

## Chapter 9

# “The Modern Daily Life” in Turkey in the 1950s in Popular Play Scripts of the State Theater

**Başak Akar**  
Ankara University, Turkey

### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this chapter is to examine how modern daily life is imagined and transmitted to the audience by the products of the popular culture in the 1950s through the repertory of the state theater and how this reflects the tendencies of the time. This study is based on the argument that the imagination of the modern daily life in the 1950s is not a simple continuation of the early republican period’s way of defining the modern daily life on the basis of public life solely. Modern daily life in the 1950s is set both on the public life and the private life. Also, it relies on the adversity of the lifestyle, religion, emancipation, and universalism and civilization in the context of public life, complemented by the corruption of the family, the changing role of the man and the changing role of the woman.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter will problematize the concept of modern daily life in the 1950s with the help of popular cultural products that reach the audience via the State Theater. While focusing upon the popular culture selection in the 1950s, it covers the perception of the modern daily life at the same time with an inevitable connection to the daily life and operates upon the repertory of the State Theater. Within this scope, this study argues that the imagination of the modern daily life differs from what Early Republican period. This difference relies on the understanding of the modern daily life through a critical lens of modernization of daily life. Early Republican period focuses on the building of the public sphere and a perception of one modern, which is basically Europe in the context of modern daily life. On the contrary, modern daily life in the 1950s deals with both sides with the dissatisfaction of the modern life, with the return of the longing for traditions.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8491-9.ch009

The objective of this chapter is also to bring an interdisciplinary insight by presenting an intersection either to the daily life studies or the relationship between arts and politics. The main question of this study is: “How is the modern daily life in the 1950s in Turkey constructed by the help of the State Theater’s popular plays?” The subsidiary questions are: “How is the modern daily life in Turkey constructed in public life in the State Theater’s popular plays?” and “How is the modern daily life in Turkey constructed in private life in the State Theater’s popular plays?”

One of the main reference books about the Turkish political life and popular culture in the 1950s is edited by Mete Kaan Kaynar (2016). The book elaborates upon the popular culture and daily life in the 1950s with the help of cinema (Özen, 2016), literature (Uçar, 2016), media and censor (Cantek, 2016; Dede, 2016; Esen, 2016) and popular music (Bengi, 2016). Only Aslı Uçar evaluates the involvement of the modern daily life through the literature of the given period. The studies that focus on the political and historical transformation of Turkey estimates the period for the reflections of popular culture on gender politics, secularism, globalization and nationalism (Çınar 2005, 2008, 2010). Akar (2017) focuses on the cultural transformation that reflected on national identity building. However, none handles the popular cultural aspect of the period, even though the 1950s were very efficient in popular culture (Kahraman, 2010).

The 1950s are known as a break off from the one-party regime, its ideology and finally the way modern daily life is perceived in the early Republican Era. Many studies cover various tools such as movies, comics with their relation to the popular culture. Less of the literature evaluates the relationship between popular culture and the modern daily life. None, on the other hand, searches for how the modern daily life is imagined in the 1950s in popular theater plays. Yet the popular theater plays are where the daily routine of the ordinary people are performed, with its relation to the work, entertainment, family relations.

## **BACKGROUND**

Turkish modernization accelerated in the aftermath of the proclamation of the *Meşrutiyet II* (II. Constitutional Monarchy) in 1908. The theaters and the city theater became a very significant space for the social life. Theaters kept its place of the media in Turkey until when the mass communication was digitalized (Toprak, 2017). The obscene or the lame comedy literature affected the popular culture in theaters and created the problematic morality of the late 19th century. This was long lasting due to emergence of obscene movies and then reproduction of the like in the early Republican era. Due to morality debates (Toprak, 2017), İstanbul City Theater initialized an alternative way of suggesting popular culture with its performances. İstanbul City Theater began placing classics among the popular vaudevilles. Pınar Çiğdem (2010) categorizes arts, theater in particular, as folk, popular and elite. Çiğdem argues that the popular theater does not aim at directing or educating the audience but entertains them, makes them think that they have so much in common with many people regarding their city life. Popular theater benefits from the comedies and entertainment. In this context, popular culture can be defined as, a reflexion of the daily culture. The products of the popular culture, so are the popular theater can contain signs of sovereign ideology or even indoctrination but must include concrete and real facts from daily life to be watchable (Çiğdem, 2010).

Aside of İstanbul State Theater’s performances, early Republican to establish a national theater under People’s Houses Theaters. These theaters had ties with the Republican People’s Party and a partisan

23 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-modern-daily-life-in-turkey-in-the-1950s-in-popular-play-scripts-of-the-state-theater/227470](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-modern-daily-life-in-turkey-in-the-1950s-in-popular-play-scripts-of-the-state-theater/227470)

## Related Content

---

### Web Platform for Public E-Participation Management: A Case Study

Carlos Quental and Luis Borges Gouveia (2014). *International Journal of Civic Engagement and Social Change* (pp. 60-77).

[www.irma-international.org/article/web-platform-for-public-e-participation-management/106947](http://www.irma-international.org/article/web-platform-for-public-e-participation-management/106947)

### Enhancing Life Skills of Children and Adolescents With Autism Spectrum Disorder and Intellectual Disabilities Through Technological Supports: A Selective Overview

Fabrizio Stasolla and Anna Passaro (2022). *Research Anthology on Physical and Intellectual Disabilities in an Inclusive Society* (pp. 971-992).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/enhancing-life-skills-of-children-and-adolescents-with-autism-spectrum-disorder-and-intellectual-disabilities-through-technological-supports/289103](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/enhancing-life-skills-of-children-and-adolescents-with-autism-spectrum-disorder-and-intellectual-disabilities-through-technological-supports/289103)

### The Construction of Orientalist Discourse in the Documentary Series on the Digital Broadcasting Platform Netflix

Hüdai Ate and Alev Fato Parsa (2021). *Handbook of Research on Contemporary Approaches to Orientalism in Media and Beyond* (pp. 12-32).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-construction-of-orientalist-discourse-in-the-documentary-series-on-the-digital-broadcasting-platform-netflix/275944](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-construction-of-orientalist-discourse-in-the-documentary-series-on-the-digital-broadcasting-platform-netflix/275944)

### School Leavers With Verified Disabilities: Issues Influencing Transition to Employment in Non-Metropolitan Communities

Helena Stark (2022). *Research Anthology on Physical and Intellectual Disabilities in an Inclusive Society* (pp. 355-394).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/school-leavers-with-verified-disabilities/289068](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/school-leavers-with-verified-disabilities/289068)

### Societal Influence on the Cognitive Aspects of Entrepreneurship

Neeta Baporikar (2015). *International Journal of Civic Engagement and Social Change* (pp. 1-15).

[www.irma-international.org/article/societal-influence-on-the-cognitive-aspects-of-entrepreneurship/149928](http://www.irma-international.org/article/societal-influence-on-the-cognitive-aspects-of-entrepreneurship/149928)