works.

The word 'encounter' relates to another aspect of the problem. Rather than having aesthetic experiences depending on the appreciation of 'significant forms' of the works, the audience experienced spatio-temporal encounters with those works; and 'acted', in partly actual and partly imaginative terms, 'in' the space of works for a certain duration, so that the qualities of those 'acts' could be compared to the qualities of the 'outside' ones.

Consequently, a study focusing on the peculiar aspects of the process of encounter of the audience with spatial works was preferred instead of an analysis of the characteristics of the so called 'aesthetic experience'. The concept of 'theatricality', with all its related terms such as stage, staging, mimesis, play, acting, etc., and its apparently paradoxical implications in artistic and literary theory, seems highly productive to deal with various aspects of such a process.

In fact, a look at the history of modernist art criticism would reveal that theatricality, especially in relation to the concept of space, has been a significant and continuous problem in the Western tradition of visual arts.

1.2. Introduction to the conceptual framework

Certain statements made by the American art critic Michael Fried played a significant role in the development of the structure and the arguments of the present study. In fact, he was one of those who first observed some elements of theatricality in Minimalist and post-minimalist art, which he called 'literalist'. In his article "Art and Objecthood" (originally published in 1967, and reprinted in a collection of his articles in 1998), he severely criticized the way some Minimalist and anti-formalist artists handled space, which, he thought, involved establishment of an "entire situation" in which the "beholder's" body was also included. He also criticized their approach to time, which he interpreted as a "duration of the experience" or temporality of "presence" as opposed to the "presentness" and "instantaneousness" that he favoured in modernist sculpture and painting.

Fried's views were regarded under the general title of 'formalism' together with those put forward by Clement Greenberg, who was generally considered as the leading critic of modern art, and they were frequently criticized by many other theoreticians and critics starting from late 60s up to recent times. In fact, when one looks at the later developments in the field of contemporary art, both in practice and theory, one can observe that the tendency towards anti-formalism has increasingly widespread. Today, the position maintained by Michael Fried can be seen as a mere ghost of a once dominant discourse that guided avant-garde art production of a period. In fact, in a discussion with some of his leading opponents (namely, Rosalind Krauss and Benjamin Buchloh) in 1987, Fried stated that his position could not be

seen as that of a “sheriff” but of an “outlaw” (Foster 1987: 82). Yet, considering the still ongoing debates and following the evidence of contemporary art practice, it should be admitted that some of his arguments still persist; especially his account of theatricality seems to be a promising point of departure for an alternative approach in analyzing the encounter of the audience with contemporary artworks.

Basing his argument on a previous observation by Greenberg, Fried claims that “the presence of literalist art ... is basically a theatrical effect or quality - a kind of stage presence.” He refers to the anti-formalist artist Robert Morris’s wish “to emphasize that things are in a space with oneself, rather than ... [that] one is in a space surrounded by things.” Then, Fried states that “literalist works of art must somehow confront the beholder - they must, one might almost say, be placed not just in his space but in his way.” So, what is involved is “an entire situation,” in Morris’s terms, which, Fried continues, seems to include “the beholder’s body.” In such a situation, he says, “there is nothing within his field of vision ... that declares its irrelevance to the situation.” He thinks that the beholder ceases to be a subject who will have an aesthetic experience of the artwork, but is rather “subject” to some objects that cause her/him to be distanced from her/himself. “Being distanced by such objects is not,” he suggests, “entirely unlike being distanced, or crowded, by the silent presence of another person; the experience of coming upon literalist objects unexpectedly -- for example, in somewhat darkened rooms -- can be strongly, if momentarily, disquieting in just this way” (1998: 154-55).

The way Fried and other formalist critics conceive of theatricality and its relation to space, time, and body will be problematized throughout this study in the light of some arguments from various fields and in reference to spatial works, which, I think, elements of theatricality play a fundamental role in the ways in which they confront their addressee. Yet, one point of Fried's needs to be stressed here as it will help to describe how the present study will develop.

Fried's irritation of theatricality becomes clear in his description of the beholder's situation. He seems to accuse some artists since they did not help the addressee to have a clear field of vision, or to behold, but rather exposed her/him to their works in such an unexpected way that the addressee may feel to have been disquieted by another person. What is depicted by Fried can be compared to the experience of a small child in her/his attempts to orient her/himself in the environment. On the one hand, the child "approximates himself to the environment, which is comparable to the mimicry, and on the other, experiences his power over spaces and objects through the mediation of his magical interaction with them. For spaces and objects 'look back', without completely subordinating the child" (Gebauer and Wulf 1992: 278). Walter Benjamin, who found an anthropological significance in the 'mimetic faculty' (1978b), also observed an experience of magical enchantment in one's confrontation with artworks, which he expressed by the term 'aura'. His definition of aura is significant in its reference to space and time: "strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be" (1979). Elsewhere, he states that "to perceive the aura of an object we look at means

to invest it with the ability to look at us in return” (1969a). Michael Taussig (1993), depending basically on Benjamin’s theory, mentions the occurrence of a “mimetic vertigo” when one feels oneself as mirrored in the eyes of the other. He says that the convention developed by the Western man against such a threat of losing one’s identity is the “defensive appropriation of the unfamiliar by means of an ‘explanation’” (237). According to Roger Callois (1980), the process of adaptation to space causes an “ossification and estrangement” and a “loss of unified consciousness.” In fact, what happens to the self is a dissolution of the “unity of the inner self,” which is strongly bound to the sense of temporality, an awareness of past, present, and future. What results is an experience of space-time, which can be considered as a kind of timelessness (cited in Gebauer and Wulf 1992: 282).

The uncanny³ experience of the ‘beholder’ in Fried’s description seems to be something like an experience of such a space-time, if momentarily. Although such terms he uses in his argument as ‘presence’, ‘objecthood’, or ‘literalness’ attempt to designate an ordinary experience of simple objects by a conscious subject, his depiction of theatricality reveals an alternative experience of space-time, which must have resulted from an ambiguous, mimetic process in relation to the environment, or “the entire situation,” in Morris’s terms.

As it can be observed in Fried’s statements, a great impasse of the formalist approach to Minimalist and post-minimalist art originates from the insistence on the Cartesian

³ The term ‘uncanny’ plays a significant role in this study as far as the encounter of the audience with spatial works is concerned. This will be discussed in a separate section of the study in reference to the analysis of the concept made by Sigmund Freud.

subject-object dichotomy to understand the relationship between the artwork and its receiver. The formalist attempt to make a distinction between the subject and the 'beholder' or between the ordinary object and the 'art object' cannot suffice to account for contemporary art production and its reception. In order to achieve a more adequate conception of those processes, it seems to be necessary to include a problematization of 'the subject' and to reveal its connection with the specific power mechanisms of the cultural field. Then, it may become possible to observe a non-Cartesian agency in art, on a rather 'theatrical' basis, which may be called "the role of the playing subject." In this study, I will attempt to develop such an alternative position of agency, and the subsequent transformations of such concepts as 'presence', 'objecthood', etc. What happens to a 'playing subject' in the encounter with a spatial work will be discussed in some detail in terms of 'mimesis'. Different aspects of a mimetic process and its role in the appreciation of artworks will be described. Such a description seems to have a crucial significance from two aspects. First, a theoretical analysis of the process seems to be promising for a re-mapping of the field of art criticism. If the theories of mimesis from various approaches are re-considered in a close observation of the process of confrontation of the artwork with its audience, then it can be possible to open up this process as a territory for theoretical practice, which is as significant as the process of interpretation of artworks. Secondly, an analysis of how those works from Turkey have confronted their audience in practice, both in terms of common elements and in terms of their differences in actualization, will enable localization of those processes in their actual space-time in contemporary Turkey. If, as Pierre Bourdieu (1984; 1993) puts it,

appreciation of artworks is dependent on social distinctions, which, in turn, can be observed in the development of a certain habitus in the cultural field, then, as Harvey states (1996), development of such an habitus and the establishment of a discursive power, in Foucauldian terms, will be subject to some elements specific to their places. In other words, it should be taken into account that, confrontation of the audience with the work, and experience of a mimetic vertigo, and then, overcoming it by play - all these processes will also be influenced by some place-specific factors. One of the hypotheses of this study is that, all of the four artists whose works constitute the material basis of this study, albeit from different standpoints, were closely concerned with the actual conditions of space-time in which their works confronted the audience.

1.3. Related terms and concepts

My preference to use the term 'spatial' about such works, instead of an established one such as 'visual', is closely related to an aim to approach them as 'processes in relations', or 'events', once occurred in their own space-time, rather than seeing them as 'presences', that is to say, as clearly definable entities in their objecthood which took place once, and which, consequently, can be conclusively interpreted according to an overarching discourse. Here, the terms 'spatial', 'event' and 'presence' have been borrowed from Jacques Derrida, who, in an interview on the so called 'visual arts', used these terms when he commented on the differential condition of painting, sculpture, and architecture in relation to both the artist and the addressee (1994). I will focus on that interview in detail later in the study. I use the terms 'process' and

‘relation’ in the senses put forward, for example, in David Harvey’s arguments (1996). The experience of space-time has been given an account of by Callois (1980), and various researchers have studied it later⁴.

In this study, in addition to the contemporary views from the fields of social sciences and literary theory, I will use some discussions on symbolism by Alfred North Whitehead (1985) (1927), originally a physicist. I am especially interested in his account of experience, according to which, sense-impressions cannot be separated from sensing space, and one’s sense of time is constituted on them through some symbolic reference. His explanation of experience will serve as a useful starting point to consider various concepts with which present study operates in their relation to each other:

Our experience, so far as it is primarily concerned with our direct recognition of a solid world of other things which are actual in the same sense that we are actual, has three main independent modes, each contributing its share of components to our individual rise into one concrete moment of human experience. Two of these modes I will call perceptive, and the third I will call the mode of conceptual analysis. In respect to pure perception, I call one of the two types concerned the mode of ‘presentational immediacy’, and the other the mode of ‘causal efficacy’. ... The synthetic activity whereby these two modes are fused into one perception is what I have called ‘symbolic reference’ (17-8).

⁴ The term ‘space-time’, in this context, does not refer to an annihilation of temporal elements in favour of space but rather denotes that in the actual encounter with a spatial work, space and time are interwoven in the process of experience.

What Whitehead understands as “the given-ness of experience” is “the specific character of the temporal relation of that act of experience to the settled actuality of the universe which is the source of all conditions” (39). Thus, in the process of perception, he assigns “to the percipient an activity in the production of its own experience,” and it becomes impossible to separate the perceiver from what is perceived. He says, “for the percipient at least, the perception is an internal relationship between itself and the things perceived” (9). In his theory of the percept, there are two structural elements: (1) sense data, and (2) locality (49). He describes the relationship between the two as follows:

The sense data must ... play a double role in perception. In the mode of presentational immediacy they are projected to exhibit the contemporary world in its spatial relations. In the mode of causal efficacy they exhibit the almost instantaneously precedent bodily organs as imposing their characters on the experience in question. We see the picture, and we see it with our eyes; we touch the wood, and we touch it with our hands; we smell the rose, and we smell it with our nose; we hear the bell, and we hear it with our ears; we taste the sugar, and we taste it with our palate. In the case of bodily feelings the two locations are identical. The foot both is giving pain and is the seat of the pain (50).

According to Whitehead, our conception of an experience in a unity, and of a succession of our acts of experience are due to symbolic reference: “The partial community of structure, whereby the two perceptive modes yield immediate demonstration of a common world, arises from their reference of sense-data, common to both, to localizations, diverse or identical, in a spatio-temporal system common to both” (53). He states that “complete ideal purity of perceptive

experience, devoid of any symbolic reference, is in practice unobtainable for either perceptive mode.” Thus, he concludes that

Our judgements on causal efficacy are almost inextricably warped by the acceptance of the symbolic reference between the two modes as the completion of our direct knowledge. This acceptance is not merely in thought, but also in action, emotion, and purpose, all precedent to thought. This symbolic reference is a datum for thought in its analysis of experience. By trusting this datum, our conceptual scheme of the universe is in general logically coherent with itself, and is correspondent to the ultimate facts of the pure perceptive modes (54).

1.4. A note on authorship and methodology

A final point should be added to the introduction. I personally witnessed the installation processes of those four works the experience of which constitutes the departing point of this study. In the case of Tenger’s work, I conducted an interview with the artist right after the work was completed. Furthermore, I experienced those works as part of an audience. Such an experience as an addressee of the works, and later discussions with the artists helped a lot to develop the present arguments.

However, according to the approach maintained in this study, even a full experience of those works does not give a decisive authority to understand or explain them.

Furthermore, it would be a contradiction in terms if I attempted to occupy the position of a ‘universal subject’ in the presentation of this study, when a considerable amount of it is reserved for discussions about the irrelevance of such claims. I would rather suggest that, although every single encounter with a work has the quality of an

event, this does not lead to the conclusion that there is no possibility of a comparison between any two cases of experience. Since a spatial contact with the work has occurred in both cases, a mimetic process is bound to start, and there is the potential of a 'play'. It should be expected that how the play is to be performed will differ in each case since it depends on social distinctions embedded in habitus as well as on differences of skill. Yet, each of the cases can be put against each other in equal terms, provided that the conditions and the developments of them are available to the actors themselves. Otherwise, there will always be the risk of giving the account of a 'once occurring event' from the voice of 'the other actor', if not of a 'no one'.

Consequently, I preferred to present this study without trying to conceal the fact that the study has started from the position of an already constructed subject in the cultural field of contemporary Turkey, which has been looking for its references to Western tradition for more than a hundred years. Furthermore, I will try to present that something has happened to that subject during the processes of 'theatrical' experience of the works, and also during the following research. My first intention is to show that what is now being written 'represents' an oscillation between becoming, in the sense of being so involved in giving a voice to this specific study, and 'being', in the sense of presenting an 'histoire' of the research process from the perspective of a 'transformed' subject. What I aim in the later stage is that this 'histoire' acquires the quality of an adequate dissertation that can open a space of 'exchange' for various 'histoires', even though they would be 'always already' -- to use a term by Jacques Derrida -- bound by an economy of difference.

Therefore, subsequent chapters of this study can be considered as descriptions of significant ‘moments’ (Harvey 1996) of a two-fold process based on the encounter with four spatial works from Turkey: first, as the ‘moments’ of transformation of a certain subject position, secondly, as the ‘moments’ of an endeavour to open a space of exchange for various possible subject positions.

Since the purpose of the study is to give an account of the perceived gap between the actual experience of spatial works and the still prevalent discourse in the field of art, the thesis has the character of a theoretical study rather than an art historical survey or a piece of art criticism. What is principally argued in the thesis is that, theatricality, which has been considered an almost empty term denoting the ‘other’ of art, in fact provides the key to understand the actual character of art experience.

Some concepts developed in previous studies on art as well as in various related fields are used to describe several aspects of the theatrical approach introduced in the present study. In some cases, it is observed that the concepts borrowed in order to clarify a certain aspect of the theatrical matrix belonged to apparently diverse lines of thought. In such cases, the original sources in which the related concepts were defined are directly referred -- sometimes at the risk of inserting long quotations into the text -- and how those concepts are fitting to the present argument is explained. If the context in which a specific concept was developed was considerably different than that of the present study, the relevance of the concept in spite of the contextual difference is clarified.

The relationship between the theoretical body presented in the following two chapters, and reference to the actual encounter with four spatial works in the fourth chapter should be considered in the framework introduced above. Since the present theoretical study was triggered by the experience of those works, that experience is referred to exemplify the basic theoretical points developed throughout the study. Consequently, the part of the study in which some characteristics of the works are examined does not yet have the character of a piece of art criticism from a theatrical perspective. Production of such works is crucially important. However, it seems possible only after the required methods and tools are advanced to a certain extent especially with possible contributions to and criticisms of the present theoretical introduction.

1.5. Summary of chapters of the study

The second chapter of the study is devoted to a survey of the modernist formalist discourse on art and its approach to theatricality in various stages. In the first section of this chapter, the principal arguments of modernist formalism as put forward by Clive Bell, Roger Fry, Clement Greenberg, and Michael Fried are reviewed and the development of an anti-theatrical attitude is examined. In the second section, some critiques directed at the main theses of formalism are discussed mainly in reference to the arguments by Victor Burgin and to an interview made with Jacques Derrida. The third section examines the modernist notion of visuality in critical terms in respect to its various aspects. Arguments by leading art critics and theoreticians such

as Rosalind Krauss, Benjamin Buchloh, Martin Jay, Jonathan Crary, Norman Bryson and Anton Ehrenzweig are reviewed. Hegemonic ways of seeing, the subject-object dichotomy, as well as the issue of the 'body' are problematized in this context.

The third chapter of the study involves a radical criticism of the modernist formalist approach departing from Walter Benjamin's concept of shock. Apart from mimesis-representation, a pre-rational mode of mimesis is argued to function in the encounter with spatial works. Arguments developed by Susan Buck-Morss and Michael Taussig are referred in this context. The issue of the 'body' is discussed from an alternative perspective mainly in reference to the views posited by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In the light of his views, as well as of Roger Callois' argument on mimicry, a reading of Lacanian concepts of the real and the gaze is attempted in comparison to readings of such critics as Aimee Rankin, Norman Bryson and Hal Foster. In the following section of the chapter, a reading of Freud's concept of the 'uncanny' is endeavored in the context of art experience. In the third section of this chapter, the equivocal character of play and mimesis are examined mainly in reference to the works by Friedrich Nietzsche and Antonin Artaud. Thus, it becomes possible to link these concepts to a 'cruel' approach to theatricality. Arguments on play by Richard Schechner and D. W. Winnicott are also referred to. Mihai Spariosu's studies on play and mimesis has lead me to develop my own arguments.

The fourth chapter of the study presents an account of my actual experience of four spatial works from Turkey. The experience is referred to contextualize the theoretical

arguments developed throughout the study. After a description of works, spatio-temporal characteristics of the works are discussed. Then, the main aspects of a theatrical experience of artworks, as put forward in the previous chapters, are exemplified in this chapter.

In the last chapter, the theoretical conclusions arrived at different stages of the study are reviewed in the light of the actual encounter with four spatial works from Turkey.

2. THEATRICALITY IN THE MODERNIST SCENE OF ART AND CRITICAL APPROACHES

In a discussion of the theses put forward by Michael Fried in his article "Art and Objecthood," Rosalind Krauss, one of the leading critics of contemporary art, makes a significant observation:

... theater and theatricality are precisely what is never defined in the pages of "Art and Objecthood," or in the one definition that is ventured we are told that theater is what lies between the arts, a definition that specifies theater as a nonthing, an emptiness, a void. Theater is thus an empty term whose role it is to set up a system founded upon the opposition between itself and another term (Foster 1987: 62-3).

To further the point stated by Krauss, it can be asserted that such a construction of theatricality as an 'emptiness' or a 'void' is a requirement for the internal cohesion of the modernist formalist discourse, and it has been gradually constructed starting from the writings of early modernist critics. In order to make a comprehensive examination of that conception of theatricality, stages of its construction should be followed. In addition, such a survey will facilitate to grasp how that concept of theatricality is affiliated to the notions of space and time in modernist aesthetic discourse.

2.1. Construction of modernist notion of theatricality

2.1.1. Form versus representation

Roger Fry and Clive Bell are two early critics of modernist art. They collaborated in organizing exhibitions and both engaged in art criticism in the first half of the twentieth century. In some early articles by Fry, it is possible to observe the elaboration of some formalist elements in art criticism. Yet, it was Bell who enthusiastically attempted to construct an encompassing theory of art when he was quite young. Bell's Art: The Classic Manifesto on Art, Society, and Aesthetics (1987) (1912) can be considered as the first programmatic study of modernist formalism. Therefore, it is appropriate to start the survey with some of his views.

In his book, Bell claims that “every kind of visual art” provokes a “particular kind of emotion” which is called ‘the aesthetic emotion’, and it is the task of aesthetics to “discover some quality common and peculiar to all the objects that provoke” that emotion. By this way, aesthetics will have discovered “the essential quality in a work of art, the quality that distinguishes works of art from all other classes of objects” (7). According to Bell, “only one answer seems possible” to this question: ‘significant form’. He defines it as “lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms” that can “stir our aesthetic emotions” (8). Bell then attempts to make a distinction between form and representation, and claims that representation has no value in provoking ‘aesthetic emotion’:

Let no one imagine that representation is bad in itself; a realistic form may be as significant, in its place as part of the design, as an abstract. But if a representative form has value, it is as form, not as representation. The representative element in a work of art may or may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant. For, to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions. Art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation. For a moment we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories are arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life (25).

Later, Bell asks if it is the forms themselves or one's "perception of their rightness and necessity that caused aesthetic emotion" (26), and decides that one needs "nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space" (27) in order to appreciate a work of art. With the inclusion of spatial representation, Bell remembers his attempt to distinguish form from representation. His solution to the problem seems rather ambiguous:

... If the representation of three-dimensional space is to be called 'representation', then I agree that there is one kind of representation which is not irrelevant. Also, I agree that along with our feeling for line and colour we must bring with us our knowledge of space if we are to make the most of every kind of form. Nevertheless, there are magnificent designs to an appreciation of which this knowledge is not necessary: so, though it is not irrelevant to the appreciation of some works of art it is not essential to the appreciation of all. What we must say is that the representation of three-dimensional space is neither irrelevant nor essential to all art, and that every other sort of representation is irrelevant (27-28).

Bell goes on to claim that “every sacrifice made to representation is something stolen from art” (44). In his view, a genuine artist is the one who, when looking at objects, “perceives them as pure forms in certain relations to each other, and feels emotion for them as such” (51). Bell also thinks that perceiving objects as pure forms means “to see them as ends in themselves” (52), and it is significant in that, by this way, one can get a glimpse of ‘ultimate reality’ (53-54). In conclusion, he suggests that ‘significant form’ is form “behind which we catch a sense of ultimate reality” (54). As for the critic, his task is to “feel the aesthetic significance of the artist’s forms” (62). At this point, he links his argument to the point he put forward at the beginning: “The contemplation of pure form leads to a state of extraordinary exaltation and complete detachment from the concerns of life” (68). After relating ‘significant form’ to ‘ultimate reality’ and emphasizing his aim to detach form from life, he becomes more explicit in his idealistic concerns:

... we can only suppose that when we consider anything as an end in itself we become aware of that in it which is of greater moment than any qualities it may have acquired from keeping company with human beings. Instead of recognizing its accidental and conditioned importance, we become aware of its essential reality, of the God in everything, of the universal in the particular, of the all-pervading rhythm. Call it by what name you will, the thing what I am talking about is that which lies behind the appearance of all things -- that which gives to all things their individual significance, the thing in itself, the ultimate reality (69-70).

It is possible to sum up Bell’s theory in the following points: (i) ‘Aesthetic emotion’ is something which exalts man to a godlike position in the contact with the ‘ultimate reality’; (ii) the ‘ultimate reality’ can be contacted by contemplating ‘significant

form'; (iii) 'significant form' should be freed from representation since the latter is always polluted by ordinary human interests. Latent in his idealistic-humanistic discourse, the following postulates can be observed: (i) Art, through 'aesthetic emotion', can provide human beings with a higher presence of spirituality than their corporeal involvement in life; (ii) the artist is a higher being than ordinary subjects since (s)he is able to perceive 'significant form' in things and present it as such; (iii) the critic is an elect personality who can lead others in contemplating forms and in recognizing their significance.

From the concerns of this study, the most significant aspect of Bell's discourse is its attempt to construct a hygienic separation between life and the experience of artworks. A second aspect, which is related to the first one, is that his model depends on a short circuit of seeing-contemplating the forms on the side of the spectator. Although he does not mention the concept of theatricality, his denigration of representation should be taken as an introduction to later discussions on the subject. In this context, his striving for a cleavage between form and representation is the most crucial point. He is well aware that such a cleavage becomes most problematic when it concerns spatial illusion, which seems to play a crucial role in the perception of forms. In order to argue its irrelevance in apprehension of forms, he uses some examples of graphic designs but his argument is still problematic. Spatial illusion is required for the perception of many designs, too, since a relationship between the foreground and the background enables one to perceive the design. If the pictorial space is two-dimensional, that is, if it emphasizes its absolute flatness, the forms, or

rather shapes and colours, on it can not be separated from what follows in the environment, except by a borderline or a frame across the surface. Even in the latter case, the frame just connects those forms to, as much as separating from, what is contiguous on the surface. Therefore, the significance of the shapes and colours on the surface remains dependent on a spatial difference, and thus, on perception of a space of representation. To conclude, Bell's argument does not seem to succeed in protecting 'pure form' from the threats of representation.

The same problem has been dealt with by Roger Fry in more detail. Moreover, he has associated it with a discussion of a certain kind of theatricality in visual arts. Fry's attitude is different from Bell's in that he is not insistent on the authority of a single theory of art. He relates that "there are two rival theories of the graphic arts, towards one of which people are likely to gravitate according to the nature of their sensibilities and temperaments." In this very statement, it is possible to observe that Fry does not see a direct correspondence between an aesthetic theory and a human essence. According to the first view, as Fry puts it, "while form is necessary, it is only necessary as a predisposing cause and condition of appreciation. The other theory is that the essence of art lies in the form and in the emotions which that arouses." Rather than taking sides with one of those two theories, Fry attempts to reconcile them in a writing from 1914:

There is left a possible third view, namely, that while form is the constant and predominant element in all works of art, and while the nature of the content is entirely irrelevant and unimportant ..., yet that the essence of art does lie in the fitness of the form to this neutral and ineffective element in the compound (Fry 1996: 157).

Yet, in another article written in the same year, Fry refers to Bell's solution to the question of finding what is common to all artworks, and affirms that "the common quality is significant form, that is to say, forms related to one another in a particular manner, which is always the outcome of their relation to \underline{x} (where \underline{x} is anything that is not of itself form)" (Fry 1996: 161).

In his later writings, Fry discusses the place of the dramatic element in painting, and connects it to the problem the representation of pictorial space. In an essay on Rembrandt's paintings, he interprets the artist's work as a challenge against two problems of pictorial art. These are, in Fry's view, (i) "the position and value of the dramatic presentation of the appeal to the emotions of actual life"; and (ii) illusionism, that is, "to what extent can we afford to deny the picture surface -- to realize so vividly the imagined vision as almost to forget that we are looking at a painted surface." Concerning the first problem, Fry states that, in drama, it is possible to have "an imaginative pleasure" without having any feeling of form. He does not deny the value of such pleasure while he still maintains that the pleasure one can take in contemplating form "is in some ways more important and more ultimately satisfying as it is less conditioned and more universal in its nature." He modulates the problem into a possibility of uniting those two kinds of pleasures. If it can be achieved, he thinks, still the emphasis should be put on form since "the formal emotions are less poignant and more lasting, permitting of a more prolonged contemplation." Otherwise, the dramatic appeal "will tend to obscure formal beauty." As for the second problem, that is illusionism, Fry has two objections: First, he

considers illusionism an insult to one's intelligence since, he thinks, it prevents "a witty allusion to the thing represented which is undoubtedly one of our pleasures in art." Secondly, Fry posits that illusionism "destroys the picture as an objet d'art; ... and if it hangs on the wall it breaks the wall and has no relation with its surroundings. It is a world isolated by the frame." Fry thinks that this lessens the viewer's pleasure of form. He maintains that "our highest pleasure in the contemplation of form depends on some co-operation of our own. We must be inspired ourselves to some imaginative activity" (1996: 378-9).

Fry develops this discussion with some reference to the difference of abstract painting from architecture and literature. He mentions a certain lack of emotional appeal in abstract painting which he associates with the reduction of the third dimension of pictorial space. Fry sees it necessary to return to the problem of representation: "One cannot construct either volume or space on a canvas without having recourse to representation. So I revert to my idea that, in spite of these attempts at abstraction, painting has always been, and probably will remain, for the greater part a representational art." Fry admits that "representation is almost essential to the art of painting" but, on the other hand, he maintains that "if in a picture something persists solely as representation this destroys the unity of the work of art." Therefore, he thinks, the real problem of painting is "to represent the outside world in such a way that it enters completely into the pictorial unity," and to decide "what sort of part is it to play?" (1996: 381). Fry posits that when a painter faces this problem, s/he can do one of the following:

He can consider the objects he represents as volumes developing in an ideal space -- and thus he places himself alongside the architect who also disposes volumes in a given space but with the difference that in architecture the space is real and in painting only imagined. Or else the painter can consider the objects he represents chiefly from the point of view of their associated ideas, and in this case he is much closer to the poet. This ambiguous situation of pictorial art is, I think, the source of many of the misunderstandings which exist in aesthetics (382).

Taking the example of Impressionist painting, Fry elaborates on that ambiguous aspect of painting in more detail. He reminds us of the basic principle of the Impressionist style, that is to express “visual experiences by means of touches of colour juxtaposed on a flat canvas.” “On the contrary,” he states, “our surroundings, as perceived by our consciousness, ... consists in a system of solid objects existing in a space of certain depth.” Fry agrees the Impressionist view that “what we really see is ... a flat mosaic of coloured blobs”; however, he also states that “from our infancy the necessities of life have taught us to interpret these blobs in terms of objects situated nearer to or farther from our eyes. And we have learnt this lesson so well that is it very difficult for us to recover the innocent and inexperienced eye of a new-born child.” Fry mentions the Impressionists’ desire to remain in purely visual terms and their refusal “to be influenced by knowledge otherwise acquired, by the sense of touch, for instance” (384). He makes a comparison with the style of Cézanne. He relates that Cézanne had a passion for volumes in space, and the object was integrated in his painting to a certain extent. However, Fry thinks that “it was not the object as a vehicle of associated ideas but as a plastic volume. He thus remained as

far as possible from all literary notions of art” (385). As it can be observed, Fry tries to overcome the problem of representation by means of another division which, he, now constructs between painting and literature. He makes a classification of arts in which architecture and music are defined as ‘non-representational’ arts, and literature as representational. He posits, perhaps with a wish to highlight the difference of his approach than Bell’s, that he does not “aim at absolute principles or at a metaphysical basis”, but rather “accepts as data the fact that our aesthetic sense finds satisfaction in music through a series of rhythmic and harmonious relations of notes and in architecture in the rhythmic and harmonious relations of volumes in space”. Fry points out to two theories of painting, “each claiming for itself the entire territory of painting”. He defines them as ‘the literary theory’ and ‘the architectural theory’. The literary theory (ut pictura poesis) has a history of two thousand years whereas the architectural theory “is of quite recent formation; foreshadowed in the nineteenth century, it has only taken shape in the last twenty years” (1996: 385). Rather than crediting universal validity to any one of those theories, Fry sees them as referring to two ‘categories of painting’, which he describes as such:

One can be called pure painting, appealing to our emotions through plastic harmonies, as in architecture, and chromatic harmonies, as in music. The other category would contain pictures which make their appeal by the associated ideas and emotions called up by the representation of objects in a manner corresponding to literature (1996: 386).

Fry admits that he has sometimes been ‘mouth-piece’ to “those who enthusiastically uphold the theory of pure painting”, and asserted that “the only value of painting is inherent in plastic, spatial and chromatic harmonies”. However, after a keener

observation he decides that the strong opposition between those two theories points out the existence of some paintings “in which both elements would be found, plastic and literary”. Fry asserts that such works “result in fact from the co-operation of two distinct arts; that they are therefore analogous to dancing or drama and, above all, the opera” (1996: 387). In Fry’s view, Giorgione’s The Three Philosophers is a perfect example of this kind of painting. His description of the work is significant in his use of theatrical terminology to define some aspects of it which cannot be given in visual terms:

First of all we are struck with the amplitude of these forms, by the disposition of these figures both so unexpected and so inevitable in so strange a space. ... This effect, produced by the disposition of forms, prepares us to meet beings far removed from everyday life ... He [Giorgione] has created people that appear to come from far away, from out of another world, men who proclaim by their looks and the sweep of their gestures which have an imposing gravity that they are the repositories of an almost divine wisdom. So it is through his psychological imagination, akin to that of great poets, that Giorgione was enabled to create these strange characters. And such psychological values only serve to complete and enrich the emotion already produced by the arrangement of the volumes in space. Here then, as I see it, is a picture in which the two elements combine and enrich each other (1996: 392).

When this last essay from 1933 is compared with his early writings, it can be observed that Fry’s career in art criticism shows a rather ambiguous development from a strictly formalist position, comparable to Bell’s, towards a search for a synthesis of diverse tendencies. What is significant for our purposes is that he applies metaphors of theatricality in order to describe the difficulty, if not impossibility, to

conceive of form as such, that is as separated from representational elements. Fry tacitly observes that purity of form is threatened from two sides. On the one hand, its perception is dependent on space; and on the other hand, it is dependent on associated ideas belonging to the world of objects. A painting should conform, at least, to one of those requirements, which means the necessity of including illusionistic elements. The rise of these conflicts, as Fry puts it, is related with the interference of illusion. What he proposes finally seems to be a strategic usage of the disadvantages of one requirement as a constraint against those of the other. To put it in other terms, either the pictorial space can be represented in such a manner that the objects represented in it could be taken as forms rather than being immediately associated with some models outside the work; or, the objects can be represented in such a way that the pictorial space becomes an ideal one, which makes it difficult to identify with the outside world. Cézanne's work can be considered as an example of such a usage of the representation of space and objects against each other. Fry's proposal of integrating theatrical elements into formal qualities of a painting is another development of the above mentioned strategy. As far as understood from his description of Giorgione's work, he thinks that theatrical staging can be used to enhance the formal and plastic quality of a painting. However, in his overall strategy aimed primarily to save form, Fry seems to have sacrificed the relationship between the work and the surrounding environment. Perhaps it should be regarded as a consequence of a conflict inherent in his theoretical framework. The conflict can be discerned in his assertion, on the one hand, that a painting should exist as an 'art object' so that its forms may be well appreciated, while thinking, on the other hand,

that illusionism separates it from its surrounding and thus creates a “world separated by a frame.” Insistence on the presence of a work as an ‘art object’ in a way necessitates its isolation from other classes of objects. Yet, in comparison to the model put forward by Bell, which was directly aimed at separating art from daily activities, Fry’s work should be considered as a failed attempt to bring it down to earth. One of the most interesting statements of his, which should be considered in this context, is that visual perception is conditioned by culture, and that a ‘natural’ way of seeing is not possible.

2.1.2. Optical illusionism

Clement Greenberg is the leading, and the most widely criticized member of the second generation modernist critics. A survey of his writings reveals that he continues and develops Bell’s project in the context of art production in the United States after the Second World War.

In an essay of 1948, Greenberg gives an account of what he expects from modernist art. He suggests that

... a modernist work of art must try, in principle, to avoid dependence upon any order of experience not given in the most essentially construed nature of its medium. This means, among other things, renouncing illusion and explicitness. The arts are to achieve concreteness, ‘purity’, by acting solely in terms of their separate and irreducible selves (1961: 139).

Greenberg then attempts to elaborate his notion of medium-specificity in terms of both painting and sculpture, separately. He, like Bell, thinks that “neither the representational nor the third-dimensional is essential to pictorial art, and their absence does not commit the painter to the “merely” decorative.” He maintains that modernist painting, “by renouncing the illusion of the third dimension,” meets a desire for the literal (1961: 139-40). The reason he favours the literal aspect of a painting is that, in his view, this supplies a “tension between that which was imitated and the medium that did the imitating.” Although he considers literalness as a positive characteristic for painting, he asserts that being “too literal, too immediate” makes a negative effect in the spectator’s appreciation (1961: 140). On the other hand, he sees a positive ‘reduction’ with the rise of abstraction in modernist sculpture which enables it “to be almost as exclusively visual in its essence as painting itself,” and liberates it “from the monolithic as much because of the latter’s excessive tactile associations.” He supports the representation of recognizable images in sculpture since it does not cause a sculpture to be illusionistic. Sculpture’s literal quality becomes an advantage at that point. The only thing which should be avoided in sculpture is to imitate ‘organic substance’ because, in Greenberg’s view, “the illusion of organic substance or texture in sculpture” is “analogous to the illusion of the third dimension in pictorial art.” Here, the most important principle put forward by Greenberg, that is, “the prohibition against one art’s entering the domain of another is suspended” but he does not see any harm in this since “the eye recognizes that what offers itself in two dimensions is actually (not palpably) fashioned in three.” Although “modernist sensibility,” according to Greenberg, “rejects sculptural

painting of any kind, allows sculpture to be as pictorial as it pleases.” At this point, it becomes possible to discern that the main target of the Greenbergian version of the hygienic program is the body itself. In order to prevent art from being contaminated by corporeality, he privileges sight against the sense of touch. Greenberg announces that “the human body is no longer postulated as the agent space in either pictorial or sculptural art; now it is eyesight alone” (1961:142-3). Greenberg puts forward his program of pure opticality against tactility as such:

To render substance entirely optical, and form, whether pictorial, sculptural or architectural, as an integral part of ambient space - this brings anti-illusionism full-circle. Instead of illusion of things, we are now offered the illusion of modalities: namely, that matter is incorporeal, weightless and exists only optically like a mirage. This kind of illusionism is stated in pictures whose paint surfaces and enclosing rectangles seem to expand into surrounding space; and in buildings that, apparently formed of lines alone, seem woven into the air; but better yet in Constructivist and quasi-Constructivist works of sculpture. ... A work of sculpture, unlike a building, does not have to carry more than its own weight, nor does it have to be on something else, like a picture; it exists for and by itself literally as well as conceptually (1961: 145).

It can be observed that Greenberg supports literalness of an artwork and a certain interaction of it with the surrounding space unless it becomes too literal. By “too literal,” he means the work’s provoking other senses but sight. When Greenberg tries to separate vision from the body, apparently, his aim is to link it directly to the contemplation of form.

In an essay of 1954, Greenberg makes an analogy between painting and the theatrical stage to define the difference in the conception of pictorial space between the modern painting and the earlier tradition:

From Giotto to Courbet, the painter's first task had been to hollow out an illusion of three-dimensional space on a flat surface. One looked through this surface as through a proscenium into a stage. Modernism has rendered this stage shallower and shallower until now its backdrop has become the same as its curtain, which has now become all that the painter has left to work on (1961: 136).

Greenberg posits that in that 'curtain-painting', the painter is no longer obliged to create "an illusion of the same kind of space as that in which our bodies move". He claims that, by this way, "the picture has now become an entity belonging to the same order of space as our bodies; it is no longer the vehicle of an imagined equivalent of that order". He thinks that this prevents the spectator's escape into the pictorial space "from the space in which he himself stands". He goes on to assert that the only deception that may be involved in the appreciation of such a painting is "optical rather than pictorial", that is "by relations of colour and shape largely divorced from descriptive connotations, and often by manipulations in which top and bottom, as well as foreground and background, become interchangeable" (1961: 137).

Greenberg's argument on the change in the representation of pictorial space is questionable in some respects. First, the fact that in modern abstract paintings we don't see an imitation of the space that we perceive in actuality does not necessarily

mean that painted forms now belong to the same space as that in which we stand. In order to grasp those forms in their formal and chromatic relations, as well as in an interchangeable movement between foreground and background, as Greenberg describes it, we should have a sense of imaginary space; no matter how compressed, it can be clearly separated from the 'real' space. What we perceive in the same space as our bodies move is an object on the wall, and the colours on it can only be compared to the colours of other objects such as a curtain, a table, a book, etc. The paradox becomes more evident when Greenberg tries to make a distinction between 'pictorial' and 'optical' illusion. It does not seem tenable to claim that there is an essential difference in the kind of illusionism between traditional and modern abstract paintings. As long as they are perceived as paintings, the illusion involved is pictorial. Or, to put it the other way around, if there is an optical illusion in modern painting, the same kind of illusion is discernible in traditional painting, too. They all deceive the eye so as to be perceived as a denial of their literal presence, that is, so as to be perceived as representations. In fact, the same rule applies to the perception of sculptures, too. Greenberg asserts that "abstract sculpture meets less resistance than abstract painting ... because it has not had to change its language so radically. Whether abstract or representational, its language remains three-dimensional -- literal" (137). However, the three-dimensionality of a sculpture cannot be taken literally as long as it is perceived as a sculpture. Again, what can be seen literally is an object among others, which is made of marble, wood, metal, etc. Greenberg's attempt to make a distinction between the abstract and the representational is bound to fail in the sense that an abstract form is also representational; the only difference is

that what is represented is not registered in our memory beforehand. Yet, Greenberg's emphasis on the 'physical presence' and 'corporeality' of the artworks (1961: 138) is a new development in modernist discourse.

Greenberg's simultaneous support of the interaction between the work and its surrounding on the one hand, and of denigration of tactility in favour of opticality on the other hand, deserves to be examined in more detail for our own purposes. In an essay of 1949, Greenberg compares modern abstract painting with traditional masterpieces of Western painting in terms of the difference in the conception of space:

The Old Masters pursued sculptural effects not only because sculpture still taught them lessons in realism, but also because the post-medieval view of the world ratified the common-sense notion of space as free and open, and of objects as islands in this free and open space. What has insinuated itself into modernist art is the opposed notion of space as a continuum which objects inflect but do not interrupt, and of objects as being constituted in turn by the inflection of space. Space, as an uninterrupted continuum that connects instead of separating things, is something far more intelligible to sight than to touch (whence another reason for the exclusive emphasis on the visual). But space as that which joins instead of separating also means space as a total object, and it is this total object that the abstract painting, with its more or less impermeable surface, 'portrays' (1961: 172-73).

We understand that what Greenberg asks of the modern artist is to 'represent' space as a continuum; and he thinks it is possible only in terms of visibility. However, if one assumes that the 'objects' inflect and are inflected by space, it follows that one

still conceives of 'objects' and 'space' as separate entities, although one tries to attempt otherwise. And if one conceives of space as a total 'object', it means that one tries to construct space as an abstract idea so as to 'portray' it as something separate than one's own becoming as a continuum of it. All the argument seems to safeguard the 'presence' of the spectator-subject as the agent of mimesis-representation through the short-circuit of seeing-contemplating -- "whence the reason for the exclusive emphasis on the visual"; any interference of tactility would call the risk of a mimetic vertigo, even if momentarily, thence a possible loss of the subjective identity in the experience of space as a continuum. Although an attempt can be observed in modernist art to approach space as a continuum, it should be still 'portrayed', according to Greenberg, as 'a total object' in order to guarantee the separate identity of the spectator as the potential possessor of that total object. In order to keep the position of a 'treater' of the exterior object, even though in the form of a totality, the spectator should be encouraged to be a 'traitor' of his own becoming in passion.

In an essay of 1961, Greenberg describes various aspects of pictorial art in their relations to other branches of art. He discusses that, among the various characteristics of painting, it was only the flatness of the picture support that was "unique and exclusive to painting." He thinks that "the enclosing shape of the support was a limiting condition, or norm, that was shared with the art of the theater; colour was a norm or means shared with sculpture as well as the theater." However, in his view, "two-dimensionality was the only condition painting shared with no other art," so it became the most fundamental element for "the processes by which pictorial art

criticized and defined itself under modernism” (Harrison and Wood 1992: 756).

Greenberg sees a linear development in the history of painting as far as the tendency to emphasize two-dimensionality is concerned. He thinks that it started in Venice in the sixteenth century and continued in Spain, Belgium, and Holland in the seventeenth, with a special emphasis on colour against line. In the styles of Manet and the Impressionists, according to Greenberg, “the question ceased to be defined as one of colour versus drawing, and became instead a question of purely optical experience as against optical experience modified or revised by tactile associations.” Greenberg considers the works of the successive generations of modernist painters as attempts by which the norms of picture frame and of finish and paint texture were questioned, in addition to the experiments of value and colour contrast (Harrison and Wood 1992: 757).

Greenberg admits that “the flatness towards which Modernist painting orients itself can never be an utter flatness.” Yet, in his view, it can achieve an ‘optical illusion’ instead of a ‘sculptural’ one. Greenberg is aware that “the first mark made on a surface destroys its virtual flatness, and the configurations of a Mondrian still suggest a kind of illusion of a kind of third dimension.” However, he thinks that “now it is a strictly pictorial, strictly optical third dimension.” He attempts to formulate the new version of third dimension in relation to the spectator’s body: “Where the Old Masters created an illusion of space into which one could imagine oneself walking, the illusion created by a Modernist is one into which one can only look, can travel through only with the eye” (Harrison and Wood 1992: 758). Greenberg tries to

justify his call for an exclusive confinement of art to visual experience with reference to what he calls 'scientific consistency'. He describes his opinion as such:

Scientific method alone asks that a situation be resolved in exactly the same kind of terms as that in which it is presented - a problem in physiology is solved in terms of physiology, not in those of psychology; to be solved in terms of psychology, it has to be presented in, or translated into, these terms first. Analogously, Modernist painting asks that a literary theme be translated into strictly optical, two-dimensional terms before becoming the subject of pictorial art - which means its being translated in such a way that it entirely loses its literary character (Harrison and Wood 1992: 758).

However, Greenberg also states that such a consistency in terms of medium does not in any way guarantee "aesthetic quality or aesthetic results," and he emphasizes that "the only consistency which counts in art is aesthetic consistency, which shows itself only in results and never in methods or means" (Harrison and Wood 1992: 759). This last point by Greenberg is significant since it reveals that the tendency towards abstraction and what Greenberg calls 'optical illusion' cannot be directly related to aesthetic concerns. If so, one cannot help asking such a question: what is the urge behind this insistent demand for a clear separation between various branches of art as well as for a privileged isolation of visuality from other kinds of sensuous experience? Researches on and critiques of these issues will be discussed later.

As it is stated in the introduction, Michael Fried is a follower of Greenberg. He has made significant contributions to Greenberg's view of medium-specificity, as well as

crystallizing the hostile attitude against theatricality, which was not fully developed by the earlier champions of modernist formalism.

2.1.3. 'Shape as form' and anti-theatricality

Fried's first significant contribution to the formalist aesthetic discourse is his introduction of 'shape' as a further development of form. In his article "Shape as Form" (originally written in 1966), Fried makes this point in reference to Frank Stella's paintings. He describes how he conceives of shape as a new category in formalist criticism:

By shape as such I mean not merely the silhouette of the support (which I shall call literal shape), not merely that of the outlines of elements in a given picture (which I shall call depicted shape), but shape as a medium within which choices about both literal and depicted shapes are made, and made mutually responsive. And by the viability of shape, I mean its power to hold, to stamp itself out, and in -- as verisimilitude and narrative and symbolism used to impress themselves -- compelling conviction (1998: 77).

Fried gives an account of the subsequent stages of the development of this new medium in the same article (1998: 78-81). The first stage of the development is, as he puts it, "the emergence of a new, exclusively visual mode of illusionism" which can be observed in the works of Abstract Expressionist artists, and which is discussed by Clement Greenberg. Fried describes the second stage as "the neutralizing of the flatness of the picture support by the new, exclusively optical illusionism." At this point, he makes a revision of Greenberg's argument on flatness. Fried emphasizes that "it is the flatness of the picture surface, and not that surface itself, that is

dissolved, or at least neutralized, by the illusionism in question.” Fried does not mean a denial of the literalness of the surface but sees “one’s experience of that literalness” as “an experience of the properties of different pigments, of foreign substances applied to the surface of the painting, of the weave of the canvas, above all of colour -- but not, or not in particular, of the flatness of the support.” This insistence of Fried on a separation between the picture surface and the support itself is significant since it emphasizes the desire to keep the spectator’s experience exclusively in visual terms. What is involved, in fact, is not simply an emphasis on flatness but rather a neutralization of it in visuality. In this context, this point can be considered as a precursor of Fried’s later arguments against theatricality. The third stage is, according to his account, the discovery “of a new mode of pictorial structure based on the shape, rather than the flatness, of the support,” which happened shortly before 1960. Fried thinks that after the “new optical illusionism” dissolved or neutralized the flatness of the picture support, “the shape of the support -- including its proportions and exact dimensions -- came to assume a more active, more explicit importance than ever before.” The fourth stage is presented by Fried as “the primacy of literal over depicted shape.” By this, Fried means that the ‘depicted shape’ of a painting can no longer be felt as such except by acknowledging its dependence on the ‘literal shape’. Yet, the most important point for Fried is still the distinction he made between these two kinds of shape. He thinks that the difference between them can be regarded as “between two utterly distinct and different kinds of entities.” If the experience of the first one, that is of depicted shape is dependent on the literal shape, this latter one as such can only be taken as “an object in the world -- an object whose

relevance to our experience of the painting is not clear” (1998: 82). Fried observes a sensibility in certain artists according to which the “conflict between the literal character of the support and illusion of any kind is intolerable”. He thinks that this leads to a tendency to go ‘beyond’ painting and reach at works that are ‘wholly literal’. Fried calls this tendency the ‘literalist sensibility’ and considers it as a “by-product of the modernist painting itself,” and wants to make it clear that what he means by literalness as a positive quality in art “is not the literalness of the support” (1998: 88).

Fried mentions three points that he regards as the advantages of a painting like Stella’s over sculpture as far as optical illusionism is concerned. The first one is that “because sculpture is literal it can, in the end, be known; whereas the shapes that constitute Stella’s new paintings, and the new paintings as experienced wholes, cannot.” Secondly, since paintings hang on a wall, they “begin off the ground” “whereas advanced sculpture -- which, as Greenberg has again remarked, is illusively weightless -- has to begin at ground level and literally climb to whatever height it reaches.” The third one is related with colour. Fried reminds that “all sculpture, like all solid, opaque objects, is coloured, or has colour, or anyway has surface.” In terms of opticality, this may become a disadvantage since it overemphasizes the fact that “when we perceive a solid object, eyesight makes contact with no more than its surface (and then only part of that) (1998: 96-7).

In his famous article “Art and Objecthood” (originally written in 1967), Fried sums up his views on the literal aspect of paintings in relation to shape and separates it from what he calls ‘objecthood’, which, he thinks, is a main concern of the ‘literalist sensibility’:

... modernist painting has come to find it imperative that it defeat or suspend its own objecthood, and the crucial factor in this undertaking is shape, but shape must belong to painting - it must be pictorial, not, or not merely, literal. Whereas literalist art stakes everything on shape as a given property of objects, if not indeed as a kind of object in its own right. It aspires not to defeat or suspend its own objecthood, but on the contrary to discover and project objecthood as such (1998: 151).

Fried argues that the interest in the object as such indicates “a plea for a new genre of theater,” and in his view, this theater amounts to “the negation of art.” Theatricality, according to Fried, begins with the way the audience encounters the work. Giving reference to the anti-formalist artist Robert Morris’s own explanations, Fried states that “the experience of literalist art is of an object in a situation - one that, virtually by definition, includes the beholder” (1998: 153).

Following Greenberg’s view, Fried posits that “the presence of literalist art ... is basically a theatrical effect or quality -- a kind of stage presence,” since this kind of art demands from the audience simply to be aware of the work and act accordingly (1998: 155). Fried considers this as a “profound hostility to the arts” which he discerns “precisely in the absence of the object and in what takes its place, what might be called the theatricality of the objecthood.” On the other hand, according to

Fried, “the imperative that modernist painting defeat or suspend its objecthood is at bottom the imperative that it defeat or suspend theater.” So, he thinks that “there is a war going on between theater and modernist painting, between the theatrical and the pictorial ... a war that ... is not basically a matter of program and ideology but of experience, conviction, sensibility” (1998: 160).

Fried thinks that the modernist and the ‘literalist’ attitudes can be seen as diverse responses to the objecthood of the artwork. While modernist artwork tended to “undo its objecthood,” the ‘literalist’ approach preferred to respond “in theatrical terms, by a sensibility already theatrical, already (to say the worst) corrupted or perverted by theater.” Therefore, he asserts that “what has compelled modernist painting to defeat or suspend its own objecthood is not just developments internal to itself, but the same general, enveloping, infectious theatricality that corrupted literalist sensibility” and “made objecthood an issue for modernist painting” (1998: 160-1). At this point, Fried’s hostility against theatricality acquires a more general character, and he claims that “theater and theatricality are at war today, not simply with modernist painting (or modernist painting and sculpture), but with art as such” (1998: 163). He continues his claim by saying that “the success, even the survival, of the arts has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theater.” What is intolerable for Fried in a theatrical work is that “almost as though the work in question has been waiting for” the audience. He asserts that “inasmuch as literalist work depends on the beholder, is incomplete without him,” it “refuses, obstinately, to let him alone -- which is to say, it refuses to stop confronting him, isolating him (1998: 163-4). Fried

makes the conclusion that “art degenerates as it approaches the conditions of theater” because “theater is the common denominator that binds together a large and seemingly disparate variety of activities, and that distinguishes those activities from the radically different enterprises of the modernist arts (1998: 164). Here, in Fried’s discourse, the degenerative effect of theatricality on an artwork is presented as becoming open of the work to various activities. It becomes quite explicit that the denigration of theatricality is closely related with a desire to keep under control the experience of the audience of the work. Any ambiguity or obscurity in terms of experience is considered as a degeneration.

Fried’s attitude against theatricality becomes more explicit when he goes into details of the experience of the audience against ‘literalist’ works. He states that, against such a work, “the beholder is made aware of the endlessness and inexhaustibility if not of the object itself at any rate of his experience of it.” He thinks that such an awareness is further aggravated “by what might be called the inclusiveness of his situation, that is, by the fact ... that everything he observes counts as part of that situation and hence is felt to bear in some way that remains undefined on his experience of the object” (1998: 166). One can deduce from Fried’s description of the experience that his problem is primarily related to a spatial ambiguity, which arises from a lack of distinction between the experience of an object as such and the experience of it as an art object. What he discusses in this passage is a continuation of his attempt to make a distinction between ‘literal shape’ and ‘depicted shape’. What Fried is insistent to see is a clear separation between the space of the work

itself and the space of its contemplation. He does not seem to allow any contamination between these two realms.

In an article on Antony Caro's sculpture (originally written in 1968), Fried develops a further argument on how he conceives of the role of space in the encounter of the audience with the artwork. He argues that certain experiences of the audience of Caro's sculptures can be compared to one's experience of architecture: "for example, those of being led up to something, of entering it, perhaps by going through something else, of being inside, of looking out from within." Fried does not think that "Caro's work is architectural in look or essence." However, he thinks that "it shares with architecture a preoccupation with the fact, or with the implications of the fact, that humans have bodies and live in a physical world." According to Fried's view, "this preoccupation finds a natural, and inescapably literal, home in architecture" whereas in painting or in sculpture, this can be done by rendering the work "antiliteral or abstract." He claims that "not only is the radical abstractness of art not a denial of our bodies and the world; it is the only way in which they can be saved for high art in our time, in which they can be made present to us other than as theater" (180-1). When describing a work by Caro in which there exist some abstract forms which can be associated with doors, Fried discusses that the artist "discovered what constitutes an abstract door, or that he discovered the conventions - corresponding to deep needs - which make something a door." He thinks that, by this way, it is as though

sculpture has become committed to a new kind of cognitive enterprise: not because its generating impulse has become philosophical, but because the

newly explicit need to defeat theater in all its manifestations has meant that the ambition to make sculpture out of a primordial involvement with modes of being in the worlds can now be realized only if antiliteral -- that is, radically abstract - terms for that involvement can be found (1998: 181).

This description of the sculptural form by Fried in terms of its spatial relation to the body is significantly parallel to Greenberg's account of the pictorial space as the representation of space as a continuum. Here Fried, following Greenberg, asserts that spatial qualities can be abstracted from actual spatial constructions and be represented so as to avoid literalness, or objecthood. What lies behind this argument seems to be an assumption that there are some primordial modes of being which have led people to actual spatial constructions. Therefore, from a formalist modernist point of view, what should be demanded by the artist is not an illusionistic representation of any single instance of a primordial mode of being but an abstract form which directly corresponds to the relevant mode. When it is approached from this perspective, the presentation of any object in a situation which includes the audience can be considered as analogous to a performance of an illusionistic theater since that situation itself is conceived of as a representation of a primordial mode of being. From the same perspective, it is even possible to claim that it creates the most corrupted kind of illusion as it represents the essential mode only from some aspects, and in relation to some practical purposes; thus, it may take the 'beholder' much more away from a contact with that mode, which is possible only in an abstract, exalted state. One can understand that what Fried, or Greenberg, means by body and

space are already abstracted from actual becoming, and an opposition between becoming and being is implicit in their arguments.

Fried observes another radical difference between modernist art and 'literalist' art in terms of the experience of time; and here, too, he observes a theatrical degeneration:

The literalist preoccupation with time -- more precisely, with the duration of the experience -- is, I suggest, paradigmatically theatrical, as though theater confronts the beholder, and thereby isolates him, with the endlessness not just of objecthood but of time; or as though the sense which, at bottom, theater addresses is a sense of temporality, of time both passing and to come, simultaneously approaching and receding, as if apprehended in an infinite perspective. ... That preoccupation marks a profound difference between literalist work and modernist painting and sculpture. It is as though one's experience of the latter has no duration -- not because one in fact experiences a picture by Noland or Olitski or a sculpture by David Smith or Caro in no time at all, but because at every moment the work itself is wholly manifest (1998: 167).

Fried defines the relationship of modernist artworks with time as a "continuous and entire presentness," and he asserts that he experiences "a kind of instantaneousness" of such a work as if "a single brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it." He claims that "it is by virtue of their presentness and instantaneousness that modernist painting and sculpture defeat theater" (1998: 167). Fried concludes his discussion of the experience of time with an interesting remark: "We are all literalists most or all of our lives. Presentness is grace" (1998: 168). In fact, Fried's description of the

difference in one's sense of time in relation to theatrical and modernist works indicate two radically different kinds of experience. As it can be observed, in the theatrical experience, it is not possible to distinguish between the senses of time and space; they interact as the experience continues. However, the sense of time in front of a modernist work is presented by Fried so as to exclude the one who experiences it. The work is fully complete beforehand and it is eternally present there. Its contemplation requires from the audience a passage from the continuous to the simple present tense, and from becoming to being.

In his book Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot (1980), which is essentially an art historical study, Fried mentions his past writings on modernist art and reevaluates his position against theatricality in art:

In several essays on recent abstract painting and sculpture published in the second half of the 1960s I argued that much seemingly difficult and advanced but actually ingratiating and mediocre work of those years sought to establish what I called a theatrical relation to the beholder, whereas the very best recent work - the paintings of Louis, Noland, Olitski, and Stella and the sculptures of Smith and Caro -- were in essence anti-theatrical, which is to say that they treated the beholder as if he were not there (5).

In his book, Fried makes a parallel between his attitude against contemporary art and a certain discourse on art emerged in France in the eighteenth century, mainly led by Denis Diderot. That discourse has taken the concept of 'absorption' as a central theme, which, according to Fried's account, shows a great similarity with what Fried means by an anti-theatrical treatment of the 'beholder'. In order to explicate the

character of this treatment, Fried first refers to some dictionary definitions of the term of 'absorption'. He relates that "The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'absorption' as 'the entire engrossment or engagement of the mind or faculties'; and defines 'to absorb' as 'to engross, or completely engage the attention or faculties'." Fried observes that those definitions are "consistent with the definitions given in Diderot's article 'Absorber' in the Encyclopédie" (written originally in 1751).

Fried states that the theory of absorption and some related doctrines on art which emerged in France from the mid 1750s demanded that "the artist bring about a paradoxical relationship between painting and beholder -- specifically, that he find a way to neutralize or negate the beholder's presence, to establish the fiction that no one is standing before the canvas." As Fried relates, the paradox involved in the doctrine is due to the assumption that the audience can "be stopped and held precisely there" only by means of such a fiction. Fried gives a detailed account of that fiction from alternative perspectives:

One might say that the dramatic conception of painting that was gradually being evolved during these years depended for its successful realization upon the establishment of the supreme fiction of the beholder's nonexistence. (That would be to think of that fiction as a sort of metaphysical illusion anterior to and necessary for dramatic illusion.) Alternatively, one might say that the dramatic conception was at bottom a means to an end: that it was chiefly by virtue of the persuasive representation of the complete absorption of a figure or group of figures in various actions, activities, and states of mind -- a dramatic illusion if there was one -- that the painter was able to establish the fiction of the aloneness of those figures, and by implication of the painting as a whole, relative to

the beholder. (That would be to consider the metaphysical illusion as a product not the cause of the dramatic illusion.) It should be clear, however, that neither formulation wholly excludes the other, and that in fact it is precisely their circularity that must be kept in mind (1980: 108-9).

Fried's notion of anti-theatricality becomes more explicit in his account of Diderot's argument. He, following Diderot, thinks that if the artist forgets the audience, what is represented will be more convincing. It should be noted that the fiction Fried mentions is a theatrical technique, and the essence of that technique is illusion, as Fried himself states. Moreover, as again Fried himself remarked, the illusion is twofold: dramatic and metaphysical. In fact, what this technique tries to neutralize, or rather 'naturalize', is the 'always already' -- to use a phrase by Jacques Derrida -- theatrical character of the relationship between the artwork and the audience. An artwork is always produced by an artist for an audience; it is always exhibited under the conditions determined by an art institution; and the audience confronts the work with the already given role of 'the beholder'. If there is any 'reality' behind this, it is the fact that what happens between the work and the audience is a single performance of a social drama on a conventional -- in the sense of being socially constructed -- stage. Once placed in this context, Fried's discourse can be considered as an attempt to persuade the artist to play the illusion of non-theatricality, albeit in theatrical terms. If the artist can persuade the audience that s/he is not aware of, or does not care at all for, the audience, s/he would be more successful to stop the audience before the work, and the audience would be more completely absorbed by the work.

To emphasize once again, this proposition depends on the assumption that a dramatic relationship can only be successful if it pretends not to be dramatic at all.

In order to observe the paradoxical consequences of such an assumption in Fried's argument, one should return to his discussion on the role of time, and his search for a 'presentness' in the encounter of the artwork with the audience. Fried thinks that a search for a present tense as opposed to what he calls 'theatrical duration' can also be observed in Brechtian theater. From a formalist point of view, Fried asserts that "it may have been the desire for something like presentness that, at least to some extent, led Brecht to advocate a nonillusionistic theater." Starting from some techniques used by Brecht, for example the use of stage lighting so as to be visible to the audience, or the technique of acting which shows forth the represented characters rather than identifying with them, Fried proposes that Brecht might have tried to present temporality itself in such a new way that can be associated with what he calls 'presentness'. To support his proposition, Fried makes the following quotation from Brecht:

Just as the actor no longer has to persuade the audience that it is the author's character and not himself that is standing on the stage, so also he need not pretend that the events taking place on the stage have never been rehearsed, and are now happening for the first and only time. ... He narrates the story of his character by vivid portrayal, always knowing more than it does and treating 'now' and 'here' not as a pretense made possible by the rules of the game but as something to be distinguished from yesterday and some other place, so as to make visible the knotting of the events (cited in Fried 1998: 172).

However, after making the above quotation, Fried notes that “the exposed lighting Brecht advocates has become merely another kind of theatrical convention” and that convention “often plays an important role in the presentation of literalist work.” Therefore, he states that “it is not clear whether the handling of time Brecht calls for is tantamount to authentic presentness, or merely to another kind of ‘presence’ -- to the presentment of time itself as though it were some sort of literalist object” (1998: 172, n. 23).

In fact, Fried’s hesitation is reasonable since Brecht’s use of light rather indicates that there is a performance going on-stage and the audience should maintain a certain amount of disbelief in the narrative of the play. Such a technique of lighting is part of a general program put forward by Brecht the essential aim of which is to refuse the traditional staging techniques that depend on the principle of behaving as if there were no audience, or as if there was a fourth wall between the audience and the stage. On the contrary, Brecht sees the traditional staging as a pretense which aims to naturalize the existing illusion. When Brecht asserts that it is incorrect to try to persuade the audience in what is seen, he does not aim to hide the fact that theater is something which has been rehearsed and prepared before the performance for the audience but rather emphasizes it. He wants the audience to feel often that what is seen, ‘first of all’, is a theatrical performance. When the audience finds an identification with the character -- this might occur to a certain extent in any performance -- it is suddenly spoiled by special techniques of acting, stage design, and lighting. What is generally experienced by the audience is an oscillation between

absorption and distraction. This mimetic oscillation prevents the audience from forgetting that there is a play on-stage and it is being performed there for a certain duration. Therefore, it can be said that Brecht's approach to time is of the kind which Fried calls 'literalist'. In other words, it cannot be sensed as a 'presentness' but as an interaction between the duration of a performance and the time period represented by the narrative. The difference of the Brechtian approach to time from the traditional one is that it does not try to conceal the specific duration of the performance, and to search for the possible advantages of this fact to construct an alternative relationship with the audience. It is generally known that Brecht develops these techniques with the expectation that they can alienate the audience from their already alienated conditions of life, and possibly enable them to recover their feet firm on the ground⁵

Fried's reference to Brechtian theater seems to have arisen from a misunderstanding of Brecht's project. In fact, such a misunderstanding is understandable when it is remembered that both Brecht's project and Fried's, or Greenberg's modernism are aesthetic responses to the crises of modern life. Again, they are both against the established forms of illusionism in art. So, from a formalist perspective, Brecht's theater can be understood as a denigration of theater itself. However, such a perspective does not cover the Brechtian project properly. There is a crucial difference between two approaches, arising from a paradox in the modernisms of Fried and Greenberg. Brecht is consistent in his attitude since he tries to distract the audience from being absorbed by his own work. In other words, he does not attempt

⁵ Brecht's views on theatre and the techniques he used have been subject to numerous studies. For a good compilation of his own views on theatre see Brecht 1964.

to represent an authentic, unalienated condition of life in art -- except in his later didactic plays -- but tries to create a tension between illusionism and the medium of theater⁷. Thus, he tries to blur the distinction between art and life to a certain extent. On the other hand, although both Greenberg and Fried have denigrated illusionism and emphasized the significance of the medium itself, they still strongly believe that art, at least modernist abstract art, represents an authentic condition of life. Thence Greenberg promotes an 'optical illusionism', and Fried promotes a representation of 'primordial modes of being'. So, they fall into a paradox in encouraging the artists to absorb the audience in the short-circuit of beholding-contemplating. As we have already seen, absorption is an advanced version of illusionism. As a conclusion, neither Greenberg nor Fried seem to be successful in protecting art against theatricality but their discourses have rather served to naturalize a certain kind of theatricality under the guise of anti-literalism.

2.2. Some critiques of modernist aesthetics

2.2.1. Subject-object dichotomy and the problem of the 'body'

In his The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity (1986), Victor Burgin points out the differences between Russian formalism and the modernism of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, which followed mainly the formalism of Roger Fry and Clive Bell. According to his account, the main differences are: first, Russian formalists did not make a distinction between 'pure form' and content of an artwork;

⁶ A more radical break with the traditional forms of theatre has been effected by Antonin Artaud, who has also criticized Brechtian project. Some of his views as well as some contemporary arguments on his theory will be mentioned later in this study.

secondly, they did not look for “a linear descent in art, but rather saw history as a succession of discontinuities”; thirdly, instead of insisting on “the particular material attributes” peculiar to various branches of art, they “were concerned with abstract ‘devices’”; and lastly, they made a distinction between art practice and criticism, that is, they thought that although art has a continuity with social life, “criticism should become scientific” (12-16). Burgin reminds us that, in opposition to Russian formalism, Clement Greenberg has “defined modernism as the historical tendency of an art practice towards complete self-referential autonomy,” depending on a strict medium-specificity. Burgin maintains that, according to the modernist aesthetics, appreciation of an artwork depends on an aesthetic response, and “the source of stimulus of the aesthetic response ... is the art object, which in turn is the representative of the sensibility of the artist.” He thinks that behind that notion of modernism, it is possible to observe a conservative humanistic ideology, and also what Jacques Derrida called ‘logocentrism’. He tells that the humanism concerned in that context is closely related with a certain conception of the individual presupposed as “an autonomous being, possessed of self-knowledge and an irreducible core of ‘humanity’, a ‘human essence’ in which we all partake, an essence which strives over history progressively to perfect and realize itself.” As for ‘logocentrism’, he says it refers to “our tendency to refer all questions of the meaning of ‘representations’ ... to a singular founding presence which is imagined to be ‘behind’ them, whether it be the ‘author’, ‘reality’, ‘history’, ‘zeitgeist’, ‘structure’, or whatever” (29-32).

According to Burgin, the privileged status of painting in Western artistic tradition is also related to a “conflation of humanism and logocentrism” behind it. He argues that

... 'humanity', 'the human essence', call it what you will (in theology it is 'the soul'), is an abstraction, but it has a corporeal representative - the human body ... Paint, the brush mark (or the dribble, it makes no difference) is the index, the very trace, of the expressive body, and thus of the 'human essence' to which it plays host. ... today, any form of inscription directly linked to human agency, without the mediation of modern technology, is to be valorised; other forms of inscription are to be denigrated on grounds precisely analogous to those invoked by Plato and Aristotle in their defence of the oral tradition against the progressive incursions of writing (34).

Burgin goes on to say that behind an artwork "we can find no trace of an author. No humanity, only technology - optical, chemical, electronic - and there is no more fiercely defended tenet of the humanist faith today than that of the inherently alien and alienating nature of modern technology" (34).

Burgin's criticism of modernist aesthetics is significant especially in that it allows to observe the modernist tendency, on the one hand, to elevate the position of the artist to an abstract, mystical agency, and on the other hand, to homogenize the activities of the audience under the title of 'aesthetic response', and to reduce the role of the critic to that of a consumer. Having so succinctly put forward the differences between Russian formalism and the modernist aesthetics, Burgin, however, seems to fail in examining in full detail some consequences of those differences in his critique of the modernist aesthetics. Therefore, for our specific purposes in this study, some points of his argument against modernist aesthetics deserve a closer examination one by one.

The first point I want to deal with in Burgin's presentation of modernist formalism is the position of the art object. As far as the so called 'aesthetic response' is concerned, the stimulus suggested by the modernist aesthetics is not the art object but 'significant form' or 'shape'. It is this form or shape which distinguishes the object from all the others as an 'art object'. I think, Burgin's attempt to relate modernist formalism with humanistic discourse should be complemented with the observation of a hygienic program between the abstract 'form' or 'shape' and the 'literalness' and 'objecthood' of the art object. It is this separation of the form from the object that enables modernist critics to denigrate the so called 'materialism' of everyday life, or 'kitsch' of popular culture. Again, thanks to such a separation, it becomes possible to mystify the relationships first between the artist and the work, and then between the audience and the work. In the modernist mise-en-scène, the artist is exalted to the role of a god-like hero who can give 'significant form' to materials; the art object becomes the bearer of the form, and the audience becomes the 'beholder' who is trained to be absorbed by the form and contemplate it. As for the critic, s/he is one of those elects who can accompany the artist by means of her/his expertise in examining the 'significance' of the form, and who can lead the audience in appreciating that significance. The stage is separated from others within the frame called 'artistic field', and what guarantees 'aesthetic experience' on that stage is that all the plots to be constructed should conform to the principle of 'denial' or 'reversal' of the socio-economic field. Theatrical construction of the artistic field as a 'reversed' subfield of the socio-economic field has been examined in detail by Bourdieu (1990). The

crucial aspect of this process is its dependence on a separation between the object and its abstract form.

The second point of Burgin's which should be elaborated in our context is his argument on 'presence', or what he calls the 'corporeal representative' of humanism. After criticizing the modernist search for an 'index', or a 'mark' of an artist behind the artwork, Burgin argues that all we can have behind a work is a certain technology. Although this argument tacitly observes the mystical status credited to some media and technologies against the others by the modernist formalism, it tends to blur the significance of the performative and spatial aspect of the relationship between the artwork and the audience. In other words, Burgin's approach seems to exclude any possibility of a discussion of the modernist attitude towards corporeality and 'presence'. It is not so clear if he means that any argument on a bodily involvement with an artwork is bound to be 'logocentric'. In fact, I assume that the shortcoming of his association of 'logocentrism' with any kind of search for corporeal presence behind a work is closely linked to his above-mentioned overlooking of the modernist separation between the 'art object' and its form. In order to examine these two points in relation to each other in more detail, it will be helpful to refer to an interview made with Jacques Derrida on visual arts (1994), which is mainly focused on the same issues.

In the interview, when referring to painting, sculpture, and architecture, Derrida prefers to use the term 'spatial' instead of 'visual' since he thinks that, in the

experience of these arts, “it is within a certain experience of spacing, of space, that resistance to philosophical authority can be produced.” Derrida adds that “resistance to logocentrism has a better chance of appearing in these types of art” (10). When he is asked to talk about “the idea of the ‘thereness’ of the visual object, in painting, sculpture, and architecture, what might be called a feeling of presence,” Derrida reminds us that spatial works do not speak to the audience directly, and their silence “produces an effect of full presence.” He thinks that this fact renders the relationship of a spatial work with the audience rather complicated. Here, Derrida distinguishes between ‘mutism’ and ‘taciturnity’ in order to explain that the silence of a spatial work can be interpreted in two diverse ways. According to the first interpretation, the work is taken as absolutely mute, “completely foreign or heterogeneous to words, and one can see in this a limit on the basis of which resistance is mounted against the authority of discourse, against discursive hegemony.” Derrida asserts that “there exists, on the side of such a mute work of art, a place, a real place from the perspective of which, and in which, words find their limit.” Then, he emphasizes that “by going to this place, we can, in effect, observe at the same time a weakness and a desire for authority or hegemony on the part of the discourse” (12-13). However, there is “the other side of the same experience,” depending on the idea of the work’s ‘taciturnity’, which Derrida describes as follows:

... we can always refer to the experience that we as speaking beings -- I don’t say ‘subjects’ -- have of these silent works, for we can always receive them, read them, or interpret them as potential discourse. That is to say, these silent works are in fact already talkative, full of virtual discourses, and from that point of view the silent work becomes an even more authoritarian discourse ... Thus, it can be said that the greatest logocentric power resides

in a work's silence, and liberation from this authority resides on the side of discourse, a discourse that is going to relativize things, emancipate itself, refuse to kneel in front of the authority represented by sculpture, or architecture. It is that very authority that will try in some way to capitalize on, in the first place, the infinite power of a virtual discourse -- there is always more to say, and it is we who make it speak more and more -- and, in the second place, the effect of an untouchable, monumental, inaccessible presence (13).

Derrida thinks that "one is always between" these two interpretations, "whether it is a question of sculpture, architecture, or painting" (13). Later in the interview, he points out the strategic importance of including his expanded concept of 'text' into the discussions of spatial arts. He posits that "there is always a little discourse somewhere in the visual arts, and also because even if there is no discourse, the effect of spacing already implies a textualization." Consequently, he maintains that "the works of art that are the most overwhelmingly silent cannot help but be caught within a network of differences and references that give them a textual structure" (15).

Derrida's sophisticated presentation of the ambivalent character of our experience of an 'art object' is crucially important since it allows to understand how we may be spatially affected by a work -- thence the term 'spatial work' is always preferable --, that is, the possibility of going in a real space where words find their limit while maintaining that this process of being affected will be overcome in reference to a certain discourse since "the effect of spacing already implies a textualization." From the perspective of our study, what Derrida emphasizes is the in-between character of one's experience of a work, that is, one's being actually affected by its spatial quality

on the one hand, and one's perceiving it in an abstract process of objectification, or 'textualization', to adopt the Derridean term, on the other hand. Both processes are valid and simultaneous, and one's experience of a work always oscillates between the two. To conclude, Derrida's argument (i) does not exclude the spatial effect of a work but rather conceives it as a possible site of resistance against the work's own potential of hegemonic, discursive power; and (ii) emphasizes that those two diverse effects of a work are not separable from one another. Therefore, such an approach is far away not only from Greenbergian or Friedian modernisms but also from Russian formalism since the latter assumes that 'abstract devices' might render criticism 'scientific'.

In the course of the same interview, Derrida is asked about the "presence of the artist's body." Using the example of a Van Gogh painting, the interviewer asks Derrida if he does not feel that "in any 'trait', any brushstroke, there is a certain presence of the artist." Derrida replies that for him, "the body is not absent" even when he reads "Plato or Descartes." He admits that being "haunted by the body of Van Gogh is irrefutable," and such a reference to body "makes up part of the work, and the experience of the work." However, he translates that experience in a different manner:

... the very body of Van Gogh that haunts his paintings is all the more violently implicated and involved in the act of painting to the extent that it was not present during the act, for the body itself is ruptured, or, let's say, riven by nonpresence, by the impossibility of identifying with itself, of being simply Van Gogh. So what I would call the body -- I am happy to talk about the body from that point of view -- isn't a presence. The body is, how

should I say, an experience in the most unstable (voyageur) sense of the term; it is an experience of frames, of dehiscence, of dislocations. So I see a dislocated Van Gogh, one who is dislocated in the process of performing something. ... and my relation to or experience of the signature of Van Gogh is all the more violent both for him and for me because it also involves my own body -- I suppose that when you speak of the body you are speaking also of your own -- and all the more ineluctable, undeniable, and passionate. I am given over to the body of Van Gogh as he was given over to the experience. Even more so because those bodies are not present. Presence would mean death. ... If all these experiences, works, or signatures are possible, it is to the extent that presence hasn't succeeded in being there and in assembling there. Or, if you wish, the thereness, the being there [l'être-là], only exists on the basis of this work of traces that dislocates itself (15-16).

The passage summarizes almost every aspect of what Michael Fried has called 'theatricality' and has tried to protect the 'beholder' from its degenerating effects. As it can be observed, in Derrida's description, it is impossible to separate the audience (as an individual identity named 'Derrida', and given the role of a 'beholder' among others) and the artist (as an individual genius named 'Van Gogh' in opposition to other artists), and the work (as one of those valuable paintings produced by the famous artist). What is involved is a violent interaction of all which can be called a process of becoming. It is violent because the interaction is realized through a certain 'dislocation' or 'dehiscence' of identities, or 'presences'. The borders of the subject and the object, or rather of bodies, become porous so as to be effectively affected by each other; or one should say that the actual porosity of borders, and the continuous interaction of dehiscent bodies in space-time is felt as a transgression of their

identities. As Derrida states, “presence would mean death” from such a process-based perspective. The ‘mark’, the brushstroke, taken in this context, is not an ‘index’ of the artist’s ‘presence’ but rather indicates a dislocation of that ‘presence’ in the process of performance of that very stroke. Furthermore, it provokes the audience to dislocate her/his ‘presence’ so as to be passionately affected by it. Rather than constituting an abstract form in order to absorb the audience in optical terms, it provides the art object with a spatial quality, and calls for an active involvement in an event.

One can conclude that, even in the case of a painting or a sculpture, as far as the processes of the artist’s production and the experience of the audience are concerned, there is a theatrical element that cannot be captured by a discourse based on subject-object or form-content (or representation) dichotomies. To put it in other terms, there is always a remainder on the part of the work which cannot be reduced to such binary opposites. In the same interview, Derrida elaborates more on this point in reference to the signature on a work. He says that “the signature is something other than merely writing down one’s own name.” He sees it as “an act, a performative by which one commits to something, by which one confirms in a performative way that one has done something -- that it is done, that it is I who has done it.” Derrida maintains that “such a performativity is absolutely heterogeneous; it is an exterior remainder to whatever in the work signifies something,” and that “there will be a signature every time that an event occurs, every time there is the production of a work, whose occurrence is not limited to what can be semantically analyzed.” In his view, this is

the significance of a work: “a work which is more than what it signifies, that is there, that remains there. ... thus there is a signature for every spatial or visual work of art, which is finally nothing other than its own existence, its ‘thereness’, its nonpresent existence, that of the work as remainder.” Derrida adds that such an excess on the side of the work “obviously provokes discourse *ad infinitum*; that is what critical discourse consists of. A work is always inexhaustible from that point of view” (17-18). When he is asked if there is any resemblance between his own works and the artworks mentioned in that context, Derrida significantly includes theatrical works in the list, and emphasizes the acoustic and spatial qualities of his own works:

I would say what they have in the final analysis that is most analogous to spatial, architectural, and theatrical works is their acoustics and their voices. I have written many texts with several voices, and in them the spacing is visible. ... People’s reactions, their libidinal investments, positive or negative, their rejection or hatred, can probably be best explained in terms of tone and voice more than in terms of the content of what I actually say. They can put up with the fact that I take this or that position, but what really upsets them is this spatialization, the fact that one no longer knows whom one is dealing with, who signs, how it all comes together [*se rassemble*]; that is what disturbs them, what scares them (22).

Derrida compares “this effect of spatialization” in his texts to that of the spatial works and asserts that his texts sometimes scare the addressee “even more than do spatial works themselves, because even spatial works that should produce this effect still give the impression of a kind of gathering [*rassemblement*].” He explains the difference in effect in reference to the physical boundaries of a painting or a sculpture:

We can say the work is there, it's a terrible thing, it's unbearable, it's menacing, but in fact it's within a frame, or it's made of stone, or it's in a film that begins and ends; there is a simulacrum of gathering and thus the possibility of mastery, the possibility of protection for spectator or addressee. But there are types of texts which don't end or begin, or disperse their voices, which say different things, and which as a result hinder this gathering. One can listen but can't manage to objectify the thing. So, with my work, there are those who like it and those who don't. But I think that it is always a question of space, of the nonmastery of spacing, and not only of the voice or something in the voices (22).

2.2.2. Institutional context

It can be observed that the shortcoming in paintings, sculptures, or films put forward by Derrida regarding the spatial effect is primarily related to the fact that those works are still limited by a material frame, or a certain material, or a narrative sequence, respectively. If we put aside the case of film, and focus our attention on spatial arts, we can say that, starting from the early twentieth century avant-garde art movements, a certain sensibility can be discerned in arts to refuse to be spatially limited by a frame or a flat surface in painting, and by a pedestal or a certain material in sculpture. Especially if we consider the developments in Europe and in the USA from the 1960s onwards, it is possible to assert the existence of a new tradition which became successful in detaching itself from the dichotomy of form-representation, and instead focused on the encounter of the works with the audience on a spatio-temporal basis. Michael Fried's argument against theatricality was obviously a reaction against that newly developing tradition in the USA. In a discussion with Fried on this topic (Foster 1987), Rosalind Krauss summarizes the later developments mainly in an

American context, and especially in reference to the struggle between spectacle and the bodily involvement of the audience:

The bodily specificity of that subject, the fact that it had a front and a back, that its experience was affected by the vagaries of ambient light, that its very corporeal density both guaranteed and was made possible by the interconnectedness of all its sensory fields so that an abstracted visuality could make no more sense than an abstract tactility -- all of this was choreographed and mobilized by minimal art. That corporeal condition, which within '60s minimalism was still directed at a body-in-general within a rather generalized sense of space-at-large -- that condition became ever more particularized in work that has followed in the '70s and '80s. The gendered body, the specificity of site in relation to its political and institutional dimensions -- these forms of resistance to abstract spectatordom have been, and are now, where one looks for whatever is critical, which is to say non-Imaginary, nonspecular, in contemporary production (63-4).

The specific arguments developed by Krauss in a psychoanalytic context will be mentioned later in this study. For the moment, I prefer to return to the above-mentioned discussion with Michael Fried (Foster 1987). Benjamin Buchloh, another participant of the discussion, relates his observation that “the radical art practice after pop and minimalism” took precedence over the “depoliticized and apolitical” art criticism. He emphasizes that in that practice “the specificity of site and audience relationships supplanted the minimalist stress on the specificity of materials, and the essentially collaborative nature of aesthetic experience was emphasized and expanded” (67).

In response to the criticisms directed at his essay “Art and Objecthood” during that discussion, Michael Fried first claims that what is emphasized in the article is not “a reification of opticality.” He maintains that what he discussed in the text was not “opticality versus object, but a radically syntactic or differential art versus the projection of objecthood” (72). Fried continues to defend his argument in the article with reference to minimalist attitude towards time:

... it was as if the minimalists were the ones who really believed the Greenbergian reduction -- that there was a timeless essence to art that was progressively revealed. And in their reading the timeless essence turned out to be not just the delimited flat surface of painting but the literal properties of the support. They then projected a further “insight” -- that the support itself is a limited, compromised form of literalness. So why not go all the way and isolate, hypostatize and project literalness as such -- go beyond painting and sculpture altogether and simply make things like primary objects? If literalness was behind the entire development of modernism, if it was the motor that made it run, why not just go after it directly? That was the logic of the minimalists (73).

Indeed, it is possible to assert that minimalists were also looking for an ‘essence’ which was supposed to be specific to the medium of visual arts. In this context, Fried’s criticism against what he called ‘literalness’ is consistent. A similar criticism was directed against minimalism by some artists who favoured an anti-formalist approach in art⁷. Nevertheless, Fried admits that, in a sense, “everything new in art

⁷ For example, the article by Robert Morris entitled “Anti-Form” (1993) (1968) can be considered in this context. However, in addition to a criticism of minimalist obsession with optical effects and form, Morris favoured an expanded version of what Fried called ‘theatricality’.

since then has happened in the space between arts,” which he “characterized as theater.” He describes the process and his opinion on it as follows:

In fact, the whole area of theatricality has been explicitly colonized in ways that are very diverse, often very interesting, in many cases powerful; so that the opposition between good art and theatrical art and the meeting of specific arts in the theatrical space between the arts has been enormously complicated by practice. ... On the one hand, I haven't been moved or convinced by all this theatrical work; on the other hand, I recognize -- I think -- that it's not subject to blanket dismissal. I certainly recognized then that there's an intertwining of the theatrical and the nontheatrical, and that the art that I championed as nontheatrical was itself staged in certain ways, but when one writes polemically certain subtleties get lost (84).

If, as Fried himself admitted, those works he considered as 'nontheatrical' were also “staged in certain ways,” rather than mentioning “an intertwining of the theatrical and the nontheatrical,” an expanded concept of theatricality seems to be developed. What should be stressed is the dyadic, ambivalent character of theatricality instead of an insistence of an opposition between the two aspects of a process. Fried concludes his defensive argument by stating that he has “never been happy with the notion of formalism,” and prefers to call his criticism instead 'medium-specific'. Yet, he observes that “we are now in a time when medium-specificity is radically called into question in many different ways” (85). Douglas Crimp (1984) makes a similar description of the situation of the artistic production during the 1970s:

... over the past decade we have witnessed a radical break with that modernist tradition, effected precisely by a preoccupation with the 'theatrical'. The work that has been laid most serious claim to our attention throughout the seventies has been situated between, or outside the individual

arts, with the result that the integrity of the various mediums -- those categories the exploration of whose essences and limits constituted the very project of modernism -- has dispersed into meaninglessness (176).

Crimp observes in the production of contemporary artworks strategies based on “processes of quotation, framing, and staging,” which, he thinks, requires an approach aimed at “uncovering strata of representation.” Yet, he emphasizes that what will be uncovered is not “sources or origins, but structures of signification,” since he thinks, “underneath each picture there is always another picture” (186). Although Crimp’s approach in studying artworks differs from the approach put forward in the present study, his conception of theatricality in terms of framing and staging seems to have an affinity with the way I would like to describe my own encounter with those spatial works from Turkey.

If those later remarks by Fried himself and by his critics are considered in relation to contemporary art practice, the crucial point seems to be to look at if the use of any form or medium is directed at neutralizing the institutional context -- which is essentially theatrical -- or at demystifying it. Sensibility for spatio-temporal effects should be regarded as a fundamental characteristic of those works which have a potential to serve as a stage for a theatrical event during which demystification of an institutional context becomes possible rather than confirming an abstract presence.

However, it would be misleading to assume that demystification of the institutional context can be fully realized by only the work itself. Recent developments of some

art institutions have shown that it is quite possible for even such works to be appropriated and absorbed in the neutralizing paradigm. It is remarked that in the USA, there are now some collections which consist of only installations (Mutman 1994) which were once announced to be produced in order to encounter the audience primarily in spatial terms. Benjamin Buchloh observes similar developments in the European art milieu:

... this generation of postminimalist artists, whom Fried attempted to discredit as 'theatrical', now receives and accepts commissions for public monumental sculpture from both conservative governments and corporate real estate speculators. For instance, in Berlin the earth mounds that Joseph Beuys installed in a museum only a few years ago are now (posthumously) cast in bronze. And in Brussels Daniel Buren's once-subversive demarcations underscoring the institutional and discursive constitution of vision are now transformed from one of the most pointed critiques of formalist aesthetics into a mere architectural decoration of marble slabs for the lounge of the Royal Family at the Opera House (Foster 1987: 69).

This kind of reappropriation and reinstitutionalization of once subversive works show the persistence of a certain neutralizing paradigm effective in the reception of artworks. One, and perhaps the most powerful of them seems to be the established convention of visibility, which also constitutes an important aspect of the process of the construction of subjects as spectators.

2.3. Critiques of modernist visuality and disembodiment of the 'subject'

Rosalind Krauss states that Michael Fried, following Clement Greenberg, has assigned a specific function to the artwork: "to produce the illusion in the viewer that he is not there - an illusion that is set up in reciprocity with the status of the work as mirage: It is not there and so consequently he is not there -- a reciprocity of absence." Yet, Krauss emphasizes that what is meant by Fried is not a "total absence: no painting in an empty room." The work as the 'mirage' should remain:

as anti-matter, as non-physicality, as the fiction of non-presence. So the viewer is there in a mirror condition, abstracted from his bodily presence and reorganized as the noncorporeal vehicle of a single stratum of sensory experience -- a visual track that is allegorized, moreover, as pure cognition. What we have here, then, is not exactly a situation of nonpresence but one of abstract presence, the viewer floating in front of the work as pure optical ray (Foster 1987: 61).

Krauss asserts that this situation, which constitutes the subject "as a function of the image ... through the mechanism of identification with the object," is parallel to the Lacanian schema of the "formation of the 'I'," as it is put forward in his analysis of the mirror stage. (Foster 1987: 62). Krauss, following Lacanian concepts of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, observes two subjects in "the theoretical space of 'Art and Objecthood': "(1) a subject alienated in vision," which can be described as an 'Imaginary subject', and "(2) a nontheatrical subject that is laboring to recenter itself through the operations of a symbolic, moralized order of language." According to

Krauss, “[i]t is the second subject that works both to retotalize the divided logic of ‘Art and Objecthood’ and to recuperate or rewrite the other, Imaginary, decentered subject in the register of self-presence” (63). Krauss also posits that the term ‘presentness’ proposed by Fried refers to “an experience which is allegorized as one of pure cognition, a tremendously instantaneous moment in which one gets the point of the work both instantaneously and forever so that this explosion of ‘getting it’ supposed to lift one out of the temporal altogether” (75).

To sum up, one can say that the beholder absorbed by the form, or shape of the artwork is a subject ‘alienated in vision’, and when he contemplates the form it registers itself as a self-presence in the symbolic order. By this operation, the experience of which is described by Fried as a sense of ‘presentness’, the subject and the art object acquire presence in abstraction since both the spatial, or in Fried’s term, literal, and the temporal qualities of the process have been bypassed. I have already described this operation as a version of theatrical experience despite all the counter-arguments by Fried because both the artistic technique to absorb the viewer and the viewer’s submission to the operation take place in a naturalistic drama, or in Fried’s term, in a ‘supreme fiction’. Such a naturalization of a theatrical process is largely due to a well established convention that ‘seeing and appreciation of form is something natural’. However, seeing is realized under the hegemony of a ‘scopic regime’.

2.3.1. The 'body' under the 'scopic regimes of modernity'

Martin Jay (1988) proposes that more than one mode of vision can be observed in the Western tradition of art. He thinks that although the 'Cartesian perspectivalist tradition' has become so dominant from the fifteenth century onwards, and most of the contemporary researches and critiques have been made on it, the other modes have some significant characteristics which should not be ignored. Jay uses the terms of Norman Bryson in order to describe the 'Cartesian perspectivalism': "it followed the logic of the Gaze rather than the Glance, thus producing a visual take that was externalized, reduced to one 'point of view', and disembodied." Moreover, according to this tradition, "the gaze of the painter ... contemplates the visual field from a vantage point outside the mobility of duration, in an eternal moment of disclosed presence," and "the viewing subject unites his gaze with the Founding Perception, in a moment of perfect recreation of that first epiphany" (Bryson 1983; cited in Jay 1988: 7). Jay relates that, in this mode, there is a wide gap between the spectator and the spectacle, and "the moment of erotic projection in vision" is lost "as the bodies of the painter and viewer were forgotten in the name of an allegedly disincarnated, absolute eye" (8).

Nevertheless, detailed researches made on this tradition have shown that there are some variations of the model, and also, and more significantly, despite the vast experiments in perspective, "constitutive role of the monocular subject" provides this kind of works still with a "storytelling function." According to Svetlana Alpers, the world depicted in the Renaissance pictorial spaces "was a stage in which human

figures performed significant actions,” which can be related to a narrative function. However, in the seventeenth century Dutch painting and the following tradition, it is possible to observe a suppression of the “narrative and textual reference in favour of description and visual surface.” This second tradition emphasizes “the prior existence of a world of objects depicted on the flat canvas, a world indifferent to the beholder’s position in front of it” (Alpers 1983; Jay 1988: 12). Jay proposes that this second ‘regime’, with its emphasis on textures and surfaces, and with its looser relationship with the frame, acquires a ‘mapping’ quality; thus it can be “a more likely predecessor” of modern painting (12-13). He also posits that

if we can detect a certain fit between the exchange principle of capitalism and the abstract relational space of perspective, we might also discern a complementary fit between the valorization of material surfaces in Dutch art and the fetishism of commodities no less characteristic of a market economy (15).

The third ‘scopic regime’ proposed by Jay has been first introduced with the Baroque art. He thinks that although the baroque style has generally been confined to the seventeenth century, “it may also be possible to see it as a permanent, if often repressed, visual possibility throughout the entire modern era” (16). Following French philosopher Christine Buci-Glucksmann, Jay first indicates to “the dazzling, disorienting, ecstatic surplus of images in baroque visual experience,” which rejects “the monocular geometricalization of the Cartesian tradition.” Then, again following Buci-Glucksmann, he mentions the contrast between “baroque fascination for opacity, unreadability, and the indecipherability of the reality it depicts” and the descriptive and topographical quality of the Dutch painting, which is fascinated with

the surfaces and the material solidity of the world (Buci-Glucksmann 1986; Jay 1988: 16-17). Jay maintains that the baroque is aware of the “contradictions between surface and depth,” and shows “its dependence on the materiality of the medium of reflection.” The mirror “it holds up to nature” is a ‘tainted’ one; and “baroque visual experience has a strongly tactile or haptic quality, which prevents it from turning into the absolute ocularcentrism of its Cartesian perspectivalist rival” (17). According to Jay, the erotic body has a certain place in baroque vision in the form of “allegories of obscurity and opacity” (18).

Jay asserts that, although all of these three scopic regimes have been challenged in the twentieth century, the main target of criticism has always been the perspectival tradition. The other two regimes, the art of description and the baroque, has become more successful to take a place in contemporary discourses on visibility. Especially the baroque ‘madness of visibility’ seems to be embraced without so much criticism. Jay draws attention to the role of the perspectival tradition in the development of Western scientific tradition, and proposes that its alternatives should not be embraced uncritically. He states that, in the art of describing, it is possible to observe a tendency to make “a fetish of the material surface instead of the three-dimensional depths.” As for the baroque tradition, it can be considered that the celebration of the ocular madness, “which may produce ecstasy in some,” also produces “bewilderment and confusion in others.” Moreover, the “postmodernist visual experiments” in the same tradition with baroque ‘ocular madness’ are far away from threatening “the

current vision of ‘the culture industry’,” in the sense put forward by Adorno and Horkheimer (Jay 1988: 19-20).

2.3.2. Construction of the modern spectator as ‘observer’

Jonathan Crary (1990) states that “vision and its effects are always inseparable from the possibilities of an observing subject who is both the historical product and the site of certain practices, techniques, institutions, and procedures of subjectification” (5). He mainly bases his conception of the observer on Michel Foucault’s views, who rejected the concept of a subject “that evolves through the course of history.”

Foucault has needed “to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that’s to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework.” Foucault called this kind of analysis “genealogy, that is, a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to a field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history” (Foucault 1980: 117; cited in Crary 1990: 6). Having such a genealogical perspective in his analysis of the construction of the modern observer, Crary describes modernization as

a process by which capitalism uproots and makes mobile that which is grounded, clears away and or obliterates that which impedes circulation, and makes exchangeable what is singular. This applies as much to bodies, signs, images, languages, kinship relations, religious practices, and nationalities as it does to commodities, wealth, and labor power. Modernization becomes a ceaseless and self-perpetuating creation of new needs, new consumption,

and new production. Far from being exterior to this process, the observer as human subject is completely immanent to it (10).

Crary reminds us that his argument is also in concordance with those of Deleuze and Guattari's (1978), who have maintained that "bodies, objects and relations were 'deterritorialized' by modern capitalism, that is they were made abstract and exchangeable," but only in order to "'reterritorialize' them in new institutions and hierarchical structures" (Crary 1990: 10). Crary interprets this process as "a new evaluation of experience," in which "it is given an unprecedented mobility and exchangeability, abstracted from any founding site or referent" (14). In addition, "knowledge about the body and the constitutive relation of that knowledge to social power" have been rearranged. The final result of the rearrangement is "a complex remaking of the individual as observer into something calculable and regularizable and of human vision into something measurable and thus exchangeable" (17).

Crary then refers to Guy Debord's The Society of the Spectacle (1990), and reminds Foucault's rejection of the concept of 'spectacle'. Foucault has claimed that "our society is not one of spectacle but of surveillance. ... We are neither in the amphitheatre nor on the stage but in the Panoptic machine" (Foucault 1979: 217; cited in Crary 1990: 17). Crary thinks that "Foucault's opposition of surveillance and spectacle seems to overlook how the effects of these two regimes of power can coincide" (18). The first point Crary notes is that the 'society of the spectacle', in the sense put forward by Debord, takes shape only in the late 1920s, "concurrent with the technological and institutional origins of television, the beginning of synchronized

sound in movies, the use of mass media techniques by the Nazi party in Germany, the rise of urbanism, and the political failure of surrealism in France” (Crary 1989; 1990: 18). What seems significant to Crary in Debord’s discourse is his emphasis on the privileged status of sight in modern society as ‘the most abstract of senses’:

Since the spectacle’s job is to cause a world that is no longer directly perceptible to be seen via different specialized mediations, it is inevitable that it should elevate the human sense of sight to the special place once occupied by touch; the most abstract of senses, and the most easily deceived, sight is naturally the most readily adaptable to present-day society’s generalized abstraction (Debord 1990: sec. 18; cited in Crary 1990: 19).

Crary states that “dissociation of touch from sight occurs within a pervasive “separation of senses” and industrial remapping of the body in the nineteenth century.” When the touch lost its function “as a conceptual component of vision,” the eye was unloosened “from the network of referentiality incarnated in tactility and its subjective relation to perceived space. This autonomization of sight, occurring in many different domains, was a historical condition for the rebuilding of an observer fitted for the tasks of ‘spectacular’ consumption” (1990: 19). Crary observes that, together with the process of separation of sight from tactility, “the imperatives of capitalist modernization” have generated new “techniques for imposing visual attentiveness, rationalizing sensation, and managing perception.” These were “disciplinary techniques that required a notion of visual experience as instrumental, modifiable, and essentially abstract, and that never allowed a real world to acquire solidity and permanence” (24).

To use the term of Deleuze and Guattari, Crary's account of the modernization of vision can be considered as the 'reterritorialization' of visual experience in new hierarchical institutions. The position of the modernist formalist aesthetics and its notion of the contemplative beholder of the avant-garde artworks can be reconsidered in this context. Although there is a reaction in this position against the so called anti-aesthetic distraction of everyday life, and the appearance of kitsch in artistic field, it does not question in any way the hygienic program of modern capitalism. On the contrary, formalist critics can be said to have developed the program of the separation of senses in reception of artworks basing their discourse mainly on the division of disciplines both in art and science, and maintained the Kantian tradition of hygienic aesthetics.

In his book (1990), Crary observes that the above-mentioned developments in the western conception of vision are not a direct continuation of the Cartesian perspectivalist tradition started in the fifteenth century Italy and best represented in the experiments on vision by camera obscura. Although the tradition of camera obscura has generally been associated with a disembodiment of visual experience, the modernist reterritorialization of vision in the nineteenth century was closely related to some scientific experiments which emerged due to a wish to measure bodily sensations. Parallel to the Romantic tradition in painting, William Turner being one of the best representatives, Crary mentions the studies made by some nineteenth century scientists, among whom Gustav Fechner is an outstanding

personality. Fechner searched for “a method of establishing an exact relationship between interior sensory experience and events in the world, to situate these two domains on the same field of operations.” However, Crary states that although Fechner’s studies targeted visual experience itself, “the end result was to relocate perception and the observer within the reach of empirical exactitude and technological intervention” (145). The reason was that “sensation as a multiplicity of intangible affects ... was not in itself rationalizable -- that is, it was not directly accessible to study, manipulation, duplication, and measurement as an empirical isolable entity.” Consequently, “Fechner set about rationalizing sensation through the measurement of external stimulus” (145). Crary summarizes the result of Fechner’s studies as follows:

Central to Fechner’s work was the establishment of measurable units of sensation, quantifiable increments that would allow human perception to be made calculable and productive. These were derived from thresholds of sensation, from the magnitude of the stimulus needed to generate the very least noticeable sensation over and above the stimulus that is unnoticed by the human sensorium. ... Thus human perception became a sequence of magnitudes of varying intensity (146).

Crary asserts that what is significant in Fechner’s work is not the attempt to measure vision but the fact that his equations have a “homogenizing function: they are a means of rendering a perceiver manageable, predictable, productive, and above all consonant with other areas of rationalization.” In such a ‘formalization of perception’, “the specific contents of vision” becomes irrelevant. He emphasizes that “vision, as well as other senses, is now describable in terms of abstract and

exchangeable units. ... this new valuation of perception, this obliteration of the qualitative in sensation through its arithmetical homogenization, is a crucial part of modernization” (147). As for the body, “that had been a neutral or invisible term in vision was now the thickness from which knowledge of the observer was obtained” (150). Crary concludes his remarks on the modernization of vision as such:

... once vision became relocated in the subjectivity of the observer, two intertwined paths opened up. One led out toward all the multiple affirmations of the sovereignty and autonomy of vision derived from this newly empowered body, in modernism and elsewhere. The other path was toward the increasing standardization and regulation of the observer that issued from knowledge of visionary body, toward forms of power that depended on the abstraction and formalization of vision (150).

As Crary’s study clarifies it, what is counted as “body” by modernism is enframed, or reterritorialized under the supremacy of vision, which, in turn, is defined in formal terms. It is a body whose functions can be regulated and measured in a political economy, and whose pleasures can be controlled in a libidinal economy. It should be accepted that techniques of ‘spectacle’ and ‘power/knowledge’ have worked together in the construction of the modern observer.

At the beginning of his book (1990), Jonathan Crary reminds the reader that, in the contemporary era of cybernetics and electromagnetic images, “most of the historically important functions of the human eye are being supplanted by practices in which visual images no longer have any reference to the position of an observer in a ‘real’, optically perceived world.” Such images no longer refer to ‘objects’ but “to

millions of bits of electronic mathematical data.” In such an environment, “visuality will be considered in terms of “abstract visual and linguistic elements” which “coincide and are consumed, circulated, and exchanged globally” (2). Crary asks if it is possible to assert that “computer graphics and the contents of the video display terminal” can be considered as “a further elaboration and refinement of what Guy Debord designated as the ‘society of the spectacle’.” If the observing body is now “becoming a component of new machines, economies, apparatuses, whether social, libidinal, or technological,” then, what is to be studied is the ways in which subjectivity is “becoming a precarious condition of interface between rationalized systems of exchange and networks of information” (2).

I would like to suggest that although the new technologies have really transformed the reference of the spectacle, and have given subjectivity the role of an ‘interface between global networks of information’, they cannot be considered as a radical denial of the established mode of window consumerism of the ‘society of the spectacle’ but rather form an advanced version of it. In other words, the central position of an abstract spectator-subject before a represented space of vision has not been blocked but rather expanded and complemented by the new technologies. In order to examine the persistence of the essential mode of visuality, it would be useful to refer to an argument developed by Norman Bryson.

2.3.3. Paradox of the spectator

In an article on 'gaze', Bryson (1988) posits two points, among others, which seem significant for our own purposes. The first point is about the subject-object dichotomy of the Cartesian perspectivalism, which is still the dominant tradition of vision in the West, if not globally. Bryson asserts the inseparability of the viewpoint from the vanishing point in such a visual field. He maintains that "the self-possession of the viewing subject has built into, therefore, the principle of its own abolition: abolition of the subject as center is a condition of the very moment of the look (91). Although this point by Bryson is significant, it should be remembered that, it calls for the validity of a reverse proposition: the vanishing point represents a deferral of illegibility, indeterminacy, at least to a certain extent. Up to that point in the horizon of the illusionary space, everything seen can be objectified by the viewer, which means that her/his central position is guaranteed until that point.

Indeed, Bryson's own argument does not ignore the ambivalent character of the visual field. His description of the 'object' and the 'subject' in the "Cartesian self-enclosure of the cogito" reveals it. According to that schema, the subject has a central position "amidst the world of things," and "looks out on its objects and perceives them as separate entities." Those objects that appear to the subject 'as complete beings' have some common characteristics: "(i) stable location in a single place; (ii) independent self-existence ...; (iii) permanent or enduring form." In a similar way,

"the subject exists (i) in one place and one place only. It exists (ii) independently of the objects around it, whose existence the subject is free to doubt, without that doubt entailing that the subject come to doubt its own

existence. And the subject (iii) remains itself despite transformation in the material world. ... the subject of the cogito has a further characteristic which the objects of the world do not share: (iv) a position of universal center, around which the object world clusters or converges as the subject's experiential horizon (96-7).

One can deduce from the above description that the permanent identity of the subject, although it continuously transforms in the material world, is due to its ability to perceive the objects around him in 'permanent or enduring forms'. Here we arrive at the second point put forward by Bryson:

Stabilizing the entity as a fixed Form, with a bounded outline, is possible only if the universe surrounding the entity is screened out and the entity withdrawn from the universal field of transformations. The concept of the entity can be preserved only by an optic that casts around each entity a perceptual frame that makes a cut from the field and immobilizes the cut within the static framework. But as soon as the frame is withdrawn, the object is found to exist as part of a mobile continuum that cannot be cut anywhere (97).

This operation of framing was mentioned by Roland Barthes long ago under the term 'découpage', when he discussed the character of representation:

Representation is not defined directly by imitation: even if one gets rid of notions of the 'real', of the 'vraisemblable', of the 'copy', there will still be representation for so long as a subject (author, reader, spectator or voyeur) casts his gaze towards a horizon on which he cuts out the base of a triangle, his eye (or his mind) forming the apex. The 'Organon of Representation' ... will have as its dual foundation in the act of cutting out (découpage) and the unity of the subject in that action (Barthes 1977: 69-70)

The same passage by Barthes has been quoted by Victor Burgin (1986) during a discussion on the role of ideology in perception. Burgin states that although one knows that what one sees as a painting is ‘a two-dimensional surface’, one still believes to be looking “through it into three-dimensional space.” Since it is impossible to do both at the same time, “there is a coming-and-going between knowledge and belief.” Burgin proposes that “as perception is held in cognition, so cognition is held in ideology.” He thinks that we draw off a ‘natural meaning’ from an image, and “convert it into a vacant form to receive an ideological content, but in the instant we make this observation the literal meaning returns -- literal meaning and ideological motivation are caught in a turnstile” (16).

As it can be observed, Burgin’s discussion depends on the oscillation of perception between the literal shape of a picture and its representational space. However, both Barthes’ and Bryson’s arguments are rather concerned with the process in which an observer cuts out a perceptual frame from her/his own actual environment, and fixes some forms in it. What is emphasized in Barthes’s description is that the subject acquires its identity in the very act of cutting out. The crucial question one can ask is that if it is possible for a subject not to constitute frames in which forms are stabilized as long as the subject is doomed to be identical to itself. In order to discuss this point, Bryson introduces ‘the term sunyata, translated as ‘emptiness’, ‘radical impermanence’, ‘blankness’, and ‘nihility’, developed by the Japanese philosopher Nishitani (1982). According to Bryson’s account,

[m]oved on to the field of sunyata or radical impermanence, the entity comes apart. It cannot be said to occupy a single location, since its locus is

always the universal field of transformations: it cannot achieve separation from that field or acquire any kind of bounded outline. Because of its inseparability from the field of impermanence it cannot be said to enjoy independent self-existence, since the ground of its being is the existence of everything else. And it cannot present itself in the guise of an enduring Form (1988: 97-8).

Bryson uses the example of water to explain sunyata. In order to be itself, and perform as such, water must cross its own boundary and “infiltrate the entity’s dry surround, enter into the surrounding field across the porous filters of irrigation: only when it does so, when it leaves the self-enclosure of water, can it become water. Its existence comes to it when it has left water behind it and entered what is not itself” (99). Similarly, a viewer who is “a being that exists through the existence of everything else in the universal field,” is not just “the subject-effect of the object that appears at the end of the viewing tunnel” (100). Accordingly, Bryson comments, “if we try to picture to ourselves the Gaze of sunyata or blankness, it must be in terms of the nonrepresentational or the anti-representational” (101).

Bryson discusses the concept of sunyata in comparison to the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s concept of ‘gaze’, which, in turn, is developed through a critique of French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre’s discourse on the subject. Commenting on Lacan’s views, Bryson posits that “between retina and world is inserted a screen of signs, a screen consisting of all the multiple discourses on vision built into the social arena.” This screen casts “a shadow of death,” and “mortifies sight” (92). Bryson claims that “Lacan’s descriptions tend to privilege the genetic and formative

moment” of the subject, “not the long and diverse elaborations of adult life.”

Accordingly, he comments that this “makes it difficult to think through the question of cultural variation. As part of this, it is difficult to think through the cultural diversity of visual regimes, some of which may view the decentering of the subject in terms other than those of menace”⁸ (105). According to Bryson, “Lacan’s account of vision as persecuted by the Gaze, like Sartre’s, itself unfolds within the Imaginary, an Imaginary constructed in a culturally and historically specific fashion. If so, then it is that analysis which itself needs to experience some cultural and historical decentering” (106). Bryson argues that Lacan’s thoughts on vision makes it open to terror from the beginning, that is, in a way, “naturalizes terror” whereas Bryson proposes that “[t]error comes from the way that sight is constructed in relation to power, and powerlessness. To think of a terror intrinsic to sight makes it harder to think what makes sight terroristic” (107-8).

Bryson’s emphasis on the role of a specific culture and historical moment in the construction and development of the identity of the subjects and their relation to a scopic regime is significant. Especially his conception of the seeing subject in terms of sunyata is very helpful in understanding the process of the encounter with artworks. Bryson’s proposition that the subject should cross its boundaries in order to ‘be’ can be considered in parallel to Derrida’s account of bodily presence in reference to the experience of a Van Gogh painting. Nevertheless, Bryson’s interpretation

⁸ Mentioning ‘menace’ here, Bryson refers to Lacan’s association of the ‘gaze’ with the ‘evil eye’, since, according to Lacan, “[t]he gaze in itself not only terminates the movement, it freezes it” (Lacan 1978: 117). A different interpretation of Lacan’s account of the gaze and its role in the encounter with an artwork will be attempted later in the study.

seems to reduce Lacan's concept of the gaze to a semiotic function whereas Lacan casts it a more complex and ambivalent role in the encounter of the subject with the other. I would like to note that all these complicated accounts of vision and visibility, and possible misunderstandings can also be considered as evidences of the difficulty of developing an alternative argument against the prevalent modalities of vision and of cognition, since those arguments have to be made from within.

2.3.4. Reclaiming corporeality from within visibility

Indeed, what Rosalind Krauss (1988; 1993) has produced can be considered as a subversive study of vision from within the modernism's established mode. She mentions "modernism's ambition to ground the visual arts on a particular notion of the autonomy of vision," which is both secured "in relation to matters of space," and also depends on "very particular limits set on the experience of time" (1988: 51). In her examination of some works by Duchamp, Giacometti, and Picasso, she discerns the existence of an alternative matrix which works from inside the modernist visibility. She uses the term 'optical unconscious' (1993) to explain this alternative matrix, which, she thinks, connects vision to an erotic body. Krauss describes such works as staging an "explicitly erotic theater," and asserts that they restore "to the eye (against the disembodied opticality of modernist painting) that eye's condition as bodily organ, available like any other physical zone to the force of eroticization" (1988: 59). She observes a certain 'pulse', or 'beat' in those works which is not "structurally distinct from vision but to be at work from the deep inside it."

Krauss states that, “from the point of view of a modernist logic,” gestalt refers to “the simultaneous separation and intactness of figure and ground” whereas the beat can only intrude “from the domain of the temporal, the auditory, the discursive.”

However, according to Krauss, in some visual works, “the beat itself is ... figural -- but of an order of the figure that is far away from the realm of space that can neatly be opposed to the modality of time” (63). To explain her conception of the beat, she borrows Jean-François Lyotard’s concept of ‘matrix’, which is described by Lyotard as “the order of the ‘invisible’,” that lies both “below the ‘seen’ order of the image (that is, the object bounded by its contour) and below the ‘visible but unseen’ order of gestalt (Krauss 1988: 64). The characteristics of the ‘matrix’, and its belonging to the figural are explained by Lyotard himself as such:

If the matrix is invisible, it is not because it arises from the intelligible, but because it resides in a space that is beyond the intelligible, is in radical rupture with the rules of opposition ... It is its characteristic to have many places in one place, and they block together what is not compossible. This is the secret of the figural: the transgression of the constitutive intervals of discourse, and the transgression of the constitutive distances of representation. (Lyotard 1971: 339; cited in Krauss 1988: 64-5).

Krauss relates some case stories by Freud which Lyotard re-interpreted and proposed that it is possible to observe in those stories two different kinds of recurrence of fantasies, which, in turn, can be related with two different kinds of rhythm, or ‘beat’. One is the ‘on/off throb’ which oscillates between presence and absence, and it belongs to the pleasure principle. This corresponds in visual terms to the eye’s oscillation between the figure and the order (gestalt). But there is another pulse in

which it is not guaranteed that “an ‘on’ will always follow an ‘off’.” It “does not promise the return of the same, but simply re-turn, the coming of nothing. This second pulse is not a good form, not a good gestalt,” since it makes it possible to conceive several spaces in one place, and also violates the distinction of the senses of space and time. As Lyotard proposes, “it is a form in which desire remains caught, form caught by transgression; but it is also the, at least potential, transgression of form.” Since this second rhythm always implies the possibility of an ‘absolute break’, Lyotard associates it with the death drive, “operating below the pleasure principle.” Understood in this context, “the matrix is the form that figures recurrence” (Lyotard cited in Krauss 1993: 222). Krauss thinks that this matrix serves as “a resource for an artistic practice disinclined to obey the modernist law” since it makes it possible to develop artistic devices connected to the second kind of beat through which “the neat separation of senses -- space logically segmented off from time --” can be dissolved. In Krauss’s view, the artistic devices developed in this direction call for a beat that “could not be understood as structurally distinct from ‘vision’ but as operating from within it.” (Krauss 1993: 225).

Twenty-six years before this study by Krauss, Anton Ehrenzweig (1967) had developed a theory to conceive of the artworks and the structure of the production process on a psychoanalytical basis. Ehrenzweig proposes several revisions of the key concepts of the Freudian theory in order to be able to apply it to the aesthetic realm. The first one of them is an expanded concept of the unconscious, according to which “images and fantasies can become unconscious because of their

(undifferentiated) structure alone, that is, even if they are not related to repressed drives.” His second proposition is that “the ego alternates between dedifferentiation (decomposition) and re-differentiation without the prompting of the id.” Thirdly, he reinterprets Freudian ‘oceanic feeling’, in which one feels that one’s individual presence is “lost like a drop in the ocean.” Freud related this feeling with a regression to “a primitive state of mind when the child was not yet aware of his separate individuality” especially from the mother. “Fantasies of returning to the womb,” as well as religious feelings were attributed such an oceanic quality. What Ehrenzweig proposes is that “this state need not be due to a ‘regression’, to an infantile state, but could be the product of the extreme dedifferentiation in lower levels of the ego which occurs during creative work.” He adds that “dedifferentiation suspends many kinds of boundaries and distinctions; at an extreme limit it may remove the boundaries of individual existence and so produce a mystic oceanic feeling that is distinctively manic in quality.” In Ehrenzweig’s view, during the artistic experience, this manic-oceanic feeling occurs in association with an undifferentiated type of perception which allows one “to grasp the total indivisible structure of the artwork.” Since “oceanic dedifferentiation usually occurs only in deeply unconscious levels,” one is not aware of it. However, Ehrenzweig thinks, “if the results of unconscious undifferentiated scanning rise into consciousness, we may experience feelings of manic ecstasy.” Lastly, Ehrenzweig re-interprets the Freudian death instinct. He proposes “to attribute the ego’s innate propensity towards dedifferentiation to the death instinct” since “it represents a temporary decomposition of the ego, at least in its deepest levels.” According to Ehrenzweig, “[t]he ego, in striving towards

unconscious undifferentiation, aims at the uniform state of the inorganic, dead matter. Death is undifferentiation” (291-96).

In his book (1967), Ehrenzweig studies the stages of the relationship between artistic activity and ego development, from early childhood to the late middle age. He borrows the term ‘syncretistic’, coined by Jean Piaget, to explain “the distinctive quality of children’s vision and of child art. This vision is directed towards the tactile quality of objects rather than their abstract details, and is inclined to grasp totality. In opposition to gestalt theories and some others which try to understand the development of vision and its relation to artistic production as a gradual development from the simple to the complicated, and as an opposition between the differentiated form and the undifferentiated background, Ehrenzweig attempts to explain creative activity and its relation to ego development as an interaction between undifferentiated and differentiated kinds of vision, which, he thinks, occurs through an oscillation between different levels of the ego. He observes a tendency towards abstraction especially in the Western art, starting from the fifteenth century perspectival tradition and reaching its climax in modern art. He associates this, first, with the death instinct, the early implications of which he observes in ancient Greek mythology, and secondly, with the subsequent stages of ego development which he follows up to late middle age. Although he frequently attempts to legitimize at least some aspects of the modernist aesthetics in reference to psychoanalytic theory, Ehrenzweig’s work is significant at least for (i) it expands some key concepts of

psychoanalysis so as to render them operatable in the studies on art, (ii) it provokes further studies using those concepts, even if from a different point of view.

I have attempted to make a survey of modernist visuality and have reached at some conclusions: (i) vision is privileged against other senses, (ii) it is conceived as an abstraction in relation to an abstract body which is reduced to a function of the image, (iii) yet, it is possible to challenge the modernist abstract notion of visuality even from within itself. Now, I would like to open this scene to more radical challenges by different fields of study. My aim is to reach a point from where I will be able to reinterpret some well-known concepts, which, in turn, together with some new ones, may become operable in an elaboration of my own expanded notion of theatricality.

3. ACTUALITY AND THEATRICALITY OF THE ENCOUNTER WITH ARTWORKS

3.1. Actuality of the Real and two modes of mimesis

3.1.1. ‘Shock’ and pre-rational mimesis

Walter Benjamin (1969b) has asserted that, instead of presenting an appearance or a structure, a Dadaist artwork “became an instrument of ballistics. It hit the spectator like a bullet, it happened to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality” (238). Starting from this tactility, Benjamin proposes that a work can be experienced either in distraction or in concentration. The difference between these two modes of reception is crucial for him since it helps to understand how different is the experience of an art lover who contemplates the form and structure of a work from the experience of masses who are distracted in their environment. Benjamin says, “A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art the way legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished painting. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art.” In Benjamin’s view, architecture represents “the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction.” He describes the experience of buildings as follows:

Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception -- or rather, by touch and sight. Such appropriation cannot be understood in

terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building. On the tactile side there is no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent even optical reception. The latter, too, occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion. This mode of appropriation, developed with reference to architecture, in certain circumstances acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is by contemplation alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation (240).

Susan Buck-Morss (1993), in her reconsideration of the above-referred article by Benjamin, turns back to the etymology of the term 'aesthetics' in order to re-evaluate the significance of Benjamin's argument. She recalls that "aisthitikos is the ancient Greek word for that which is 'perceptive by feeling'," and "aisthisis is the sensory experience of perception." Accordingly, she posits that "the original field of aesthetics is not art but reality -- corporeal, material nature. ... It is a form of cognition, achieved through taste, touch, hearing, seeing, smell -- the whole corporeal sensorium" (125).

A significant point in Buck-Morss' argument is her view that although the individual always exists as a culturally constructed 'second nature', the same individual "enters the culturally constructed world ... leaving a remainder, a biological substrate that can provide the basis for resistance" (125, n. 16). Starting from this ground, she develops a concept of 'synaesthetic system', through which the inner images of

memory are connected to the external stimuli received from one's specific environment. She describes this system as follows:

The circuit from sense-perception to motor response begins and ends in the world. The brain is thus not an isolable anatomical body, but part of a system that passes through the person and her or his (culturally specific, historically transient) environment. As the source of stimuli and the arena for motor response, the external world must be included to complete the sensory circuit. (Sensory deprivation causes the system's internal components to degenerate). The field of the sensory circuit thus corresponds to that of 'experience', in the classical philosophical sense of a mediation of subject and object, and yet its very composition makes the so-called split between subject and object (which was the constant plague of classical philosophy) simply irrelevant. In order to differentiate our description from the more limited, traditional conception of the human nervous system which artificially isolates human biology from its environment, we will call this aesthetic system of sense-consciousness, decentered from the classical subject, wherein external sense-perceptions come together with the internal images of memory and anticipation, the "synaesthetic system" (128-129).

According to Buck-Morss, there are "three aspects of the synaesthetic system -- physical sensation, motor reaction, and psychical meaning." These three aspects converge in "signs and gestures comprising a mimetic language." This language cannot be conceived in conceptual terms. "Written on the body's surface as a convergence between the impresses of the external world and the express of subjective feeling, the language of this system threatens to betray the language of reason, undermining its philosophical sovereignty" (129).

Such a conception of 'aesthetic' experience makes it possible to conceive of the processes in which a body, although always largely conditioned by its cultural milieu, can be affected by what it is exposed to in terms of a mimetic relationship. In reference to Sir Charles Bell's -- who was also a medical doctor -- 'excessive' impressions of the dead bodies in the battlefield of Waterloo, Buck-Morss asserts that

Bell's 'excess' of sentiment did not mean emotionalism. ... It was not a psychological category of sympathy or compassion, of understanding the other's point of view from the perspective of intentional meaning, but, rather, physiological -- a sensory mimesis, a response of the nervous system to external stimuli which was 'excessive' because what he apprehended was unintentional, in the sense that it resisted intellectual comprehension. It could not be given meaning. The category of rationality could be applied to these physiological perceptions only in the sense of rationalization (130).

Buck-Morss relates that Benjamin understands modern experience in terms of shock. The shock is caused by the 'excessive energies' issued by the external stimuli. However, "the more readily consciousness registers these shocks, the less likely they are to have a traumatic effect." That is to say, if the stress is so high, Buck-Morss complements Benjamin, the ego employs consciousness as a buffer, blocking the openness of the synaesthetic system, thereby isolating present consciousness from past memory. Without the depth of memory, experience is impoverished. As Buck-Morss has pointed out, Benjamin's view is in concordance with Freud's 'metaphysical speculation', as he himself puts it in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle",

that consciousness functions as a shield to protect organism from the ‘excessive energies’ of the external stimuli (Freud cited in Buck-Morss 1993: 130).

Buck-Morss also points out that “the sense of sight was privileged in [the] phantasmagoric sensorium of modernity” against the other senses, and “the singling out” of sight resulted in the “numbing” of other senses (134). Having given an account of the various techniques of modern ‘anaesthetics’ in both medical and cultural terms, she makes an analogy with Lacan’s argument of the ‘mirror stage’ in order to describe the condition of modern visuality:

In the ‘great mirror’ of technology, the image that returns is displaced, reflected onto a different plane, where one sees oneself as a physical body divorced from sensory vulnerability -- a statistical body, the behaviour of which can be calculated; a performing body, actions of which can be measured up against the ‘norm’; a virtual body, one that can endure the shocks of modernity without pain (139).

Buck-Morss’ argument provides a rich and vivid stage to observe the mutual functioning of those techniques of aesthetization and anaesthetization in the construction of modern cultural environment. However, what I am more interested at this moment of my study is what she calls ‘sensory mimesis’ in reference to Walter Benjamin.

Michael Taussig (1993), again referring to Benjamin, makes a comprehensive study of the concept, and develops it up to a certain point that may be quite useful for the purposes of the present study. Taussig explains his concern as “to reinstate in and

against the myth of Enlightenment, with its universal, context-free reason, not merely the resistance of the concrete particular to abstraction,” but also “its sensuousness, its mimeticity” (2). Taussig interprets Benjamin’s notion of ‘mimetic faculty’, that is what remains from a compulsion to “become and behave like something else,” as “the capacity to Other” (19). Taussig observes that there are two layers of mimesis: “a copying or imitation, and a palpable, sensuous, connection between the very body of the perceiver and the perceived.” He thinks that “to ponder mimesis is to become sooner or later caught ... in sticky webs of copy and contact, image and bodily involvement of the perceiver in the image” (21). Following Benjamin, Taussig re-emphasizes the relation between the tactile aspect of perception and habit, in which, as he asserts, “unconscious strata of culture are built into social routines as bodily disposition” (25).

On the other hand, we know that, for Benjamin, the tactile aspect of perception was also closely related with the appreciation of space. Taussig discusses this point in reference to Roger Callois’ well-known article on what he called ‘legendary psychasthenia’ (1984). In this article, Callois examines examples of excessive mimicry in animals and associates this phenomenon with human mimetic capacity, which he considers as a threat to individual identity. He proposes that mimesis, before imitating, can be considered as “being tempted by space, a drama in which the self is but a self-diminishing point amid others, losing its boundedness.” As Taussig puts it, “Callois tries to describe this drama in its most extreme form where the

mimicking self, tempted by space, spaces out” (Taussig 1993: 34). Callois describes the experience of space by schizophrenic patients as follows:

“I know where I am, but I do not feel as though I’m at the spot where I find myself.” To these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them in a gigantic phagocytosis. It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at himself from any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, dark space where things cannot be put. ... He is similar, not similar to something, but just similar. And he invents spaces of which he is the convulsive possession (Callois 1984: 30; cited in Taussig 1993: 34)⁹.

Callois thinks that the experience is not unique to schizophrenia. He asserts that the tactile aspect of mimesis is always a threat for ‘normal’ people, too. He mentions the sense of tactility in the experience of darkness, and suggests that dark space is sensed as ‘full’, which constitutes a threat for the sense of ‘I’ as separate from the environment, whereas light conveys a sense of emptiness of one’s environment, which affirms the identity of the ‘I’ (Callois 1984: 30). The extreme example about schizophrenia given by Callois helps Taussig to understand “what’s most at stake with the mimetic faculty, this “degree zero” of similitude, an ineffable plasticity in the face of the world’s forms and forms of life.” He says,

⁹ As Taussig also points out, Callois later (the original date of publication of the essay on mimicry was 1935) criticizes his own essay. He relates that, instead of a disturbance of space perception, mimetism can be viewed as “the insect equivalent of human games of simulation” (1961 (1959): 178; cited in Taussig 1993: 260). Yet, for two reasons, reference to this argument remains valuable for the present study: (i) since simulation also involves a radical change in space perception, it is still tenable to argue the existence of a relationship between space perception and mimesis; (ii) the essay plays a critical role in Lacan’s discussion of the gaze, and in Hal Foster’s reading of it, as a threat to subjective identity. Both of these arguments I will mention later.

I am struck with the way, therefore, mimesis is not only a matter of one being another being, but with this tense yet fluid theatrical relation of form and space with which Callois would tempt us. I am especially struck by the notion of 'presence' as an invented space of which the mime is the convulsive possession. And as such, presence is intimately tied to this curious phenomenon of 'spacing out' -- this plasticity and theatricality ... (34).

In reference to Benjamin's proposition that 'sentience' takes one outside of oneself, in his "One Way Street" (1978a: 68), Taussig asserts that it is "fundamental to understanding the visceral bond connecting perceiver to perceived in the operation of mimesis" (1993: 38). I think, in order to have a full grasp of Benjamin's approach, this proposition, which implies the power of the environment in the experience of a 'mimetic vertigo', in Taussig's terms, needs to be complemented with Benjamin's understanding that the subject should be open, or rather make an effort, to be affected by what (s)he encounters, as it is emphasized in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (see Introduction). What is involved in the process of encounter is that it is always open to symbolization, which, in turn, is always conditioned by social constructions, as we have already observed when dealing with 'scopic regimes' and 'techniques of the observer'. However, Benjamin proposes that there is a way to reverse this process.

3.1.2. Actuality and theatricality of the body

If one considers some arguments by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in The Phenomenology of Perception (1992) in this context, it becomes possible to observe that, although his theory of perception basically depends on perspective and intentionality, he prefers to

stay in an ambiguous zone as far as one's perception of one's own body is concerned. So significantly, he uses a metaphor of theater to describe the ambiguity of the sense of 'presence':

There are two senses, and two only, of the word 'exist': one exists as a thing or else one exists as a consciousness. The experience of our own body, on the other hand, reveals to us an ambiguous mode of existing. If I try to think of it as a cluster of third person processes -- 'sight', 'motility', 'sexuality' -- I observe that these 'functions' cannot be interrelated, and related to the external world, by causal connections, and they are obscurely drawn together and mutually implied in a unique drama. Therefore the body is not an object. For the same reason, my awareness of it is not a thought, that is to say, I cannot take it to pieces and reform it to make a clear idea. Its unity is always implicit and vague. It is always something other than what it is, always sexuality and at the same time freedom, rooted in nature at the very moment when it is transformed by cultural influences, never hermetically sealed and never left behind. Whether it is a question of another's body or my own, I have no means of knowing the human body other than that of living it, which means taking up on my own account the drama which is being played out in it, and losing myself in it (198).

Merleau-Ponty's formulation of the coexistence and the inseparability of the concrete and the theatrical in the lived experience of the body is illuminating for understanding what he means by saying that "the theory of the body is already a theory of perception" (203). In his model, the body as an identity and the percept as an object are constituted in a single process. He gives the example of his own relationship with the objects in his flat. There would have been no distinction between his body and what is around while he was moving in the flat, if they had not

been separated and identified in a process parallel to his movements. While the various aspects of the flat are identified as “views of one and the same thing,” the movements are identified as belonging to the same body, and thus, identity is retained “through the stages of those movements” in opposition to the flat (203). As Merleau-Ponty puts it, “the synthesis of the object is here effected, then, through the synthesis of one’s own body, it is the reply or correlative to it” (205). Merleau-Ponty’s description of recognition of objects and people echo’s Barthes’ notion of ‘decoupage’, as it can be clearly observed in the following passage:

... when I say that I see the ash-tray over there, I suppose as completed an unfolding of experience which would go on ad infinitum, and I commit a whole perceptual future. Similarly, when I say that I know and like someone, I aim, beyond his qualities, at an inexhaustible ground which may one day shatter the image that I have formed of him. This is the price for there being things and ‘other people’ for us, not as the result of some illusion, but as the result of a violent act which is perception itself (361).

As it can be discerned, for Merleau-Ponty, presence is not secure but is always experienced under a continuous threat, and perhaps the biggest question for him is “how the presence to myself (Urpräsenz) which establishes my own limits and conditions every alien presence is at the same time derepresentation (Entgegenwartigung) and throws me outside myself” (363).

According to the arguments presented above, it can be asserted that the difficulty of having a ‘clear’ conception of body is may be related to a perspective based on hygiene. According to this perspective, it seems necessary to have an ‘extra’

distance, a hygienic zone between the borders of the body and the ‘external things’ which could be used to firmly establish the internal coherence and unity of the identity of the individual, if not of the body. Such an attempt at hygienic separation is entirely abstract since the actuality of the body involves a continuum with the ‘external’. The borders of the body and what is next to it are porous and allow contamination. Furthermore, as far as sense impressions are concerned, it is impossible to separate the body from the environment since the impression is effected by a violent intercourse between the two, and the space in which the impression occurs becomes ambiguous. Yet, we know that what we sense of our perception is rather in accordance with the abstract system of perception, due not to illusion, but to a violent counter-operation of hygienic separation, aimed at ‘presence’. Taken in this context, “presence means death,” as it is suggested by Derrida in the context of the experience of a Van Gogh painting. And it is perhaps why it is under the perpetual threat of death, or, to put it in other words, the ego is far away from being under the full sovereignty of libido but is subject to continuous attacks of a ‘death drive’, as it has been stated by both Freud and Lacan. It can be observed that, in my reading, the term ‘death drive’, rather than being related to a natural tendency to return to an inorganic or inanimate state, refers to a compulsion to re-experience one’s engulfment in becoming instead of one’s absorption by being. Here, becoming pertains to the ‘real’, and being, to the ‘symbolic’, following Lacanian terms. As it is stated by Richard Boothby (1991: 224), “the concept of the death drive forms a kind of dynamic intersection between three registers as it is at

once the return of the real, the unbinding of the imaginary, and the agency of the symbolic.”

In order to elaborate more on this point, and to associate it with the issues of modernist formalism, I would like to refer again to the entry ‘to absorb’, written by Diderot in the *Encyclopédie* (1751), and quoted by Fried (1980)¹⁰ (see 2.1.). There, Diderot suggests that, in a figurative sense, one can be “absorbed in God, or in the contemplation of some object” but he does not think that “to engulf can be used in a figurative sense” although those two terms are given as synonyms. My reading of the two terms is in concordance with Diderot’s definition; yet, I am inclined to further the discussion. In terms of perception, the eye (as a part of the body) is captured by the image, and then, the experience “spreads over the whole.” What is ‘destructured’, or ‘consumed’, following Diderot’s terms, is one’s embeddedness in becoming. The process takes away the body to an abstract realm in which the subject and the object are constructed in an experience of ‘presentness’, as it is suggested by Fried. The crucial point is that while the operation provides the subject with an imaginary experience of ‘oneness’ with the object, it allows, at the same time, the hygienic separation of the subject and the object at the symbolic level, and thus, protects

¹⁰ Nuances given by Diderot in his definition, especially in relation to the synonymous term ‘to engulf’, are significant for the purposes of this study. Therefore, a full quotation of Diderot’s article is preferable: “TO ABSORB, TO ENGULF, synonyms. To absorb expresses a general but successive action, which, beginning only in one part of the subject, continues thereafter and spreads over the whole. But to engulf indicates an action whose general effect is rapid, and seizes everything at the same time without breaking it up into parts.

The first is particularly related to consumption and destruction; the second properly designates something that envelops, sweeps away, and causes suddenly to disappear. Thus fire absorbs, so to speak, but water engulfs.

It is according to the same analogy that one speaks in a figurative sense of being absorbed in God, or in the contemplation of some object, when one gives oneself up to it with all one’s thought without allowing oneself the least distraction. I do not think that to engulf can be used in a figurative sense” (*Ouvres complètes*, V: 231-32; cited in Fried 1980: 183-4, n. 6).

identities. Of course, such a separation is impossible in an experience of ‘oceanic engulfment’ (“water engulfs”) in the actual. What can be sensed is the ‘touch’ of the other and blurring of the boundary between the identity and the environment. However, since the subject is constructed through an alienation from the actual at a very early stage of childhood, the account of which is given by Lacan in his description of the ‘mirror stage’, engulfment is not the dominant mode of experience. Due to an alliance of the imaginary with the symbolic, the subject feels itself as separated from the environment; it perceives a distance, a gap, which does not exist in actuality at all. The real is in ‘abeyance’ and can only be sensed in the form of a momentary mimetic vertigo, or ‘oceanic feeling’ in Freud’s terms, which shatters the identity of the subject. The modernist formalist aesthetics conceives of the subject’s relationship with the work only in terms of the alliance between the imaginary and the symbolic. According to this logic, the aesthetic experience can only be discussed in terms of libido, and mimesis, only in terms of representation. However, the actual, the death drive, and a pre-rational form of mimesis¹¹ are always at work, too.

¹¹ I borrow the terms ‘pre-rational’ and ‘rational’ from Mihai I. Spariosu. In his study on play (1989), he describes pre-rational and rational modes of mentality, play, and power. I generally adopt his line of argument, and especially apply it to describe the two modes of mimesis whereas he prefers the term ‘mimesis-play’ to distinguish it from ‘mimesis-representation’. His concept of mimesis-play is somewhat similar to my ‘pre-rational mimesis’ since he makes a distinction between play, which is undefinable in his view, and game, which is institutionalized play. Yet, I think there is a difference especially in my relating mimesis to mimicry, following Benjamin on the one hand, and reading Lacan in a specific way, on the other. As it will be observed, in my ‘pre-rational mimesis’, the emphasis is on the affection by the actual; a pre-rational form of play intervenes after the affection, against the ‘shock’, in Benjamin’s term, or to ‘intimidate’ the gaze of the other, following Lacanian terms. Moreover, the term ‘mimesis-play’ might cause confusion as far as the ambivalent character of play itself is concerned. I will focus on the relationship between play and mimesis in more detail later.

3.1.3. The real, the gaze, and mimesis

Aimee Rankin, in an essay in which she discusses ‘the legacy of the real’ (1987), bases her argument on Lacan’s schema. She describes the three terms of the schema as follows: the imaginary is “the dimension of images, conscious and unconscious, perceived or imagined”; the symbolic “refers to signifiers defined as differential elements, in themselves without meaning, which acquire value only in their mutual relations”; and the real is “that before which the imaginary falters, over which the symbolic stumbles - that which is refractory and resistant. It is in this sense that the term [describes] that which is lacking in the symbolic order, the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element which may be approached but never grasped: the umbilical cord of the symbolic” (Lacan 1977; cited in Rankin 1987: 93). Rankin posits that, “like any umbilical cord, this one leads us ... to the mother’s body, the original site of that all-encompassing plenitude against which the subject must struggle to emerge” (93). Rankin then refers to “Lacan’s description of the mirror phase as founding moment in the infant’s recognition of his or her identity,” and points out the significant role of the mother’s look in the separation from the real and in being prepared to enter the realm of the language of the father. Rankin describes language as “the code of repression which breaks the bonds to the maternal body, predicated as it is on its structuring principle of difference which allows the subject to separate him or herself as such.” As a consequence of this violent operation “the subject exists as an effect of the symbolic,” as it is stated by Lacan in Écrits: “... the symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing, and this death constitutes in the subject the eternalization of his desire.” (Lacan 1977: 105;

cited in Rankin 1987: 94). However, Rankin asserts that, the real as “that which is ‘outside’ the order must exist as a condition of that order’s function, which becomes then the continual staging of its death” (96). Furthermore, she proposes that

the imaginary can in fact be posed against the symbolic order, the domain of ‘critical distance’, as the realm where immersion and fascination are the rule. As anyone who does a few laps in the image pool can attest, the image produces pleasure where it fixes meaning least, and we can see in the phantasmatic structure of spectacle that polysemic plenitude that still bears a faint stain of the real (97).

Three points can be deduced from Rankin’s argument which will be helpful to further the present study: (i) the real stays ‘there’ as the ineluctable force which makes the symbolic order function; (ii) apart from its provisional function for the persistence of the symbolic order, the imaginary may also work in the opposite direction, that is, it “can be posed upon the symbolic” so as to subject it to the effects of the real; (iii) an archaic model of the oceanic engulfment in the real can be found in the intra-uterine experience and also at the very early stage of the relationship of the child with the mother. In the light of these points, I would like to engage in a closer examination of Lacan’s account of the encounter with the real and of the gaze.

Lacan discusses the real in terms of primary processes, following Freud. He describes the encounter with the real, which he called tuché, borrowing an Aristotelian term, as an ‘essentially missed encounter’, and it can be sensed in the form of ‘trauma’. So, the real presents itself to the psychoanalytic discourse, which follows the symbolic order, in a form “which is unassimilable in it.” Because of

being unassimilable in the symbolic order, it indicates a “rupture ... between perception and consciousness,” its experience leads us to imagine a ‘non-temporal locus’, that is, “forces us to posit what Freud calls ... the idea of another locality, another space, another scene, the between perception and consciousness.” Thus, the encounter enables us to conceive the real as “in abeyance¹² there, awaiting attention.” It is this quality of the encounter with the real that leads to a ‘compulsion to repeat’, as it is formulated by Freud (Lacan 1978: 55-6). One of the cases Lacan relates in this context shows that the encounter with the real may happen at any time in our daily environment. Lacan describes the event as follows:

The other day, I was awoken from a short nap by knocking at my door just before I actually awoke. With this impatient knocking I had already formed a dream, a dream that manifested to me something other than this knocking. And when I awake, it is in so far as I reconstitute my entire representation around this knocking -- this perception -- that I am aware of it. I know that I am there, at what time I went to sleep, and why I went to sleep. When the knocking occurs, not in my perception, but in my consciousness, it is because my consciousness reconstitutes itself around this representation -- that I know that I am waking up, that I am knocked up.

But here I must question myself as to what I am at that moment -- at the moment, so immediately before and so separate, which is that in which I began to dream under the effect of the knocking which, to all appearances, that woke me (1978: 56).

The process can be reviewed as such: the audio attribute of the knocking reaches him when he is sleeping; it penetrates his body, and touches the sensible area inside the

¹² Lacan uses the French term souffrance, which means, as it is stated by the translator, ‘in suspense’, ‘in abeyance’, ‘awaiting attention’, ‘pending’, but also ‘pain’ (1978: 56, n. 1). Thus, Lacan refers to an oscillation between an abstract, that is, symbolic operation of understanding and a bodily sensation.

ear. At the very moment in which the sound-effect is produced, there is no gap between him and the sound which is a material attribute of knocking. Yet, his becoming conscious of being knocked up is effected through a symmetrical structure other than the actual process. There, the imaginary works in the service of the symbolic order so as to form a dream, which, in fact, only represents the knock. Forming of such a representation is crucially important in that it not only enables him to become conscious of being knocked up but also, since this is an ‘involved reflection’, makes him able to ‘sustain’ himself. In other words, the representation serves to defer the encounter and protects the identity from sensing that its boundaries are penetrated. Lacan says, “... it is only my representation that I recover possession of” (57). I would like to suggest that this is not only a temporal deferral. It also involves a spatial gap which does not have a counterpart in the actual process -- a distance between the subject and the sound as it is recast back on the door from which it came. On the other hand, Lacan’s question remains significant: the question of ‘what he is at that moment -- the moment in which he began to dream under the effect of the knocking’. The question can be answered in reference to two modes of mimesis: First, he is the subject which is in the way of recovering himself through mimesis-representation of a dream; secondly, he is a decentered subject -- to a certain extent, at least -- since he is engaged in a pre-rational mimesis under the tactile effect of knocking. Both processes are valid and simultaneous. Thus, it can be proposed that the entire event is characterized by an oscillation of the imaginary between the real and the symbolic. I think, the capability of the imaginary to move in two

opposing directions has a crucial importance also in re-interpreting Lacan's account of the gaze.

The first point to be kept in mind regarding Lacan's account of the gaze is that he rejects any understanding of the gaze which can be consummated in the consciousness of the subject. Lacan states that the function of the gaze "always escapes from the grasp of that form of vision that is satisfied with itself in imagining itself as consciousness." Therefore, a phrase such as "seeing oneself seeing oneself" represents "an avoidance of the function of the gaze" (Lacan 1978: 74). He relates that he is trying "to grasp how the tuché is represented in visual apprehension" (77). So, what is implicated in the gaze is not a consciousness reflecting upon itself but a reciprocal aspect of vision, which, "in our relation to things," "is always to some degree eluded" (73).

The second point that draws attention is that Lacan discusses the gaze always in reference to Merleau-Ponty and Callois. The two works of Merleau-Ponty cited by Lacan are The Phenomenology of Perception and The Visible and the Invisible. According to Lacan, the first work "brings us back ... to the regulation of form, which is governed, not only by the subject's eye, but by his expectations, his movement, his grip, his muscular and visceral emotion -- in short, his constitutive presence, directed in what is called his total intentionality." Lacan thinks that in the latter work, Merleau-Ponty "pushes the limits of this very phenomenology," and leads the way to think of "something prior to [the] eye," that is to conceive of "the

pre-existence of a gaze” when he says, as Lacan relates it, “I see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides” (Lacan 1978: 71-2). Lacan refers to Callois for the latter’s account of mimicry. From Lacan’s perspective, “the most radical problem of mimicry is to know whether we must attribute it to some formative power of the very organism that shows us its manifestations.” What interests Lacan at this point, in addition to the gaze, is the function of what he calls ‘the stain’, that is, the “pre-existence to the seen of a given-to-be-seen.” Lacan says, “There is no need for us to refer to some supposition of a universal seer. If the function of the stain is recognized in its autonomy and identified with that of the gaze, we can seek its track, its thread, its trace, at every stage of the constitution of the world, in the scopic field” (1978: 73-4). Combining Merleau-Ponty’s and Callois’ arguments, Lacan reaches at a point in which it is possible to conceive of the emergence of the seeing eye from what he calls “the function of seeingness” (82).

According to Lacan’s schema, the split of the subject is determined by a “privileged object, which has emerged from some primal separation, from some self-mutilation induced by the very approach of the real.” As it is known, Lacan calls this object ‘object a’. The gaze can be conceived as a continuation of the same phenomenon “in the scopic relation.” The encounter with the gaze leads to a “phantasy from which the subject is suspended in an essential vacillation.” Lacan proposes that when the gaze appears, “the subject tries to adapt himself to it, he becomes that punctiform object, that point of vanishing being with which the subject confuses his own failure.” Then, the subject ‘misunderstands’, or ‘elides’ the gaze by way of symbolizing “his own

vanishing and punctiform bar (trait) in the illusion of the consciousness of seeing oneself see oneself" (83). Now, the question remains as to understand how we can imagine the gaze when it is elided by consciousness.

Lacan's well-known account of his encounter with a sardine can on the surface of the sea illuminates the situation. As Lacan relates, one day he is out with fishermen on the open sea. A fisherman shows a sardine can on the surface of the sea, and says to Lacan: "You see that can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn't see you!". Lacan thinks it is untrue from a certain perspective, since the can was looking at him "at the level of the point of light, the point at which everything that looks at [him] is situated" (1978: 95). Lacan describes the process from his position as such: he is not only "the being at the geometral point from which the perspective is grasped." The picture is painted in his eye, and he is in the picture (96)¹³. Yet, in the following moment, Lacan renders the scene more complicated:

That which is light looks at me, and by means of that light in the depths of my eye, something is painted -- something that is not simply a constructed relation, the object on which the philosopher lingers -- but something that is an impression, the shimmering of a surface that is not, in advance, situated for me in its distance. This is something that introduces what was elided in geometral relation -- the depth of the field, with all its ambiguity and variability, which is in no way mastered by me. It is rather it that grasps me, solicits me at every moment, and makes of the landscape something other than a landscape, something other than what I have called the picture (96).

¹³ Hal Foster points out that in the translation by Sheridan, the affirmative sentence is transformed into negative: "But I am not in the picture" (1996: 265, n. 32).

As it can be discerned, what is involved at the level of being captured by the gaze, before anything else, is an experience of space, or rather becoming space, which is radically different from the perception of geometrical space. In this capture, there is not yet either an object to be perceived at a distance or a subject of representation to perceive it. What Lacan calls the 'picture', or, rather, 'landscape', can be conceived in this context as a continuum of space which is of 'another kind'. In it, the subject that "must not be understood here in the usual sense of the word," mimics the environment, in the sense put forward by Callois. The point of gaze is the correlative of the 'picture', and the two are mediated by the 'screen', which is opaque. The gaze in this space "is always a play of light and opacity," and the mimicking subject "is always in the form of the screen," or to put it in better terms, as "the stain, the spot" which has almost merged with the screen. Since the opacity and light counter-balance one another, the capture remains at the level of 'lure', which becomes the main characteristic of this ambiguous space (96-7). However, the process is bound to end in the 'taming of the gaze' and in the appearance of the object-image in the symbolic order. Simultaneous with that is the appearance of the subjective consciousness as seeing oneself see both oneself and the object. What occurs at this level in which the imaginary allies with the symbolic is that what are seen as object-images acquire an extra opacity so as to be differentiated from each other whereas the screen loses its opacity, transforms into a transparent window-screen, and allows the representation of the Cartesian space, in which those extra opaque things are placed in opposition to each other, once again.

We are not yet able to give a sufficient account of how the symbolic order is re-established. This is partly because, in the above case, only the gaze at the side of the object has been involved, though, we know that it is reciprocal. Lacan discusses this reciprocity later in the context of art, that is, in the relationship between the spectator and a painting. However, before that, he elaborates more on mimicry and its role in the ‘taming of the gaze’. Lacan refers to ‘camouflage’ which is an essential aspect of mimicry, in Callois terms, in order to describe the process by which the subject situates itself in the picture as stain. Lacan emphasizes that “it is not a question of harmonizing with the background but, against a mottled background, of becoming mottled,” just like in warfare (99). Again, he points out that the act of imitating should not be immediately related to what is imitated. At bottom of imitation, one is “inserted in a function whose experience grasps it” (100).

For Lacan, the encounter of one with a painting is actually an encounter of two gazes. The artist wishes to impose her/himself upon us as gaze through the painting. This means that the artist “invites the person to whom this picture is presented to lay down his gaze there as one lays down one’s weapons” (101). In fact, the spectator accepts this invitation and lays down her/his gaze. However, this does not mean that s/he is “entirely caught up in this imaginary capture” by the gaze at the side of the painting. According to Lacan, human subject, unlike animals, is able to isolate the function of the screen which is “the locus of mediation,” and “knows how to play with the mask as that beyond which there is the gaze” (107). As Lacan states it, “the most subtle point” is that the gaze at the side of the painting comes through the brushstrokes.

However, if the brushstroke is that which relates the act of the painter, it also marks the termination of a movement. Here, Lacan makes a distinction between an act and a gesture, and describes how the painting can be appreciated as a theatrical scene, in the Aristotelian sense of the term:

It is by means of the gesture that the brushstroke is applied to the canvas. And so true is that the gesture is always present there that there can be no doubt that the picture is first felt by us, as the terms impression or impressionism imply, as having more affinity with the gesture than with any other type of movement. All action represented in a picture appears to us as a battle scene, that is to say, as something theatrical, necessarily created for gesture (114-5).

The analogy of the battle scene is later elaborated by Lacan in reference to a performance by Peking Opera, in which the actors' gestures represent weapons. Lacan relates that the actors have represented a combat without ever touching each other. Things become clear now: the violent movement of the gaze from the side of the painting inevitably takes the form of a gesture in the brushstroke because the desire of the painter is also aimed at being seen (115); it should take the form of a 'displayed movement' (117). This ambivalent aspect of the gesture is used by the spectator who is initially only a 'stain' in the violent field of combat, which was previously called 'picture' by Lacan. The spectator engages in mimicry. S/he camouflages her/himself and uses the 'screen' as a mask to intimidate the violent gaze. Since the attacks of the gaze are already in the form of 'gestures', that is to say, they are already given to be seen, the screen can be used by the spectator to move towards the gaze until the gestures appear as clear gestalt. What is necessary to be

discerned here is the transformation of the screen by the spectator. Its spatial and tactile attributes are deleted, and its reflective, specular attributes are overemphasized. Once the screen is positioned at the right point where the image can best be seen, the spectator can retreat to the previous point as a subject of representation. The violent battle, or 'the theater of cruelty', in Artaud's terms, ends in Aristotelian spectacle. Both parties -- the artist and the spectator -- have laid down their weapons for peace. Yet, there is the price of peace for both parties since neither of them achieved a total victory. The real aim of their desires, or to put in better terms, 'the real' itself, is also represented as something behind the 'screen' -- something unassimilable in representation but imaginable as beyond it. As for the satisfaction, it can be consummated as 'pleasure' according to the contract made between the parties, but always with a sense of lack.

Here, a brief discussion of Norman Bryson's reading of Lacan's notion of the gaze will help to lead the present study to a new direction. Referring to the story about the sardine can, Bryson considers the gaze as functioning in the symbolic order from the beginning:

Lacan's account depends, not on the irruption of another personal viewer but the irruption, in the visual field, of the Signifier. When I look, what I see is not simply light but intelligible form ... For human beings collectively to orchestrate their visual experience together it is required that each submit his or her retinal experience to the socially agreed description(s) of an intelligible world. ... deviation from this social construction of visual reality can be measured and named, variously, as hallucination, misrecognition, or "visual disturbance" (1988: 91).

However, in the case Lacan relates, the fisherman's vision of the can conforms with that of a signifier, that is the socially constructed reality of it. Lacan's vision is a deviation from it. He seems to insist on his own experience against the socially agreed recognition of the can. Whenever he recognizes it as an intelligible form, that is, as a signifier, it ceases to look back on him, which is the case with the fisherman.

As it is tacitly observed by Hal Foster, "to read the gaze as already semiotic is to tame it before the fact" (1996: 265, n. 33). Furthermore, the encounter with the gaze, or the 'fact', in Foster's terms, cannot be covered in purely visual terms, whether personal or semiotic. At the beginning, the spatial and tactile aspect is dominant. The shift from the decentered subject in mimetic vertigo to a subject of representation can be understood in reference to the transformation of the screen from an intermingling of light and opacity into an image-screen as differentiated from light. It is only at this final stage that the form and space can be identified separately, that is to say, the space can be defined as an emptiness, a distance between the subject of representation and the form, which, now appears as clear gestalt. Foster also points out the confusion in some readers about the status of the screen. He proposes that the screen in which the subject is a 'stain' is "different from the image-screen," and that "the subject is an agent of the image-screen, not one with it" (1996: 265, n. 33). This proposition is in accordance with my reading if the difference between the two screens is not considered as between two separate entities but as denoting a transformation of the screen as I described above. However, Foster's reading seems

to be different from mine in the way he interprets the ‘second’ screen. He thinks that “the meaning of this last term is obscure,” and explains his own interpretation as such:

I understand it to refer to the cultural reserve of which the image is one instance. Call it the conventions of art, the schemata of representation, the codes of visual culture, this screen mediates the object-gaze for the subject, but it also protects the subject from this object-gaze. That is, it captures the gaze ... and tames it in an image (1996: 140).

I think, according to this interpretation, it becomes too difficult to observe the significance of Lacan’s reference to mimicry as play with the screen. What is mediated to the subject by the screen at the first stage of the encounter, or the tuché, is not the visual code but the actual attribute of the object. At this stage, it is not possible for the subject to engage in mimesis-representation according to the cultural codes since it (not a ‘he’ or ‘she’) cannot be considered a proper subject. What is sensed by this subject is its own ‘opacity’ that is touched, which remains as a ‘stain’ in the ‘picture’, which, in turn, refers to the totality of that ambiguous space-time of the event. Yet, this subject can engage in a pre-rational mimesis. The first stage of it is in the form of camouflage in the ambiguous environment. During this stage, the imaginary can be assumed to oscillate between the ‘stain’ and the ‘screen’. The second stage of the pre-rational mimesis is ‘intimidation’, in which, the opacity of the stain is used as a mask, or a shield, to ward off the gaze. Now, the subject of pre-rational mimesis shows itself to the gaze. Lacan describes this stage in detail in reference to animals during ‘the sexual union and in the struggle to the death’:

In both situations, the being breaks up, in an extraordinary way, between its being and its semblance, between itself and that paper tiger it shows to the other. In the case of display, usually on the part of the male animal, or in the case of grimacing swelling by which the animal enters the play of combat in the form of intimidation, the being gives of himself, or receives from the other, something that is like a mask, a double, an envelope, a thrown-off skin, thrown off in order to cover the frame of a shield. It is through this separated form of himself that the being comes into play in his effects of life and death, and it might be said that it is with the help of this doubling of the other, or of oneself, that is realized the conjunction from which proceeds the renewal of beings in reproduction (1978: 107)¹⁴.

I assume that the oscillation of the imaginary acquires a new character at this stage of pre-rational mimesis. Although it is not yet possible to mention a symbol formation, it can be observed that the imaginary retreats from the screen-body in the form of a doubling so as to play between the two. It is only after such a play in split that the imaginary becomes able to ally with the symbolic so as to form a gestalt of the object on the one hand, and to identify an image of the self, on the other. Lacan asserts that “the moment of seeing can intervene here only as a suture, a conjunction of the imaginary and the symbolic” (1978: 118). Nevertheless, this conjunction also implies (i) an abstract, hygienic separation of the subject and the object in mimesis-representation, (ii) and an exclusion of the ‘real’, or according to my reading, the material attribute of the actual, from the order so as to be sensed as a lack, and to be assumed to stay beyond what is seen. I think, it is only at this last stage of mimesis-

¹⁴ This passage by Lacan can be compared with Michael Taussig’s (1993: 236-55) account of the mimetic techniques of doubling used by native tribes in Africa, America, and Australia to ward off the Western colonialists.

representation that the cultural reserve, or the visual code intervenes. The difference between the semblance involved during the intimidation stage of pre-rational mimesis and the representation of an image as signifier has a crucial significance. The former, although the subject is decentered in it, strengthens the 'actor' against the threat of the gaze whereas the latter registers her/him back in the symbolic order.

Only in such a reading, Lacan's final remark in which the gaze is given a mortal power can be questioned. Perhaps, the gaze is always evil, as it is proposed by Lacan; but on the condition that 'evil' is read as 'violent', or 'cruel', that is, actually affective. It actually impresses the subject so that the subject cannot distinguish itself from the impression. Yet, as it can be observed in Lacan's own account, the gaze cannot annihilate the subject totally. First camouflaged not to be distinguished from space, the subject then doubles the impression so as to be seen by the gaze. Through this pre-rational mimesis, the gaze is confronted with the impression caused by itself. This play of doubling wards off the gaze and lessens its effect. Then, the gaze is symbolized as an image, the verbal counterpart of which might be, "This is a sardine can," or, "This is that famous painting by Van Gogh." This last stage is not necessary to protect the subject from being annihilated but rather to 'cover' the violent effects of the event, and to represent it as a spectacle according to the established cultural codes. In this sense, the conjunction of the imaginary and the symbolic as a suture to hide the actual impression should also be seen as an attempt to prevent the consciousness from registering that the decentered body has defied the challenge of the gaze, and 'acted' so violently in a 'play' of pre-rational mimesis to ward off the

gaze. Yet, the attempt is not completely successful. The image itself has the faint stain of that violent play; following the evidence of that stain, it is still possible for the imaginary to work back upon the symbolic, and to reconstruct the scene. This is what Lacan also does in his account of the sardine can or of the painting.

Hal Foster posits that Lacan and Benjamin can be contrasted in that Lacanian gaze is always maleficent and all Western painting can be understood accordingly whereas Benjamin sees gaze as auratic and having a positive value, and thus, he approaches the position of some avant-garde movements from that perspective (1993: 193-205; 1996: 266-5, n. 35, 36). As it is put forward above, the evil aspect of the Lacanian gaze can be understood in terms of violence, and thus, it can be associated with Benjamin's concept of shock. I am inclined to see that Benjamin's approach especially to art differs from that of Lacan rather in its conclusion.

For Benjamin, the positive aspect of the strange, or uncanny experience of space-time under the effect of the gaze of the other can be related to the unintentional memory of maternal gaze and infantile bodily sensations (1969a). Here, it becomes possible to discuss the third conclusion we have drawn from Aimee Rankin's argument above: the relation of the encounter with the real and the maternal body. Freud's account of the 'uncanny' can be examined in this context.

3.2. Uncanniness of the encounter and its relation to mimesis

Freud (1919) emphasizes two aspects of the uncanny. The first is a faint sense of memory: “the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (220). The second aspect denotes a strange experience of space: “the uncanny would always, as it were, be something one does not know one’s way about in. The better oriented in his environment a person is, the less readily will he get the impression of something uncanny in regard to the objects and events in it” (221). As it will be revealed, these two aspects are interrelated, too.

According to the study Freud and his colleagues made in various Indo-European languages, the word, as similar to the case in German language (unheimlich), has a relationship with the concept of space, mainly house -- security and familiarity of an environment; time -- especially in relation to night and darkness; and human beings - - familiarity and friendliness. Freud notes that “in Arabic and Hebrew ‘uncanny’ means the same as ‘daemonic’, ‘gruesome’” (221). In his detailed examination of the word ‘canny’ in German language (heimlich), Freud observes two main group of meanings which seem to be different from one another. The first one is translated as “belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, friendly, etc.,” (222) whereas the second one is translated as “concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know of or about it, withheld from others” (223). The interesting point is that the second group of meaning of the word heimlich is “identical with its opposite, unheimlich. What is heimlich thus comes to be unheimlich” (224). In another dictionary, an explanation is given to the situation: “From the idea of ‘homelike’,

'belonging to the house', the further idea is developed of something withdrawn from the eyes of the strangers, something concealed, secret; and this idea is expanded in many ways ..." Later, the dictionary notes that heimlich, when used of knowledge, means "mystic, allegorical," and it also refers to "that which is obscure, inaccessible to knowledge" (cited in Freud 1919: 225). Freud finishes that section of study about the dictionary meanings of words with the conclusion that "heimlich is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, unheimlich" (226).

Freud observes that the uncanny feelings may arouse in relation to many situations and recurrent themes in daily life. A list of them can be given as follows: (I) The fear of losing one's eyes, which Freud associates with the castration complex. He sees in it an identification of the 'Sand-Man' (in reference to the story by E.T.A. Hoffman in which the 'Sand Man' tears out children's eyes) with "the dreaded father at whose hands castration is expected" (232). [II] The blurring of the distinction between living and inanimate things, which Freud observes in early child games. Freud states that "children have no fear of their dolls coming to life, they may even desire it. The source of the uncanny feelings would not, therefore, be an infantile fear in this case, but rather an infantile wish or even merely an infantile belief" (233). [III] The theme of the 'double': in many situations in which the feeling of the uncanny arouses, there is an image of the self as doubled, divided and interchanged. Freud thinks that this double "was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, ... and probably the 'immortal' soul was the first 'double' of the body." However, in time it

moved away from being “an assurance of immortality” but rather became “the uncanny harbinger of death.” Freud sees a further step in the theme of the ‘double’, that is the development of a ‘special agency’ in the ego “which has the function of observing and criticizing the self and exercising a censorship within the mind, and which we become aware of as our ‘conscience’.” Emergence of such an agency “which is able to treat the rest of the ego like an object ... renders it possible to invest the old idea of a ‘double’ with a new meaning”, that is, the uncanniness of being observed (234-5). For Freud, this indicates that the ‘double’ is “a creation dating back to a very early mental state, long since surmounted -- a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect.” Freud observes here “a regression to a time when the ego had not yet marked itself off sharply from the external world and from other people” (236). [IV] The theme of constant repetition of the same thing or “unintended recurrence of the same situation but which differ radically from it in other aspects.” Such a phenomenon also arouses “the same feeling of helplessness and of uncanniness” (237). [V] Superstitions about the ‘evil eye’ and the ‘omnipotence of thoughts’ (240). [VI] Our “relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts” and to “a ‘haunted house’” (241). Freud asserts that two factors seem to be significant in the relation to death: “the strength of our original emotional reaction to death and the insufficiency of our scientific knowledge about it. Biology has not yet been able to decide whether death is the inevitable fate of every living being or whether it is only a regular but perhaps avoidable event in life” (242).

In the review of the themes and situations in which the feeling of the uncanny arouses, two characteristics we mentioned at the beginning, that are related to space and time, can be evaluated better. In relation to space, one feels to be engulfed in an apparently 'impossible' environment or is encountered with something that should normally be excluded from the environment. In other words, the encounter disturbs one's rational experience of space, and leads one to be scared. On the other hand, there is something in the experience which attracts one, which causes one to wish the experience to repeat, and it is mostly due to the intervention of the time element. One feels that the situation or the thing, although disturbing and frightening to a certain extent, is also so familiar; it causes one to feel as if one has encountered it before. Freud posits that "this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (241). It evokes a feeling of remembrance of a long forgotten past experience, which can never be fully present to consciousness. It is this feeling that leads to a 'compulsion to repeat'. Freud significantly relates the feeling of the uncanny to the intra-uterine experience:

To some people the idea of being buried alive by mistake is the most uncanny things of all. And yet psychoanalysis has taught us that this terrifying phantasy is only a transformation of another phantasy which had originally nothing terrifying about it at all, but was qualified by a certain lasciviousness -- the phantasy, I mean, of intra-uterine existence (244). ... It often happens that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This unheimlich place, however, is the entrance to the former Heim [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning. There is a joking saying that 'Love is home-sickness'; and whenever a man dreams of a

place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: 'this place is familiar to me, I've been here before', we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body. In this case too, then, the unheimlich is what was once heimisch, familiar; the prefix 'un' ['un'] is the token of repression (245).

Freud observes that "an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes" (244). That is perhaps why "there are many more means of creating uncanny effects in fiction than there are in real life" (249). It is possible to deduce from this observation that what happens in the encounter with the uncanny is a kind of automatic working of the imaginary without being controlled by the reality principle. In other words, what is at stake is not a simple coming back of a 'repressed' memory but an inevitable start of 'another kind of experience'. Two points are implicated in this proposition: (i) in addition to the alternative experience of space, which I have tried to describe in several parts of this study, it is necessary to have a new concept of time which cannot be reduced to conscious memory; (ii) it should be assumed that this other kind of experience has been repeated enough so as to be habitualized that it can start automatically when the conditions evoke it. This, in turn, requires to take into consideration the possibility that this kind of experience cannot be limited to intra-uterine experience alone but has continued after the birth.

As far as the first point is concerned, that is, a new conception of time, I would like to refer to Sanford Kwinter's study (1992). Kwinter proposes that the classical science of nature has extracted "individual realities from the complex continuum which nourished them and gave them shape, made them manageable, even intelligible, but always transformed them in essence." Kwinter interprets this operation as due to an "exclusion of time" from science:

Cut off from those precarious aspects of phenomena that can only be called their 'becoming', that is, their aleatory and transformative adventure in time including their often extreme sensitivity to secondary, tertiary, stochastic, or merely invisible processes, and cut off as well from their effective capacities to affect or determine in their turn effects at the heart of these same processes -- the science of nature has excluded time and rendered itself incapable of thinking change or novelty in and for itself (Kwinter 1992: 14; cited in Crary 1990: 34).

According to Kwinter, "matter derives both its capacities and its attributes" through time; and time "can be realized only in a matter caught in the throes of 'passing out of step with itself.'" Perhaps, the element of temporality involved in this account should not be called "'time' itself (Chronos) but rather a general conception of a 'flow phenomenon', a dynamical, richly implicated system of becomings (Aion)" (1992: 18). Such a notion of time as a 'flow phenomenon' can be considered in the same line with Whitehead's account of the 'givenness of experience' as "the specific character of the temporal relation of that act of experience to the settled actuality of the universe" (see Introduction)¹⁵. Only such a notion of temporal relation allows

¹⁵ My usage of Kwinter's notion of time is rather limited to those points which relates time to force, to matter as fluctuating between metastability and form, and accordingly, to actuality. However, in his overall schema, the concepts of information, and virtuality, or potential, play a significant role so as to give time a determining power, on which I have some reservations.

one to understand the specific character of actuality in the production of experience without separating the actor from the action. If the encounter with the uncanny is taken in this context, it becomes possible to conceive it as the moment in which an outmoded, but once well-acquired mode of experience is triggered. The main character of the mode is metastability and its main requirement is 'stepping out of itself'. Instead of an oppositional difference based on separate boundaries, there is relation of forces between metastable intensities. It is this mode of experience that I call 'pre-rational mimesis'. Pre-rationality denotes the irrelevance of any economy, any attempt at preservation of a 'present' state, form, or identity in a space-time violent and uncontrolled expenditure of forces and mutual affection rules.

Here, we arrive at the second point implicated in the automatic working of the imaginary, that is, its being habitualized. If pre-rational mimesis is the essential mode of intra-uterine experience, there is no need to assume that it does not continue after the birth, or even after the formation of the 'I'. Benjamin considers 'mimetic faculty' as a developed form of mimicry. He interprets it as "a rudiment of the powerful compulsion in former times to become and behave like something else," and adds that "there is none of his [man's] higher functions in which his mimetic faculty does not play a decisive role." For Benjamin, play is the school of mimetic faculty. He reminds us that "the child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher but also a windmill and a train." Having a 'concept of similarity' in adult life, that is, being able to see 'natural correspondences' is due to the development and transformation of the mimetic faculty. However, Benjamin asserts that "these natural correspondences are

given their true importance only if seen as stimulating and awakening the mimetic faculty in man” (1978b: 333). In Benjamin’s thought, the path which links pre-rational mimesis to play, and play to mimesis-representation can easily be followed. What is more significant is his observation that from within the higher mode of mimesis-representation, there is the possibility of access to the pre-rational, sensuous mode of mimesis. In psychoanalytic and literary discourses, however, different approaches can be observed especially in the interpretation of the relation between play and artistic representation.

3.3. Play and theatricality

3.3.1. Two modes of play and mimesis

In a short article entitled “Psychopathic Characters on Stage” (1905-6), Freud, in reference to Aristotle, proposes that the purpose of drama is to open up “sources of pleasure or enjoyment in our emotional life through catharsis.” He also argues that the situation of “an interested spectator at a spectacle or play” is analogous to that of playing children. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (1997) quotes a part from Freud’s article in which Freud posits that the spectator is a person “who experiences too little,” and “he longs ... to be a hero”; by the help of the playwright and the actor he can identify himself with the hero and lives a vicarious adventure. In Freud’s view, “his enjoyment is based on an illusion” since he is sure that, “firstly, it is someone other than himself who is acting and suffering on the stage, and, secondly, that after all it is a game, which can threaten no damage to his personal security.” Freud adds that the

spectator has a masochistic satisfaction in the character's struggles and final defeat (Freud 1905-6: 305; cited in Lacoue-Labarthe 1997: 182-3).

In the second part of Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1975) (1920), Freud mentions a hesitation between two views about children's play. He states that, on the one hand, "in their play children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life, and that in doing so they abreact the strength of the impression and, as one might put it, make themselves master of the situation." On the other hand, he thinks that "all their play is influenced by a wish ... to be grown-up and to be able to do what grown-up people do." Freud also observes that "the unpleasurable nature of an experience does not always unsuit it for play," and he finds a parallel between the child's taking pleasure and her/his "passing over from the passivity of the experience to the activity of the game." However, he looks for the source of pleasure in the child's handing over "the disagreeable experience to one of his playmates" and thus revenging himself "on a substitute" (1975: 16). The first conclusion Freud draws from his own interpretation is that "there is no need to assume the existence of a special imitative instinct in order to provide for play" (1975: 17). The reason he reaches at such a conclusion is related to his notion of imitation, mainly a modification of Aristotelian 'recognition'. It is dependent on identification with a character which, in children's play, can be observed as the identification with grown-up people, and it does not seem to be the essential motive behind play. Accordingly, Freud needs to make a clear distinction between children's play and the artistic play by adults which he thinks depends on imitation on the part of the actors or the artists,

and identification on the part of the spectators. Freud asserts that the “final outcome” of such plays is “a yield of pleasure.” Since he thinks that “they give no evidence of the operation of the tendencies beyond the pleasure principle,” he decides that “the consideration of these cases and situations ... should be undertaken by some system of aesthetics with an economic approach to its subject matter” (1975: 17).

Lacoue-Labarthe (1997) observes the shift in Freud’s argument and gives special importance to the separation of children’s play from “artistic play and artistic imitation.” He thinks that there are two reasons for this separation. The first one is that “play does not imply ... the mechanism of the spectacle.” The mimicry that may be involved in play is “effective, direct, and active, comparable to that of the actor (and not of the spectator).” Furthermore, he argues that the “process of identification thus implied is more immediate ... than the actor’s,” and “the derealizing closure of the theatrical site” establishes “only in part.” In other words, there may be only “a primitive interiorization of the representational cleavage.” He presents the second reason of the separation as the presupposition of “an indirect way to pleasure, by contrast with the participation of the spectacle.” Following Freud, Lacoue-Labarthe sees a “renunciation ... of pleasure” and a “reiteration ... of suffering” in the repetition of the ‘disagreeable’, in the abreaction, and in the effort to master the situation during play. He interprets this as a “break (however brief, furtive, or tentative) with the economic system,” and as an implication of ‘loss’ and ‘risk’. He says that “one must get lost in play (and take risks) to win (back oneself).” In the deferral of “gain, pleasure, security, and even sur-vival,” he observes “differance -- in the Derridean

sense --” and “(the) death (drive) ‘itself’”. So, in his view, play lacks “the anesthetizing form ... even if play is the birth of form,” and it cannot be explained in “the theatrical-spectacular economy, at least in its Aristotelian version” (186).

As it can be observed, Lacoue-Labarthe has some reservations on Freud’s proposition, especially on the reading of theatricality only in terms of mimesis-representation. Referring also an article by Jean François Lyotard (1989), in which Freud’s views on theatricality (1905-6) are criticized, Lacoue-Labarthe notes Lyotard’s observation of “the libidinal formalism of Freudian aesthetics -- the hypnotic, anesthetizing power of form,” and states that it has been subject to criticism by various writers. The argument was “that theatricality functions as a model or even a matrix in the constitution of psychoanalysis; established theoretically by Lacan, of course, it was then confirmed by diverse commentators” (1997: 176). What was discovered by such criticism “was that Freud had remained a pure and simple prisoner of the Western system and of the mechanics of representation -- of Graeco-Italian scenography, of classical dramaturgy, etc. -- and that he had even added to its coercive power by presenting it as a structural necessity of the human subject in general (176)¹⁶ . As Lacoue-Labarthe relates,

¹⁶ The critical attitude mentioned by Lacoue-Labarthe has been largely maintained by structuralist and poststructuralist circles against both Aristotelian version of theatricality and Freudian adoption of it into psychoanalytic discourse. A significant example of such criticism can be found in the following passage by Gilles Deleuze: “It is not surprising that, among many of the authors who promote it, structuralism is so often accompanied by calls for a new theatre or a new (non-Aristotelian) interpretation of the theatre: a theatre of multiplicities opposed in every respect to the theatre of representation, which leaves intact neither the identity of the thing represented, nor author, nor spectator, nor character, nor representation which, through the vicissitudes of the play, can become the object of a production of knowledge or final recognition. Instead, a theatre of problems and always open questions which draws spectator, setting and characters into the real movement of an apprenticeship of the entire unconscious, the final elements of which remain the problems themselves” (1994: 192).

[t]his formalism is held responsible for Freud's inability to consider or even to perceive what Ehrenzweig has termed the disruptive function of art, and in particular modern art, as opposed to its merely vicarious aspect. The notion of art as disruption, of course, implies that its function must be other than merely "secondary," that it have the power to put us in the presence of the Real itself (of présence), that in one way or another it can become an event: in short, that it affects, one might say, effectively (1997: 178-9).

I think the critical point in Freud's argument is his denial of the necessity of assuming the existence of a special imitative instinct. Whether it is taken as instinctual or not, observance of the role of a pre-rational mode of mimesis seems to be crucial in discussions on both play and art. Denying such a possibility, Freud misses, or ignores, a very significant, as well as ambiguous point put forward by Aristotle himself in his Poetics. It will be remembered that, there, Aristotle mentions a natural tendency in human beings to mimesis and to take pleasure from mimesis¹⁷. In other words, for Aristotle, mimesis begins in nature; and thus, according to my reading of that statement of Aristotle, it cannot be reduced to imitation through identification with another identity. However, in the following parts of Poetics, mimesis is discussed mainly in terms of mimesis-representation in the general

¹⁷ "The habit of imitating is congenital to human beings from childhood (actually man differs from the other animals in that he is the most imitative and learns his first lessons through imitation), and so is the pleasure that all men take in works of imitation" (Poetics 1448b5-9). Since I will follow a comparative argument to Mihai I. Spariosu (1989; 1991) especially on play, I preferred to quote his translation (1991: 211) which is a modified version of Else's (1963: 128). Spariosu argues that Aristotle, following Plato rather than the Sophists, distinguishes between "good aesthetic pleasure" coming from "the logo-rational play of the intellect" and "the bad one" coming from "the violent or ecstatic play of the senses" (1991: 210). Apparently Aristotle places the pleasure of learning to a higher position since his main purpose is to render philosophy a higher status than mimetic art. It is also for this reason that he attempts to consummate "the violent and ecstatic play of the senses," in Spariosu's words, in terms of pleasure. However, Aristotle's difficulty in maintaining such an argument can be observed especially in the proposition that although people "are repelled at the sight of unpleasant animals and corpses, they nevertheless enjoy their images" (cited in Spariosu 1991: 211). Aristotle attempts to isolate the image of things from their corporeality in order to transform them into peaceful pieces of visual information which will be subject to the pleasures of a rational play. Modernist formalist approach to artworks can be viewed as in the same line as this program of separation.

scheme of tragedy. Taken in this context, Aristotle's work should not be considered as a denial of pre-rational mimesis but rather as an introduction of a model according to which the pre-rational aspect of mimesis is subjugated by a rational order. It can be proposed that, by this way, the program initiated by Plato in the form of a denigration of mimesis reaches to a conclusion in the sovereignty of representation, and mimesis is redefined "in logo-rational, philosophical terms" (Spariosu 1991: 23).

Although having generally followed a rational-representative scheme in his discourse, in his Totem and Taboo, Freud describes "the motives which lead men to practice magic" as "human wishes," and proposes that "primitive man had an immense belief in the power of his wishes" (Freud 1962: 83; cited in Schechner 1993: 235). Such a 'belief in the power of wishes' is directly related to what Freud mentioned as 'omnipotence of thoughts' in the context of the uncanny. Freud argues that the wishes of the 'primitive man' "are accompanied by a motor impulse." While describing how the mechanism of the 'motor impulse' works, Freud makes an analogy with children's plays:

This motor impulse is at first employed to give a representation of the satisfying situation in such a way that it becomes possible to experience the satisfaction by means of what might be described as motor hallucinations. This kind of representation of a satisfied wish is quite comparable to children's play, which succeeds their earlier purely sensory technique of satisfaction (Freud 1962: 83-4; cited in Schechner 1993: 235-6).

Freud observes a progression from an animistic view of the world to a religious view, and then to a scientific view; and proposes that in each stage “external reality becomes more autonomous.” However, he separates the field of art from the rest of the world because he thinks that “the omnipotence of thoughts” have “been retained ... in the field of art.” He says,

Only in art does it still happen that a man who is consumed by desires performs something resembling the accomplishment of those desires and that what he does in play produces emotional effects -- thanks to artistic illusion -- just as though it were something real. People speak with justice of the ‘magic of art’ and compare artists to magicians. But the comparison is perhaps more significant than it claims to be. There can be no doubt that art did not begin as art for art’s sake. It worked originally in the service of impulses which are for the most part extinct today. And among them we may suspect the presence of many magical purposes (Freud 1962: 90; cited in Schechner 1993: 237).

As it can be remembered, Freud has argued that it is easier to produce the effects of the uncanny in art than in ‘reality’, and has proposed that the feeling of the uncanny is aroused especially when one’s sense of reality is violated (see 3.2). Here, in the above passage, he describes a situation which he mentioned in the context of the uncanny -- ‘omnipotence of thoughts’ -- and sees it as a remainder of an earlier state of mind, or an impulse, of human beings. He further argues that art practice can be considered as a continuation of it. Nevertheless, according to an evolutionary logic, he adds that that ‘primitive’ impulse is ‘extinct’ today. Now, I would like to refer to another passage by Freud in which he describes the difference of the ‘evolution of the mind’ from the evolution of ‘reality’:

... in reality the old materials or forms have been superseded and replaced by new ones. It is otherwise with the development of the mind. Here one can describe the state of affairs which is a quite peculiar one, only by saying that in this case every earlier stage of development persists alongside the later stage which has developed from it; the successive stages condition a co-existence, although it is in reference to the same materials that the whole series of transformations has been fashioned. The earlier state may not have manifested itself for years, but nonetheless it is so far present that it may at any time again become the mode of expression of the forces in the mind, and that exclusively, as though all later developments had been annulled, undone. This extraordinary plasticity of the evolution that takes place in the mind is not unlimited in its scope; it might be described as a special capacity for retroversion or regression -- since it may well happen that a later and higher stage of evolution, once abandoned, cannot be reached again. But the primitive stages can always be reestablished; the primitive mind is, in the fullest meaning of the word, imperishable (Freud 1963: 118-9; cited in Spariosu 1989: 10).

If the 'primitive' stages are imperishable from mind, then that aspect of art which Freud mentions as 'magical' cannot be extinct, but perhaps consciousness can access to it only in a deviated fashion, as can be observed in Freud's account of the uncanny. As Spariosu suggested, the model proposed by Freud should be accepted with a modification so as to free it from "Freud's essentially rational and evolutionary bias," or from "his view of mental development as a history of progress and regress." After such a modification, this argument can be benefitted from in its conceptualization of the coexistence and interplay of a pre-rational mode of mimesis and mimesis-representation in the experience of both 'reality' and art, as I have attempted to propose throughout the present study. Taken in this context, mimesis-

representation, which is the mode of the symbolic order, can be seen as a 'cover' over the pre-rational mimesis rather than a total erasure of it. The process starting from the prevalence of pre-rationality and ending in the dominance of a rational, symbolic mode of mimesis can be represented, or rather 'theatricalized', as follows: Intra-uterine experience is in the form of an oceanic, vertiginous state of becoming. During this stage, it is possible to assume a continuous oscillation which does not end in a discrimination between individuation and engulfment. The oscillation might be between the peacefulness of not being separated from the rhythm of the mother, or from the environment but sensing the flow in a single rhythm and intensity, and the disturbance of sensing a relative difference in terms of intensity and rhythm. The early experiences of a pre-rational mimetic relationship with the environment, which are comparable to mimicry observed in other animals, can be assumed to start here. After the birth, during the struggles to cope with the traumatic experience of separation from the mother's body, pre-rational mimesis is the main mode of relationship between the inner and exterior sensations, the difference between them being still blurred. Since the mimetic relationship with the environment is social as much as being actual from the very beginning, a pre-rational kind of play might perform an essential function there. Accordingly, it is plausible that some frequently rehearsed patterns, which bear the imprints of the violent and ambivalent character of pre-rational mimesis, are habitualized in early childhood. However, the rational modes of mimesis and play start to be also effective as early as what Lacan calls 'the mirror stage', and they increasingly widespread after the passage to the 'language of the father'. It can be proposed that the 'coverage' by the symbolic order, and passage

to a mainly rational, representative mode of mimesis can only be completed at about the age of eight, when the child loses her/his self-confidence to respond to the 'external' stimuli automatically, as it is put forward by Ehrenzweig (1967) in reference to the change of character in the art practice of children. I am inclined to interpret this phenomenon as follows: since pre-rational mimesis is generally dominated by mimesis-representation by that time, the plays of the child and her/his art practice also mostly obey the principle of imitation of the models of 'reality' and of identification, according to the established social conventions. Nevertheless, the pre-rational mode of mimesis, and its habitualized patterns of play, continue to work at the bottom, although they are not directly available to the child's consciousness.

D. W. Winnicott has studied children's play from a psychoanalytic point of view, and he also related play to cultural activity in adult life. In his Playing and Reality (1971), Winnicott posits that "play is in fact neither a matter of inner psychic reality nor a matter of external reality" (96). His notion of play is in fact dependent on his theory of 'transitional objects' and 'transitional phenomena'. A transitional object can be a toy, a napkin, corner of a blanket etc., which is used by the infant between the age of four to twelve months; and, according to Winnicott, it is a primary symbol of the infant's process of separation from the mother. In Winnicott's view, transitional objects show both "the first use of a symbol and the first experience of play" (96). He asserts that "the use of an object symbolizes the union of two now separate things, baby and mother, at the point in time and space of the initiation of their state of separateness" (96-7). Thus, it can be considered that transitional phenomena

originate “at the place where it can be said that continuity is giving place to contiguity” (101). Winnicott further argues that cultural experience in adult life derives from those transitional phenomena in the early childhood. He defines the place of cultural experience as follows: “The place where cultural experience is located is in the potential space between the individual and the environment (originally the object). The same can be said of playing. Cultural experience begins with creative living first manifested in play” (100), which is “an experience in the space-time continuum” (50).

Winnicott’s argument is significant for our purposes for mainly two points: first, he sees a “direct development from transitional phenomena to playing, and from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experiences” (51). This makes it possible to assume that some early patterns of play can be registered as habit, and when the essential mode of experience changes, they might lay dormant so as to be invoked when the conditions trigger them again, which, I suggest, is the case with the ‘uncanny’. Secondly, he conceives of the passage from oceanic experience of the mother’s body as united with one’s own to the sensing of the actual as a passage from continuity to contiguity in a space-time continuum. The passage is not due to a regression or it is not the product of a judgement of the mind. Winnicott elaborates the process as follows: “For an infant, at the start, there is no good or bad, only a not yet de-fused object. One could think of separation as the cause of the first idea of union; before this there’s union but no idea of union, and here the terms good and bad have no function” (cited in Milner 1993: 38). The concept of contiguity, or

‘contact’, allows for an interpretation of the passage as a ‘mimesis-play’ in a pre-rational, sensuous mode, although Winnicott himself does not refer to the concept of mimesis in his argument. Mimesis-representation, which is dependent on the assumption of an ‘extra’, ‘empty’ space between ‘me’ and ‘not me’, then, comes only with the ‘idea’, that is, when the symbolic order covers the pre-rational mode. This coverage denotes the erasure of the sense of engulfment from conscious perception. In other words, the opacity of ‘contact’ is substituted by the clarity of rational space. Yet, since it is not possible to eradicate the contact in actuality, the effects of it and the practical habits caused by it are always at work at bottom although one is not necessarily conscious of them. Nevertheless, as it is emphasized by Spariosu (1989: 189-90), Winnicott’s project on play still remains in a ‘logo-rational’ and therapeutic framework. His aim as a psychoanalyst is mostly irrelevant to the conclusions I attempt to draw from his arguments. Thus he needs to warn his readers against the ‘dangers’ of play for ego development, and is too sensitive about securing the play process against dangerous side-effects. Accordingly, his notion of creativity and cultural experience is still in line with the Aristotelian schema. Since what is most needed in this study is to deal with those ‘dangerous’, or ‘uncanny’ aspects of play, we will focus our attention to several other arguments on play and also on theater in literary and philosophical discourse. A promising starting point for such a review can be found in some early works of Friedrich Nietzsche.

3.3.2. Ambivalence of play and art in a theatrical context

In an unfinished study on Presocratic Greek philosophy and aesthetics, later published under the title Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks (1962), Nietzsche, following Heraclitus, describes the cosmos as ruled by playing of the eternal fire:

In this world only play, play as artists and children engage in it, exhibits coming-to-be and passing away, structuring and destroying, without any moral additive, in forever equal innocence. And as children and artists play, so plays the ever-living fire. It constructs and destroys, all in innocence. Such is the game that the aeon plays with itself. Transforming itself into water and earth, it builds towers of sand like a child at the sea-shore, piles them up and tramples them down. ... Not hybris but the ever self-renewing impulse to play calls new worlds into being. The child throws its toys away from time to time - and starts again in innocent caprice (62; cited in Spariosu 1989: 74-5).

In the above passage by Nietzsche, one can observe that (i) the play of the child and that of the artist are of the same kind; there is no distinction between them; (ii) moreover, these plays are of the same kind as nature's play; (iii) furthermore, there is no distinction between nature as player and nature as plaything; nature transforms itself and plays with itself; (iv) the essence of play is an eternal process of construction and destruction depending solely on an 'ever self-renewing impulse to play' without any other imperative; (v) being appears and passes away in this eternal becoming as play. Spariosu asserts that Nietzsche "goes back to the original, etymological sense of aisthesis" and reverses the Platonic-Aristotelian values that are modernized by Kantian aesthetics since in Nietzsche's argument, "the play of the

senses and imagination gains priority over the play of understanding and reason.”

Another point emphasized by Spariosu is the difference between Nietzschean cosmic ‘innocence’ and Kantian human ‘disinterestedness’. Kant’s notion attempts to render aesthetics immune from useful ends in the context of modern society whereas Nietzsche opens aesthetics to a realm beyond rationality and morality (Spariosu 1989: 75). As it will be remembered, modernist formalist aesthetics, from Bell to Fried, follows the Kantian notion of disinterestedness, which is supposed to free the artwork from representation and connect it to a transcendental ‘reality’ (see 2.1).

In The Birth of Tragedy (1956), Nietzsche develops his concept of play into a more complicated theory of art mainly in terms of theater, which he examines in the context of the ancient Greek tragedy. He argues that two diverse forces are at work in art, which he called Apollinian and Dionysian, referring to the values attributed to those two gods of the Greek pantheon. As Nietzsche conceives them, Apollinian and Dionysian forces both belong to nature before their being treated in artworks. The Apollinian is related with illusion; it gives form, and provides the sense of individuality. It is analogous to dream. Under the effect of the Apollonian force one feels as if floating on a boat all alone in the middle of an immense and dangerous sea. On the other hand, the Dionysian force provides a linkage to the continuous becoming of nature. One feels oneself lost in this continuity. It is analogous to intoxication. It takes one to the music and rhythm of nature, or of the sea. One accepts the danger, and gets engulfed in it¹⁸.

¹⁸ In the analogy of the boat on a tormented sea, Nietzsche refers Arthur Schopenhauer’s work The World as Will and Representation (1958). That work has been a valuable source of inspiration as well as a subject of criticism for Nietzsche.

According to Nietzschean dramaturgy, Apollinian Greek consciousness meets the Dionysian with great surprise¹⁹. First it considers the Dionysian as impenetrable and assumes that it could only be conceived by something of its own kind. Yet, it becomes more surprised when it recognizes that the Dionysian is not so alien to itself; only a thin veil separates it from its own already Dionysian engulfment in nature. Thus Apollo finds it impossible to live without Dionysus. Those elements excluded from the Greek system of consciousness as titanism and barbarism are discovered to be quite as essential as the Apollonian element. Consequently, as Nietzsche posits it, “by the thaumaturgy of an Hellenic act of will, the pair accepted the yoke of marriage,” and tragedy is their child “which exhibits the salient features of both parents” (1956: 19; cited in Spariosu 1989: 76). Originally, Nietzsche associates painting and sculpture with the Apollinian, and music with the Dionysian. Taken in a simple context, tragedy, or theater, signifies the coming together of elements of different arts. However, a closer examination reveals that Nietzsche’s concern is more complicated than a classification of the sources of inspiration of different branches of art. He conceives of the early Greek music as also Apollinian, and describes its encounter and integration with the Dionysian as an introduction of a new mode of force not only into Greek music but also into Greek culture in general terms.

¹⁹ It is generally accepted that Dionysus has appeared rather late in the ancient Greek pantheon. He is assumed as reminiscent from a barbaric, Asian cult characterized by excessively orgiastic rituals and sacrifice, possibly including human sacrifice. When he was transformed into a Greek god, the barbaric aspects of the cult were tamed, and the god was associated with the productive forces of nature. It is also generally accepted that the rise of theater, both in tragic and comic forms, is related with the annual festivities held to celebrate the products given by nature, especially grapes and wine, in a shared atmosphere of intoxication and ecstasy.

According to Nietzsche, Apollinian dream state and the Dionysian intoxication are two natural ‘drives of art’ (Kunsttriebe), and the artist is an imitator, or mimicker (Nachahmer)²⁰ of these drives (1956: 24). Mimesis, then, will result on the one hand in appearance or representation. However, what appears or is represented is not ‘reality’ but the ‘being of becoming’.

In other words, art does not imitate an ‘original’ being but engages in mimesis of Apollinian force of nature which the artist also shares, and produces illusions in the Apollinian sense. For in Nietzsche’s view, being is not original but denotes a transitory individuation which appears and then necessarily passes away in the play of becoming. On the other hand, mimesis also refers to what I call ‘pre-rational mimesis’ in its Dionysian aspect “with the individual effacing himself through entering a strange being” (1956: 55; cited in Spariosu 1989: 79)²¹.

²⁰ Spariosu (1989: 77) uses the term ‘imitation’ here whereas David Lenson (1987: 39) gives a list of terms ‘copier’, ‘counterfeiter’, and ‘imitator’ in his reading of the book by Nietzsche. But both writers agree that what the artist does follows these two natural forces. In fact, Nietzsche’s use of the term ‘drive’ necessitates it. My inclusion of the term ‘mimicker’ denotes an inclination to read this argument of Nietzsche following Benjamin’s notion of ‘mimetic faculty’, which is a base concept that does not yet discriminate between pre-rational and rational modes of mimesis. Considering the following argument in which I am mostly led by Spariosu, such an inclusion seems to be required.

²¹ Spariosu thinks that Nietzsche’s argument on art as well as on mimesis is yet ambiguous, and even problematic in The Birth of Tragedy. He sees Nietzsche’s foreword to the final edition of the book written fifteen years later than its first publication as an indication of Nietzsche’s awareness of the shortcomings. However, the arguments in the book is only slightly revised by Nietzsche. As it is also noted by Spariosu, the foreword is rather aimed to draw a clear line between Nietzsche’s and Schopenhauer’s lines of thought, especially regarding the concept of Will which, for Nietzsche, cannot be consummated within morality or in a claim to truth. I think this point, which is fully developed in Nietzsche’s later works, is already clear in The Birth of Tragedy. Moreover, the term ‘pessimism’ included by Nietzsche in the changed subtitle, and the related argument in the foreword emphasizing the ‘evil’ and ‘dubious’ aspects of power and violence, has allowed psychologically oriented readings which have frequently undervalued Nietzsche’s emphasis on pre-rational but actual Dionysian force, which can neither be conceived in opposition to a rational form of power nor can be encompassed in a rational theory, even if that theory seems to focus on such concepts as ‘death’, ‘violence’, ‘cruelty’, etc. Perhaps one can propose that what Nietzsche so ‘theatrically’ exhibits demarcates the borderline beyond which Western metaphysics cannot access. It is possible to observe

As it can be observed, in Nietzsche's thought, play and mimesis are continuous from nature to art. Especially in the Dionysian mode, which follows the more 'violent' as well as 'innocent' play of nature, even the player and the plaything cannot be separately identified. Nietzsche's presentation reveals the difficulty of conceiving of play and mimesis from a purely theoretical standpoint.

Richard Schechner, referring to Victor Turner's views on play, says, "Maybe scholars should declare a moratorium on defining play" (Schechner 1993: 24).

Turner has pointed out that play has volatile and sometimes dangerous aspects; it can imitate many things but cannot be identified with any of them; rational and irrational elements co-exist in play; and it has a tendency to restructure "what our culture states to be reality" (Turner 1983: 233-4; cited in Schechner 1993: 24-5). While admitting the resistance of play against being categorized, Schechner also points out the 'framing' of play by some 'metaplays' of culture (1993: 26). In fact, every process of play requires a 'safety net' because "once play is underway, risk, danger, and insecurity are part of playing's thrill" (26). The frame, or the 'net', in Schechner's term, constituted by the play itself is not opaque but porous; it allows penetration. On the other hand, in many cases, the frame placed around the 'play area' by institutions

a similar situation regarding Antonin Artaud's 'theatre of cruelty', which I will attempt to examine in the same line with Nietzsche's views on art. Up to the present moment of my discussion on play, Sprioso's arguments have constituted a valuable guide. However, especially his reading of Nietzsche in his recent study (1997) is inclined to approach Nietzsche's work in a binary relationship to that of Schopenhauer. Besides, he develops a more explicit program in which what he calls a 'ludic-irenic' matrix is maintained. Since I would like to keep a line of thought which presupposes the co-existence of pre-rational and rational modes of mimesis and play on 'violent' terms, for the moment, I will not be able to follow his later arguments, which can be a promising subject for a separate study.

of society is aimed to separate play from 'serious' activities which are constructed as the 'realities of life'. Schechner mentions an 'informal' kind of play, which he calls 'dark play'. In it, "actions continue even though individual players may feel insecure, threatened, harassed, and abused" (27). Following Schechner's account of 'dark play', one can ask whether a 'dark play' is going on in those realms of life 'outside' play. Below, I will try to discuss that Artaud's 'theater of cruelty' is in the same line with Nietzsche's arguments on play and theater, and that it can be considered as a voluntary acceptance of the violent and wild calls of natural forces from within the 'safety net' of art as a response to the 'dark' but naturalized plays of the 'outside' world.

Artaud rejects to conceive of "a cultured, civilized man as someone informed about systems, forms, signs and representations." Such a man, for him, is a "a monster who has developed to an absurd degree that faculty of ours for deriving thoughts from actions instead of making actions coincide with thoughts." Accordingly, he proposes that our modern life lacks "fire and fervour, that is to say continual magic ... because we choose to observe our actions, losing ourselves in meditation on their imagined form, instead of being motivated by them" (1974: 2). Thus, Artaud's theater is directed above all to bodily sensations. He compares a 'true' theater to acupuncture, and asserts that "theatre can reinstruct those who have forgotten the communicative power of magic mimicry of gesture, because gesture contains its own energy" (61). In order to explain what he expects from theater in its relation to audience, Artaud uses an analogy of the snakes dancing under the effect of music:

Snakes do not react to music because of the mental ideas it produces in them, but because they are long, they lie coiled on the ground and their bodies are in contact with the ground along almost their entire length. And the musical vibrations communicated to the ground affect them as a very subtle, very long massage. Well, I propose to treat the audience just like those charmed snakes and to bring them back to the subtlest ideas through their anatomies (61-2).

Artaud gives special importance to staging (*mise-en-scène*) and show (*spectacle*). In the established tradition of Western theater, these two elements play an insignificant role just because they are in the service of the spoken text. Their role is considered supplementary since they help to represent the script visually. Artaud thinks that this will continue “as long as in theater -- a performing art -- literature takes precedence.” He posits that staging should not remain “just a means of presentation, a subordinate way of expressing works, a kind of display interlude without any meaning of its own” (80). The established tradition of theater avoids using the stage and thus theater “has become essentially psychological, the intellectual alchemy of feelings and the pinnacle of dramatic art” (81). Instead of that tradition, Artaud declares that they “intend to base theater on the show” and that they “will bring a new concept of space into the show; all possible levels, all possible height and depth sight-lines must be used, and a special notion of time coupled with movement will exist within this concept” (95).

‘Cruelty’, as Artaud conceives of it, “is not synonymous with bloodshed, martyred flesh or crucified enemies. Practicing cruelty involves a higher determination ... a

kind of strict control and submission to necessity.” Thus cruelty always requires “the application of consciousness, for the latter gives practicing any act in life a blood red tinge, its cruel overtones, since it is understood that being alive always means the death of someone else” (78). Is it possible to conclude then that ‘the theater of cruelty’ aims at an affirmation of death? If so, whose death is it? In the passage below, which echoes Nietzsche explicitly, Artaud, in turn, affirms life in terms of cruelty:

I use the word cruelty in the sense of hungering after life, cosmic strictness, relentless necessity, in the gnostic sense of a living vortex engulfing darkness, in the sense of the inescapably necessary pain without which life could not continue. Good has to be desired, it is the result of an act of willpower, while evil is continuous. When the hidden god creates, he obeys a cruel need for creation imposed upon him, yet he cannot avoid creating, thus permitting an ever more condensed, ever more consumed nucleus of evil to enter to the eye of the willed vortex of good. Theatre in the sense of constant creation, a wholly magic act, obeys this necessity (78).

“Therefore,” says Artaud, “I have said ‘cruelty’ ... as I might have said ‘life’” (87).

Artaud asserts that “theater must be on a par with life;” but this is “not a personal life, that side of life where character reigns supreme, but a kind of emancipated life, sweeping human personality aside, where man is only a shadow (89). When taken in this context, death is above all the death of character, individual identity, which renders one just a shadow among others, and moreover, transforms one into a monster with an overdeveloped faculty of “deriving thoughts from actions.” It is exactly for this reason that Artaud severely criticizes Brechtian ‘alienation effect’. He considers it as an attempt to separate mind from the force of life. What he has

criticized in Brecht is not the latter's attempt to revive theater against the illusionistic tradition, which is also Artaud's aim. Artaud thinks that critical distance aimed at by Brechtian technique takes theater back to the inefficient, routine experience of everyday life. For, according to Artaud's view, the illusionistic tradition of theater and ordinary life go hand in hand. What he expects to realize is to affect the spectator so deeply that they could be carried away from ordinary life to an experience of theater. He thinks that "if theater doubles life, life doubles true theater." That is why he has chosen the title "The Theater and Its Double" for his treatise in which he described his notion of a 'cruel' theater. He says, "This title corresponds to all the doubles of the theater that I believe to have found over the course of so many years: metaphysics, the plague, cruelty. ... It is on the stage that the union of thought, gesture and act is reconstituted" (cited in Derrida 1978: 333, n. 19). And the spectator should not be alienated from this process but rather be engulfed in the extraordinary world of theater that severely attacks its 'doubles'.

Derrida (1978) claims that no theater, including Artaud's own attempts, is able to fulfill what Artaud has tried to prescribe. If it is maintained that Artaud has aimed to reach at a form of theater 'beyond representation', it is impossible to fulfill. As Derrida stated, "[b]ecause it has always already begun, representation ... has no end." It would be just a metaphysical assumption to imagine the 'closure of representation'. Yet, Derrida proposes that "one can conceive of the closure of that which is without end. Closure is the circular limit within which the repetition of difference infinitely repeats itself. That is to say, closure is its playing space. This

movement is the movement of the world as play” (250). Derrida further argues that Artaud himself was aware of the impossibility of reaching at a ‘pure presence’:

Artaud knew that the theater of cruelty neither begins nor is completed within the purity of simple presence, but rather is already within representation, in the ‘second time Creation’, in the conflict of forces which could not be that of a simple origin. Doubtless, cruelty could begin to be practiced within this conflict, but thereby it must also let itself be penetrated. The origin is always penetrated. Such is the alchemy of the theater (248).

If ‘the alchemy of theater’ is such, and ‘cruelty’ can be practiced within representation, why should a ‘player’ bother her/himself about the closure of representation instead of engaging in such a practice? Perhaps, it is possible to regard the following statement by Artaud in this context:

Let us leave textual criticism to graduate students, formal criticism to esthetes, and recognize that what has been said is not still to be said; that an expression does not have the same value twice, does not live two lives; that all words, once spoken, are dead and function only at the moment when they are uttered, that a form, once it has served, cannot be used again and asks only to be replaced by another, and that the theater is the only place in the world where a gesture, once made, can never be made the same way twice (1958: 75, cited in Derrida 1978: 247)²².

Although the passage significantly designates another matrix than representation, that is the actuality and eventhood of every process of ‘forming’, of every utterance or gesture, Artaud’s presentation of it seems to be problematic for at least two points. First, as it is observed by Derrida, emphasis on ‘one time’ calls for a linear, rational

²² In the edition I used, the passage is translated with slight difference (1974: 57). Since I am discussing it as parallel to Derrida’s argument, I prefer to keep his citation from another edition.

notion of time. A gesture, utterance, or form, because of its ambivalent character, that is its being already 'doubled', cannot become legible, or meaningful to a rational mind without reference to repetition (Derrida 1978: 247). Therefore, the specific value and eventhood of it can only be conceived in reference to a space-time continuum in becoming. Secondly, why should theater be the only place where a gesture acquires the character of an event? Or, to ask it in other words, why should it be necessary to conceive of theater in a binary opposition to life? If the doubling is relevant to every gesture and form, both in life and in art, it becomes possible to propose that life itself is also already theatrical, in the most cruel sense of the term. If Lacan can be affected by the violent gaze of the sardine can, or Derrida can be affected by the brushstrokes in a Van Gogh painting, and moreover, if they can give accounts of those events -- at the price of decentering a fixed, identifiable subjecthood -- it becomes possible to conceive that the symbolic order, or the scheme of representation, is not entirely successful in covering, or in enframing the affection. Or, as Derrida (1987) elaborates it, the very gesture of framing itself renders the 'outside' convenient to be enframed, in turn, from within. The medium used for a hygienic separation also provides linkage, and thus, allows contamination. Taken in this context, and concerning Artaud's proposition that "life doubles theater," is 'the theater of cruelty' anything else than an attempt to engage in excessive mimesis of its monstrous double which is called 'life' or 'reality', but is actually only a 'dark', naturalistic drama?

Before arguing the possibility of a 'cruel' play, I would like to describe the conditions and character of the 'dark' play going on 'outside' in theatrical terms. When the social conventions²³ have reconstructed the field of play as the symbolic field, every act of mine should accordingly be constructed as signification and 'I', myself, have to be constructed as the subject of those acts of signification. 'I' have to be 'erected' as a figure in space and produce meanings of things. 'I' have to stand in opposition to other subjects and objects. 'I' get aggressive since 'I' am compelled to stand against those, in turn, standing against 'me'. 'I' have to construct them all as 'my' objects in order to feel that 'I' exist. 'I' am anxious at being lost or remaining all alone. This tension carries 'me' to the roles oscillating between submission to a corporate identity and being a challenging individual. Besides, 'I' am absorbed by the rhythm and tempo of the mass around 'me'. 'I' have to discipline all those actions habitualized during the playtime and reduce them into meaningful and acceptable behaviour since any excessive action may result in not being understood by others. Even in that normalized form, there is a gap between the bodily sensations of those actions and the legible representations of them, which I (who?) have to tolerate.

Derrida, during the interview on spatial arts, has remarked that, in order to mention a bodily involvement, it is required to conceive of a rupture of that body itself. But which body is this to be ruptured? Isn't body already riven due to the differentiation of pre-rational and rational modes during the formation of the 'I'? And thus, isn't the body constructed as a 'body image' or a 'body concept' which is assumed to be

²³ I do not mean a society or conventions, in general terms. These are the conventions according to which 'I' actually lead, or rather 'enact' my 'life'.

‘owned’ by an abstract ‘subjecthood’ ? If so, it can be proposed that what is left behind in a bodily involvement in an event is this ‘body image’ or ‘body concept’.

3.3.3. Playing with metaphysics in an actual-theatrical context

Mikhail Bakhtin (1993) discusses the deferral of the actuality of acts by both theoretical and aesthetic ‘worlds’ due to their essentially abstract character:

The theoretical world is obtained through an essential and fundamental abstraction from the fact of my unique being and from the moral sense of that fact -- “as if I did not exist.” And this concept of Being is indifferent to the central fact -- central for me -- of my unique and actual communion with Being (I, too, exist), and it cannot in principle add anything to it or subtract anything from it, for it remains equal to itself and identical in its sense and significance, regardless of whether I exist or not; it cannot determine my life as an answerable performing of my deeds, it cannot provide any criteria for the life of practice, the life of the deed, for it is not the Being in which I live, and, if it were the only Being, I would not exist (9).

... the product of aesthetic contemplation is also abstracted from the effective act of contemplation, and is not essentially necessary for that act. Hence, aesthetic contemplation as well is unable to grasp once-occurrent Being-as-event in its singularity. The world of aesthetic seeing, obtained in abstraction from the actual subiectum of seeing, is not the actual world in which I live, although its content-aspect is inserted into a living subiectum. But just as in theoretical cognition, there is the same essential and fundamental non-communication between the subiectum and his life as the object of aesthetic seeing, on the one hand, and the subiectum as the bearer of the act of aesthetic seeing, on the other (14).

Although such terms as 'Being', 'singularity', 'unity' appear to connote a search for an origin or an authenticity, it is quite clear that what Bakhtin emphasizes is the exclusion of actuality, or practice from an abstract metaphysics of presence which can conceive of being only in a stabilized form. Besides, Bakhtin tacitly observes that such a metaphysics inevitably splits 'subiectum' and thus, constructs an illusionary temporization which has no counterpart in actuality. He describes the impasse of metaphysics in terms of 'aesthetic experience' as such: aesthetic contemplation does not reflect life "in its actual aliveness" but "it presupposes another subiectum, a subiectum of empathizing" which is situated outside that life. Therefore, it would be wrong to conclude that "the moment of pure empathizing is chronologically followed by the moment of objectifying, the moment of forming. Both of these moments are inseparable in reality. Pure empathizing is an abstract moment of the unitary act of aesthetic activity, and it should not be thought of as a temporal period; the moments of empathizing and of objectifying interpenetrate each other" (15).

Bakhtin's discourse can be considered as a sophisticated staging of the insufficiency of aesthetics in representing actual aesthetic practice due to the former's own essentially binary structure. In order to represent practice, aesthetic reason attempts to stabilize it in a legible form but doing so, it fails to recognize that it just constitutes a moment in practical reason. This exemplifies what Artaud calls the theater's 'double', which searches for the significance of play not in acting but in what is represented. Bakhtin stages the scene according to its own dramaturgy: "the aesthetic

answerability of the actor and the whole human being for the appropriateness of the role played remains in actual life, for the playing of a role as a whole is an answerable deed performed by the one playing, and not the one represented, i.e., the hero” (18).

Schechner (1993), who has also observed the inability of Western metaphysics in coping with the equivocality of play, refers to the concept of ‘maya-lila’ in Indian philosophy, following the studies by O’Flaherty (1984). O’Flaherty examines how these two concepts, ‘maya’ and ‘lila’ were combined in Indian culture. According to O’Flaherty’s account, ‘maya’ originally “meant only what was real; through its basis in the verbal root ma (‘to make’) it expressed the sense of ‘realizing the phenomenal world’ ... to ‘measure out’ the universe ... to create it, to divide it into its constituent parts, to find it by bringing it out of chaos.” It was considered as a magical power which is executed by gods, magicians, and artists. However, some Indian philosophies argued that “every one of us does it every minute of our lives.” This concept of ‘maya’ later developed so as to connote “magic, illusion, and deceit.” “Thus ‘maya’ first meant making something that was not there before; then it came to mean making something that was there into something that was not really there (O’Flaherty 1984: 117-9; cited in Schechner 1993: 28-9). On the other hand, ‘lila’ means “play, sport, or drama; its etymology related to the Latin ludus and from there to English ludic, illusion, elusive, and so on. Gods in their ‘lilas’ make ‘maya’, but so do ordinary people.” Schechner states that these two terms “create, contain, and project each other: like a snake swallowing its own tail.” The final combination of

the two terms, that is 'maya-lila', "is fundamentally a performative-creative act of continuous playing where ultimate positivist distinctions between 'true' and 'false', 'real' and 'unreal' cannot be made" (1993: 29). Thus 'maya-lila' denotes that making of 'realities' requires their being played. According to Indian perspective, "ultimate reality, if there is such, is neti, literally 'not that'". What is available to human experience or knowledge is the multiplicity of "the interpenetrating, transformable, nonexclusive, porous, multiple realities of 'maya-lila'. The Indian tradition of 'maya-lila' rejects Western systems of rigid, impermeable frames, unambiguous metacommunications, and rules inscribing hierarchical arrangements of reality" (1993: 34).

Basing his argument on this concept of 'maya-lila', Schechner asserts that playing is a 'processual template'. It is a "continuous bending, twisting, and loping of that" for which the only appropriate name seems to be 'action' (39). Therefore, he concludes, "it is wrong to think of playing as the interruption of ordinary life." Instead, playing can be considered as "the underlying, always-there continuum of experience, as the 'maya-lila' theory says. Ordinary life is netted out of playing but playing continuously squeezes through even the smallest holes of the worknet -- because there is no such thing as absolute opacity, there are no totally blank walls" (43).

In the light of Schechner's discussion of play, it becomes possible to add a final remark to the argument I have tried to develop against the presentation of theatricality by formalist aesthetics. Formalist aesthetics -- or any other discourse in a

similar position --, when trying to condemn theatricality as 'the other', was not perhaps aware of playing with fire. For what becomes more and more apparent in time is that theatricality is not the interruption of art, but its 'real' character. If it is impossible to separate any act from its enactment, it is also impossible to be located in a non-theatrical position either in production or in experience of art. The very enactment of these actions is always already theatrical. The arguments developed against theatricality by the supporters of formalist discourses can be conceived as attempts to naturalize the theatrical character of their own gestures. On the other hand, although those attempts cannot succeed in defeating theatricality of art practice or its experience, they manage to a certain extent to keep it in a classical, naturalist dramaturgy. And behind the thin veil, or inside the frame, of this dramaturgy, the acts of the actors in the artistic field can still be appropriated by art institutions.

Pierre Bourdieu asserts that "the experience of the work of art as being immediately endowed with meaning and value is a result of the accord between the two mutually founded aspects of the same historical institution: the cultured habitus and the artistic field." It is possible to propose that "it is the aesthete's eye which constitutes the work of art as a work of art." However, it should be also noted that "aesthetes themselves are the product of a long exposure to artworks." Bourdieu considers this two-sided process as fundamental to "every institution which can function only if it is instituted simultaneously within the objectivity of a social game and within the dispositions which induce interest and participation in the game." He further describes how the game is played: "The game makes the *illusio*, sustaining itself

through the informed player's investment in the game. The player, mindful of the game's meaning and having been created for the game because he was created by it, plays the game and by playing it assures its existence" (1993: 257).

Bourdieu states that both the production and the consumption of works "become historical through and through, and yet more and more totally dehistoricized." He explains dehistoricization as due to a reduction of the history of the play of appreciation of the works into a "a pure history of forms," and thus "completely eclipsing the social history of the struggles for forms which is the life and movement of the artistic field" (266).

In his comprehensive study on practice (1990), Bourdieu, in turn, defines the relationship between an observer and the observed as a particular instance of the relationship "between knowing and doing, interpreting and using, symbolic mastery and practical mastery, between logical logic, armed with all the accumulated instruments of objectification, and the universally pre-logical logic of practice." He further defines an 'objectivist' kind of relation to an object as "a way of keeping one's distance, a refusal to take oneself as an object, to be caught up in the object" (19). Accordingly, Bourdieu observes a certain conservatism in philosophy in privileging the logical logic and even attempting to exclude the practical logic from the field of thinking in a similar way to the process of dehistoricization of the encounter with the artworks:

the 'thinker' betrays his secret conviction that action is fully performed only when it is understood, interpreted, expressed, by identifying the implicit

with the unthought and by denying the status of authentic thought to the tacit and practical thought that is inherent in all 'sensible' action. Language spontaneously becomes the accomplice of this hermeneutic philosophy which leads one to conceive action as something to be deciphered, when it leads one to say, for example, that a gesture or ritual act expresses something, rather than saying, quite simply, that it is 'sensible' (sensé) or, as in English, that it 'makes' sense (36-37).

Later in his study, Bourdieu examines the relationship between the body and cultural habitus, which he considers crucial for a comprehension of the character of the logic of practice. He asserts that the reduction of body to a 'body image' or a 'body concept' is "a subjective representation largely based on the representation of one's own body produced and returned by others." He points out two reasons of such a reduction. The first one is that "all schemes of perception and appreciation in which a group deposits its fundamental structures, and the schemes of expression through which it provides them with the beginnings of objectification and therefore of reinforcement, intervene between the individual and his/her body." Bourdieu explains the second and more important reason of the reduction as due to the incompatibility of what I have previously called pre-rational and rational modes of mind:

... the process of acquisition -- a practical mimesis (or mimeticism) which implies an overall relation of identification and has nothing in common with an imitation that would presuppose a conscious effort to reproduce a gesture, an utterance or object explicitly constituted as a model -- and the process of reproduction -- a practical reactivation which is opposed to both memory and knowledge -- tend to take place below the level of consciousness, expression and the reflexive distance which these

presuppose. The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it enacts the past, bringing it back to life. What is ‘learned by body’ is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is (72-3).

According to Bourdieu, it becomes impossible to conceive the emergence of unexpected actions under the conditions of an established habitus without taking into account those processes at work below consciousness. Elements of pre-rational, or in Bourdieu’s term, pre-logical, mimesis and play enables the practice to be “caught up in ‘the matter in hand’” and excludes the possibility of paying “attention to itself (that is, to the past). It is unaware of the principles that govern it and the possibilities they contain; it can only discover them by enacting them, unfolding them in time” (92). In relation to this point, Bourdieu notes that “there are acts that a habitus will never produce if it does not encounter a situation in which it can actualize its potentialities.” He mentions the possibility of the use of the “interdependence of habitus and situation” in art. When “a habitus (chosen, intuitively as a principle generating a particular style of words, gestures, etc.)” is brought together with “an artificial situation designed to trigger it off,” this may lead to “the production of practices which may be completely improvised” (295).

In the light of all those arguments developed throughout this study in which I have tried to elaborate various aspects of the theatrical encounter with spatial works, I would like to review the two alternative ways of experiencing such works.

If a work is produced so as to remain within the frame which envelopes it, or, if it is tried to be kept in its 'specific' medium as it is proposed by Fried, this means that the work also tries to keep the 'subject' in front of it in her/his boundaries. When the 'subject' forms a meaningful gestalt of the work according to the established 'rational illusion' of space, s/he does not become aware that her/his 'body image' is threatened. There occurs a movement from the 'subject' towards the work during which the difference between the work and the 'subject' is maintained at the symbolic level, and thus, the 'subject' does not get irritated by being absorbed by the work. Although the work still affects the 'subject', that is, although the movement is actually reciprocal, bodily violation is naturalized thanks to the voyeuristic pleasure experienced through gestalt. On the other hand, if the work highlights its specific spatio-temporal character, it is possible for the 'subject' to experience a momentary mimetic vertigo. Since the movement from the work towards the 'subject' overtly theatricalized, the 'subject' 'senses' to be decentered from her/himself; in other words, the acting body leaves off the 'body image' so as to be engulfed with the work in 'another' space-time. Here, the reciprocity of the movement, the violation of the separation of the 'subject' from the gestalt can be felt. Simultaneously the body senses to be activated, tempted to act, to play. Such an encounter is uncanny in the most ambivalent sense of the term: it is unheimlich in the sense of deterritorialization, to use the term by Deleuze and Guattari, it is also heimlich in the sense of annihilation of distances and intermingling of an acting body and a 'transitional object', in Winnicott's term, which is what we called 'the work' before the encounter. I will try to elaborate how this 'transitional phenomenon' is

reterritorialized in a 'wonderland', or an 'as if' world in terms of play in the following chapter. But before that, I would like to note the other possibility. Even in front of such a work, it is possible for a 'subject' to resist to be engulfed by the work, and to insist on keeping the distance, and to construct a relationship based on gestalt. What can be 'perceived' by this 'subject', then, is the 'objecthood' or 'literalness' of the work, as is the case with Fried. The mechanism of such a resistance is explained by Bourdieu as follows: "In periods of rupture, the inertia inherent in art competences (or, if preferred, in habitus) means that the works produced by means of art production instruments of a new type are bound to be perceived, for a certain time, by means of old instruments of perception, precisely those against which they have been created" (1993: 225-26). This possibility of resistance can only be broken in a long-term struggle in the artistic field.

The four works I mentioned in the introduction, with their special emphasis on their spatio-temporal characteristics, have overtly theatricalized the processes of encounter of the audience with them. Therefore, I suggest that, any other approach than what I have tried to theoretize as 'theatrical' would not succeed in giving an account of how such works effectively affect the audience. A closer examination of some details of those works will exemplify various aspects of the theatrical encounter with them.

4. THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE OF FOUR SPATIAL WORKS FROM TURKEY

In this chapter, I will try to exemplify the uncanniness of the encounter with spatial works, the functioning of pre-rational and rational modes of mimesis and play, and thus, to show the significance of the theatricality of such experiences, in reference to my own experience of those four works mentioned in the introduction. Before a close examination of the details of those works from a theatrical perspective, I would like to review how two modes of mimesis and play function in an uncanny encounter with an overtly theatrical work.

Mimesis and play perform different functions in different stages of the ‘uncanny’ encounter with the spatial work. At the first stage of the encounter, the ‘subject’ experiences a vertigo which requires for it to cross its previously constructed boundaries due to the affection by the gaze of the work, and it becomes a ‘decentered’ body. There, it enters in a pre-rational mode of mimesis in order to adapt to the space-time of the event (camouflage). This pre-rational mimetic mode is also characterized by a pre-rational ludic element in the form of a doubling. It doubles itself; one of the parts plays the role of a ‘shield’ or ‘mask’ in order to ward off the gaze of the work (intimidation) while the other assumes the role of a pre-rational ‘actor’. The play is activated at this pre-rational stage through an oscillation

of the imaginary between the ‘mask’ and the ‘actor’. At the second stage of the encounter, depending on the relative security achieved through doubling, the imaginary finds opportunity to ally with the symbolic in order to double the work, in turn. In more explicit terms, the ‘actor’ part of the double gets in contact with the past memories collected in the consciousness of the socially constructed subject before the encounter. It engages in mimesis-representation to form semblance; that is to say, it first accepts the attributes of the work as ‘gestures’, and associates them with conscious images. This rational mimetic mode is also characterized by a ludic element because it involves a creative play of the imaginary both with the attributes of the work and with the available stock of past images. Thus, a fictive, or an ‘as if’ world is brought to fruition in which the ‘actor’ develops into a character, and the work becomes a ‘stage’, or a playhouse. It can be asserted that what seems uncanny (*unheimlich*) from the ‘outside world’ which enframes it, and from the perspective of a socially constructed subject, becomes ‘homely’ from within the frame, and in terms of theatrical character. However, the world within the frame is ‘a world apart’, and to use the term coined by Mikhail Bakhtin, it has its own ‘chronotope’²⁴. This means that, although being enframed by the ‘outside world’, it cannot be consummated in its terms. Furthermore, the ‘character’ enacted by the ‘actor’ cannot be explained solely from the position of a socially constructed subject from whom once ‘it’ has been decentered. ‘It’ cannot be considered a ‘man’ in the established sense of the

²⁴ Bakhtin (1981) describes chronotope as follows: “We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, ‘time space’) to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. ... we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely). ... The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic.” Here Bakhtin refers to Kant’s definition of space and time “as indispensable forms of any cognition” in “Transcendental Aesthetics,” but he notes that he differs “from Kant in taking them not as ‘transcendental’ but as forms of the most immediate reality” (84-5).

word. It can rather be considered as a ‘monster’ or a ‘freak’, which can assume the ‘character’ of an animal, a machine, or a thing as well as a ‘man’ in this special chronotope where the imaginary can also work against the symbolic order. It follows that the ‘world’ enframed and separated by the outside one by being labelled as ‘theatrical’ now acquires a power from this very gesture of framing, which is a basic element of naturalistic drama, so as to enframe in turn the outside from within, but now according to a ‘theater of cruelty’.

Below, in the first section, I will make a short description of those four works the experience of which has lead me to the present theoretical study. Then, in the second section, I will elaborate on the spatio-temporal specificities of the works. In the third section, the aforementioned points of theatrical encounter will be exemplified. My aim is not to ‘represent’ or interpret the works but to transfer the theoretical argument developed in previous chapters on the experience of spatial works back to its actual context. Therefore, in this examination of some aspects of those works, I will refer only to those points which seemed exemplary for a description of certain aspects of the theatrical process.

4.1. Description of the works

Kurşun Uyku (Heavy [Lead] Sleep) was exhibited by Selim Birsal in the group exhibition “Gar” in Ankara Train Station, during Sanart, “Art and Taboos,” 2nd International Symposium, Ankara, 1995. The work was partly produced in situ, on the first waiting platform of the train station, just behind the main entrance hall. It

consisted of twelve hollow relief human figures (six male, four female, and two figures of children whose sexes were unidentifiable) made of wrapping paper, painted with graphite, and laid on the floor side by side (Plate I). The figures of women and children were ready beforehand. A theater actor, Şehsuvar Aktaş, served as a model for the male figures, which were produced on site. The actor lied on the floor in various poses and Birsal wrapped his body with wet wrapping paper. Then, Birsal dried the molded pieces with an electric resistant heater, while Aktaş was still wrapped in them (Plate II). After they were dried, the actor got out of the pieces, and they were placed on the floor. Those hollow figures in graphite colour remained there, on the platform, among people who waited for trains (Plate III).

Unfortunately, the work could only be exhibited for two days, since it, together with some other works in the same exhibition, was damaged by unknown people, and the management of the train station decided to close the exhibition. The officially declared reason for the ‘closure’ was that “it became impossible to protect the works against damages.” However, what was told by the witnesses was different. Huge numbers of soldiers were frequently transported in parties from Ankara Train Station to the South-East Anatolia, in order to engage in the warfare going on against Kurdish rebels. Some people, presumably those who were relatives and friends of soldiers sent from the station, compared the hollow figures of Birsal’s to dead bodies, and damaged them as a reaction. They also complained to the management of the station against the work with the claim that it had a harmful effect on the psychology

of both the soldiers and those who saw them off. It was told that the managers acknowledged the complainers to be right, and closed the exhibition.

Pilav ve Tartışma Yeri (Rice and Discussion Place) was exhibited by Sarkis in the 4th International Istanbul Biennial, Antrepo, Istanbul, 1995. The materials and requirements of the work were listed by Sarkis himself as follows:

- “Rice and Discussion Place” written on a yellow neon chandelier. In the center 220 cm high.
- An old copper cauldron with a diameter of 80 cm and depth of 40 cm. Rice with chickpeas will be served in the cauldron every day at a specific time (between 12:00-15:00 or later). The pot will be warmed up.
- Plates, spoons, water barrels, salt, pepper, and open cupboards to put these in.
- Wooden banks to sit on.
- Someone responsible for the place (to serve, to pick up things and to clean).
- Sitting, eating, talking and discussing if desired, will be open to everyone (Catalogue for the Fourth International Biennial 1995: 254) (Plate IV).

Sarkis stated that his main motivation was to liberate a cauldron that he owned from being a decorative object. He thought that such a liberation involved a transformation of the abstract to the concrete. He started from an abstract form, “for example a square with a circle in the middle, waves radiating from the circle to the square and angle-irons indicating the four corners of the square,” and he transformed it into a concrete “place.” He described the development of the project as such:

The circle in the middle became the round body ($\varnothing=80$ cm) of the cauldron [Plate V]; the waves turned into banks to sit on, and the angle-irons into

cupboards. The square was the space itself. The heat in the center became the heat of the food, warm, grains of white with yellow dots (like rice with chickpeas). Banks became seats for the visitors. A place to come, sit, eat, and talk; around the heat of the center, like sitting around a brazier or a food tray. Generally, in international group exhibitions, because of unacquaintance and timidity everybody either scatters out or forms small groups (more often among the artists of the same country). ... I wished to set up this “place” a few weeks before the exhibition is opened, after the floor is cleaned. Mainly for the ones who work in this “place,” to come and eat a plate of rice and chickpeas, to meet, to get acquainted, to talk ... Artists, curators, workers and the whole staff ... And after the opening, for the visitors to come, to sit, to eat a plate of rice and talk about the exhibition. It is open to everybody. The rice and the chickpeas and the water should be free of charge in this “place,” just as looking at the paintings on the walls is (Catalogue for the Fourth International Biennial 1995: 254) (Plate VI).

Dışarı çıkmadık, çünkü hep dışardaydık, İçeri girmedik, çünkü hep içerdeydik (We didn't go outside, we were always on the outside; We didn't go inside, we were always on the inside) was exhibited by Hale Tenger in the 4th International Istanbul Biennial, Antrepo, Istanbul, 1995. This was a site-specific installation in the same huge hall as the work by Sarkis was exhibited, about a hundred meters away. Tenger's work had strictly defined boundaries with the barbed wires that surrounded the area of the work in a rectangle, between a series of columns and a side wall of the hall. If the rectangular space was considered to be divided into two equal squares, a small, old guard house took place in the middle of one of the square areas, although there was not any division in the area surrounded by the barbed wires. The only entrance to the surrounded area was through a gate, which was so close to a side wall

of the building (Plate VII). The upper ends of the metal posts of the barbed wires were bent inward as if to prevent going out. The guard house remained from the period when the building was used as a customs warehouse. Supposedly, it was used by the guards to keep warm in cold weathers. When Tenger first came to Antrepo to examine the place of exhibition, she found this hut left at a corner in the second floor of the empty building, where she later exhibited her work. Then, she used it as a part of her work (Plate VIII). Inside the hut, there was a bench and a small table, on which photographs from old calendars, with scenes from nature, were stuck. Similar pictures from calendars were also plastered on windows and walls. On the small table, Tenger placed an empty glass of tea, and a small radio, which continuously played some old, naive, Turkish lyric songs (Plate IX; X).

Fani Olan (One [that] who [which] is transitory) was exhibited by Cengiz Çekil in Sanart, “Art and Environment,” 3rd International Symposium, Ankara, 1997. This work was also produced in situ, on the remains of a small demolished building, once used to administrate the construction of the Congress and Exhibition Center, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, where the international symposium and the related exhibition organized. Since the construction of the center was completed, the function of that small service building ended, and people were demolishing it when Çekil decided to use its ruins in his project. He first collected various materials that once belonged to that building, and cleaned the foundation and some ruined walls of the building. Then, he arranged and installed those findings back in the building according to his project (Plate XI).

The building occupied a place of approximately 70 m². Before being demolished, there were eight interior sections of the building: a large room, three small rooms, a kitchen section, a bathroom, a toilet, and a small cabinet. After the main entrance, that was reached after four steps, there was a corridor that separated the interior sections from each other. However, the roof, the outer walls, and most of the inner walls were completely demolished. When it was approached, what was seen was a concrete platform, approximately 60 cm high, and remains of some walls separating the kitchen, the bathroom, and the toilet from each other. Çekil first removed the remains of the floor pavement of two rooms, and used the black glue once used for paving the floor as a surface. To highlight the raising and the interior separation, He painted the outer sides of the foundation and the lines of division on the floor, where necessary. Then, he paved the floors of the rooms with pieces of window glasses he collected around the building so that it became possible to see the reflection of the sky and the clouds on those pieces of glasses (Plate XII). The corridor was not paved in order to permit people to ‘enter’ the building. In the toilet section, he placed a thick, clear, rectangular glass panel on the remaining old style (*à la turca*) toilet. On both sides of the toilet, he placed two metal, mechanical tools, which were broken and scattered around the building (Plate XIII). In the small cabinet next to the toilet section, he put on the floor a metal case with a glass cover in which he placed regularly some parts of tools and machines he collected around the building (Plate XIV). In the bathroom, he placed a long, transparent hose on a remaining fountain from which water flowed through the demarcations of the demolished walls (Plate

XV). On the wall of the bathroom, he printed “Cengiz Çekil”, in black coloured, capital letters. He hung on a remaining wall a metal label once belonged to a machine. Lastly, on the kitchen floor, he erected three thick and large rectangular stone blocks in reddish brown. On one of the stone blocks, the dates of the beginning and the end of the symposium was inscribed. On the remaining wall of the kitchen section, beside the stone blocks, Çekil hung a panel on which the title of the work, “Fani Olan” was printed (Plate XVI).

4.2. Specific role of space-time in the works

Considering the above-given short descriptions of the works, and the titles given to them by the artists, it can be deduced that specificity of the site and of the time of installation is the common denominator for all the works. As far as space is concerned, it has a two-fold significance. First, in general terms, all the artists seem to be conscious that they installed their works in this particular geography, that is contemporary Turkey, and their works would be received in this cultural milieu with its specific characteristics as well with those that combine it with a more general Western cultural environment. Secondly, though related to the first, there are more specific features of the places in which works are installed, and by means of their interaction with those very installations, which have their own spatial qualities, I argue, those places transformed into sites of certain ‘theatrical’ experiences. The issue of time can also be approached with respect to two aspects. The first one goes parallel to the first point about space: in all of those four works, although with some variations of attitude, there is a sense of historical time, a certain consciousness about

“what was going on around” while that work was being installed there in that specific period. Secondly, again related to the first aspect, there is a sense of duration of that which I called ‘theatrical’ experience both in terms of a ‘single performance’ by a receiver and in the sense of a ‘performance season’, or, if you like, the period of exhibition. It will be useful to exemplify these points in terms of each work, separately.

To follow the above order, let me start with Selim Birsal’s work. First, the issue of space: when Birsal installed his work on a waiting platform of Ankara Train Station, people from different parts of Turkey and with different social and cultural backgrounds had been using that platform to wait for trains going to different regions of the country. There were also some homeless people, especially youth and children, who used to stay at the station, which might be a common condition in similar places in many Western countries. Lastly, some art-lovers would come to see his work there. So, when he made his hollow figures ‘sleep’ on one of the platforms of the station, all those people with divergent cultural habitus would gather around those figures that would be lying under their feet. Whatever were Birsal’s expectations from such a meeting, he must have been prepared to meet the contingencies which might occur in that special part of the platform, which then turned into a place of an uncanny encounter of both people with each other and of people with the work. In terms of historical time, one can follow a line from a more broader to a narrower sense. It is clear that the train station served well to observe the conditions of the period. The contrast between the architecture of the building and its decoration which

remain from relatively early years of the Turkish Republic, and the later modifications to the decoration and addition of contemporary advertisements, the appearance of old and few relatively new trains, together with the divergent clothing and behaviour of passengers, presented a vivid image of the age in a rich historical setting. This scenery, which was perhaps no longer available to people, who were so accustomed to it, and so involved in their own daily routine, started to perform again because of that extraordinary occurrence on the platform. A narrower sense of time was also effective on the performance of the work, which was related with the 'normal' function of the platform. For those who came there to wait for trains, the duration of the performance was to be limited by the duration of waiting; otherwise they would miss their trains. An uncontrolled concentration on the work would distract them from the rhythm required by a daily timetable. But for those who came to receive the artwork, the case is reverse. Since they came to concentrate on the work, they needed a rhythm and a sense of time which would allow absorption; and the fuss of the others, and the quick change of the surrounding appearances would distract their concentration. In sum, it is possible to assume the existence of an ambiguity in the experience of space-time for any receiver, and that should be expected to cause some complications.

Sarkis installed Pilav ve Tartışma Yeri in an open area in the huge hall in the second floor of Antrepo. Being part of a contemporary biennial exhibition, the work took place beside works by some other artists, and its reception would inevitably be influenced by them. Perhaps, considering that fact as an advantage, Sarkis did not

attempt to isolate his work from others. On the contrary, he handled it with a strong awareness of space-time, starting from the historico-geographical significance of Antrepo itself. The building had a history as an old customs warehouse in Istanbul but at that time it served as a setting for an international exhibition of contemporary artworks. Sarkis' work, first of all, used this tidal movement in space and time in a fictional sense, but also in very concrete terms. He designed his 'stage' -- Sarkis himself has used the term when giving account of his various works -- as if it is an open-air shop, or buffet, where rice with chickpeas was served in an old cauldron -- but that time free of charge -- and talked. Since the space was open, and allowed surrounding works to be seen, and since the visitors were those who stayed in, or visited Istanbul, and were in some way or other interested in the exhibition, what would be talked about could be Istanbul, the exhibition, and the relationship between the two. The old copper cauldron and rice with chickpeas were two traditional elements of the culture of Istanbul. Rice with chickpeas is still sold either by traveling sellers or in small shops in the narrow streets of traditional bazaars of Istanbul. In a similar way, Sarkis served rice in an open-air buffet located on one of the narrow streets of the huge exhibition, the design of which was not so different from that of a bazaar. The visitors, as it would happen in a bazaar, could eat their rice without being distracted from the spectacle and could talk about what they saw. Of course, then, the objects of the spectacle were 'art objects', and the subject of the talk would be art. Pilav ve Tartışma Yeri, with its square plan achieved with corner cupboards filled with necessary equipment, and with its circular benches installed around the round cauldron, transformed into 'pure space', in the sense of being a

concrete stage, and thus reserved a 'place' for 'rice and discussion' in the exhibition organized in Istanbul, as a continuation of Istanbul (the exterior) in Istanbul (the interior), in which contemporary art, produced by artists from all around the world for that biennial in Istanbul, could be appreciated in a context of Istanbul as a 'theatrical' experience. A further point should be observed regarding the duration of the experience. It is limited to a certain extent with the period in which a plate of rice would be eaten by a visitor. In other words, the duration of 'performance' for each 'player' was conditioned materially; yet, it was also related by one's own rhythm and tempo. This should be assumed to have been effective on the tidal movement in space-time. Furthermore, since the work was in a deep interaction with the local spatio-temporal characteristics, and its becoming a 'stage', for those who wished to 'act upon' it, was dependent on those characteristics, its life as an artwork would be limited by the duration of the exhibition in Istanbul.

Hale Tenger's work also strongly emphasized the specificity of geography and history. The first element to mention in this context is the title of the work. The two lines taken from the poem Oteller Kenti by Edip Cansever, playing with a spatial paradox and contrast in its semantics, but also playing with the sense of time as repetition and monotony in its syntax, called for a tidal play in the addressee's turn between movement and stability in both spatial and temporal terms. When one turned to the installation by Tenger, it could be observed that the basic spatial elements of the work, the hut and the barbed wire surrounding it, enhanced the effect of the

mentioned call²⁵. The hut is an original extension of the old warehouse, including the old pictures plastered all around inside it. But when it is surrounded by the barbed wire, it becomes part of a contemporary work. A spatial rift led to a break in historical significance of the hut. Yet, since the work divided its own territory from the rest of the exhibition to a certain extent, and created its own interior and exterior, the historical element was allowed to continue to perform, though it was diverted from its 'natural' course. Then comes the historico-geographical, and also political significance of the barbed wire, the association of which, before anything else, in contemporary Turkey, would be with prison²⁶. What one faces in experiencing the work is not a mere sense of being prisoned; there is something more in it, since one can at least 'play' inside Tenger's territory. However, there is a rift: the outside, which was inside -- the interior of -- the exhibition hall. Still, there is another rift, since the wire directed inversely, indicating that the 'real' inside is outside. After a while, it might become possible for anyone to think that the best place to escape from such a seemingly eternal spatio-temporal distraction would be to go into the 'truest' inside, that is the inside of the hut. That was quite correct: it was possible to 'feel at home' there, warm and secure, equipped with the necessary accessories, the most pleasurable of them being the music coming from a small radio receiver. Yet, when

²⁵ In fact, in the process of production of the work, the hut, found by Tenger in approximately the same place as the work was installed, was the first element. In two interviews on this work, she told that she looked for a title which could continue the effect of the hut on herself, and she decided on those lines by Cansever, although the poet's context was different. When the hut, the first spatial element, and the title constructed a context of her own, she continued with the other spatial elements (Sarıkartal 1995; Kortun 1997).

²⁶ The association for Tenger was a bit stronger, since she had been accused of committing a political crime with her work in the previous biennial, but she was found "innocent" by the court. She expressed that she considered the work in the following biennial, that is the work studied here, as a response to the case in court (Sarıkartal 1995). However, the account of her case is in no way necessary for any ordinary person living in Turkey to make such an association at the first encounter with the work in spatial terms. In fact, 'interior' or 'inside' [*içeri*] is used as a synonym for prison in Turkish language.

one listened to the songs, and realized that all of them were long-forgotten Turkish fantasy songs from years away, one would become aware that the warmth and security could only be ‘played’ in the past tense. So, a tidal movement was also relevant in the experience of time by a visitor. As for the sense of duration, it can be clearly observed at two levels. The duration of a single ‘performance’ was determined by spatial elements as (i) approaching the work from the ‘outside’, (ii) entering through the gate, (iii) playing in the ‘outside’ of the ‘inside’, that is the area surrounded by the wire, (iv) playing the ‘pure inside’, that is the interior of the hut, and (v) exiting through the gate. The duration of ‘performance season’ was also spatially determined since the significance of the spatial elements, mainly the hut and the wire, would inevitably change if they were transported to any other place than Antrepo after the exhibition ended.

As far as its title was concerned, Cengiz Çekil’s work could be thought to be related with time, and the concept of transitoriness. Although this may seem correct from a general perspective, as a closer look might reveal, what enabled that work to deal with time seemed to be its being, first of all, a spatial work. It was a site-specific work, and it was ‘constructed’ on the ruins of a building. So, it is bound and related with architecture. It was installed beside a huge and significant work of architecture on the campus of one of the leading universities in Turkey, that is the new Cultural Center building, METU, and had a close relationship with that building. It was not so only because Çekil’s work was a part of an international symposium held at the Cultural Center but also, and perhaps more significantly, because he produced his

work on another building, which was once constructed in order to administrate the building process of the Cultural Center, and then was being demolished since its function 'ended', from a 'constructionist' perspective. According to that perspective, that small building must have been conceived, in the overall design of the Cultural Center, as a 'supplement', which would be used in order to complete the 'essential' building. And when the construction was finished, it was conceived as a 'deficiency' of design which had to be eliminated. However, it was such a 'supplement' that it had an 'originary' function in the process of construction, since everything was centered there, and carried out from that center. When Çekil came across the 'traces' of such an 'originating' process on the ruins of that 'temporary' center, he must have wished to 'act upon' it, and thus transform it into a 'stage' on which the visitors would also 'act' in their turn, even if he could not 'deconstruct' the mentality behind that process of construction which worked through destruction. What he actually did, using his findings of the ruined building, was to 'highlight' it in spatial terms, so as to call back its 'old' central function. But it was only possible in 'theatrical' terms. Indeed, his was a 'real' stage: an approximately seventy square meter platform, about sixty centimeters high, which could be climbed at with three steps. Once one got on it, all the available traces of the building's previous function would be revealed through the artist's manipulation. As for the sense of 'transitoriness', it would be experienced as parallel, on the one hand, to one's temporary, or rather 'transitory', performance onto the 'stage', and on the other hand, to the duration of exhibition, since the work, together with what had remained from the building, would be 'deleted' for ever as soon as the symposium ended.

4.3. Theatricality in context

As it can be deduced from the descriptions, all those works, due to the special emphasis on their spatio-temporal characteristics, were all presented to the audience as potential spaces of uncanny experiences. While framing their own uncanny spaces, that is, setting their own stages within the naturalized settings of some established institutions, they also deliberately allowed passages between ‘in’ and ‘out’. The porosity of the borders, or the ‘nets’, emphasized the uncanny effect.

In Bırsel’s Kurşun Uykusu, the border was in the most permeable form. What provided the border of the ‘other’ space was mainly the hollowness, or the fakeness of the figures themselves. It showed that although human figures were referred to, the literal, or material qualities of the work were more emphasized. In other words, the likeness to models seemed to be utilized in order to emphasize the deviation from them. If it is also considered that the work was partly produced in situ, in front of the audience, the emphasis on difference rather than semblance becomes more apparent. Consequently, the fact that I could not help taking those figures as human bodies, and could not prevent myself from being affected by their ‘gaze’, although they were explicitly shown not to be human bodies, rendered that part of the waiting platform an uncanny space for me, mainly because such affection seemed unreasonable.

Sarkis’ Pilav ve Tartışma Yeri was demarcated by the wooden cupboards at four corners of the work. The borders of the work were clearly visible but since the

cupboards were approximately 80 cm high, the inside was also visible. Besides, the gates at the center of each side, the benches around the cauldron, and above all, the rice served in it invited the audience to enter the square space marked by the cupboards. The crucial point in the experience of Sarkis' work seemed to be the recognition of the vast difference between staying one step outside the 'rice and discussion place' and stepping in it. Although the passage between 'in' and 'out' was apparently continuous, that one step difference changed the character of the experience entirely. Since everything which belonged to the work could be seen from outside clearly, it made no sense to enter the demarcated area as a spectator. Even though it was still possible to enter in order to examine the details closely -- an apparently senseless activity --, one could find oneself in so strange a situation while others were sitting, eating and talking. In sum, the single step by which one enters the 'place' cast one an entirely different role. If one resisted to enter and preferred to watch from outside, the experience was equally strange, too, since one could not help feeling oneself as if watching other people sitting, eating and talking in the 'place'. I think, what aroused the feeling of the uncanny in Sarkis' work was to sense that inevitable differentiation of one's role in and out of the 'place' although the distance between was only a single step. The ambiguity, and the uncanniness of the inner space was furthered by the awareness that although the 'place' was not a 'real' buffet, it was difficult to distinguish the actual experience of it from that of a 'real' one.

In Çekil's work, the separation from the outside was more explicit since one had to climb four steps in order to enter the space of the work. However, I was aware that

those steps and the raised platform were not originally parts of the work but belonged to a building. On the other hand, there was not a building, in a proper sense. The oscillation of my imagination between the presence and the absence of a building, which was dependent on my actual experience, led me to the conclusion that what I stepped on was an 'impossible' space although the experience of which was so 'real' for me. The feeling of the uncanny was aroused due to the difference between my past memories and the actual experience of architecture.

Tenger's work was the one whose boundaries were most explicitly fixed in comparison to other three works. The barbed wires clearly separated the space of the work from outside. At first glance, I saw a courtyard with a small hut in it, enframed within the huge exhibition hall. However, barbed wire preventing entrance was not what one expected to find in such an environment. Moreover, a detail defied my logic. The posts of the wire were bent outward, which conventionally signified that I was 'in', and accordingly, in order to go 'out', I was invited to go 'in'. The play with the conventional perception of space aroused the feeling of the uncanny.

Furthermore, since the gate through which I enter the courtyard was at the rear, beside a sidewall of the hall, while entering the courtyard, I could not help feeling myself entrapped, though voluntarily. Once one was in the courtyard the feeling of the uncanny increased, especially when one was being watched by those who were at the 'outside'. The ambiguity of one's situation in the courtyard encouraged one to enter the hut, which seemed to be a more stable and secure space. Yet, in fact, the experience of the inside of the hut increased the feeling of the uncanny. Although the

interior space is so homely and warm, it was inevitable not to feel as if one violated a private space belonged to someone else. The arrangement of the objects, the pictures plastered all around, and the music played in the radio were all reminiscent of a life once going on inside but cancelled sometime in the past. Perhaps due to a wish to escape from that sense of past, I was urged to go 'outside', even though 'outside' also referred to a sense of being 'in'.

It might have become evident so far that my relationship with those four works depended firstly on a pre-rational mimesis and play. Naturally, the conscious recognition of it occurs in the symbolic order, after the event. In this respect, the situation is analogous to Lacan's account of his experience of being knocked up (see 3.1.3). Yet, I will try to give examples of how I have been sensually affected by certain actual attributes of works, and of some consequences of such affection.

The encounter with Selim Birsel's hollow figures can be compared to Buck-Morss' account of Sir Charles Bell's experience of dead bodies in the battlefield (see 3.1.1). What was involved was not a case of identification or empathy but rather a mimicry of the actual characteristics of those 'bodies'; that is, a reconstituting of their attributes as belonging to 'this' body (of mine) which was 'captured' by them; the skin deformed, wrinkled and darkened (burned?), the touch of cold, hard stone pavement of the floor to the oversensitive and fragile body, the experience of deep sleep (or, coma or death?), etc. The body was doubled then; one part sensing, the other enacting the sense, and elaborating the scene; and between them, the imaginary

oscillated. The possibility of playing so violently and of enduring sensation due to the doubling enabled the imaginary to contact with the past memories of the decentered self, to associate the sensation with imaginable situations, and to transform the play into a cruel drama. While I was watchfully seeing with a group of people how those figures were being formed by Birsel around the body of the actor who cooperated with him in production, I heard the voice of an old man standing beside me: “Yes, sons; this is the situation of retired workers like me!” Now, after the experience of Birsel’s work, I can imagine how those people who saw off their young relatives to military service might have been affected by the figures lying on the platform. I can also imagine how some of them were compelled to actual violence against those ‘bodies’ under the strong desire to ‘abject’ those ‘obscene’ figures²⁷. Can one easily claim that the response of those people who damaged the work was not an ‘aesthetic’ one, in the actual sense of the term? Four years after the actual experience of the work, and in the light of the studies I made in order to understand my own experience of the work, I now conclude that the ‘dark’ play going on ‘outside’, and enframing Birsel’s work has contaminated the artistic space-time of the work as a consequence of being effectively influenced by it.

What has sensually captured me in Sarkis’ work was the warm rice served in the large round cauldron at the center of the ‘place’. As I also observed other guests, it attracted people like a magnet. Moreover, the arrangement of the benches in concentric circles, and the angled shape of the cupboards forming a square plan with

²⁷ For the concepts of ‘abject’ and ‘abjection’, and for their significance in the experience of art, see Julia Kristeva’s Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection (1982).

gateways between them -- all performed so efficiently that none of the people collected around the cauldron to eat and talk seemed to be aware of constituting a 'figure' in the stage of the work, or of devouring 'significant forms' so violently. Although being 'fake' and transitory from the perspective of an outsider, the work served as a 'real' stage for a carnival, or a festival for those 'in'. Furthermore, the work managed to get together people with different habitus on art around that sensuous bodily activity. Those who were well-trained in art and equipped with the required intellectual skills could easily find themselves sitting beside one of the technicians or workers hired for the installation of the works in the biennial. Perhaps, they did not have so much common to talk about but the distance between them was eliminated, and they 'acted' on the same stage even if for a short duration.

The first and most affective element in Tenger's work, I think, was the barbed wire. The tactile effect of it created a sense of being prevented from action, or being prisoned. Normally, barbed wire indicates a restricted zone, the outside of which gives one a sense of liberated action. However, the ambiguous position of the posts, as I have described above, spoiled the sense of freedom outside, too. In contrast to that, Tenger's work included the small hut which denoted enclosure and also security of a house. However, as I have also described above, the setting of the interior stage did not allow me to feel secure because what I sensed most was not to belong to that space -- a sense of alienation²⁸. Every detail of the objects in the hut, which captured me one by one, increased that feeling.

²⁸ The kind of alienation I refer in this context is far away from the Brechtian concept since it is effected through spatial perception and sensed as a cruel exclusion.

Çekil's work, in contrast to Tenger's, could be considered to have affected me through a lack of support or shelter, that is the absence of walls and the roof of the 'building'. As it can be imagined, a few remaining interior walls increased the sense of lack. I felt myself 'doomed' to stand on that uncanny stage, and present myself to every possible 'natural' influence: that of the sun, the rain, the wind, etc. The sense of lack and being open to influences was much furthered when I saw the reflection of the sky on those pieces of glass once belonged to the windows of the 'building'. The arrangements made in different sections of the 'building', more than indicating their previous functions, emphasized the impossibility of those functions. And all these were related to me through bodily sensations. For example, the sight of the bathroom caused me to feel as if bathing in open air in cold weather. The toilet was covered with glass, which preserved and separated it from a possible usage, or perhaps protected it from a further damage by a human body like mine. The arrangement of some tools in a case covered with glass had a similar effect; the tools were protected against any more usages, perhaps misusages. As for the kitchen, it was transformed into a tomb; instead of being a place serving for cooking, for survival, it served to recall death. In this extremely uncanny space, I had to 'erect' and 'act'. As a consequence of all those sensations and feelings, I sensed the significance of my feet, which connected my body, which had been removed from the identity it was attached before stepping on the platform, not only to the 'foundation' of the 'building' but also to the ground, the 'natural nature' on which buildings, or stages were erected, the people 'acted', and also to the short and narrow pathway which connected the

‘building’ to the ‘essential’ one, the modern Cultural Center in which the issues and problems of “Art and Environment” were being discussed at that time. Through bodily sensation, the imaginary worked upon the symbolic, and urged it to make ‘sense’ of the ‘difference’ between two stages: that of the work and the symposium’s, which enframed the former.

Another significant aspect which is common to those four works is the emphasis on historico-geographical specificities of them, as described above. This point can be related to the theatrical experience of those works in two respects. Firstly, it enables the works to resist to a certain extent the still prevailing tendency to approach artworks according to the conventional formal codes of deciphering so as to homogenize the experience of art. A work, emphasizing its local significance through spatio-temporal characteristics, also highlights its potential for sensual affection and its appeal to practical logic more sufficiently. Secondly, it also enables the work to provide the audience with richer material to experience the special ‘chronotope’ of the work. In other words, in the second stage of the theatrical experience in which the world of the artwork is separated from the world enframing it, and the imaginary works upon the symbolic so as to see ‘outside’ from within, the audience, in order to be able to ‘act’ on the stage of the work, needs various concrete elements that can be associated with their habitus and be used in the elaboration of the scene. If the work can meet this requirement, I, as an ‘actor’ on the stage of the work, can generate more details of my specific performance which are continuous to the sensual affection by the work, which, in turn, will result in long-lasting memories of that

performance. Below, I will exemplify these two points in reference to my own experience of only a few locality-specific elements of those works.

Birsel's work was inevitably experienced together with its surroundings. In other words, those figures were lying in Ankara Train Station, on a platform, among people waiting for trains. They just constituted a group, the same way others did. An extraordinary looseness of the borders of the work allowed all the spatial elements belonging to the station to interact with the work. The architecture of the station, the pavement of the floor, the nearby advertisements some of which remained there for years, the dark and dusty look of the railway -- they altogether created a local atmosphere for the theatrical experience of the work. I think this openness to interaction enabled audience with various backgrounds to carry their own habitus to their performance on the stage of the work. In my own imaginary enactment of the scene, those figures acted together with others who have slept at nights in the station. However, in the response of the old retired worker, and that of those who damaged the work, I witnessed alternative textualizations of the work.

In Sarkis' work, such traditional local elements as the old copper cauldron and rice with chickpeas were balanced by plastic plates and forks, and also by the neon chandelier, which referred to globalized convention of fast food. I think, combination of elements with local and global connotations provided a two-way entry to the stage of the work. The global elements helped the international artists and guests to adapt to local tradition while the local elements were used by the natives of Istanbul to get

together with foreigners. This coming together of different cultural elements in concrete terms must have resulted in vivid memories for both parties, which could be referred to in future confrontations.

As I also described above, to encounter barbed wires surrounding Tenger's work was difficult to endure in an international exhibition, although the country in which it was organized was also well-known for its prisons. In addition to the wires which attempted to transform the whole exhibition hall into a restricted zone, Tenger's work included various local elements, starting from the hut itself and continuing inside the hut. Pictures from old calendars with landscapes of Anatolian countryside were plastered all around inside the hut. The music played in the radio was also a 'quotation' from the popular mode of entertainment of about thirty years ago. The glass of tea and the small plate that carried it referred to the same period. Through such local elements it became possible for me to imagine that although this was the same country, the chronotope of the hut's interior excluded my presence. Yet, I was not given the role of a spectator of 'forms', either. This encouraged me, as an actor, to transform into a stage 'character' oscillating between the chronotopes of the 'inside' and the 'outside'.

In Çekil's work, most of the elements used were those originally belonged to the 'building', thus, they mainly referred to the convention of construction. However, certain remains of those facilities used in everyday life such as the old style toilet and the bathroom section connoted the local way of life of the workers who lived there. They first allowed me to reconstitute myself as a 'character' experiencing such a way

of life, and then to recognize the difference between that life and the 'other' one connoted by the modern building of Cultural Center. The oscillation between those two roles as an 'actor' enabled me to register the difference in my memory.

5. CONCLUSION

In the light of the actual examples given in the previous chapter, I will now make a short review of the theoretical conclusions drawn from the arguments developed in different parts of the study.

First of all, the study following the experience of four spatial works has revealed that theatricality is the matrix around which the experience has occurred. The theatrical experience of a spatial work involves an intermingling of pre-rational and rational modes of mimesis and play. Although theatricality can be observed even in the experience of works produced with traditional media such as painting, those works whose spatio-temporal characteristics are specifically emphasized allow a richer experience of theatricality.

Yet, it is still possible, and quite widespread, to consume spatial works in absorption. This approach can be considered as a reduction of the actual experience into abstract visuality, that of seeing and contemplation of forms. The main factor behind the persistence of this reductive approach is the long established habitus of looking for voyeuristic pleasure in experiencing artworks and its having been strongly institutionalized in the artistic field. The counterpart of this well established habitus is a formalist discourse in art criticism, which has managed to a certain extent to

naturalize the 'always already' theatrical character of the experience of spatial works. However, the study has revealed that some contemporary art criticism has managed to challenge the formalist discourse even from within visuality. Yet, an attitude which does not confine itself with visual terms but follows the violent, actual experience of artworks in theatrical terms is much more promising in the theoretical field.

The main difficulty of theoretical practice seems to be the prevalence of hierarchical oppositions both in theoretical and aesthetic discourses. The most significant instance of being trapped in a binary opposition seems to be the attempt to conceive of the experience of artworks according to a binary construction. This can be observed in some arguments in literary theory which try to oppose reality against representation and theatricality. In psychoanalytical theory, it is exemplified in the presentation of the 'real' and the 'symbolic' in an agonistic relationship. A theoretical approach tracing the working of practical logic seems to provide an alternative, although in a deviated fashion, which is perhaps inevitable in a theoretical work. The benefit one may derive from such an approach may be to recognize that those binary structures belonging to abstract reason are continuously deconstructed in actuality. I have argued in the present study that, in the actual experience of spatial works, it is impossible to separate reality from theatricality since each act of a being, captured sensually by the space-time of a work, is also enacted. It is in no way necessary to represent an action rationally when one is violently engulfed in it. The cleavage is a product of a logical logic. As for psychoanalysis, from an approach tracing practical

logic, the Lacanian term ‘real’ can be considered as the material effect of the actual whereas according to a prevalent reading, it is represented as if to be ‘standing’ beyond the reach of the ‘symbolic’, which seems to be an abstract figuration.

As it can be discerned, throughout the study, I have avoided ‘imitating’ the position of an artist in the process of production, which would lead easily to an attempt to ‘understand’ and ‘explain’ spatial works. Instead, I have tried to focus on ‘what has happened to me’ during the encounter with spatial works. I have expected that such an approach would help to reach at some points which would serve to commence further studies aimed at opening an alternative space for theoretical studies on spatial works.

I have based my study on such concepts as ‘space-time’, ‘uncanny’, ‘mimesis’, and ‘play’. I tried to take advantage of the equivocality of all those terms in order to elaborate the various aspects of the actual encounter with works, and proposed a concept of theatricality that can cover those terms without imposing an authority over them which might have destroyed their heterogeneous character. As I expected at the beginning, to start from sensual affection of the audience by spatial works allowed me to conceive of ‘aesthetic experience’ as a process that cannot be consumed solely in terms of abstract theory, nor can it be reduced to a certain habitus which is firmly bound by established distinctions and institutional limitations in the artistic field.

To conclude, the thesis can be considered as a theoretical study on art attempting to understand a perceived gap between the actual experience of spatial works and an aesthetic discourse constructed on recognition of and contemplation of formal characteristics of works. It has been revealed throughout the study that this gap can be filled in terms of theatricality which has been considered by formalist aesthetics as the 'other' of art or as denoting the undefinable territory between established art disciplines. Theatricality is neither an empty term nor it denotes an ambiguous zone between arts. It points out to the continuity between art and life as well as between arts, and it shows the impossibility of an hygienic separation as far as the actual experience of art is concerned.

A final remark should be made on further studies. This thesis can be considered as an introduction to a theoretical approach to art in terms of theatricality. Further theoretical studies and criticisms on the possible shortcomings of this introduction will serve to strengthen the theatrical approach which seems to provide a promising alternative for the studies in the artistic field. Furthermore, such an endeavour should be complemented by contributions from other related fields of study, which are art criticism and the history of art. Detailed criticisms of specific spatial works from a theatrical perspective will be particularly useful to contextualize and to advance the theatrical matrix. This could not be realized in the present study just because it seemed necessary to concentrate fully on clarifying the theoretical ground and elaborating on the related basic concepts. It has been revealed in the present study that a theatrical approach to the encounter with spatial works is strongly dependent

on specific historico-geographical elements. Therefore, the possibility of adopting a theatrical approach in specific art historical studies appears as a challenging issue. Naturally, this issue will be open to the contributions from such related fields as anthropology, cultural studies, performance studies, literary studies, etc.

PLATES



Plate I



Plate II

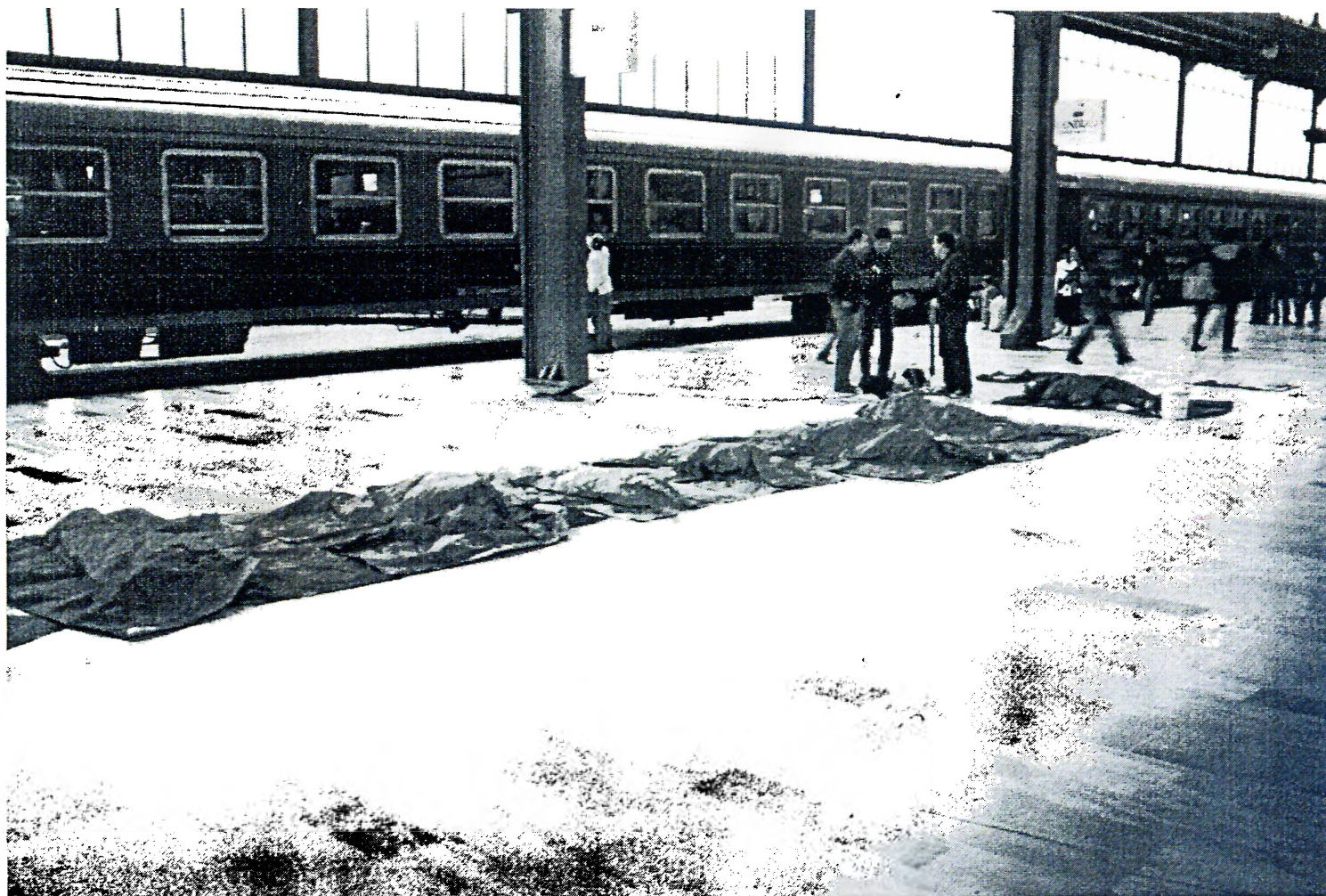
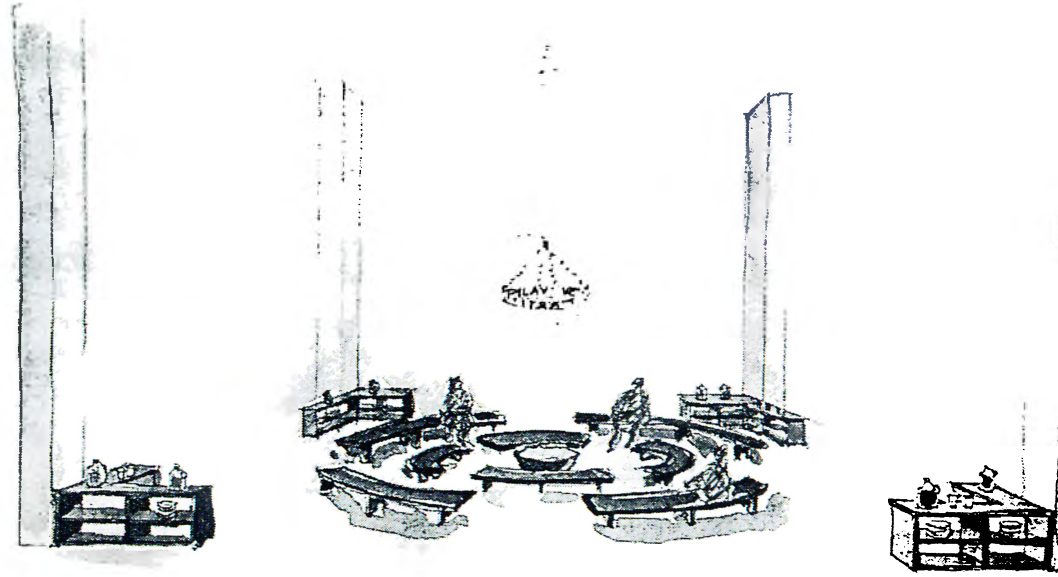


Plate III



"PILAV VE TARTISMA YERİ"

4. MENZEL İÇİN, İSTANBUL 1915



ESKİ, BÜYÜK (KAP BOYU) BİR TENCERDE
NOMUTLU PILAV.



NEUN'DAN SAK

İSTANBUL
1915



Plate V



Plate VI

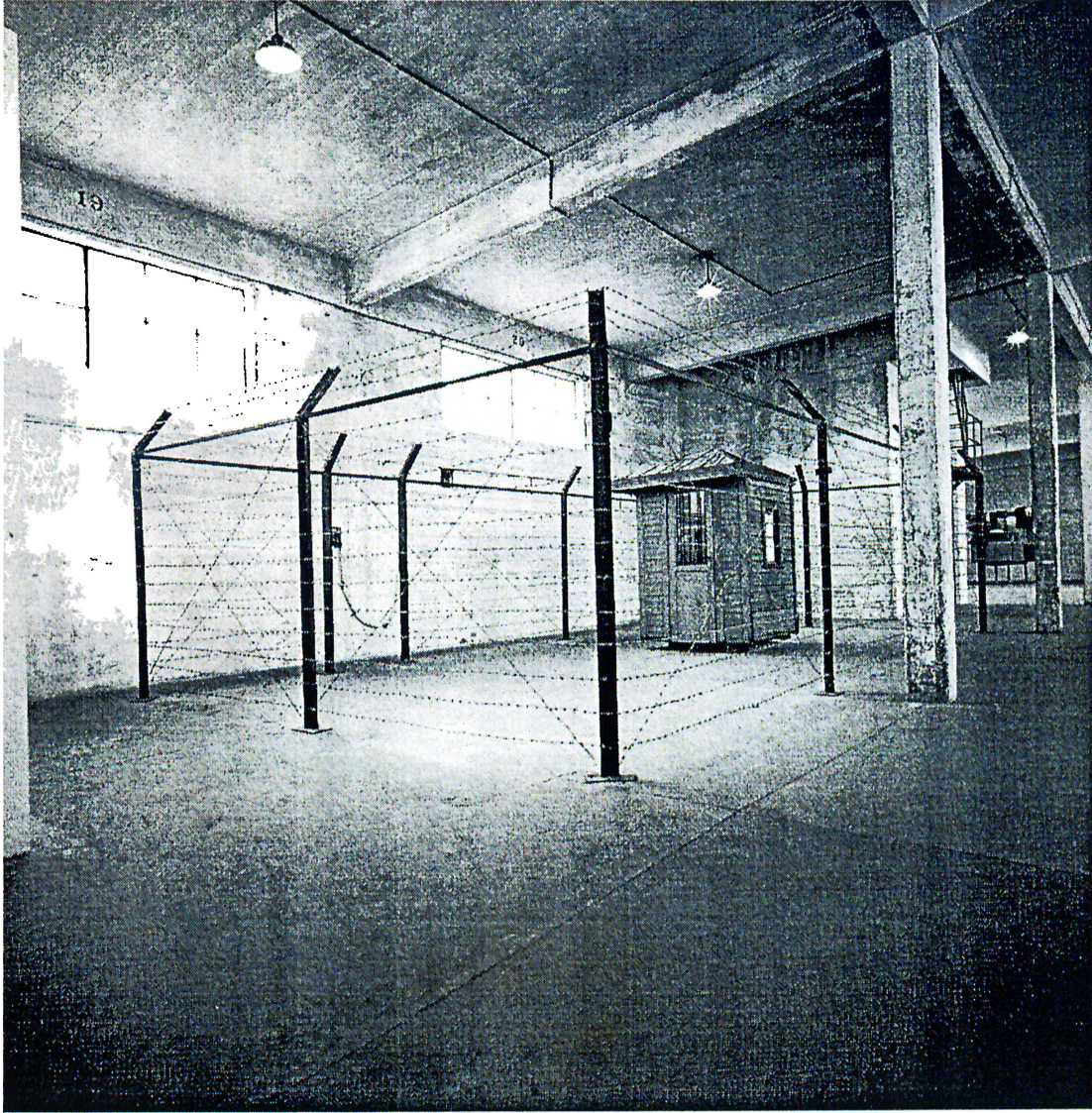


Plate VII

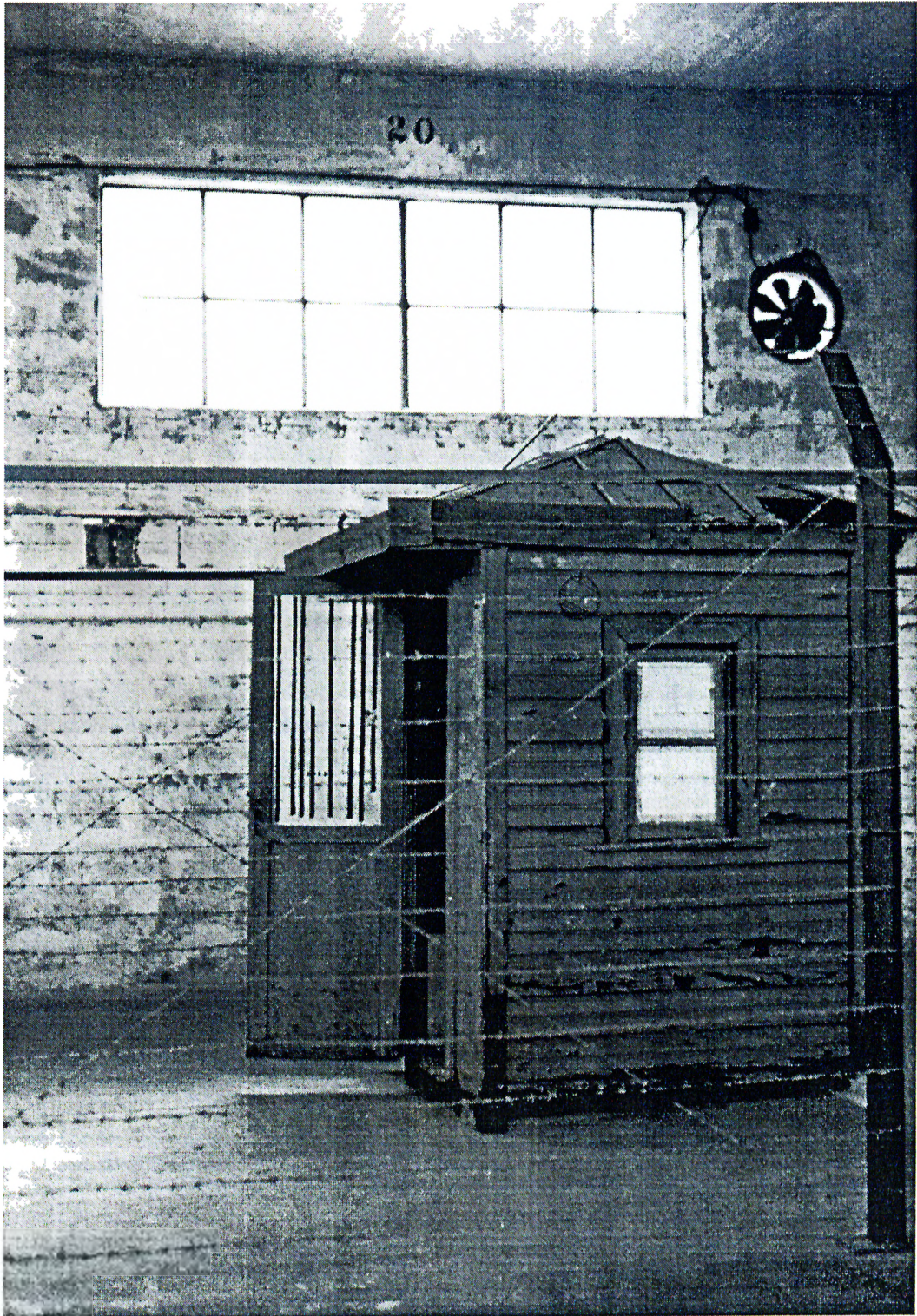


Plate VIII



Plate IX



Plate X



Plate XI

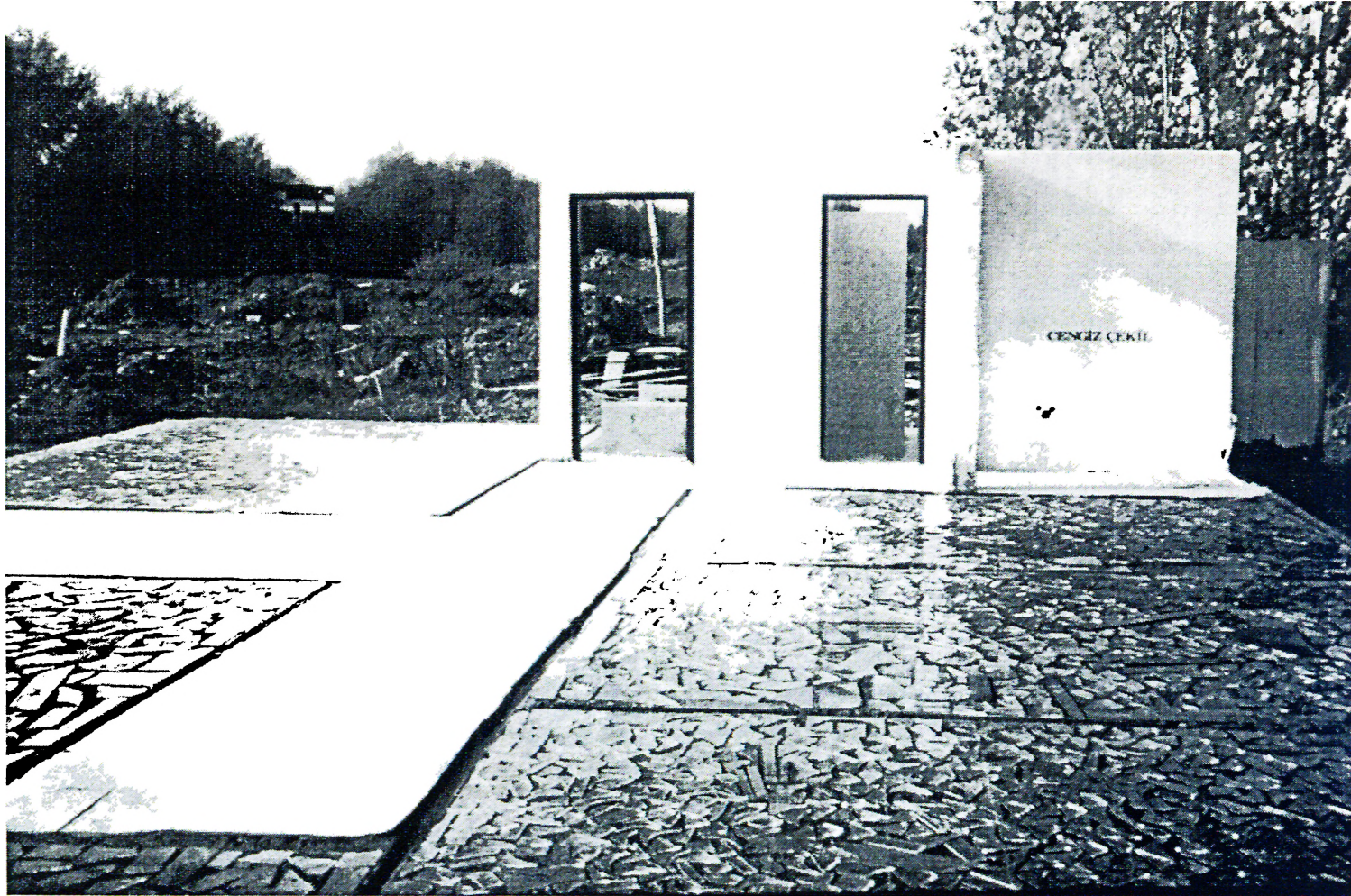


Plate XII

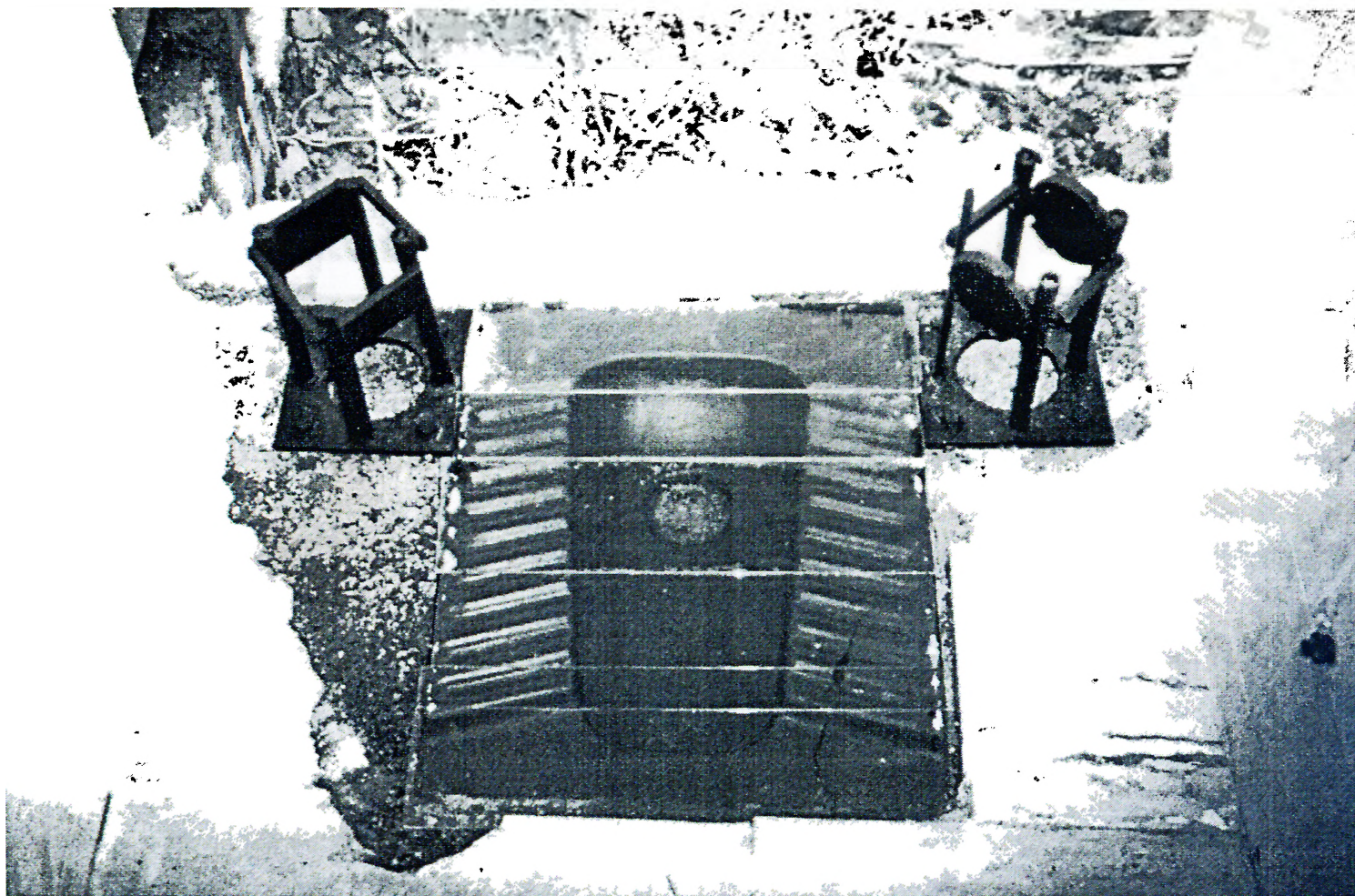


Plate XIII

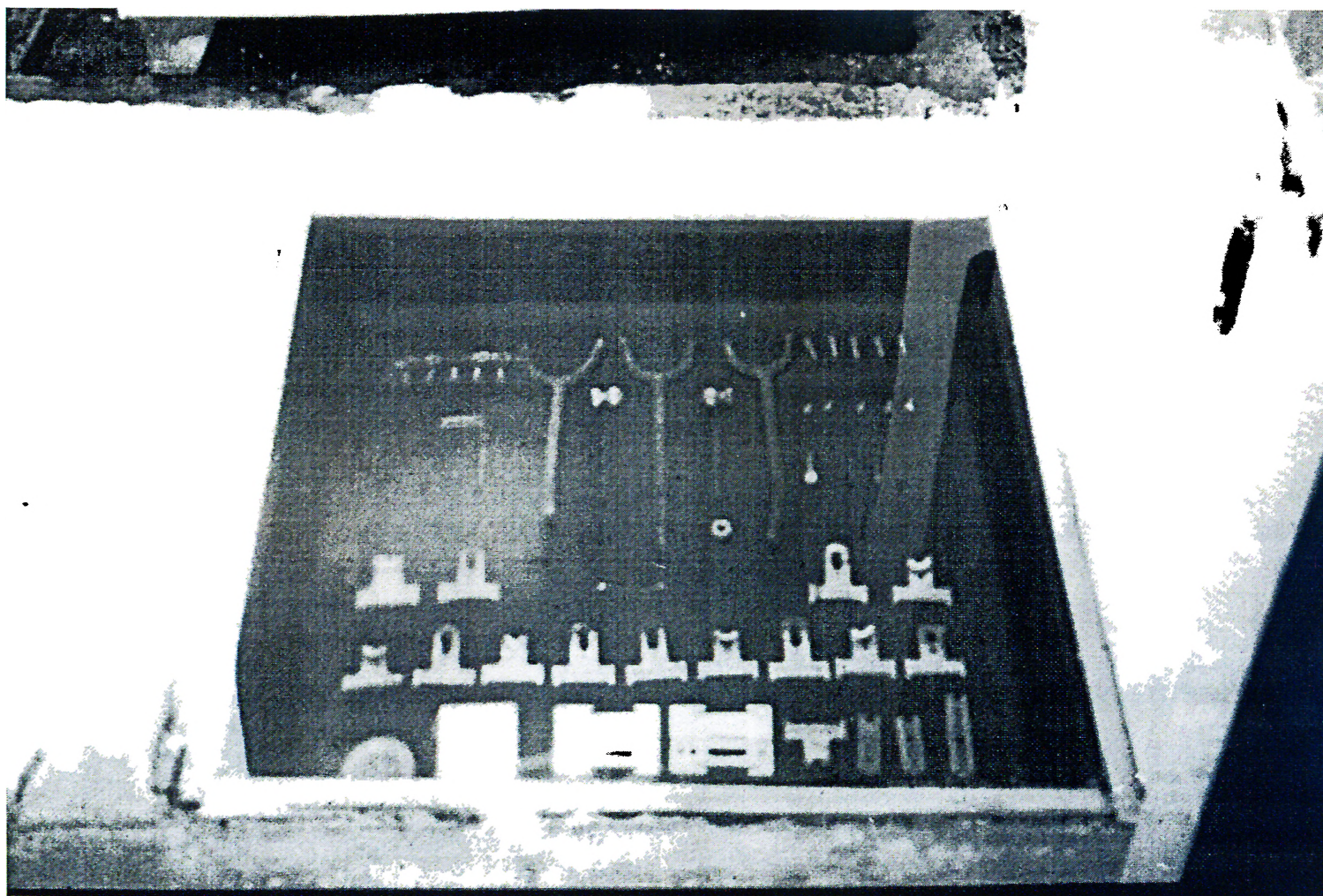


Plate XIV



Plate XV

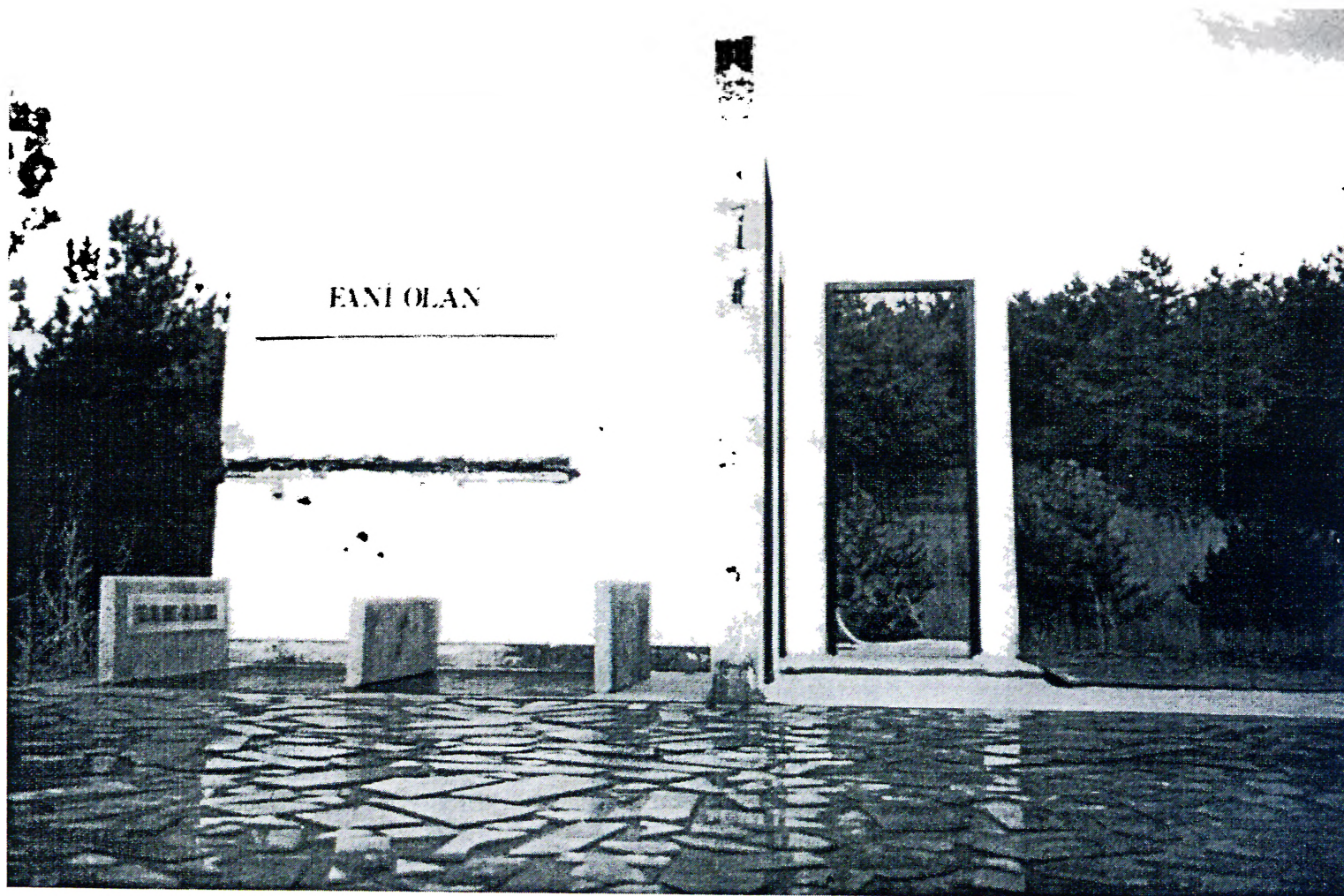


Plate XVI

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