QUEER EMBODIMENT IN MUSICALS: THE CASE OF ROCKY HORROR SHOW'S TURKEY PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT

QUEER EMBODIMENT IN MUSICALS: THE CASE OF ROCKY HORROR SHOW'S TURKEY PRODUCTION

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This thesis examines queer embodiment in musical theatre through the case study of *The Rocky Horror Show*'s Turkish production. Through the theory of performativity by Judith Butler, the queer phenomenology of Sara Ahmed, and the concept of disidentification by José Esteban Muñoz, the dissertation investigates how the production of *The Rocky Horror Show* undermines conventional gender binaries and reorganizes bodies, affects, and spaces, thus opening spaces for resistance and subversion.

The research emphasizes that queer embodiment in theatre generates emotive and material interactions that create a counter public sphere within Turkey's socio-political context. This thesis examines the relationship between performance, audience reception, and local cultural dynamics, illustrating how musical theatre serves as a space for both queer orientation and disorientation, where non-normative identities are represented, experienced, and collectively created. This work contributes to discussions in Gender and Queer Studies by demonstrating how musical theatre functions as a channel for embodied critique and queer world-making, contesting

current narratives while fostering alternative visions of belonging and intimacy.
Keywords: Musical Theatre, Queer Theory, Queer Embodiment, Queer Performance, Rocky Horror Show.

ÖZ

MÜZİKALLERDE KUİR BEDENLENME: ROCKY HORROR SHOW'UN TÜRKİYE YAPIMI ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu tez, müzikal tiyatroda kuir bedenselliği *The Rocky Horror Show*'un Türkiye sahnelemesi üzerinden incelemektedir. Görünürlük, çeşitlilik ya da kapsayıcılık söylemlerine odaklanmak yerine, kuir performansı bedensellik, eleştirel fenomenoloji ve dünya kurma (*world-making*) çerçeveleri içerisinde konumlandırmaktadır. Judith Butler'ın performativite, Sara Ahmed'in kuir fenomenoloji ve José Esteban Muñoz'un kimlikten farklılaşma (*disidentification*) kavramlarından hareketle, *The Rocky Horror Show*'un sahnelenmesinin normatif toplumsal cinsiyet ikiliklerini nasıl bozduğunu ve bedenleri, duygulanımları ve mekânları direniş ve altüst oluş imkânlarını açacak biçimlerde nasıl yeniden yönlendirdiğini tartışmaktadır.

Araştırma, sahnedeki kuir bedenselliğin Türkiye'nin sosyo-politik bağlamında karşı-kamusal bir alan yaratan duygulanımsal ve maddi karşılaşmalar ürettiğini öne çıkarmaktadır. Performans, seyirci alımlaması ve yerel kültürel dinamikler arasındaki etkileşimi analiz ederek, müzikal tiyatronun kuir yönelim ve yönsüzleşmenin işlediği bir mekân olarak nasıl işlev gördüğünü göstermektedir—burada norm dışı kimlikler yalnızca temsil edilmez, aynı zamanda yaşanır, hissedilir ve kolektif olarak üretilir. Bu yolla, çalışma, toplumsal cinsiyet ve kuir çalışmalarındaki tartışmalara müzikal

tiyatronun bedensel bir eleştiri ve kuir dünya kurma pratiği olarak işleyişini göstererek katkıda bulunmaktadır; hâkim anlatıları sorgularken, aidiyet ve yakınlığın alternatif tahayyüllerini de üretmektedir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Müzikal Tiyatro, Kuir Teori, Kuir Bedenlenme, Kuir Performans, Rocky Horror Show.

To Enes, and to all who carry their struggle with unbending dignity and courage.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

The musical theatre scene has historically occupied a paradoxical space related to queerness. In addition to serving as a refuge for queer performers, artists, and audiences, it has also strengthened heteronormative structures. As Rich (1980) argues, musical theatre has been a significant purveyor of compulsory heterosexuality, with Broadway musicals often structured around the resolution of heterosexual relationships (*Hello, Dolly!).* However, McGill, Chaffe, and Ross (2024) note that queer visibility in musical theatre has increased over time, allowing musicals to become central to queer culture. Despite this change in visibility, Gelfand (2018) points out that the percentage of queer characters in Broadway musicals is less than 5%, and this situation shows that the involvement of queerness and its restricted representation on stage has a permanent tension.

This paradox brings up critical questions about the role of musical theatre in shaping queer identities. Historically, musicals have embedded queer narratives in subtext rather than overt representation, relying on coded performances, such as the flamboyant and effeminate portrayal of characters, camp aesthetics, like the use of drag and gender-bending, and exaggerated stylization, as seen in the over-the-top choreography and costumes. Judith Butler's (1990, 1993) theory of performativity emphasizes that gender is not an inherent identity but a series of repeated acts. This perspective echoes the theatricality of musicals, where identities are not simply represented but enacted and negotiated through performance.

Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) further expands this discussion by shifting the focus to orientation—how bodies take shape through their repeated

interactions with space, objects, and other bodies. Musical theatre, in this context, does not simply depict queer identity but materializes it through embodied performance, spatial dynamics, and affective encounters. The stage is not a neutral site, just like Ahmed's conceptualization of orientation. It is shaped by the movements, desires, and histories of those who occupy it. This thesis builds on this phenomenological perspective to explore how musical theatre functions as a performative and embodied queer space rather than just a representative space.

Focusing on *The Rocky Horror Show*, this work explores how the musical, especially in its Turkish production, serves as a dynamic and lived site of queer embodiment, resistance, and identity formation—where queerness is not merely represented but continuously enacted and negotiated through bodily performance. This thesis examines how actors experience, internalize, and reconstruct strangeness through their performances, emphasizing how the feeling of strangeness—of being disoriented, out of place, and beyond normative bodily alignments—is materially experienced on stage.

Situated in Turkey's tightening socio-political climate, where moral regulation and selective cultural gatekeeping shape access to stages and publics, the reception of *The Rocky Horror Show* is filtered through institutional norms and risk management. These conditions modulate how audiences may participate, what props or scripts are allowed, and how bodies are oriented or disoriented in campus versus commercial/urban settings—core dynamics this thesis traces ethnographically.

1.2. Main Arguments

I argue that musical theatre is inherently peculiar not only because of its content but also because of its performative structure. In contrast to traditional theatre, musicals rely on heightened expressionism — marked by song, dance, and exaggerated influence — which is compatible with the fluidity and instability of queer identity (Clum, 1999; Miller, 1998). This performative extremism disrupts rigid gender norms, making musical theatre a fertile ground for queer self-expression and resistance.

Based on Butler's (1990) concept of performativity, this study examines how musical theatre exhibits queerness through repeated acts of gender and identity performance.

Musical numbers, choreography, and vocal expression function as iterative practices that shape and reinforce queer embodiment. However, this performance is discursive, and material bodies experience strangeness through movement, breathing, gesture, and spatial positioning. In this context, *strangeness* refers to the sense of disorientation and non-familiarity that emerges when bodies move outside normative scripts, disrupting expectations of gendered behavior. This aligns with Ahmed's (2006) claim that strangeness is related to the body's orientation in space, its ability to move against normative alignments, and its encounters with other bodies and objects.

Moreover, this thesis, following Taylor's (2003) argument that the performance itself constitutes an embodied queer information archive, considers queer musicals as historical transmission spaces. Unlike traditional forms of writing history, the peculiar history in musical theatre is preserved through bodily memory, improvisation, and repetition. Therefore, queer musicals do not only merely depict homosexuality; they actively produce and perpetuate it through performance.

Through a case study of the Turkish production of *The Rocky Horror Show*, this research examines how participation in a queer musical transforms' performers' bodily awareness, identity, and resistance strategies. By conducting qualitative interviews with actors, I explore how queerness is lived and embodied not only through scripted performance but also through repetitions in rehearsals, backstage interactions, and off-stage lived experiences.

This thesis makes six compact contributions: it reconceives Sara Ahmed's orientation as a method and articulates it with Butler's citationality/repetition and Muñoz's disidentification to build the theoretical spine; methodologically, it deploys multimodal triangulation—participant observation, interviews, gesture/micro-gesture analysis, surtitle–stage synchrony, call-and-response patterns, and spatial layouts; empirically, it offers a comparative ethnography of two Turkish stagings (a campus-based production and a ticketed urban venue) to show how institutional/public regimes and participation protocols reconfigure queer embodiment; conceptually, it introduces two operative tools—"participation metronome" and "surtitle alignment"—to operationalize body–text relations and threshold moments; contextually, it details micro-apparatuses (entry checks, seating, stage–audience distance, threshold/door

choreographies, prop rules) as organizers of power–orientation relations in Turkey; and, finally, it proposes a transferable analysis protocol centered on embodied technique, rhythmic coordination, and spatial orientation that can travel beyond *Rocky* to other localized musical theatre productions.

1.3. Introduction to Musical Theatre

Musical theatre is a mixed format that combines narrative, music, and movement to create an immersive storytelling experience. Kenrick (2008) defines musicals as productions in which song and dance are integral to narrative progression rather than just decorations. Unlike traditional theatre, where dialogue is the primary form of storytelling, musicals rely on music as an expressive tool that takes emotions and tensions beyond spoken language.

This structural difference is the key to understanding the strangeness of musical theatre; as Greenwood (2021) notes, musicals deconstruct linear storytelling with abrupt shifts between dialogue and song, camp aesthetics, and extravagant performances. This formal instability reflects the resistance of queer identity to fixed categorization and positions musicals as an inherently queer artistic medium.

In addition, musical theatre functioned as a significant queer public space, offering spaces for identity negotiation and community formation. Mohanty (2022) argues that musical theatre provides refuge to historically marginalized voices, while productions such as *Cabaret* and *La Cage aux Folles* use metaphor and allegory to embed queer themes into mainstream culture. This thesis is based on this perspective, arguing that musical theatre serves not only as a space of representation but also as a performative arena in which queer practices of reinterpretation and transformation unfold in real-time.

1.3.1. A “Place for Us”: Queer Public Sphere in Musical Theatre

The role of musical theatre as a queer public space extends beyond representation to encompass emotional, communal, and embodied experiences. Ahmed (2006) argues that orientation is shaped through repeated bodily encounters with space and objects, suggesting that queer world-making takes place through material interactions rather

than abstract discourse. With its participatory audience engagement, improvisational elements, and emphasis on bodily expression, musical theatre functions as a queer counterpublic space—a space where identities are not only represented but physically and emotionally lived. As Warner (2002) and Berlant (1997) emphasize, counterpublics emerge in opposition to dominant publics, offering marginalized communities a discursive and affective arena for alternative world-making. Within this framework, queer musical theatre can be seen as fostering a collective affective environment where non-normative identities are embodied, validated, and co-constructed through performance.

Through an analysis of *The Rocky Horror Show*, this research highlights how musical theatre functions as a space of collective queer embodiment, where performers and audiences co-create identity through affect, movement, and social interaction. This emphasizes the felt, lived, and relational dimensions of queerness, challenging traditional descriptions that reduce queer identity to visibility.

1.4. Research Questions

In this study, my research questions revolve around how musical theatre operates as a critical site for queer embodiment, resistance, and historiography. Rather than treating them as isolated inquiries, I see these questions as interconnected pathways that allow me to explore the embodied, aesthetic, and political dimensions of queer performance. My research questions are the following:

- How does musical theatre function as a performative space for queer embodiment beyond visibility and representation?
- How do aesthetic and performative elements (e.g., camp, excess, stylization) shape queer embodiment in musical theatre?
- How does participation in a queer musical transform the bodily awareness and identity formation of performers?
- How does *The Rocky Horror Show* exemplify the role of musical theatre in queer historiography and resistance, particularly in Turkey?

- How do embodied performances in musical theatre challenge dominant gender norms and heteronormative narratives?

By asking these questions, I aim to inquire into the ways musical theatre not only stages queer lives but also reshapes the embodied practices of performers and audiences. My focus is on how *The Rocky Horror Show*, as a case study, foregrounds queer embodiment as a mode of historical narration and resistance, while simultaneously revealing how performance aesthetics produce and contest normative understandings of gender and sexuality.

1.5. The Premise of the Research

This study contributes to Gender and Queer Studies by examining musical theatre as a site of embodied queer performance. This research, which goes beyond visibility analyses, brings to the forefront the embodiment of the lived, emotional and material dimensions of queer identity on stage. Integrating Butler's performativity, Ahmed's queer phenomenology, and performance historiography, this thesis presents a multidimensional analysis of queer musical theatre as a field of orientation, disorientation, and world-making—particularly in its emotional and affective dimensions.

Through a case study of *the Rocky Horror Show* in Turkey, this research highlights the socio-political risks of queer performance in a non-Western context. This study investigates how musical theatre supports queer identity development, resistance, and embodied social criticism by combining qualitative interviews, participant observation, and performance analysis.

1.6. The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into five main chapters, each designed to build upon the previous one to construct a coherent understanding of queer embodiment in musical theatre. The structure follows a theoretical-to-empirical progression, beginning with conceptual foundations and culminating in an analysis of lived experience, performance, and political resistance. The introduction outlines the research question, rationale, and significance of the study. It explains why queer embodiment matters in

both local and global theatre contexts, particularly given the ongoing marginalization of LGBTQ+ communities in performance spaces. The introduction also previews the theoretical frameworks that anchor the study—namely Butler's performativity, Ahmed's orientation theory, and Foucault's analysis of power and surveillance—setting the stage for how these concepts are later operationalized in analysis.

The theoretical framework chapter delves deeper into these foundational concepts, offering a critical discussion of embodiment, orientation, discipline, and disidentification. Rather than treating theory as abstract background, this chapter articulates how each framework shapes the analysis, particularly in understanding the relational, situated, and affective dimensions of queer performance.

The methodology chapter outlines the qualitative research design used in the study, explaining the logic behind using semi-structured interviews and participant observation. It also addresses ethical concerns and the challenges of conducting research in politically sensitive contexts, particularly in relation to queer visibility and self-expression in Turkey.

The analysis chapter is divided into several interconnected sections that explore themes emerging from the interview data and performance analysis. Rather than treating each section as isolated, the chapter traces a narrative arc through queer embodiment—from bodily movement on stage to the politics of costume, voice, and spatial navigation. The chapter demonstrates how queer performers negotiate heteronormative norms, resist institutional constraints, and create alternative forms of being through their performances. The insights are situated within the theoretical frameworks introduced earlier, showing how disorientation (Ahmed), performativity (Butler), and embodied resistance (Muñoz and Foucault) manifest in practice.

Finally, the conclusion synthesizes these findings, arguing that queer musical theatre operates not only as a space of representation but also as a space of embodied world-making. It reflects on how the study contributes to queer performance studies, and proposes future directions, particularly regarding digital performance spaces and non-Western queer cultural production.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Historical Background of Western Musical Theatre (Broadway/West End)

This section focuses on Western musical theatre—primarily the Broadway/West End tradition—from which *The Rocky Horror Show* (UK, 1973) emerges. Western musical theatre is a hybrid performance form combining text, music, dance, and visual aesthetics. Shaped by Broadway/West End, early musicals centered the male–female couple and reinforced heteronormative roles (Wolf, 2011; Wollman, 2017).

By the late 1960s and 1970s, within Western musical theatre, social movements (feminist, gay liberation, counterculture) catalyzed more political, non-normative, and experimental orientations. In this context, *The Rocky Horror Show* (1973) can be read as both a product and catalyst of Western musical theatre's transformation, introducing camp aesthetics, drag performance, gender fluidity, and audience participation (Šimková, 2010).

The queering of Western musical theatre progressed at the character level and through aesthetic/performative strategies; drag, exaggerated gesture, and costume reorganized gender codes on stage (Clum, 1999; Wolf, 2011).

2.1.1. Evolution of Western Musical Theatre (Opera/Operetta to Rock/Pop Musicals)

Within the Western tradition, musical theatre evolved from opera/operetta and industrialized in Broadway and the West End. The 20th-century "golden age" yielded to rock- and pop-inflected forms; by the late century, "musical" spanned diverse subgenres (Kenrick, 2017; Wollman, 2013). Broadway emerged as a dominant production hub within Western musical theatre. In the recent days, scholarship often

treats the umbrella of Western musical theatre, especially in the USA inclusively across subgenres (Taylor, 2016).

2.1.2. Musical Theatre in Turkey: Operetta Lineage and the Path to *Rocky Horror*

Turkey's encounter with musical theatre developed through an operetta lineage in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods. Works by Cemal Reşit Rey—most notably *Lüküs Hayat*—popularized melodic comedy while installing a vocabulary of spectacle, gesture, and stylized gender play that later resonates with *Rocky Horror*'s camp and drag aesthetics. Rather than offer a comprehensive history, this subsection isolates elements germane to this thesis: how music-driven spectacle, exaggerated costuming, and comic gender codes habituated Turkish audiences to theatrical excess. From the 2000s onward, independent ensembles and university stages diversified this ecology; within this scene, camp intimacy, close audience–stage proximity, and amateur–professional hybridity provided conditions under which *Rocky Horror* could be locally legible. The 2024 Ankara stagings (Bilkent; Lemur Sanat) are thus read not as anomalies but as context-sensitive activations of a long-standing operetta/musical sensibility, reoriented toward queer embodiment and participatory spectatorship.

2.2. Queer Historiography in Musical Theatre

A contradiction has always defined musical theatre: although it provides a creative haven for gay artists and viewers, its mainstream storylines have often supported heteronormative values. Rich's (1980) concept of compulsory heterosexuality helps explain how classic musicals such as *Hello, Dolly!* and *My Fair Lady* reinforced heteronormative coupling, even as musical theatre also carried subversive undercurrents.

The visibility of queer characters in musical theatre has progressively grown throughout time. While visibility of queer characters has grown (McGill, Chaffe & Ross, 2024), Gelfand (2018) notes that fewer than 5% of Broadway musicals feature explicitly queer characters, highlighting a persistent gap between queer participation and representation. This historical dilemma emphasizes how musical theatre serves both as a venue for revolutionary expression and a place of marginalization. The intrinsic framework of musical theatre—a mix of heightened affect, music, dance, and

exaggerated theatricality—offers chances for resistance and reimagining of standard identities. In this context, musicals act as a space for negotiating queer embodiment, moving beyond representation toward becoming and experiencing identity through performative practice.

The term *queer* is sometimes treated as an umbrella term that includes gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, agender, intersex, aromantic, asexual, pansexual, and other non-normative identities. Yet, it is more than that. As Following Cathy Cohen (1997), queerness here is understood not as a fixed identity but as a marginalized relation to power, while Warner emphasizes queer as opposition to normativity, and Umphrey reminds us that even the "natural" standards shaping normativity must themselves be questioned. When defining the opposition to normativity, we also consider the normal, the "natural," as a structure. Therefore, other power structures that create the illusion that there is such a thing as a standard in the first place and apply it are also questionable. The reason why queer is considered a challenge in this thesis and examined in the history of musical theatre is also that it is included as a destructive challenge among the standard regimes that are privileged within the categories of constructed heterosexuality and deconstruction.

Michel de Certeau critiques the illusion of objective history, noting that truth is always perspectival; as Susan Bennett observes, historiography now acknowledges multiple dispersed narratives, opening space for marginalized voices such as queer histories (De Certeau, 1988; Bennett, 1996). This challenge is significant as the queer changes in the history of musical theatre reflect broader shifts in historiography. Provincial queer musical theatre historicism rejects the usual white model of history as one kind of past event.

Diana Taylor (2003) contrasts archives with repertoires, arguing that performance itself transmits memory and history, making queer historiography particularly suited to musical theatre's embodied, ephemeral practices.

Musical theatre has strong connections with queerness across various dimensions—through queer actors, playwrights, and audiences. Scholars such as Miller, Savran, and Wolf highlight how queer artists and audiences have long shaped musicals, reading

exaggerated theatricality, parodic gender codes, and camp aesthetics as central to the genre's queer appeal (Miller, 1998; Savran, 2003; Wolf, 2002; Wolf, 2011). Scholars began to explore what makes musical theatre so appealing to queer audiences. There is a shared belief that the genre promotes queer readings and pleasures regardless of narrative content. Especially since the so-called Golden Age of musical history, choreography and performances have consistently gestured toward a queer aesthetic, regardless of the creators' identities. In *Something for the Boys: Musical Theatre and Gay Culture* (1999), John Clum highlights aesthetic characteristics appealing to gay audiences: increased theatricality, exaggerated and parodic gender codes, and romantic fantasies.

Frances Negrón-Muntaner, in her analysis of *West Side Story*, highlights similar characteristics within the context of race and queerness, noting the use of camp, hyperbole, overstated décor, cross-dressing, mimicry, gender inversions, and playful subversion (Negrón-Muntaner, 2000). These elements challenge normative aesthetics and embody queerness beyond simple representation. Sara Salih also emphasizes that queerness resists normativity through an ongoing, dynamic movement, disrupting fixed identity categories and allowing for fluid transitions between identities (Salih, 2003).

The tension between realism and theatricality in musicals destabilizes the dominance of rational, spoken language in communication, positioning musicals as inherently queer. Musical theatre interacts with historical communication using artists, performers, audiences, and venues, therefore promoting queer historiography.

Moreover, through bodily interaction with audiences, musicals question accepted theatrical conventions. As Wolf and Miller note, audiences actively participate—singing, tapping, imitating—so that musicals become, in Taylor's terms, a repertoire of embodied memory linking performers and spectators (Wolf, 2011; Weinstock, 2024).

2.2.1. Examples of Queer Musical

The musical theatre scene has often provided a space for many queer individuals to express themselves without immediate fear of judgment. However, the narratives on

stage have largely remained tethered to entrenched heteronormative structures. While overt LGBTQ+ representation increased over time, this cannot simply be framed as a linear "progress." Much of this visibility has occurred through mechanisms of neoliberal co-optation—often referred to as rainbow capitalism—where representation becomes commodified and depoliticized. Even when queer characters appear, they are frequently positioned in ways that reinforce heteronormative centrality: pushed to the background, caricatured, or placed in supporting roles such as the "gay best friend" or "fat best friend" whose primary function is to aid the heterosexual lead. As Sarah Schulman observes, "Homosexuals are rarely allowed to be heroes unless they are tragic heroes whom heterosexuals save"—a dynamic that persists not because of cyclical "regression," but because the sustaining structures of heteronormativity remain firmly intact through social, cultural, and policy frameworks (Schulman, 1998). White cisgender gay men were the first subgroup within the LGBTQ+ community to gain significant visibility on the musical theatre stage. This was not accidental; their social positioning made them more acceptable to mainstream audiences, as they could be more easily assimilated into dominant capitalist and heteronormative frameworks. Many also benefited from considerable privilege—racial, gendered, and economic—which facilitated their inclusion while other queer identities remained marginalized. This reflects broader structural inequalities in U.S. society, from misogyny and transphobia to white supremacy. Although representation of LBTQ+ people (minus G) has increased since the 2000s, the number of musicals featuring gay male characters still far exceeds those centering lesbian, bisexual, trans, or nonbinary characters. Since Stonewall, queer visibility in musical theatre has increased through works like *A Chorus Line,* which openly discussed gay stories on Broadway; *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, which centered trans narratives at a time when such stories were rarely acknowledged; and *Rent*, which brought issues of AIDS, homelessness, and queer love into mainstream theatre, reshaping public discourse.

Based on the same-name movie, *Kinky Boots* celebrates diversity in society with a trans character named Lola in the lead role. Although Lola faces a backlash from those who are afraid of change, she shows that their views have changed and that it is important to accept each other's differences. *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* follows three drag queens traveling around Australia for a concert in the remote desert. The

story introduces us to some of the wacky characters they encounter along the way and some of the homophobia and transphobia they experience. The stage adaptation of the 1994 film puts the story alongside several camp classics such as *What is Love Got to Do With* and *MacArthur Park. Hedwig and the Angry Inch* tells the story of a gay rock singer from East Germany named Hedwig Robinson. With the character's monologues and songs describing how she fell victim to a failed gender reassignment operation, the musical tells trans stories at a time when trans people are not recognized or accepted by society and do not have access to proper healthcare. *Rent* tells the story of friends going through homelessness, love, and dealing with the AIDS crisis. With its first mention of the AIDS issue, it has been a critical turning point in the history of theatre that has helped change the debate about LGBTQ+ themes. The musical *Prom* tells the story of Constance McMillen, who tries to prevent the school administration from attending the school prom when she announces plans to wear a suit to the prom and bring her girlfriend. It is an essential musical in terms of lesbian visibility.

2.2.2. Casting and Representation in Queer Musicals

Casting in queer musicals plays a vital role in how LGBTQ+ identities are represented and understood on stage. The change in casting over time reflects changes in broader social attitudes toward queer identities but simultaneously brings into sharp relief the challenges that remain in the theatre industry. Originality in representation is the first issue to which attitude changes can be seen. Queer musicals have, especially in recent years, firmly pointed out the importance of having actors who identify as LGBTQ+ cast as LGBTQ+ roles. This app provides a service to introduce authenticity to the expression of queer experiences and allows actors to draw upon personal experiences to enhance their performances.

Historically, straight, cisgender actors often played queer roles, which limited authenticity and reinforced stereotypes. In recent years, however, there has been a shift toward casting LGBTQ+ actors in queer roles, particularly in trans representation where casting cis actors can amount to erasure (Snook, 2018; Donovan, 2023). Yet, typecasting persists queer actors are often restricted to queer roles, while opportunities in non-queer roles remain limited. Issues of inclusivity also extend to intersectionality—actors of color and those with diverse body types are still

underrepresented—although productions like *Fun Home* and *The Prom* have been praised for more honest and inclusive casting (Whitfield, 2020; Donovan, 2023).

The Ring of Keys collective of theatre advocacy has made representation fairer and more equal for queer actors by advocating for better casting practices. These attempts constitute a larger struggle to shake the industry off its standard ways and make more room for voices that usually do not get much leeway. The movement stands with actors in tackling the challenges casting faces regarding authenticity and inclusivity in queer musicals. The areas that need further breakthroughs are typecasting, the continuous debate over cisgender actors playing transgender roles, and the intersectionality of race and homosexuality.The industry is moving in the direction of inclusivity, but much remains to be done so that all queer identities will be represented on stage in their proper and fair measures.

2.2.3. Queer Historiography: Non-Western Adaptations of The *Rocky Horror Show*

The *Rocky Horror Show* has been staged not only in the West but also in various cultural contexts, becoming a platform for the expression of queer identities. These adaptations have preserved the basic queer and subcultural elements of the musical while enriching them with local cultural references. In this way, they have created both visibility and spaces for queer communities to express themselves (Negrón-Muntaner, 2004; Torre, 2010).

Non-Western adaptations of The Rocky Horror Show illustrate how queer identities have survived and developed resistance strategies in societies where they have historically been oppressed or ignored. These performances create an important archive of queer resistance against heteronormative pressures while contributing to the writing of queer history. Furthermore, the staging of the musical with queer themes has often functioned as a protest social norms and gender stereotypes. In non-Western societies, the queer messages conveyed by the musical have been received not only as an aesthetic experience but also as a call for cultural change.

In Latin America, the *Rocky Horror Show* has been staged by independent theatre companies, especially in cities such as Mexico City and Buenos Aires. These

performances have provided an important space for local queer communities to express themselves and have often created an environment that challenges societal norms.

The adaptations in Mexico combined the original text and music with local jokes and cultural references, ensuring that the show was embraced by the local population while preserving its queer and subcultural elements. Similarly, the performances in Brazil and Argentina were organized on alternative stages and in private spaces, avoiding censorship and social pressures while creating a unique experience for queer audiences. Audience participation, which was encouraged in these performances, served as a tool for experiencing queer embodiment and strengthening community consciousness.

Overall, the Latin American adaptations of the *Rocky Horror Show* demonstrate how the musical can be transformed within local contexts to both preserve its core queer elements and resonate with regional cultural norms (Negrón-Muntaner, 2004; Torre, 2010).

In Southeast Asian countries, particularly Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia, adaptations of *The Rocky Horror Show* have played a critical role in both drag culture and the visibility of queer communities (Fowler, 2019). These performances were generally staged in major cities and alternative theatre spaces, combining local cultural references to reinforce the meaning of queer themes.

In Thailand, adaptations staged in cities such as Bangkok and Chiang Mai facilitated the local acceptance of drag performances and queer aesthetics. Audience participation, combined with the interactive nature of the performances, created a collective experience and a space for identity formation for queer communities.

Performances in the Philippines similarly expanded the boundaries of queer representation, offering an aesthetic that subtly challenged societal norms. These adaptations illustrate how queer aesthetics are shaped within the local cultural context and how the universal themes of the musical resonate with local communities (Negrón-Muntaner, 2004).

In the Middle East, adaptations of *The Rocky Horror Show* have been more limited and often took place in private spaces due to social and cultural pressures. In countries outside of Egypt, Lebanon, and Turkey, performances staged by independent theatre groups created spaces of resistance against censorship and for queer representation (Arab News, 2012) For example, performances held in Egypt during the 2010s became popular among young people and queer communities, but they often faced police intervention and censorship. In Lebanon, independent theatre groups in Beirut staged queer-themed performances, creating platforms for discussions on gender and identity. These performances not only enhanced the visibility of queer communities but also provided a safe and inclusive experience for participants (Arab News, 2012).

Middle Eastern adaptations demonstrate how queer theatre outside the West has functioned as a site of struggle and resistance. In this context, *The Rocky Horror Show* has served not merely as an entertainment event but as a tool for political and cultural intervention for queer communities.

Taken together, the adaptations of *The Rocky Horror Show* outside the West highlight the musical's capacity to preserve queer subcultural elements while adapting to diverse local contexts. They demonstrate the universality of queer aesthetics, the resilience of queer communities, and the performative negotiation of identity in response to local norms and constraints.

This global perspective provides essential context for examining the Turkish production of *The Rocky Horror Show* in Ankara, which will be discussed in the next section. Understanding how non-Western audiences and performers have engaged with the musical allows us to situate the Turkish adaptation within a broader discourse of queer embodiment, community formation, and resistance against heteronormative frameworks.

2.3. Pioneering Queer Musicals and Their Impact

2.3.1. *La Cage aux Folles*: A Turning Point in Queer Representation

La Cage aux Folles marked a key moment in the history of queer musical theatre by foregrounding themes of drag culture and gay relationships. Its mainstream success

challenged societal norms and provided a platform for queer visibility within popular culture. The musical's focus on family, love, and acceptance within a queer context broke new ground for representation on stage.

Based on Poiret's 1973 stage farce, *La Cage aux Folles* first appeared on Broadway in 1983. Set in St. Tropez, the story follows Georges and Albin, a gay couple running a drag nightclub, whose family faces conflict when their son becomes engaged to the daughter of a conservative politician. The plot, blending humor and poignancy, highlight's themes of love, acceptance, and chosen family (Wollman, 2017; Clum, 1999).

The show was a topic of discussion as much as a cultural monument. Presenting a gay romance on Broadway attracted both compliments and condemnation at once. While celebrated for offering mainstream visibility to a gay couple, it was also critiqued for not being "gay enough" and for relying on stereotypes in portraying queer characters. *La Cage aux Folles* broke through conventional wisdom by tackling acceptance, love, and family, therefore providing a potent story of queer representation during a period when LGBTQ+ presence on stage was few.

La Cage aux Folles debuted with a radical portrayal of a homosexual partnership that sympathetically humanized the long-term gay relationship of Georges and Albin. In a time when most LGBTQ+ representation was either nonexistent or negative, this presentation was revolutionary. The musical was both a commercial and critical success, winning several Tony Awards and proving that a story centered on a gay relationship could thrive on Broadway. At the same time, it was criticized for relying on stereotypes and for sanitizing queer identities for mainstream audiences. Both gay and mainstream viewers still find great resonance in the musical examining family, acceptance, and love. Challenging conventional ideas of family and normalcy, it sent strong messages to underprivileged groups, providing validation and exposure for queer people on a worldwide scene.

2.3.2. Evolution of Queer Representation Post-*La Cage aux Folles*

After *La Cage aux Folles*'s revolutionary popularity, queer representation in musical theatre started to change, including more complex and nuanced stories. La Cage's

success set the path for the following musicals more explicitly and honestly, exploring LGBTQ+ themes despite varied degrees of progress and failures.

After *La Cage*, queer themes became more visible in works like *Rent* (AIDS, homelessness, queer survival) and *Fun Home* (lesbian coming-of-age), marking a shift toward more diverse but still uneven representation that continued to privilege white cisgender gay men (Larson, 2005; Tesori & Kron, 2017).

Though much has been accomplished, there are still difficulties in reaching thorough and accurate gay representation on stage. Shows like *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* highlighted continuous problems of authenticity and representation in the theatre business, therefore sparking discussions about the casting of cisgender actors in transgender roles (Miner, 2011). Furthermore, some shows struggle to approach complex topics like the AIDS crisis without simplifying or avoiding them altogether, even if more LGBTQ+ themes find their place on popular platforms.

Theatre community advocacy projects like The Ring of Keys collectively highlight the continuous fight for equality and inclusion. Beyond tokenism and clichés, these projects seek to guarantee that musical theatre fairly depicts the whole range of LGBTQ+ identities. The difficulty remains in depicting the variety and complexity of queer experiences while preserving authenticity and integrity as queer representation keeps growing.

2.3.3. Embodied Queerness in Contemporary Musicals

Modern musicals have embraced ideas of queer embodiment beyond simple portrayal to show how queer identities are felt, lived, and experienced on stage. This change indicates a greater cultural awareness that queerness is about how bodies interact with space, emotions, social structures, and visibility. In this sense, embodiment describes how artists physically and emotionally inhabit queer identities on stage, therefore turning abstract ideas of queerness into visceral, lived experiences.

Important examples of how modern musicals question conventional gender binaries and honor body expression are productions such as *Hedwig, the Angry Inch*, and *Kinky Boots*. *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* presents a raw exploration of gender identity and

loss, blending monologue and rock music to depict trans and non-binary struggles with resilience and self-expression. *Kinky Boots* uses the character of Lola (Lauper & Fierstein, 2013), a drag queen, to challenge rigid gender norms and celebrate empowerment, showing drag as both entertainment and political resistance (Miner, 2011).

Musicals like *Fun Home* and *The Prom* extend this trajectory, portraying lesbian and queer youth narratives that frame queerness as lived experience rather than token representation (Sklar, Beguelin & Martin, 2018).

These shows show how modern musical theatre generates venues where queer presence may flourish. Using theatricality, musical expression, and dance gives performers a special stage to confront societal standards physically. By doing this, musicals became venues of resistance and celebration where audiences and performers could interact with queerness as a lived, embodied reality.

Moreover, these musicals inspire emotional and physical participation, challenging the audience's passive absorption of LGBT stories. In Hedwig, for instance, audience involvement becomes a part of the performance, blurring the lines between performer and spectator and promoting a shared feeling of vulnerability and empowerment—this dynamic foster communal embodiment whereby queerness exceeds the stage and becomes a shared experience for all present.

Modern musicals are essential venues for investigating embodied queerness and providing stories outside of popular appeal. By use of performance, dance, music, and audience engagement, these works question accepted conceptions of gender and sexuality, therefore providing venues where queerness may be sensed, experienced, and celebrated in its whole richness. The focus on physical presence and body expression emphasizes the transforming power of musical theatre as a venue for queering stories and the performing act itself.

2.4. *The Rocky Horror Show*: A Case Study in Queer Embodiment

Renowned for its spectacular costumes—including fishnet stockings and glitter and its famous rock songs—*the Rocky Horror Show* is important in musical and cultural

legacy. Still, the queer community carries the most significant influence. Rising as a revolutionary player on the late 1970s musical theatre scene, it represented a more significant sexual awakening. The concert brought together gay viewers from many backgrounds, making the stage a joyful venue for people who felt excluded by conventional society. Within its subversive milieu, the musical helped to create regional queer groups seeking refuge for self-expression and discovery. *The Rocky Horror Show* emerged in the 1970s as a radical work that blended camp, drag, and rock music, creating a space of queer visibility and liberation (Kinkade & Katovich, 1992; Mann, 2018; Weinstock, 2024; Greene, 2016).

Amid this backdrop of activism, Richard O'Brien began crafting *The Rocky Horror Show*, drawing inspiration from 1950s science fiction films and the prevailing sense of rebellion during the era. With assistance from director Jim Sharman, the musical premiered on the West End stage in 1973. With its absurd humor and boundary-pushing components, first stunning viewers, the show finally attracted a devoted cult following and became a historic cultural phenomenon.

2.4.1. Background Information and Plot Overview

Brad and Janet, a newly engaged couple, seek shelter in a mysterious castle after a storm. Inside, they encounter Dr. Frank-N-Furter, who unveils his creation Rocky, a figure embodying physical perfection. Eddie's sudden appearance and death intensify the chaos. Frank seduces Brad and Janet, triggering their sexual awakenings. Later, Riff-Raff and Magenta stage a coup, killing Frank and others. The castle departs, leaving Brad, Janet, and Dr. Scott to escape.

Frank challenges their conservative views and drives Brad and Janet into sexual awakenings as the narrative progresses, so seducing them. Driven by jealousy and fresh ambition, Janet finds comfort in Rocky's arms. When Dr. Scott finally makes it to the castle looking for his nephew Eddie, he is appalled by Frank's behavior. Frank drives the characters into a cabaret performance and outfits them in extravagant clothes, marking the story's end.

The power dynamics shift when Riff-Raff and Magenta rebel against Frank's distractions from their mission—originating from the alien planet Transsexual

Transylvania. Their coup results in the deaths of Frank, Columbia, and Rocky. Ultimately, Brad, Janet, and Dr. Scott escape as the castle returns to its home planet.

2.4.2. Characters as Embodied Queer Figures

Characters in *The Rocky Horror Show* serve not only as story devices but also as live representations of queer identities and experiences, each person expressing a different aspect of queer embodiment and subverting homogeneity. The musical's unique capacity to combine humor, absurdity, and great social satire turns its characters into vehicles for investigating ideas of gender fluidity, non-conformism, and the challenge of conventional expectations.

Riff Raff, Magenta: Operating on the outskirts of Frank's castle and representing the foreign and the otherworldly, Riff Raff and Magenta are fundamental representations of rebellious queerness. Their conflicted relationship, with hints of incestuous undertones, questions established family and sexual roles. At first, he seems to be a hunchbacked servant, but Riff Raff exposes his dominant role, subverting the first presumptions about his place in the power dynamics of the castle. His ultimate revolt against Frank brings to light internal strife among the LGBT community—questions of power, persecution, and betrayal.

Conversely, Magenta releases sexual freedom and revolt. Her apparent sensuality represents her physical presence, which contrasts with her later commitment to Riff Raff's betrayal. Their acts combined illustrate the complexities of LGBT relationships, which often battle with both consistency and conflict in questioning social conventions. Their last deed of killing Frank represents a rejection of Frank's unbridled hedonism, therefore highlighting the results of unbridled power in homosexual environments.

Rocky Horror: As Frank's invention, Rocky is the actual expression of desire—a manufactured ideal of manhood shaped by Frank's dreams. His hyper-masculine body contrasts his childish innocence and vulnerability to produce an interesting dynamic whereby physical perfection becomes a site of manipulation and exploitation. Rocky's exchanges with other characters—especially Janet—showcase issues of sexual awakening and objectification of the body. Rocky becomes a living commentary on

the pressures of physical ideals inside both heteronormative and gay societies as a figure of projected desire.

Columbia: Columbia's portrayal of queer heartache and unrequited love offers a moving backdrop to the otherwise turbulent musical energy. Frank first attracts her, but her fall into disillusionment reflects the emotional sensitivity commonly left out of queer stories. Her extravagant appearance, emphasized with sparkles and vibrant colors, contrasts with the depth of her loss to symbolize the struggle between outer celebration and interior grief. The terrible conclusion of Columbia emphasizes the suffering of betrayal and the darker results of unequal power in relationships.

Representing the incursion of scientific rationalism into the freeing anarchy of Frank's castle, the conventional authority Dr. Everett Scott stands for. Within the musical framework, his conservative attitude and connection with homonormative ideals are questioned and finally laughed at. However, as the narrative goes on, Dr. Scott takes part in the subversive events of the castle, therefore representing the idea that no one is free from the attraction of liberty and non-conformism.

The narrator, the criminologist: Acting as a detached spectator, the criminologist is a figure of reason trying to provide logical order to the developing anarchy. His job is naturally paradoxical since his logical justifications usually contradict the ridiculousness and flux of the story. The clinical manner of the character starts to parody academic and social attempts to classify or justify gay identities. His presence emphasizes how poorly traditional structures understand or can contain the complexity of queer existence.

Using these characters, *The Rocky Horror Show* crafts a rich tapestry of embodied LGBT experiences. From the sensuous Frank to the sensitive Columbia, every character questions accepted mores and offers a different view of queerness. Apart from undermining conventional gender stereotypes and sexual expectations, the musical illustrates via these characters the fluidity, complexity, and resilience inherent in queer identities. Their embodied performances confirm *The Rocky Horror Show* as a vital piece in queer musical theatre since they provide an opportunity for celebration of difference, self-expression, and resistance (Muñoz, 1999; Halperin, 2012).

2.4.2.1 Dr. Frank-N-Furter: Queer Transgression and Embodiment

Frank-N-Furter is a groundbreaking character in *The Rocky Horror Show* who questions conventional gender roles and societal expectations. Frank's performance as a drag legend is critical as the show debuted following major queer activity in the late 1960s, at the same time as movements inspired by the Stonewall Riots. Frank questions strict conceptions of masculinity and femininity by embodying ideas of gender fluidity and non-conformism.

Represented as an extravagant mad scientist, Frank is a self-described "sweet transvestite from Transylvania." Using his sensuality and charm to control people around him, his character offers a striking representation of drag culture. Frank's gender expression questions conventional roles by combining feminine and masculine elements; he boldly wears traditionally feminine clothes, makeup, and accessories while claiming authority by aggressively and powerfully masculine features.

For many queer people, Frank represents a figure of sexual and gender liberation, embodying the freedom to express oneself beyond normative boundaries. Frank regularly manipulates and objectifies others around him, therefore reflecting the darkest aspects of gender performance in his use of power for dominance. Frank's persona questions and parodies preconceptions about trans and queer people, therefore providing a multifaceted picture that both empowers and alienates, as Aviram (1992) remarks.

Frank's presence acts as a revolutionary force, giving gay viewers somewhere to investigate and accept non-conforming gender identities. Encouraging self-acceptance and applauding fluid gender expression, his legendary exhortation, "Do not dream it, be it," speaks to viewers. However, the act also emphasizes the underlying conflicts in drag culture, as cisgender men sometimes parody feminism in ways that would support negative presumptions. Frank's influence is still crucial in breaking traditional norms on sexuality and gender despite their complexity. By showing that gender, sexuality, and appearance do not have to line up, his character questions homonormative ideas. Emphasizing that these components are unique and fluid, Frank reflects on the junction of physical sex, gender identification, and gender performance, as Tickle (2016) notes.

Frank-N-Furter questions conventional wisdom by modeling gender flexibility, therefore providing a radical forum for gay expression. Frank's appearance in *The Rocky Horror Show* remains a monument in queer representation, even if his portrayal is not without debate, especially about the reinforcement of some prejudices. His role represents the ability of theatre to question societal norms and promote more acceptance of many gender identities.

2.4.2.2 Brad and Janet: Subversion of Heteronormative Archetypes

With its sarcastic approach toward heteronormativity and conventional gender roles—embodied by the ultra-conservative pair Brad and Jennet—*The Rocky Horror Show* is one of the outstanding successes. When they reach the castle, their rigorous loyalty to society's expectations becomes a subject of satire. The hostility begins even before they arrive at the castle during their rushed engagement scene. Janet grabs the bridal bouquet with great excitement, which motivates Brad's proposal since it symbolizes their outstanding commitment to meeting recognized norms of society. This picture captures their absorption of social forces and reflects more general social customs emphasizing homogeneous values.

Their arrival into Frank N. Furter's unusual environment sharply contrasts their firmly rooted principles. When the couple encounters the liberated and non-conforming culture of the castle, their attempts to stick to their created roles fall apart rapidly and expose the frailty of their societal views. Their unease shows their difficulty balancing their internalized values with the anarchy around them. Frank's presence weakens Brad's confidence via harsh remarks, weakening his masculinity and strength. This confrontation reveals a stronger political commentary: the tension between the firmly established heterosexual rules and the destructive potential of queer expression. Their solid moral values crumble as the pair gets trapped in Frank's schemes.

The turning point comes when Frank hooks Brad and Jennet separately. First upset by these meetings, they soon find unexpected relief and release, knowing their secrets will be protected. These encounters expose their identities' flux and challenge conventional gender stereotypes. This change also questions society's inclination toward homogeneity of values, which shows flimsiness under duress.

Their answers draw attention to the hypocrisy often observed in conservative society, particularly concerning the time the musical was scheduled. Presented initially as tales of wisdom, Brad and Jennet soon produce to the subversive circumstances of the castle. This metamorphosis questions the consistency of homogeneous social structures by revealing how easily strong values could fail.

Their path in *The Rocky Horror Show* ultimately shows a humorous subversion of conventional gender roles and societal standards. The musical emphasizes how society constructions are frailer and shallower than they seem by revealing their sensitivity to change, highlighting the artificiality of homonormative values (Wollman, 2017).

2.4.3. The Significance of The *Rocky Horror Show* for Queer Musical Theatre

Not only for its bold embracing of non-conformism but also for how it questions conventional gender roles and societal norms, *The Rocky Horror Show* occupies a legendary place in the development of queer musical theatre. Originally aired in the 1970s, during a period of significant societal change and campaigns for sexual liberation, the show became a lighthouse of radical queer visibility. It gave people excluded by mainstream culture a safe place where they may see themselves reflected on stage in hitherto unthinkable terms.

The way the show embodies queer transgression and celebrates gender flexibility is, at the core, what drives its impact. *The Rocky Horror Show* subverts homonormative assumptions by offering an outrageous, charismatic person who freely embraces non-binary manifestations of gender and sexuality through characters like Dr. Frank-N-Furter. Frank's unreserved representation of queerness—combining masculine and feminine elements in an exaggerated, theatrical manner—helped to destroy strict binary systems. This creative representation not only gives queer viewers representation but also a type of empowerment, which helps people to embrace their identities free from guilt.

The direct audience involvement of the production accentuates its significance by surpassing the traditional limits between performer and spectator. Dressed-up audience members asking back calls and captivating themselves in the performance create a community environment that helps LGBT culture and identity blossom.

Mirroring the concepts of liberation and self-expression at the center of the play, audience participation changes the musical from a passive, lived experience. Within the LGBTQ+ community, this participatory culture helped to promote a feeling of belonging. It created *The Rocky Horror Show* as a cultural phenomenon and haven for gay expression as much as entertainment.

Within the framework of queer historiography in musical theatre, *The Rocky Horror Show* also questions the conventional narratives sometimes found in past works such as *La Cage aux Folles*. While earlier gay musicals gently negotiated mainstream acceptance, *The Rocky Horror Show* embraced queerness with extreme flamboyance and rebellious narrative. The show's irreverent energy established a new standard for how musicals should depict LGBT identities—not as side characters or clichés but as essential players driving the story.

Primarily by depicting the conservative couple Brad and Janet, this musical also made new ground by parodying and subverting heteronormative ideas. Their journey from strict traditionalism into sexual awakening under Frank's direction questions society's expectations of gender roles and sexual purity. Judith Butler's idea of performativity—where gender and sexual identities are created via repeated performances—makes this narrative arc resonant. Brad and Janet's changes expose these social ideas' frailty when faced with expressions of unrestricted queerness.

The Rocky Horror Show also mainstreamed drag culture and camp aesthetics. The musical's overdone theatricality and lighthearted parodies fit Susan Sontag's conception of camp as a mindset honoring artistry, excess, and irony. Incorporating aspects of drag and camp, the program gave gay groups a stage on which to use theatrical excess and comedy to question social mores. Later musicals such as *Kinky Boots* and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, which further explore issues of gender identity, transition, and acceptance, helped find their path at this junction of camp and drag.

The show's legacy spans its cultural impact as much as its content. *The Rocky Horror Show* helped create an atmosphere whereby queerness could be celebrated freely by encouraging a participatory culture whereby audience members could represent queer identities. By encouraging inclusivity and shattering stereotypes around LGBTQ+

identities, this interactive involvement prepared the way for upcoming queer-positive venues in theatre and beyond.

The Rocky Horror Show indeed influences contemporary queer musical theatre. It broke through assumptions to study multifaceted sensations of identification, desire, and transformation, opening the road for more varied and sophisticated representations of LGBT characters. *Rent*, *Fun Home*, and *The Prom* owe much of their capacity to foreground LGBT stories to the subversive foundation set by *The Rocky Horror Show*.

The Rocky Horror Show is ultimately still a classic piece in the annals of LGBT musical theatre. Its rejection of traditional narrative, celebration of fluid identities, and building an interactive, communal venue for LGBT expression define its significance as a cultural and theatrical turning point. The show's continuing appeal emphasizes its function not just as entertainment but also as a revolutionary force challenging society's expectation and changing the scene of queer representation in musical theatre (Sontag, 1978; Wolf, 2011; Weinstock, 2024).

2.4.4. Productions in Ankara and Turkey

The Rocky Horror Show, written by Richard O'Brien (1973), is a cult musical that has generated a distinctive tradition of participatory spectatorship worldwide. In Turkey, however, it was long known primarily through its film adaptation (*The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, 1975), while stage adaptations remained limited. The first notable amateur initiative was undertaken in 2011 by METU's Musical Theatre Company (The Company) in a campus setting. Despite modest means, this university production reached Turkish fans of *Rocky Horror* and laid the groundwork for subsequent attempts.

The year 2024 marked a watershed for *Rocky Horror* in Turkey. Bilkent University's Departments of Music and Theatre staged a campus-based academic production in May 2024 under the direction of Jennifer Tipton, targeting students with free admission and explicitly foregrounding the show's interactive tradition. Instructions projected onto a screen guided the audience on when and how to respond, successfully translating the work's international "participatory audience" practice into a campus context. In this way, the production offered a pedagogical framework that conveyed

to young audiences the musical's call to "don't dream it, be it" through direct experience.

Shortly thereafter, the independent Ankara collective Lemur Sanat mounted the professional-scale Turkish premiere of *The Rocky Horror Show*: premiering on 26 May 2024, the production ran through June 2024, introducing Ankara audiences to the phenomenon. Performed in the original English with Turkish subtitles, it preserved the musical's atmosphere while practically overcoming the language barrier. Venue choice was decisive for the production's aesthetics and interaction strategy. Although there was some confusion, performances took place not at Tatbikat Sahnesi but at the Turkish American Association (TAA) Coşkan Daş Stage (Çankaya). With limited seating, this intimate black-box space suited *Rocky Horror*'s close-contact and interactive nature. Iconic elements of the original (laboratory décor, neon lighting, etc.) were reimagined through resourceful, locally feasible solutions; costumes remained faithful to Sue Blane's concept, featuring bold designs that carried punk and glam aesthetics. From foyer to auditorium, audiences encountered the red lips logo and makeup motifs referencing Transylvanian characters, priming them for the show's camp and queer spirit.

The project began with securing official performance rights, observing practical constraints such as a single-venue license. The logistical and financial challenges of realizing a controversial, large-scale work were met through a volunteer yet highly disciplined process; given the score's demands—especially in Act II—the team undertook an approximately month-long intensive rehearsal period. Rehearsals in English preserved musical integrity; the largely unpaid, volunteer labor safeguarded artistic coherence through meticulous work.

Although both Bilkent and Lemur Sanat productions were staged in Ankara in the same year, they differed in context, scale, and aims: Bilkent's two-show, education-oriented campus event highlighted guided interactivity (screen prompts), whereas Lemur Sanat offered a ticketed, longer-running, community-based model. The independent production combined conventional staging with a dramaturgy that left room for spontaneous participation by a dedicated fan base, softening the spectator–performer divide through the affordances of proximity. This contrast clarifies the

distinction between institutional/representational (Bilkent) and participatory/embodied (Lemur) enactments of queer embodiment.

In sum, within the Turkish context, Lemur Sanat's production constitutes a turning point for independent musical theatre, making queer narratives visible on a non-Western stage, carefully navigating censorship and social pressure, and creating a safe, inclusive space. The production process—through close collaboration among set, music, costume, lighting–sound—brought the exaggerated gestural economy of camp and drag into dialogue with participatory spectatorship, enabling collective queer embodiment. As such, the production functioned not only as an aesthetic experience but also as a political and cultural intervention: it enhanced the visibility of queer communities, encouraged creative diversity, and demonstrated the transformative power of community-based art. In this respect, 2024 stands as a threshold year for *Rocky Horror* in Turkey, showing how the musical can take shape across different contexts and offering a reference point for future projects.

2.5. Camp, Drag, and Queer Aesthetics in Musical Theatre

Historically, two key components in the expression of queer identity in musical theatre have been camp and drag. They have a solid basis in performance, parodies, and resistance, not only entertainment value. Performative instruments, camp, and drag challenge binary ideas of gender and undermine heteronormative expectations, therefore changing the musical stage into a venue of radical expression and belonging for the queer community. Through their overdone theatricality and inherent subversion, these styles create unique chances for gay tales to develop, therefore offering places for expression that intentionally challenge society's conformity.

2.5.1. Camp Aesthetics: Theatrical Excess and Subversion

As a performing aesthetic, camp is firmly ingrained in queer sensibility and theatrical expression. Camp, as Susan Sontag (1978) notes, thrives on irony and exaggeration, while Isherwood (1956) emphasizes its sincerity as 'loving parody.' Through this lens, musicals like *La Cage aux Folles* and *Kinky Boots* use camp to challenge gender norms and highlight queer subversion. These musicals show characters and stories that challenge conventional gender norms and heteronormative expectations, therefore

highlighting the subversive possibilities of camp. These musicals became camp so important for musical theatre community.

Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (2024) underlines how audience involvement in *The Rocky Horror Show* interacts with camp aesthetics to turn inert viewers into active participants. Key principles of camp aesthetics, irony, and parody let viewers participate in the content, blurring the boundaries between performance and reality.

2.5.2. Drag Performance and Gender Performativity

In queer musical theatre, drag performance is an essential element that both challenges conventional gender roles and represents transformation. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, drag frames gender as fluid and constructed. Characters such as Dr. Frank-N-Furter exemplify how drag destabilizes binary categories while simultaneously celebrating queer embodiment (Butler, 1990; 2004).

Lovelock (2019) notes important musical theatre clichés, including the drag queen, drama queen, and dance queen, that appeal to LGBTQ audiences. Though occasionally predicated on stereotypes, these clichés provide means for examining queer issues and challenging heteronormative narratives. Drag shows are used by productions like *La Cage aux Folles* and *Kinky Boots* to represent acceptance, self-expression, and personal change.

Dr. Frank-N-Furter in *The Rocky Horror Show* captures the controversial force of drag. Frank, a "sweet transvestite from Transylvania," questions accepted ideas of gender and sexuality by flamboyant, theatrical mixing of masculine and feminine elements. Using drag as a weapon to challenge homonormative conventions and promote queer embodiment, his performance emphasizes the performing aspect of gender.

2.5.3. Camp and Queer Embodiment in *The Rocky Horror Show*

Rising as a cultural phenomenon outside conventional limits of queer representation, *The Rocky Horror Show* is an iconic structure at the intersection of camp aesthetics and drag culture. Combining camp aesthetics, queer themes, and audience participation, Richard O'Brien's musical offers a truly complete experience that speaks especially to LGBTQ+ audiences.

Jackie Roach (2024) emphasizes for queer people in the 1970s and beyond the relevance of the musical's slogan, "Do not dream it, be it." Within the queer community, the bright, overdone images provide an opportunity for self-expression and liberation. Representing drag performance, Dr. Frank-N-Furter's character questions social conventions about gender and sexuality and provides queer audiences with an opportunity for self-acceptance and personal discovery.

In *The Rocky Horror Show*, camp aesthetics and drag culture converge to produce a queer space of liberation. As Roach (2024) emphasizes, the slogan 'Do not dream it, be it' became central to LGBTQ+ self-expression, while Miner (2011) argues that the musical reworks Frankenstein motifs to critique rigid gender roles. Together, these perspectives underline the show's enduring role in queer cultural resistance. Using characters such as Frank-N-Furter, the musical challenges the consistency of values and examines the rigidity of conventional gender roles. In this regard, camp culture becomes an instrument for social criticism and transformation, therefore supporting the subversive character of the musical.

The Rocky Horror Show shows how camp and drag may cross to create venues of gay embodiment and resistance. *The Rocky Horror Show* remains a classic in queer musical theatre by promoting gender fluidity and embracing non-conformism, therefore inspiring the next generations with its radical challenge of society's expectations.

2.6. The Limits of Queer Representation in Turkey

Performing arts in Turkey have historically been shaped by state policies, social moral norms, and cultural codes. In this context, the transport of queer identities and representations to the stage has always been limited by indirect means, if not by direct censorship. These boundaries operate at the institutional (lack of space, support withdrawal, producer pressure), social (family reaction, audience discomfort), and individual levels (self-censorship of actors).

The inclusion of queer characters in Turkish theatre has remained at the level of implication for a long time; open representation has often been staged in the form of comedy, cartoonish typing or "colorful side characters." This situation makes sense of

the existence of queer representations on the stage only on the axis of "otherness;" it does not allow the queer subjects to convey their own experience holistically. Therefore, the representation of the queer body on the stage is limited not only in terms of content, but also aesthetically, spatially and physically.

In this context, the field of self-expression of queer representations is often established through subtext, metaphors, silences and changes of direction. A character's look, his appearance on the stage, the tone of a song or the exaggerated form of a gesture function as queer encodings where direct representation is not possible.

Especially in recent years, with the digitalization and the increase of alternative stage collectives, queer representations have started to appear in more open forms. However, this opening is still a high-risk area. Primarily due to the pressure of the institutions supporting the theatre, local governments, or sponsors, some plays are canceled during the rehearsal phase; some scenes are changed. This shows that queer theatre is still a fragile area of expression in the context of Turkey.

In this context, the staging of works containing strong queer representations such as *The Rocky Horror Show* in Turkey should be read not only as an art event, but also as a claim to existence and a form of political intervention. This study aims to examine the aesthetic, bodily, and spatial layers of these forms of intervention precisely.

2.7. Conclusion

The staging of queer musicals in Turkey should be seen as both an artistic event and a political intervention. In this section, the historical development of musical theatre and its relationship with queer representations are examined. It has been seen that the musical traditionally carries a structure based on heteronormative love narratives, fixed gender roles and binary social norms. However, especially since the 1970s, this structure has been transformed by the influence of social movements; with works such as *The Rocky Horror Show*, different forms of queer aesthetics, embodiment and resistance have become visible on the stage.

While much of the literature on queer musicals has approached them primarily through the lens of representation and visibility, this thesis acknowledges the limits of

representational readings. Instead, it argues that the transformative power of queer musicals lies not only in who is represented on stage but in how queerness is embodied, performed, and experienced as a process of becoming. This perspective allows a shift from static notions of visibility to the dynamic, affective, and embodied dimensions of queer performance, which will be at the center of the following analysis.

This transformation has occurred not only through character representations but also through gestures, costumes, the use of sound, and spatial arrangements. Thus, musical theatre has become entertainment and a space of political embodiment and collective transformation.

In the context of Turkey, this transformation could be carried to a much more fragile and limited stage. Due to both direct censorship mechanisms and the more widespread indirect pressures and self-censorship practices, the area of queer representation is still quite narrowed. Despite this, the effort of queer bodies to exist on the stage continues through alternative theatre collectives and independent stage practices; this effort creates a space for both aesthetic and political intervention.

This historical and cultural background grounds the theoretical framework of the dissertation, drawing on Butler's performativity, Ahmed's spatial orientation, and Foucault's power/resistance, which will guide the analysis of queer embodiment on stage (Butler, 1990; Ahmed, 2006; Foucault, 1978).

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK-EMBODIMENT, ORIENTATION AND POWER

In this section, I will focus on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, Sarah Ahmed's queer phenomenology, and Michel Foucault's theories of power and discipline, which form the basic theoretical framework of my dissertation, and examine what theoretical tools these three names offer for understanding the concepts of queer embodiment. The theories of Butler, Ahmed, and Foucault are very important for analyzing how queer bodies question normative gender stereotypes, reconstruct them, and create new forms of existence in the process. Studying these theoretical approaches will allow us to understand the queer becoming process in depth, primarily through queer performances put forward in musical theatre.

The concept of queer embodiment is related to the creation of alternative embodiment practices by going outside the heteronormative and socially determined gender norms of bodily existence (Butler, 1990; Ahmed, 2006). In this thesis, queer embodiment is considered not only in terms of gender (and sexual) presentation, but also as a dynamic process of gendered becoming that is tied to performative acts and spatial orientations. Judith Butler's theory of performativity emphasizes that identities are not fixed and essentialist but are produced through constantly recurring social actions. Butler, especially in *Gender Trouble* and *Undoing Gender*, suggests that gender is reproduced in every repetition and that each repetition is not a stable identity; on the contrary, it has the potential to transform by differentiation (Butler, 1990; 2004).

Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology, on the other hand, gives a spatial and directional dimension to the concept of queer embodiment. Ahmed discusses how bodies are aligned towards specific normative orientations and how queer bodies create new

orientations by moving out of these alignments (Ahmed, 2006). These orientations are seen as important factors that shape the movements of queer bodies in everyday life and their relations with space. Ahmed's theory provides a critical framework for analyzing the movements and choreographies of queer bodies on stage.

Michel Foucault discusses how bodies are shaped and disciplined by power relations. In *Discipline and Punishment* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Foucault examines how bodies are disciplined and how these disciplinary processes ensure the continuity of control over the body. According to Foucault, power is not only oppressive but also a productive mechanism; in this context, a queer embodiment can also be seen as a practice that is both disciplined within power structures and has the potential to resist these disciplinary processes (Foucault, 1976; 1975).

Using the theories of Butler, Ahmed, and Foucault together will allow me to examine the concept of queer embodiment in both a performative, spatial, and political context. While establishing the theoretical framework, the original contributions of each theorist to the queer becoming process will be revealed. Butler's potential of performative repetitions to construct gender identities, Ahmed's spatial redefinition of queer orientations, and Foucault's questioning of power and discipline relationships on the body will form the theoretical basis of this study.

This theoretical approach provides an ideal framework for analyzing the effects of queer performances and musical theatre staging on queer bodies and the formation processes of queer identities, in particular. Understanding the

process of *collective queer becoming*—that is, the shared and co-constructed ways in which queer identities are shaped and embodied within a community context—through a specific example, such as the staging of *The Rocky Horror Show* in Turkey, is also important in terms of seeing how these theories work in practice. In this context, the main argument of the thesis is as follows: "Musical theatre offers a space for collective queer becoming where queer embodiment is marked by performative repetitions, spatial reorientations, and practices of resistance against normalization."

Finally, I engage Muñoz to theorize both disidentification and queer futurity as they pertain to audience participation (Muñoz, 1999). Within this framework, queer

embodiment will be considered not only as a way of existence but also as a political and aesthetic resistance strategy.

This theoretical section will also clarify how my work contributes to the field of queer performance studies by reviewing previous studies and literature on queer embodiment. Thus, it is aimed that the thesis will bring an original approach to the concept of queer embodiment by filling in the gaps in the existing literature.

3.1. Queer Embodiment: Basic Concepts and Definitions

Queer theory deals with identities not only as fixed categories but also through how bodies are perceived, experienced, and positioned in the world. Theorists such as Sara Ahmed and Judith Butler have developed an approach to queer phenomenology that emphasizes the interwoven orientations of bodily experiences with space and history. The queer phenomenology of Ahmed (2006) defines orientation not only as an individual issue but also because of cultural and social processes. In this context, queer embodiment includes the way an individual expresses his/her own identity and the interaction of this identity with other bodies, spaces, and social structures (Ahmed, 2006).

According to Ahmed, orientations are not limited to physical movements; bodies are shaped and directed toward specific directions by social norms, cultural expectations, and historical accumulations. In a heteronormative society, while specific orientations of certain bodies are considered normative, queer bodies deviate from these normative orientations, and this deviation causes queer individuals to experience a kind of "disorientation" constantly (Ahmed, 2006). Ahmed's queer phenomenology is based on questioning how queer bodies take part in spatial organizations and how they change these organizations.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (1990; 2004), combined with Ahmed's queer phenomenology, provides a strong basis for deconstructing the concept of queer embodiment in depth. Butler expresses that sex is a performative sequence of actions and is produced by constant repetitions. Every performative action reproduces gender norms or destroys these norms (Butler, 1990). Butler's theory reveals that queer embodiment is a continuous process of construction and disruption; in this process,

bodies defy normative expectations or reform them with each performative action. In this context, queer embodiment is the questioning of normative arrangements of bodies and creating new forms of existence through this questioning (Butler, 2004).

The combination of Ahmed and Butler's theories allow queer embodiment to be understood not only as an individual identity performance but also as a dynamic process that takes place in constant interaction with spatial and social relationships. Ahmed's concept of queer orientation explains how queer bodies create different orientations in space; Butler's theory of performativity shows how these orientations are built and reshaped through repeated actions. The perspectives of these two theorists emphasize that queer embodiment is a multilayered process: identities, social norms, and bodily movements are in constant dialogue during this process (Ahmed, 2006; Butler, 1990).

Michel Foucault's concepts of power and resistance also play an important role in expanding the theoretical framework of queer embodiment. Foucault emphasizes that power is an oppressive and productive mechanism and expresses that social norm shape bodies by disciplining them. In this context, queer embodiment can be considered as a field of resistance against normative power structures (Foucault, 1978). Queer bodies produce new forms of identity by questioning and disrupting the boundaries created by normative discourses and spatial arrangements. Thus, queer embodiment is a physical and performative manifestation of Foucault's theory of resistance (Foucault, 1992).

In the context of musical theatre, the concept of queer orientation arises as an active and lived experience rather than focusing solely on representation. Queer bodies' performances on the musical stage, from the theoretical perspectives of Ahmed, Butler, and Foucault, create transformative experiences that question traditional perceptions of social interaction, space, and identity. In this context, musical theatre provides a space for queer embodiment to explore, resist and negotiate different orientations (Muñoz, 1999; Wolf, 2002).

Scholarship on the American musical underscores that these stages do not simply reflect gender; they teach audiences how to "do" gender through conventional

pairings, choreographic holds, vocal casting, and star personae. Stacy Wolf shows how romantic duets, partnering, and diva frameworks organize heterosexual coupling and femininity/masculinity as stylized acts, while also leaving cracks for queer and feminist resignifications (Wolf, 2002; 2011).

José Esteban Muñoz (1999) considers queer performance as a productive act that not only questions existing social norms but also establishes new worlds and new social relationships. At this point, Muñoz's concept of disidentification helps explain how queer bodies relate to normative structures and how these structures are transformed. In this context, queer embodiment means not only breaking away from norms but also entering a complex and creative relationship with norms (Muñoz, 1999).

Alongside Butler, Ahmed and Foucault, I also draw on Jasbir Puar's notion of assemblage, which reframes identity not as a stable intersection of categories but as a contingent coming-together of bodies, affects, discourses, objects and institutions (Puar, 2005; 2007). From this vantage, queer embodiment is not a property that individuals "have," but an event that emerges through relational proximities—lighting, costuming, sonic atmospheres, spatial layouts, and audience reactions that are constantly re-assembled in performance. This lens is especially apt for musical theatre, where choreography, props, microphones, screens, and spectators co-produce the conditions under which queerness becomes sensible and actionable.

As a result, the concepts of queer orientation and embodiment gain depth through the interaction of the theories of Ahmed, Butler, and Foucault and are understood as a dynamic and multilayered process in which queer identities and bodies are constantly reproduced. This theoretical framework reveals that the performances of queer bodies on the musical theatre stage are not only aesthetic but also a political and social intervention. Queer embodiment is a powerful analytical tool that emphasizes how identities resist normative pressures and how they carry a transformative potential through this resistance.

3.2. Queer Embodiment as Performative Becoming

Following Butler, gender is not an inner essence, but the effect of reiterative acts compelled by social norms; identities are made and remade through those citations,

which both stabilize normativity and open slippages where it can be bent (Butler, 1990; 1993; 2004). On stage, parodic excess and drag make this contingency legible. Performativity names the compelled, citational production of gender; performance a conscious theatrical act. They often meet in musical theatre, but they are not the same. In this study, I track how reiteration is bent—through camp, timing, and citation—so that norms show their seams; detailed instances appear in the analysis chapters rather than here. This framing also sets up Ahmed: it is not only *what* is repeated that matters, but toward where bodies are oriented when they repeat. Queer embodiment is not only constructed but also unstable, fluid, and overflowing beyond normative frames. In musical theatre, these repetitions become aesthetic tools, allowing performers to parody and challenge gender roles, revealing their instability and artificiality. While performativity refers to the compelled, iterative production of gender, performance names a conscious theatrical act—this distinction is important but need not detain us here. In this sense, gender is a performance embodied in the body and constantly reproduced with repetitions (Butler, 1990, p. 33). As Butler explores in *Undoing Gender* (2004) more in-depth, this performative process has the potential not only to reproduce gender identities but also to question and subvert gender norms. According to Butler, while gender identities are constantly reproduced within normative systems, they open new areas of identity by disrupting and transforming these norms in the same process (Butler, 2004, pp. 15-20).

Butler's idea is sometimes misunderstood as restricting performativity to performance. Butler clearly distinguishes the two: whereas performativity describes the unconscious and compelled repetition of behaviors that maintain gender norms, performance is a conscious act, frequently dramatic, with an audience aware of its artificiality (Butler, 1993). In musical theatre, where gender representation sometimes encompasses the line between purposeful performance and the continuous practices that either reinforce or disrupt gender norms, this difference is essential. In practice, gender identity is re-established by differentiating with each repetition of this process.

The process of "reiteration" conceptualized by Butler plays a key role in understanding the variability of queer embodiment. Especially in the context of musical theatre, queer bodies infiltrate these normative repetitions, parodying them and distorting them with performative gestures and body movements. As Butler argues, primarily through drag

performances, the parody of gender norms reveals their naturalized structure and the arbitrariness of norms.

While gender norms gain strength through repetition, the same repetitions also reveal cracks in these norms, indicating that identities are not fixed and are constantly being reshaped. Butler (1993, p. 23) states, “Repetitions can also lead to the formation of an identity crisis or rift because each repetition does not provide a complete reproduction of norms; on the contrary, it creates differentiation and deviation.” Especially from the point of view of queer embodiment, performances in musical theatre not only repeat gender norms but also stretch, transform, and disrupt them. For example, queer musicals such as *The Rocky Horror Picture* Show question heteronormative gender categories by reinterpreting gender performance with parody and exaggeration and allowing new queer identities to emerge with performative repetitions (Muñoz, 1999; Wolf, 2002).

West and Zimmerman’s notion of “doing gender” converges with Butler by emphasizing that gender is accomplished in interaction rather than possessed as an inner essence (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 125).

The concept of “doing gender,” which is at the heart of Butler’s performatives, emphasizes that gender is not a fixed identity but a process that is constantly “done” through social practices. This process occurs through gestures, discourses, and body practices that individuals perform consciously or unconsciously daily (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Butler carries this concept further and states that these practices are not only individual actions but also performative processes that reflect the impact of social norms and power relations on individuals (Butler, 1990, p. 140).

When considered in connection with Sara Ahmed’s queer phenomenology, queer embodiment is a process in which bodies are constantly reproduced performatively with their movements, gestures, and orientations in space (Ahmed, 2006). Queer bodies deviate from heteronormative orientations and habits, developing different forms of orientation and movement. In this context, queer embodiment is not only an individual expression of identity but also a collective performance in which social and spatial orientations are queered.

The relationship of Butler's theory of performativity with queer embodiment explains the role of bodies in the process of continuous reproduction of gender. Bodies embody identities by repeating the internalized movements, gestures, and discourses of gender norms. At this point, queer embodiment is not limited to performative repetitions of normative forms of embodiment; by interrupting these repetitions, it goes outside the norms and creates new identity performances. Butler (1993, p. 24) summarizes this situation as follows: "Queer performativity transcends the boundaries of normative repetition and allows bodies to subvert gender norms by acting in unexpected ways."

At this point, feminist body theory also reads queer embodiment not only as a process of social construction but also as an overflowing, out-of-the-norm, and irreducible excess. This approach, when considered together with Butler's concept of performativity, shows that queer bodies are shaped not only by repetitions but also by non-normative influences that occur on the boundaries of these repetitions and beyond. According to this theory, the expression "the living body as a site of indeterminacy" (Brennan, 1999, p. 13) sheds light on the nature of queer embodiment, which cannot be fixed, is unpredictable, and is reshaped over time. Thus, queer bodies are established not only by "doing" their identity but also by transcending and carrying over norms in the process of this construction. As Samantha Brennan (1999, p. 13) notes, "Although Butler's theory emphasizes the social production of identity, the queer embodiment is not only a structure organized by repetitions but also a materiality that these repetitions cannot carry, carries redundancy, overflows from the norm."

When combined with Michel Foucault's theory of power and resistance, the performative dimension of queer embodiment becomes a practice of political resistance (Foucault, 1978). Butler's queer body performances can be read not only as forms of identity expression but also as strategies of resistance against heteronormative power relations. The study of queer embodiment through Butler's theory reveals that queer identities are a continuous process of "becoming" and "forming." The queer becoming process is when bodies come out of fixed categories and are in constant movement and change. When considered together with the theories of Butler and Ahmed, the process of "becoming queer" is a dynamic process in which performative movements, repetitions, and spatial orientations constantly reshape bodies.

Queer becoming in the context of musical theatre constantly transform gender norms with gestures and choreography on the stage. The movements and gestures performed by the bodies during the performances offer the opportunity to question normative gender perceptions and ensure the continuous performative transformation of queer embodiment in interaction with the audience.

Musical theatre offers a special place for seeking the performing aspect of gender. Gendered roles in musicals reflect Butler's notion that gender is maintained by constant remaking. Broadway shows where performers must constantly represent gendered roles clearly; this concept either promotes or defies society's expectations. Stacy Wolf's (2002) work on musical theatre and gender highlights how Broadway productions construct femininity and masculinity through stylized performances. Butler's approach clarifies how gender roles in musical theatre are not only representations but also active reinforcing or subverting of gender binaries, helping contextualize this tension.

Reading musical theatre through Butler, Wolf argues that Broadway's house styles are a gender regime: repetition across love-duets, dance partnering, and casting sediment a norm of heterosexual romance and gender complementarity. Leading and following in choreography, the tessitura and timbre assigned to roles, and diva-centered star vehicles train spectators to naturalize gender as coherent performance—precisely the illusion Butler unmasks as iterative (Wolf, 2002). At the same time, camp, cross-casting, and female-female bonds (from *A Problem Like Maria?* to *Change for Good*) expose the contingency of those norms and open queer/feminist readings (Wolf, 2011).

In musical theatre, queer performance throws more complexity over this repetitive method. Butler argues that rather than ensuring their stability, repeated mention of gender standards highlights their vulnerability. Drag, for instance, discloses its created character rather than only reflecting femininity, which makes it susceptible to failure and misinterpretation (Butler, 1990, p. 137). As shown in shows like *La Cage aux Folles* and *The Rocky Horror Show*, where gender performativity is extended and exposed as an artifice rather than a biological fact, the camp aesthetics of drag and parody function as disruptive forces (Wolf, 2011).

Butler's important contribution to queer theory is the thesis that parody—mainly as observed in drag events—can be a subversive strategy against hegemonic gender stereotypes. Butler claims that rather than being a copy of gender, drag is an exaggerated enactment that emphasizes the performativity of all gender identities, not just those of drag performers (Butler, 1993).

Long, including aspects of drag, camp, and irony to challenge and compromise gender identities, musical theatre has, for example, Dr. Frank-N-Furter's overt queerness and extravagant performance blur the lines of gender in *The Rocky Horror Show*, therefore highlighting the artificiality of normative masculinity and femininity (Wolf, 2011). Likewise, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* challenges the binary ideas of male and female identity through gender fluidity as a primary theme throughout the protagonist's path of self-discovery.

The idea of queer orientation developed by Sara Ahmed (2006) highlights even more how theatre productions could question established gender roles. Ahmed contends that queerness is about how one travels through the world—how bodies are oriented toward or away from standards—not about who one is (Ahmed, 2006). In musical theatre, queer bodies challenge conventional wisdom by generating new possibilities for identity and expression.

Applying Butler's theory of gender performativity alongside Ahmed's queer orientation helps us to understand how actively queer musicals not only reflect but also generate alternative gender representations. They present new ideas of being and becoming, transforming gender from a set reality into a contested area.

Performativity by Judith Butler offers a critical lens through which one may examine gender in musical theatre. In musical theatre, the aesthetics of drag, camp, and parody acts are effective arms for subverting established gender roles and revealing their original origins. Together with Ahmed's idea of queer orientation, we might see musical theatre not only as a place for representation but also as a site where gender norms are actively challenged and redefined.

When we think of the four theorists together, the queer embodiment is explained not as a fixed existence but as a process of formation that is constantly re-established

through the processes of repetition, orientation, deviation, transgression, and discipline. When Butler's capacity to repeat and deconstruct, Ahmed's emphasis on orientation and spatial deviation, Foucault's understanding of the body, which is shaped by disciplinary structures but can generate resistance within these structures, and the feminist approach, which centers on uncertainty and the transgression of norms, come together, queer embodiment turns into an aesthetic practice of political re-existence, not just a representation on the stage. This theory allows us to understand how queer bodies are repositioned on the musical theatre stage, how normative structures are subverted, and how queer identities are exhibited in formation during the transition to the analysis sections in the thesis. In the next section, the concrete manifestations of this theoretical framework on the stage will be analyzed in detail.

Read together with assemblage, performativity is not only about *what* gets reiterated but also about *what elements are gathered* to sustain or fracture a norm at any given moment. Musicals are exemplary in this respect: a repeated call-back, a projected cue, a wig's sheen, a base hit that lands on a pelvic accent—these cohere fleetingly into a queer *doing* that neither begins nor ends at the individual body. In short, performativity supplies the iterative logic, while assemblage specifies the material-affective infrastructure that lets those iterations take hold or fall apart (Puar, 2005; 2007; Butler, 1990; 2004). In sum, Butler's account of performativity frames gender as reiterative and therefore susceptible to slippage. I operationalize this by tracing how parodic repetition and stylistic excess on stage expose the contingency of gender norms; detailed instances appear in the analysis chapters (Butler, 1990; 2004).

3.2.1. Quoting Gender in the Musical Theatre (Butler & Wolf)

Building on Butler's claim that gender is an effect of reiteration, the American musical can be read as a citational apparatus that trains bodies and voices to "do" gender through genre codes. Stacy Wolf's feminist/queer readings show that conventions such as the ingénue/soubrette pairing, the hetero-romantic endgame, blocking those funnels women into domestic space, and voice type (legit vs. belt) operate as repeatable cues that materialize gender on stage (Wolf, 2002, 2011). In this sense, the musical does not merely represent femininity/masculinity; it produces them through stylized repetition that spectators learn to recognize, desire, and sometimes resist.

Wolf's star-text analyses are instructive. Mary Martin's Broadway persona (from *South Pacific* to *The Sound of Music*) mobilizes a paradoxical mix of wholesome domesticity and energetic authority—an "active good girl" whose voice and body naturalize care work as feminine vocation, even as they flirt with autonomy. Julie Andrews's film star image consolidates this matrix: as Maria she re-cites docile femininity and transforms it into leadership through song; as Millie (1967), she plays with modern girlhood's speed and spectacle while ending in hetero-romantic closure. For Wolf, these are not neutral stories but gender drills: choreography, vocal registration, and duet structures rehearse which desires are speakable and which bonds must be disavowed (Wolf, 2002).

Placing Wolf next to Butler clarifies method. Performativity names the compelled, intertextual repetition that makes gender legible; the musical supplies the scripts—song forms, reprises, finales—through which that repetition is staged. At the same time, the very citationality that stabilizes gender opens seams for slippage: camp, drag, and parodic excess lay bare the "as-if" quality of normativity. In later chapters, I treat *The Rocky Horror Show* as an explicit exploitation of those seams, extending Wolf's genre insights to a text that turns the musical's citational grammar toward queer embodiment. (Wolf, 2002; 2011; Butler, 1990/2004.)

Discussing the phenomenology of queer life brings with it an inquiry not only about what the individual's experienced body does but also about what this body is oriented towards in the world, what it turns its face to, and where it is excluded from. According to Ahmed, bodies take their "right" place in society by aligning themselves to specific normative directions. However, queer bodies deviate from this direction; they cannot align – this deviation, that is, "disorientation," is the starting point of queer existence (Ahmed, 2006).

Wolf's account clarifies how these spatial choices are legible as orientation devices: the default male–female duet center, diagonal approaches, and final tableau reinforce straight lines of desire, while reblocking, same-gender partnering, or diva-centered focus reorient the gaze and make queer vectors available to bodies on stage and in the house (Wolf, 2011). In short, choreography literalizes Ahmed's "lines" and shows where they can be bent.

For Ahmed, orientations organize what and whom bodies can approach: heteronormativity privileges "straight lines," rendering queer movements as misalignment or disorientation. Read on stage, orientation foregrounds how blocking, proxemics, and gesture re-route bodies away from default heterosexual couplings and toward non-normative objects, desires, and relations (Ahmed, 2006). Thus, queer embodiment names not only an identity but a spatial practice—how bodies turn, face, and refuse—to inhabit space otherwise (Wolf, 2011; Muñoz, 1999).

I use Ahmed to code reorientation events: moments when performers or audiences are turned otherwise (e.g., the redistribution of attention, the undoing of default pairings, or a shift in who/what is faced). This lens sits alongside Butler's performativity and West & Zimmerman's "doing gender," clarifying not only what is repeated but also toward where it is repeated; and it aligns with Foucault's insights on how spaces discipline bodies even as bodies resist (Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Foucault, 1978). Specific cases—including audience participation in *The Rocky Horror Show*—are examined in the analysis chapters.

Ahmed reveals how bodies and identities are shaped by social, cultural, and political orientations instead of considering the concept of orientation as individuals settling into space only physically (Ahmed, 2006) According to Ahmed, orientation is the process that determines how individuals are positioned in the world, which objects and people they are directed to, and from which ways they are removed (Ahmed, 2006). This approach challenges accepted ideas of spatiality and embodiment by examining how bodies orient themselves within their environment. She argues that heteronormativity is inherent in spatiality, and in doing so, it places specific orientations as "natural" and queers' orientations as outside the norm. This theoretical paradigm is of particular significance in the context of musical theatre, whereby queer performers negotiate various orientations through movement, interaction, and spatial practices that disrupt normative constructions of gender and sexuality.

Ahmed's concept of orientation is closely related to spatial positioning. Spatial orientation includes social norms that determine how bodies relate to the environment in which they are located and what is perceived as "natural" or "appropriate." Ahmed argues that heteronormative societies align bodies and gender identities to specific

spatial axes, and queer bodies develop different orientations by not complying with these normative orientations (Ahmed, 2006).

It considers how the body moves, who or what it is directed towards, and whether it aligns with which relationships. Orientation, in this sense, is not only a physical positioning; it is also a political attitude about how the body reacts to heteronormative norms, which paths it follows, and which ones it deviates from. Ahmed's approach allows us to conceptualize queer embodiment not only as an individual experience but also as a collective form of deviation and reorientation developed against normative constructs of space.

This situation shows that queer individuals are constantly removed and excluded from spatial and social norms. This exclusion requires queer bodies to find alternative ways and spaces both spatially and in social interactions (Ahmed, 2006).

The performance of queer bodies on stage is quite consistent with Ahmed's theory of orientation. The musical theatre scene becomes a space where queer bodies experience "reorientation," where heteronormative spatial structures are broken. During performances, queer bodies go beyond normative movement patterns and gestures and transform both the audience's and actors' understanding of their bodies and orientations (Ahmed, 2006; Wolf, 2011). Especially queer musicals such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* provide an environment where queer bodies move freely on stage, non-normative gestures are used, and the audience is also confronted with these different orientations (Muñoz, 1999; Wolf, 2002).

This applies to musical theatre as well. In this situation, bodies are positioned by choreography and restraint, thus shaping the perception of the body in a direct sense. Traditionally, normative orientations in musical theatre have worked to reaffirm heterosexual desires and gendered roles (Wolf, 2011). For instance, love duets tend to default to male-female duos, thus reaffirming a heteronormative spatial structure. Theatrical works such as *The Rocky Horror Show* (1973) and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (1998) interrupt conventional stage alignments through the disorientation of traditional blocking conventions and narrative frameworks, enabling the unscripted movement of queer bodies.

While Ahmed reads the orientation of queer bodies in social spheres as "deviation" and "shift," the tools of feminist phenomenology explain why it always deviates from straight lines. Queer orientation here means not only changing direction but also living with uncertainty, "living" new paths through bodily surpluses instead of moving along a particular line. This is a lack of orientation, both bodily and temporal; it is the reproduction of the queer body's existence by deviating from the historical line.

In this context, the "disorientation" situation experienced by queer bodies also makes it possible for new and creative forms of queer existence to emerge (Ahmed, 2006). This is where queer becoming intersects with Ahmed's queer orientation theory; queer bodies exist in a constant state of becoming by deviating from heteronormative orientations. This state of being emphasizes the constantly transforming, dynamic, and non-fixable nature of queer identities (Ahmed, 2006; Muñoz, 1999).

Queer spatiality, in Ahmed's theory, also includes the states of visibility and privacy of bodies. Ahmed states that queer bodies are often rendered invisible in heteronormative spaces or become overly visible by being perceived as abnormal. The stage provides a space where queer bodies can question this dichotomy of visibility and privacy. Queer performances have a direct interaction with the audience by becoming visible on the stage, and thanks to this interaction, queer bodies get the opportunity to question normative perceptions. The presence of queer bodies on the stage allows the rethinking of heteronormative orientations and spatial patterns for both actors and viewers (Ahmed, 2006; Muñoz, 1999).

Musical theatre offers a platform for reworking bodies in terms of non-normative desires and movements. Queer embodiment, as explained by Ahmed (2006), is more than a challenge to dominant norms; rather, it entails occupying space differently—it is a turn towards desires, objects, and gestures that do not follow ordinary paths. In musical theatre, this reworking is achieved through several processes:

Choreography and Movement: Queer musicals also disrupt classical gender performances in a reworking of movement patterns performed on stage. For instance, *Kinky Boots* (2013) is based on drag performance to disrupt stable gender norms, whereby movements by drag queens in high heels disturb usual perceptions of

femininity and masculinity. Ahmed's (2006) argument that queer movement constitutes deviance can therefore be utilized to explain ways in which performers utilize dance and spatial formation to challenge existing gender norms.

Blocking and Spatial Hierarchies: Traditional musical theatre tends to use the placement of male and female leads to emphasize their heterosexual couplings. Queer musicals, on the other hand, engage alternate spatial dynamics. A revealing example is offered by *Fun Home* (2015), in which Alison Bechdel's younger and older selves are placed in an arrangement that defies linear time and heteronormative lines of development. For Ahmed (2006), queer temporality and spatiality offer other trajectories that counter the traditional "straight" narrative of heteronormativity.

Audience engagement and spatial interaction are realized in certain queer musicals, such as *The Rocky Horror Show*, that expand the concept of reorientation to active engagement of the audience in the performance itself. According to Ahmed (2006), queerness is a communal reorientation process. When audiences participate in interactive performances, such as answering back with callbacks or acting out drag, they actively assume diverse spatial and social orientations. This agrees with Diana Taylor's (2003) theory of the repertoire, in which bodily actions serve as channels of knowledge transmission, particularly in queer spaces.

Michel Foucault's concepts of the relationship between power and space strengthen this discussion. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *The History of Sexuality* (1978), Michel Foucault analyzes how bodies are placed under surveillance and positioned in space. In this context, Ahmed's concepts of "direction" and "orientation" intersect with Foucault's disciplinary space analyses. In this sense, the musical theatre stage is not only a representation space but also a space where the body is directed, observed, and resists these orientations simultaneously. The queer body makes both a physical and ideological reorientation possible by stepping outside the normative settlements in this scene. If Ahmed helps us track how bodies are *turned* in space, assemblage clarifies the currents—the technical, affective, and institutional flows—through which such turns become easier or harder to accomplish in practice (Ahmed, 2006; Puar, 2007).

3.2.2. Applying Ahmed's Framework to the Embodied Experiences of Queer Performers

Ahmed's work provides a means of recognizing how queer artists negotiate their physical presence in performance venues. The phenomena of reorientation are seen in the way artists go through the stage:

Gendered Expectations: Queer musical theatre performers continually negotiate how their bodies are read within a traditionally heteronormative genre. Queer performers often express the feeling of being "out of place" when they are called on to perform gendered roles that do not align with their own identities. This supports Ahmed's (2006) argument that queer bodies are often called on to "straighten" to be integrated into mainstream cultural narratives.

Embodied Resistance: Citing Butler's (1990) concept of performativity, Ahmed highlights how queer embodiment is shaped by repetition and deviation. Musical theatre actors are resisting normative gender norms through gestural deviation—transforming how they walk, gesture, and interact on stage with a view to destabilizing identity categories.

The Queer Orientation Fluidity: In interviews with queer performers (Wolf, 2011), several of them explain how musical theatre is a realm in which they feel free to express gender fluidity in their work. This position concurs with Ahmed's argument that queerness is not the attainment of a fixed identity but a continuous process of reorientation. This process makes both change and resistance act possible.

When combined with Judith Butler's performative identity theory, Ahmed's understanding of orientation becomes even deeper. Identities constructed through repetition, which Butler emphasizes, when considered together with Ahmed's conceptualization of direction, raise the question of "what is repeated" and "in which direction it is repeated." For example, in a queer performance scene, the drag artist's repetitive gestures not only produce an imitation of gender but also break the framework of the normative gaze through the way they are directed at the space and the audience.

West and Zimmerman's (1987) "doing gender" intersects with Ahmed's (2006) queer phenomenology in that they both show how gender is not an inner essence but a social action that takes place in specific contexts. While West and Zimmerman highlight how individuals reproduce gender norms through everyday behavior, Ahmed extends this argument by showing how queer orientations disrupt these norms through the formation of different spatial and embodied relations.

For instance, in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, Hedwig's performances parody and rewrite, ultimately resisting the gendered expectations. Their physical traversal of the stage—sometimes hyper-feminine, sometimes hyper-masculine—illustrates how queerness operates as a disorienting orientation instead of an essential identity (Ahmed, 2006). West and Zimmerman's (1987) argument that gender is "done" through the repetition of acts parallels Ahmed's theory that queer embodiment is one of shifting orientations instead of a fundamental truth.

Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology is a much-needed framework for addressing how musical theatre as a space works to reorient gender and sexuality. Examining movement, choreography, and spatial connections helps one to see that queer embodiment actively reshapes the very structures of theatrical space rather than only addressing presenting different identities. Ahmed's scholarship, alongside Butler's theory of performativity and West and Zimmerman's doing gender, offers more understanding of queer performers' interaction with and subversion of normative orientations on stage. Queerness, in musical theatre, is not merely "represented" but instead actively embodied, performed, and reoriented in ways that challenge hegemonic cultural scripts.

As a result, Ahmed's queer orientation theory is a powerful theoretical tool to explain the spatial and social dimensions of queer embodiment. This theory helps us to understand how queer bodies exist in heteronormative spaces, how they are excluded, and how they create alternative paths and spaces because of these exclusions. Ahmed's orientation theory, combined with the concept of queer becoming, clearly reveals how queer identities and bodies are shaped in a continuous process of formation and transformation. Ahmed's concept of orientation allows us to rethink queer embodiment from a spatial-political perspective. The orientation of the body in the

world is not just an individual preference but the potential to create new collective directions by deviating from heteronormative alignments. These deviations are not only a "disappearance" but also areas of creative dislocation from which new forms of existence sprout. This framework prepares a theoretical transition to discipline and resistance, which will be discussed in the next section.

Treating queer embodiment not only as a matter of identity but also as a relationship of bodily and spatial power requires bringing into play the conceptual tools developed by Michel Foucault on the body, discipline, and subjectivation. According to Foucault, the body is an area of production at the center of modern power regimes: it is disciplined, open to supervision, and shaped according to specific normative behavior patterns (Foucault, 1977; 1978). In this context, queer bodies are not only the object of these disciplinary forces; at the same time, they are subjects that push the boundaries of these forces, produce fractures and deviations.

According to Foucault, power is not only prohibitive or oppressive but also productive. Power, knowledge, and discourse shape bodies, put them into normative patterns, and impose certain forms of behavior (Foucault, 1978). In this context, how queer bodies are shaped and resisted in power relations can be analyzed in detail with Foucault's theories.

Theoretically, Michel Foucault's understanding of power, resistance, and subjectivity offers a vital lens through which one can see how musical theatre functions as both a disciplined and liberating place for queer embodiment. Contrary to conventional wisdom, which sees power as oppressive, Foucault (1978) claims that power is productive—it creates subjectivities, controls behavior, and affects how people see themselves. Analyzing musical theatre as a place where dominant cultural standards regulate bodies but also where resistance arises through performance, gesture, and aesthetic violation is especially useful in using this idea.

Puar's account further situates disciplinary spaces within national and neoliberal governance, cautioning that some queer bodies and practices can be differentially folded into respectability while others are cast out—what she terms *homonationalism* (Puar, 2007). Thinking with assemblage here means that surveillance, respectability,

funding regimes, and venue policies are not background "contexts" but active components of what a queer body can do on stage. Thus, the same gesture may register as playful in one configuration and risky in another, depending on how institutional and affective elements have been assembled around it.

Foucault's theory of power suggests that institutions, discourses, and cultural forms do not simply suppress individuals but actively produce them as subjects within a specific system of norms (Foucault, 1978). As a cultural institution, musical theatre has historically reinforced heteronormative ideals through traditional gender roles, romantic tropes, and narrative structures that privilege cisgender and heterosexual identities (Wolf, 2011). At the same time, some mechanisms discipline gender and sexuality in the musical theatre scene, and these mechanisms also open space for the appearance of strangeness.

Discipline is not only a repressive mechanism but also a productive power. Everyday actions, such as how the body will sit, talk, and move, are regulated by forms of "micro-power," as Foucault put it. These arrangements are mainly manifested in gendered forms. The posture, tone of voice, and gesture repertoire expected from the male body, as the elegance, timidity, or "decent" performances expected from the female body, are always the product of this micro-level discipline. When queer bodies fail to adapt to these norms or consciously deviate, they are marked as "distorted," or "dangerous" both within the space and at the level of social perception.

Foucault's theory of power suggests that institutions, discourses, and cultural forms do not simply suppress individuals but actively produce them as subjects within a specific system of norms (Foucault, 1978). As a cultural institution, musical theatre has historically reinforced heteronormative ideals through traditional gender roles, romantic tropes, and narrative structures that privilege cisgender and heterosexual identities (Wolf, 2011). At the same time, some mechanisms discipline gender and sexuality in the musical theatre scene, and these mechanisms also open space for the appearance of strangeness.

For example, musicals such as *La Cage aux Folles*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, and *The Rocky Horror Show* simultaneously exist within the mainstream theatrical

tradition and disrupt the normative frameworks of gender and sexuality. These productions represent strangeness as a category of identity and engage in what Foucault describes as the "revolt of subjugated knowledge" (Foucault, 1980, p. 81).

Sara Ahmed's concept of orientation intersects with Foucault's understanding of this spatial discipline. According to Ahmed, queer bodies open in different directions by deviating from heteronormative directions. However, this deviation is not only an individual change of direction but also an effort to get rid of the disciplinary mechanisms of the body and open new areas of existence. In this context, queer orientation becomes a movement that transforms the space itself: the "different posture" of the queer body on the stage, on the street, at school, or at home upends and disrupts the power codes of the space.

In musicals, forms of performance such as gender-based choreography, sound arrangements, and gestures are reworked, and queer musicals produce new forms of embodiment that challenge the nature of heterosexuality and binary gender roles.

In Foucault's formulation, resistance is not an external force that opposes power but is inherent in power relations (Foucault, 1980). This understanding is crucial for analyzing how musical theatre brings a strange resistance to life, not by completely rejecting dominant norms but by restructuring and destabilizing them through performance. As Judith Butler (1993) elaborated, gender is not a stable identity but an iterative process — an ongoing law shaped by bodily gestures, speech patterns, and repetitive actions.

In queer musicals, traditional performance techniques are subverted, and this form of resistance is embodied. The exaggerated femininity in drag performances is mocked with heteronormative seriousness, and the camp aesthetic also reworks the entire story so that strangeness is embodied in musical theatre with performative resistance (Lovelock, 2019). In *The Rocky Horror Show*, Dr. Frank-N-Furter's overt theatricality and blending of masculine and feminine characteristics, resisting the fixity of gender categories, legislates what Foucault (1978) might call "reverse discourse" — where marginal identities reclaim and reuse the terms used to describe them. Moreover, embodied performance functions as a repertoire, as Diana Taylor (2003) explains, a

repository of living cultural memory that preserves and distributes information outside of traditional written records. In this way, queer musical theatre not only questions traditional gender and sexual scenarios but also provides a space for audiences to create and embody their queer future by physically explaining the alternatives.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault explains how sexuality is normalized through social control and regulation mechanisms. Sexuality, instead of being suppressed only by prohibitions and censors, is constantly produced and reshaped through discourse (Foucault, 1978). This productivity is important in terms of queer body experiences because queer bodies remain at or outside the boundaries of the normative understanding of sexuality. The existence of queer bodies leads to the constant questioning of heteronormative sexuality discourses and has the potential to subvert these discourses. This process reveals the forms of resistance developed by queer bodies against power relations (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1990).

Butler's theory of performativity also finds a place in this scene. According to Butler, while identities are produced through repetition, each repetition also carries the potential of breaking the norm. For this reason, queer embodiment means not only to go outside of normative identities; it also means to "disrupt" the mechanisms that produce those identities. When considered together with Foucault's disciplined understanding of the body, every staging of a queer performance is a bodily resistance that embodies this disruption.

Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish* (1977) also examines how bodies are disciplined, supervised, and punished. According to Foucault, the body is kept under constant supervision by power relations and thus disciplined within normative behavior patterns. Through the panopticon metaphor, Foucault argues that an internalized discipline is created by keeping the bodies under constant supervision (Foucault, 1977). This process is important for queer bodies because queer bodies are defined as "problematic" or "deviant" under supervision by not complying with normative disciplinary patterns. Queer individuals reconstruct their bodies and identities against these surveillance and disciplinary mechanisms and develop alternative ways of existence and resistance practices (Muñoz, 1999).

The concept of a "living body" completes this theoretical framework. It emphasizes that the body is a disciplined surface and an overflowing, unpredictable, excess-bearing entity. This excess is the area that discipline cannot completely cover and control. The queer body can generate resistance precisely through this excess. Queer performances, exhibited on the stage through camp, exaggeration, grotesque, or parody, are both a response to normative discipline and follow a "policy of excess" against these norms.

The relationship between queer embodiment and subject formation occupies a critical place in Foucault's theory. According to Foucault, subjects are produced through power relations and discourses; this process occurs by shaping and directing bodies within certain social norms (Foucault, 1978; 1977). Queer bodies present forms of existence that challenge these normative processes of subject formation. This challenge occurs when queer bodies redefine their subject formation processes and create new areas of existence outside of heteronormative social structures (Butler, 1990; Muñoz, 1999).

Following Foucault, power is productive: it disciplines bodies and generates the very subjects it regulates; resistance is internal to these relations. On the musical stage, timing, comportment and voice are organized by disciplinary gazes that can also be appropriated and bent. I therefore treat camp, parody and drag not as outside power but as embodied practices that rework discipline from within. My analysis traces how supervision and normativity are cited and distorted in performance.

Moreover, as Sara Ahmed (2006) argues in her analysis of queer phenomenology, bodies are positioned within environments to conform to accepted traditions. However, the musical theatre provides a space where queer bodies can reorient themselves — where non-normative desires, actions, and relationships can be created and explored beyond the boundaries of everyday heteronormativity. In queer musicals, performers take the front stage and question the default neutrality of honesty in theatre, therefore offering new avenues for queer subjectivity. In the end, Foucault's ideas of power, resistance, and subjectivity provide a critical framework for understanding how musical theatre disciplines allow for strangeness. Theatre offers the possibility of subversion through embodied activities that challenge the historically dominant

gender and sexual norms and reinterpret them even while supporting them. In musical theatre, dissent is not only about rejecting dominant narratives but also transforming them into new forms of queer existence through performance, dance, and audience participation. By establishing alternative spaces of belonging, and therefore transforming more general concepts of cultural identity, desire, and resistance, queer musicals reveal a way to build a world outside the stage.

Musical theatre is one of the scenes where this resistance is embodied. Drag performances break down gender norms on stage by parodying them; reverse alignments in choreography disrupt the ways normative heterosexual love stories are staged. Even the viewer's gaze is redirected by these aesthetic deviations. Thus, the queer embodiment becomes not only a "stage performer" but a being that transforms the stage itself.

As a result, queer bodies are not passively disciplined objects, as Foucault describes; they are also subjects that respond to this discipline, reshape themselves, and establish counter-spaces. These deviations from the discipline define queer embodiment not as a mere state of being but as a constant field of re-creation and resistance. In the next section, we will move on to the strategy of disidentification, which is one of the aesthetic-political forms of this resistance, and the existence of the queer body in these counter-spaces will be discussed.

3.3. Collective Resistance and Disidentification

Queer embodiment is not just an individual experience; it is a collective and culturally established, rewritten, and staged practice of resistance. The concept of disidentification, developed by José Esteban Muñoz in his book *Disidentifications* (1999), theorizes the complex way queer bodies establish relationships with normative structures that they neither fully identify with nor completely reject. Disidentification is of central importance for understanding the aesthetic-political nature of queer embodiment as a strategy that subverts, transforms, and rewrites the dominant cultural narratives of the queer subject.

Muñoz names this tactical reworking disidentification: a mode that neither fully identifies with nor simply refuses dominant forms but inhabits and twists them. In

musical theatre, this often takes collective shape as performers and audiences co-produce misalignments with mainstream conventions. I use disidentification to read those moments when normative plots, roles or gestures are re-scripted from within—where excess, parody and participation turn representation into an aesthetic-political intervention.

According to Muñoz, queer individuals can neither fully identify with hegemonic structures nor break entirely away from these structures. Instead, queer bodies establish an "overlapping" relationship with these structures: they go through the regimes of representation, transform them, and establish their own identity in this area of transformation. This overlapping process turns queer embodiment into a kind of "aesthetic deviation."

The concept of "disidentification" put forward by Muñoz expresses that individuals who are on or outside the boundaries of identity politics neither fully identify with social norms nor completely reject them but rather shape their own identities by interacting creatively with these norms (Muñoz, 1999, p. 11). In this sense, queer performances appear as acts of resistance that do not fully adapt to normative identity categories and actively try to transform them. These performances make it possible for queer identities and bodies to produce creative forms of resistance against social structures.

According to Muñoz, queer performance is more than a simple matter of representation; it is a process in which bodies and identities are reshaped as a political and social action (Muñoz, 1999, p. 31). In this context, queer performance is considered an area where conflicts with social norms shape the identities and ways of existence of queer bodies. Through queer performances, queer bodies question the boundaries imposed on them by heteronormative society and create new identities and ways of existence beyond these boundaries (Muñoz, 1999; Butler, 1990).

The disidentification strategy shows that the queer body comes on stage not only to represent something but also to push the boundaries of forms of representation. From this point of view, queer embodiment not only offers an alternative existence to normative identities, but also aesthetically questions the conditions of production of

these identities. Especially in scenes where representation and repetition are intertwined, such as musical theatre, queer performances turn into collective action spaces where this strategy is most intensively experienced.

The relationship between the concept of queer becoming and queer performance occupies an important place in Muñoz's theory. Queer becoming refers to the fact that queer identities and bodies are in a constant state of change and transformation, and this transformation process takes place through queer performances (Muñoz, 1999, p. 89). Queer performances activate the processes of queer becoming, enabling queer bodies to transcend the boundaries of normative identities and create alternative forms of existence.

Ahmed's understanding of queer orientation emphasizes the spatial dimension of this collective resistance. Queer bodies resist not only with individual orientations but also with standard spatial deviations. Disidentification is not only a critique of representation but also a critique of spatial alignment. The "incorrect placement" of bodies on the stage, choreographic deviations, or interactions with the audience break down heteronormative perceptions of space. Thus, queer embodiment becomes a collective countermovement that changes direction both in content and form.

Foucault's disciplinary theory is highly relevant in this context. Disidentification functions as an opposition to power and as the organization of bodies against norms through a collective aesthetic. In the face of panopticon surveillance, queer bodies resist against the disciplining gaze of power through forms of staging such as camp aesthetics, parody, and drag. This staged excess demonstrates that extreme queer existence is not merely an aesthetic detail but a site of political intervention.

The conceptualization of indeterminacy and excess intersects with Muñoz's strategy of disidentification at this point. While disidentification seeps into normative identity structures, it also stages an excess beyond them. This redundancy connects queer embodiment not only with recognition policies but also with policies of existing and exerting influence despite not being recognized.

Examples of such collective aesthetic resistance are often found in musical theatre works such as *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Hedwig, and the Angry Inch*, or *Fun Home*

not only present queer representations but invite the audience to participate in the practice of disidentification with queer bodies on stage. Camp aesthetics, playing with time and norms, choreographic misalignments, or exaggerations all carry this collective policy of deviation of queer embodiment to the stage.

As a result, disidentification removes queer embodiment from being an individual means of expression and places it in the field of collective aesthetic-political intervention. Muñoz's concept of disidentification allows queer performances to be considered not only as an expression of identities but also as an area of active political resistance. Queer performances activate the processes of queer becoming by enabling creative forms of resistance and transformation of queer bodies and identities against social norms and create spaces of resistance in which queer bodies are actively reconstructed.

Combined with Butler's idea of reiteration and deviation, Ahmed's potential for change of direction, and Foucault's capacity for resistance from within the discipline, Muñoz's concept provides a strong theoretical basis for understanding both the formal and political nature of queer embodiment. This ground serves as the basis for the transition to queer musical performances, which will be analyzed in the next section: now the question of "how it is staged," and not just "what is being shown," will be placed at the center.

Beyond disidentification, Muñoz also theorizes queer futurity—an orientation toward not-yet-realized social forms that becomes perceptible in aesthetic flashes (Muñoz, 2009). On stage, these appear as felt surpluses—camp excess, collective laughter, a room rising to dance—that briefly disclose the *then-and-there* within the *here-and-now*. Such moments do not resolve social antagonisms; they rehearse alternatives, letting audiences and performers co-sense a world otherwise.

Jill Dolan names these intensities utopian performatives—affective condensations in which spectators experience themselves as a provisional public bound by hope (Dolan, 2005). Read together, Muñoz and Dolan allow me to treat participation and camp not merely as style or fan practice but as world-making tactics that thicken collective feeling and redirect orientation (Muñoz, 2009; Dolan, 2005).

3.4. Foucault, Butler, and Ahmed: Common Denominators and Tensions

Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Sara Ahmed have made important theoretical contributions to the study of queer embodiment. However, each of them has developed different approaches to the formation of queer identities and bodies, their modes of existence, and their relations with social structures. Comparing the theories of these three thinkers and analyzing their intersection points is important for deepening the theoretical foundations of queer embodiment.

Power and subject formation play a central role in Foucault's analyses. According to him, the subject is shaped by various social practices, discourses, and power relations. Foucault examines the process of disciplining the body and discusses how the body is regulated and controlled through social norms (Foucault, 1977). Queer bodies are in constant conflict with the mechanisms of normative power. This conflict creates a space where bodies reshape their identities in creative and resistant ways (Foucault, 1978). Queer embodiment is thus formed by the body's resistance to disciplinary mechanisms and constantly rebuilding itself in this process (Foucault, 1978, 1977).

Butler takes the concept of performativity to the center while developing the theory of queer embodiment. According to them, gender is not a predetermined or fixed identity; on the contrary, it is produced in a performative way by constantly repeated actions (Butler, 1990). With the concept of "reiteration," Butler emphasizes that each performance is a repetition of previous performances, but no performance is completely identical (Butler, 1993). In this context, queer embodiment occurs through the constant repetition and re-interpretation of the norms imposed by heteronormative structures. Butler reveals that the body maintains normative identities through performative actions and changes them by questioning (Butler, 2004).

Sara Ahmed develops the theory of queer embodiment through the concepts of queer orientation and spatiality. According to Ahmed, bodies are positioned physically and enter specific orientations through social, cultural, and historical norms. Ahmed states that queer bodies create their unique orientations by deviating from the orientations determined by heteronormative structures (Ahmed, 2006). These "deviations" cause queer bodies to experience a constant "displacement" and "reorientation" in the social

sphere. Ahmed suggests that queer orientations constitute an active resistance against normative structures and that bodies create liberating spaces (Ahmed, 2006, p. 4).

Adding Puar and Muñoz, I treat queer embodiment as iterative (Butler), oriented (Ahmed), disciplined/resistant (Foucault), materially assembled (Puar), and futurally charged (Muñoz)—a five-fold analytic that will structure the staging analysis that follows.

3.4.1. Common Denominators and Intersections

Foucault, Butler, and Ahmed meet on common ground when queer embodiment is associated with societal norms and power structures. All three thinkers agree that queer embodiment is a continuous process of struggle, resistance, and transformation. Each of them emphasizes how queer bodies resist normative identities and create new identities and ways of existence in creative ways. These theorists reveal that queer bodies do not take a fixed and passive position within normative systems but rather are actively struggling, questioning, and transforming subjects.

Foucault's subject formation, Butler's performativity, and Ahmed's queer orientation help us to understand the dynamic positions of queer bodies within social structures. Butler's performativity, combined with Foucault's concepts of power and subject formation, paints a picture in which queer bodies are both disciplined and shaped and actively resist breaking norms. Ahmed's queer orientation explains how bodies become politicized through space and orientations and create new spatial spaces by deviating from the orientations of heteronormative structures (Ahmed, 2006; Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1978).

3.5. Summary and Theoretical Contribution

The theoretical approaches discussed in this section show that queer embodiment is a process that occurs continuously rather than being a fixed identity, tends to deviate from norms, and is staged collectively.

José Esteban Muñoz's concept of disidentification combines these three approaches into a collective strategy of aesthetic resistance. Muñoz's theory positions queer embodiment not only as a form of individual self-expression but also as a field of

creative and transformative aesthetic-political struggle waged against normative representation regimes, where disidentification becomes operational as queer bodies pass through these systems of representation and render visible the redundancy, overflow, and irreducibility of queer embodiment.

Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology adds a spatial and directional dimension to queer embodiment by showing that queer bodies not only deviate from norms but also create new lines of orientation through their orientations and deviations. Thus, queer embodiment takes shape as a process of reconstruction, through bodily orientations.

Michel Foucault's theory of discipline and power shows that queer embodiment is not only an individual expression but also a process shaped by normative control mechanisms and has the potential to resist these mechanisms. Foucault's understanding of the body's position in power relations reveals that queer bodies are both disciplined and can create areas of action against this discipline.

José Esteban Muñoz's concept of disidentification combines these three approaches into a collective strategy of aesthetic resistance. Muñoz positions queer embodiment not only as a form of individual self-expression but also as a field of creative and transformative aesthetic-political struggle waged against normative regimes of representation. In this framework, disidentification becomes operational as queer bodies pass through systems of representation and expose their limits—revealing redundancy, overflow, and the irreducibility of queer embodiment (Muñoz, 1999).

Musical theatre is an area where this phenomenon is produced and staged. Aesthetic forms such as drag, camping, and satire are the areas where queer embodiment is reproduced on both an individual and collective level.

In summary, I mobilize performativity (Butler) to explain reiteration, orientation (Ahmed) to track directional shifts, and power/discipline (Foucault) to frame regulation and resistance. I complement these with assemblage (Puar) to account for the material-affective infrastructures that enable or inhibit queer embodiment, and with queer futurity/utopian performativity (Muñoz; Dolan) to grasp how fleeting intensities on stage prefigure alternative socialites.

This composite framework treats musical theatre not as a mirror of identity but as a site where identities are assembled, oriented, regulated, resisted, and projected toward a different communal horizon—a rubric I operationalize in the analysis chapters.

In the next section, I will focus on the aesthetic, spatial, and political dimensions of being queer by examining concrete examples of queer embodiment on stage that employs this theoretical ground.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY: MIXED METHODS FOR EMBODIED PERFORMANCE & AUDIENCE RECEPTION

4.1. Theoretical and Methodological Foundations

This section operationalizes embodiment, performativity, and orientation as methodological anchors. It specifies how these concepts informed sampling, instruments, coding, and triangulation across performer, audience, and accompanying materials.

Long as a point of interaction between dominant perspectives on culture and subverted counter-discourses, musical theatre has been a very performative medium combining text, music, movement, and spectacle; therefore, it is an essential instrument for the performance of identity, community-building, and embodied resistance. Drawing on queer theory, musical theatre studies, and performance studies, the theoretical framework of this work explores how musical theatre serves not just as a mainstream cultural institution but also as a creative place for queer embodied and world-making. Emphasizing embodiment, performativity, and orientation as fundamental analytical tools, this section develops the conceptual basis for evaluating queer musical theatre beyond simple representation and visibility by implementing an interdisciplinary approach. In this study I locate the musical's genre-specific gender economy alongside Butler's reiteration in §3.2.1, drawing on Stacy Wolf's feminist/queer readings of the American musical (2002; 2011). Rather than re-summarizing here, I refer the reader to that theoretical stitch, where Wolf's star-text insights (e.g., Mary Martin/Julie Andrews) are integrated with performativity. What follows in Chapter 4 builds on that frame in production-specific terms. I situate the musical's genre-specific gender economy alongside Butler's reiteration in §3.2.1, drawing on Stacy Wolf's

feminist/queer readings (2002; 2011). What follows applies that frame to the present productions.

4.1.1. Queer Theory and Performance Studies Musical Theatre Studies

Rising from poststructuralist criticisms of gender and sexuality in the early 1990s, queer theory provides a critical sphere through which to view the fluid and contested character of identity in performance. Unlike earlier gay and lesbian studies, which sometimes concentrated on issues of visibility and representation, queer theory questions the stability of identity categories and instead stresses performativity, temporality, and spatiality in the construction of subjectivity (Butler, 1990; Halberstam, 2005; Sedgwick, 1993). Within the framework of musical theatre, queer theory helps to move from examining the existence of LGBTQ+ characters and themes toward an investigation of how queerness is performed, embodied and the audience interacts over performance.

Musical theatre operates as both a mainstream cultural medium and a site of resistance to heteronormative structures (Wolf, 2011). Historically, musicals reinforced normative narratives of romance and gender roles, yet they have also provided coded spaces for queer expression, mainly through the conventions of camp, drag, and gender transgression (Clum, 1999). Through embodied performance, shows such as *The Rocky Horror Show*, La Cage aux Folles, and Hedwig and the Angry Inch not only show queer identities but also strongly question accepted ideas of gender and sexuality.

Moreover, queer musical theatre research has shifted its focus from mere representation to embodiment and spatial orientation. Scholars such as Stacy Wolf (2011) and David Halperin (2012) argue that the affective, physical, and participatory qualities of musical theatre foster a distinctly queer atmosphere in which normative boundaries can be challenged and reconfigured.

This disruption of norms aligns with Foucault's (1978) theorization of power not as a force that represses from the outside but as something that operates within social structures and subjects. According to the opinion of Michel Foucault, resistance is not external to power but is embedded in its mechanisms. Thus, musical theatre's performative and embodied nature can be seen as producing moments of resistance

from dominant systems by momentarily subverting normative scripts of gender, desire, and identity.

Additionally, Ahmed's (2006) concept of orientation helps us understand how bodies navigate spaces—social, cultural, and literal—based on the directions shaped by dominant expectations. In this sense, musical theatre offers opportunities for bodies to reorient themselves toward non-normative desires, attachments, and modes of belonging. These alternative alignments are performed on stage, felt, and enacted by performers and audiences alike, creating a spatial and affective field where queerness can be lived and sensed.

4.1.1.1 Stacy Wolf's Double-duty Concept

My methodological approach derives from Stacy Wolf's claim that musicals do a "double duty –to promote conservative values and to provide empowering representations of women, sometimes simultaneously" (Wolf, 2022, p.45). Wolf suggests that a prominent feature of musicals is that they often create some of the most conservative narratives available in popular culture despite simultaneously producing visible queer and feminist reception communities. Discussing Mary Poppins, Chris Cuomo points out the strange coupling between the common acceptance of Poppins as a feminist figure and the relatively conservative aspect of the film's narrative (Cuomo, 1995). Thomas G. Endres notes the stark contrast between *Rocky Horror*'s relationship with decadent, hedonistic sexuality and the "obvious undercurrent that has a surprisingly conservative message in the film" (Endres, 2008). Although *Rocky Horror* is considered a queer icon musical, it allows heteronormative to achieve victory with specific points.

The destruction of his world, along with Further's castle and Brad and Janet's escape from the castle, marks a return to social norms. Dr. Characters such as Everett Scott appear as conservative reminders in places that, despite the chaos in the castle, traditional values anchor the narrative. Although the musical gives place to a queer community, it limits this culture to a temporary and fantastic space. Treating Frank and the others in the castle as aliens dehumanizes their queer sides and deconstruct this situation into an "otherness" that cannot coexist with the dominant

heteronormative culture. This description reassures a conservative audience by framing non-conformity as transient and alien. Wolf responds to the deceptive situation by saying there may be a difference between the message conveyed by the actual narrative of a musical and the message expressed by its music, choreography, performance, and other formal elements. The course of the story may produce a conservative narrative, but its music and visuals may convey something completely different on an emotional level. For example, in her book *Changed for Good* (2011), Wolf examines how a character who appears weak and passive in the plot can nevertheless be perceived by audiences as powerful and active through their singing and dancing. In other words, while the character type matters, the actor's actions on stage—what she does—matter as well.

It may still read to audiences as powerful and active because the queer, decadent Frank-N-Furter may be punished in the narrative of *Rocky Horror*. Still, he is the high point of the show's music and visuals, which explains why he is the character with whom audiences end up siding rather than the narrative protagonists Brad and Janet. This may be punished in the narrative of *Rocky Horror*. Methodologically, "double duty" says that the emotional impulses of musicals, transmitted through visuals, dance, and vocal performance, are in tension with their true stories. According to this tension, although the musical's narrative seems to convey something very normative, the music tells a different emotional story. This thriller shows queer audiences and queer performers the queer possibilities of musical narratives.

4.1.1.2 The Methodological Contribution of Stacy Wolf's Feminist-Queer Theatre Approach

The methodological framework of this study was not limited to discourse analysis; it was also expanded with the contributions of Stacy Wolf, a leading figure in the field of feminist and queer theatre criticism. Wolf's work, especially titled *A Problem Like Maria* (2002), provides a critical framework that questions the representation of female characters in American musical theatre, desire relationships, and queer ways of reading. Wolf's approach is that the musical is not just about heterosexual love narratives; it shows that the emotional, physical, and stage relationships between female characters also carry queer potential (Wolf, 2002).

In this study, Stacy Wolf's methodological suggestions were adopted to reveal non-heteronormative forms of attachment in the analysis of musical theatre. In particular, the emotional affinities, contacts, lyrics, and staging practices between the female characters have been reinterpreted by the queer reading styles proposed by Wolf. In this context, choreographies and lyrics on the stage are considered aesthetic preferences and forms of resistance to gender norms.

Wolf's approach suggests that not only the representations on the stage but also the established relationship with the audience can carry queer potential. In this thesis, Wolf's proposition includes the audience's viewing experience and the forms of association on the stage within the scope of analysis. Thus, the musical has been considered a queering area both on the stage and in the relationship established with the stage. This approach reveals that queer embodiment is a process that is not only represented but also experienced.

4.2. Research Questions and Aims

This research aims to explore how queer embodiment is performed, negotiated, and experienced in musical theatre, with a particular focus on the Turkish adaptation of *The Rocky Horror Show*. The central research question and the following sub-questions guiding this study is:

- How does musical theatre function as a queer space for performers in contemporary Turkey?

Sub-questions include:

- How do LGBTQIA+ performers experience identity formation and bodily awareness through musical performance?
- What kinds of affective labor and embodied practices emerge in the production and staging of queer musical theatre?
- How do audience interpretations of queer themes influence the broader reception and cultural positioning of such performances?

This study situates itself at the intersection of queer theory, musical theatre studies, and performance studies. It takes a performative and embodied approach to understand how theatre not only represents but also constitutes queer subjectivities, affective communities, and spaces of resistance.

4.3. Positionality and Ethical Considerations

The research is reflexively informed by the author's dual role as academic and artistic participant in queer performance. Participation in staging allowed observation from both outside and within, necessitating continuous awareness of influence on the field and on data. Following feminist and queer methodologies that prioritize situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988), subjectivity is treated as an epistemic resource. Care, accountability, and reciprocity guided the ways in which consent was obtained, anonymity was maintained, and confidentiality was ensured (Ahmed, 2012; Gustafson & Lenon, 2015).

Given potential risks around queer visibility in Turkey, consent procedures prioritized anonymity; venue names are disclosed only with institutional permissions. Audience surveys/interviews collected no identifiers; raw social-media data were anonymized and stored offline.

4.3.1. Reflexivity and the Role of the Researcher

Direct involvement in rehearsals and staging provided analytical depth—particularly for reading queer embodiment and affective relations—while requiring critical distance. Field notes, a research diary, and external consultations were used to balance interpretive bias. In line with "situated knowledge," the researcher's experience is considered a source of insight rather than a limitation (Haraway, 1988; Finlay, 2002). Interactions that produced openness or reticence were themselves coded as data.

4.3.2. Ethical Considerations

All participants received information sheets and signed consent forms. Interviews were anonymized; given the small and visible community, additional steps minimized identifiability. Recognizing possible power imbalances due to the researcher's active role, interviews were strictly voluntary and scheduled in participant-selected settings.

In line with feminist and queer research ethics (Jagose, 1996; Gustafson & Lenon, 2015; Israel & Hay, 2006), interview pacing was adjusted to protect participants' psychological safety.

4.4. Methods and Data Sources

This study employed qualitative, semi-structured interviews as the primary method for exploring how queer performers experience, negotiate and embody gender and sexuality through musical theatre. Given the sensitive, nuanced, and embodied nature of these experiences, qualitative interviews provided a flexible framework that allowed participants to share their stories on their terms while still addressing key research themes.

Participants were primarily LGBTQIA+ performers, directors, and crew members involved in the Turkish staging of *The Rocky Horror Show*. The interviews were designed to explore topics such as:

- The relationship between performers' gender and sexual identities and their on-stage roles
- The embodied experience of queer performance in rehearsals and live shows
- The practical and creative labor involved in producing queer musical theatre
- The cultural and institutional barriers faced by queer artists in Turkey
- Audience reception and the emotional responses generated by queer themes

Before each interview, participants were informed about the aims and scope of the research and asked to sign a written consent form. Interviews were conducted in environments the participants chose to ensure comfort and safety. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes and were audio-recorded with permission.

Semi-structured interviews allowed for consistency across participants (ensuring comparable data) and room for divergence based on each participant's experiences. The open-ended format also created space for emotionally resonant stories, tangents, and critical reflections that might not have emerged in a more rigid interview structure.

Following the data collection, interview transcripts were thematically coded and analyzed in dialogue with the theoretical concepts of embodiment, performativity, and orientation. This analysis was also informed by the methodological contributions of Sara Ahmed (2006), Judith Butler (1990), and Stacy Wolf (2011), which helped reveal how queer bodies and desires are performed, regulated, and subverted within musical theatre spaces.

4.4.1. Qualitative Research Approach

The qualitative data in this research allowed me to understand the queer representation on the musical theatre stage and investigate the effects of these representations on the performances of artists. Since qualitative study focuses on meaning-making processes and lived experiences, it is especially suitable for investigating questions of identity, performance, and embodiment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This study is based on feminist and queer methodological frameworks to analyze how artists relate to gender and sexuality in musical theatre. This research focuses on interpretive, process-oriented research that prioritizes subjectivity and embodied knowledge instead of trying to measure experience (Ahmed, 2006). I enriched the qualitative method with in-depth interviews and participant observation in this context.

As a result of the qualitative methods I use in my research, LGBTQ+ artists participating in *The Rocky Horror Show* talk about the power balances in their experiences in processes such as casting and character creation, and the study of the reflection of these balances on performances follows Sara Ahmed's (2006) approach in *Queer Phenomenology*, considering how bodies orient themselves in space through performance. This work examines how artists physically interact with musical theatre, revealing how theatre spaces function as spaces to (re-) orient bodies to non-normative identities and desires. The concept of double duty contained in Stacy Wolf's musical methodology also works together with feminist methods to show that performances on the musical stage can present contradictory representations of gender and sexuality, in contrast to classical and sometimes conservative definitions of musicals.

Rather than conducting Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) proper, my approach is a critical discourse-oriented content analysis: I read discourse together with non-

linguistic elements that co-produce meaning in performance—gesture and posture, proxemics and scenography, lighting and sound cues, costume–body couplings, tempo and affect. This allows me to trace how power and normativity have materialized on stage without reducing analysis to language alone. I draw on Fairclough's insight that discourse is linked to social practices and power relations (Fairclough, 1995, p. 132), but I extend the unit of analysis beyond text to include embodied and spatial cues.

The qualitative part of this research has sought to explore the intersection of queer identities and musical theatre, particularly with a focus on *The Rocky Horror Show*. This section describes the methods implemented for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data on ways musical theatre can be one of the transformative spaces both for queer representation and for resistance, with a peculiar focus on Turkey.

This study puts into practice a qualitative method of research for the exploration of experiences and perceptions occurring in queer musical performances in greater depth. Structured interviews, participant observation, and content analysis ensure that the topic under exploration is understood with as little loss of meaning as possible.

The participants were kept anonymous, and their information was confidential throughout the research. Free and informed written consent was sought before conducting any interviews, and the interviewees were informed of their rights to withdraw at any point in time. Special concern for a sensitive yet respectful atmosphere was exercised when collecting data because the nature of the research warranted it. Exploring *The Rocky Horror Show* as a medium of identity, cultural resistance, and community should be rooted intrinsically in this qualitative component. By combining interviewing, observations, and the analysis of texts, it is hoped that this study will enrich existing scholarly discussions on queer representation in musical theatre by offering a context-specific, embodied, and performative analysis of *The Rocky Horror Show*.

4.4.2. Ethnographic Participation & Fieldnotes Interviews and Ethnographic Engagement

In-depth, semi-structured interviews with artists, directors, and audience members provide first-hand accounts of queer experiences in musical theatre. The interviews

explore themes such as the impact of theatre spaces on gender expression, the role of performance in identity negotiation, and how musical theatre promotes community and resistance. Following Butler's (1990) argument that identity is formed through performative actions, this approach emphasizes how individuals express and embody strangeness in theatre.

Ethnographic participation extends beyond formal interviews to informal conversations, audience reactions, and post-performance discussions. This immersive approach allows them to holistically understand how queer bodies move in theatre spaces and how they interact with audiences, institutions, and cultural expectations (Taylor, 2003).

In-depth interviews were designed with semi-structured questions, and participants were informed about the research topic before starting the interview. They also signed consent forms protecting their privacy. During the interviews, the participants were asked about the impact of queer representations on their performances, the connections between their gender identity and musical characters, and the processes of bodily awareness. The following questions were given weight in the interviews:

- What is the role of character in the formation of identity?
- How did the stage experience have an impact on their identities?
- How has the musical changed the participants' bodily awareness?

By creating an opportunity for participants to choose where they wanted to meet, interviews were conducted in places where they felt comfortable. Participants were promised confidentiality during the interviews, and audio recordings were taken.

Participant observation was done during the rehearsal, background process coverage, and performance days of the musical. Participant observation provides insights into how strangeness is enacted and negotiated in rehearsal and performance settings. Based on ethnographic traditions (Geertz, 1973), this work includes direct interaction with rehearsals, backstage interactions, and live performances, which allows for a deep understanding of embodied queer practices. Performance analysis is also an integral part of this research. Following the framework of Wolf's (2011) musical theatre

analysis, the study examines how vocal presentation, choreography, costume, and staging contribute to queer representation. Attention is paid to the dramaturgical elements that construct and destabilize gender norms and place these performances in the broader discourses of queer regulation.

From the rehearsal process up to the premier night in June, participation in observation has been maintained wherein, in the process, observation of the physical expressions and acts that have been enacted or presented by actors, adaptation of the character they play, and interaction made on and within the collective performances analyzed, notes are taken accordingly. Meanwhile, body language and the actor's gestures on stage during the performance provided necessary data when observing the reflection of queer themes in the processes of staging.

According to Neuman (2014), participant observation is one of the qualitative research methods in which any researcher focuses on the environment of the people being researched, and researchers engage directly with the community (2014:434). "Therefore, theoretical contributions evolve from the observations and analysis of the conduct of the communities" (Neumann, 2014,434). The observation method differs according to the situations in which the researcher hides or discloses his identity and participates or does not participate in the research environment. When the rehearsals were watched, I shared my identity with the musical team and informed the team about my dissertation work. I attended rehearsals at certain intervals by making observations in time. I did not study the stream from the beginning to the end at the first rehearsal I attended. I only took notes by watching the stream from the beginning to the end of the rehearsal before the musical's representation. Still, I did not intervene or engage in any interaction with the performers. Afterward, I used critical discourse analysis to combine the notes I received and the interviews I conducted with the performers and to make an overall assessment.

4.4.3. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

This study adopts a **critical discourse-oriented content analysis**, drawing inspiration from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). While CDA focuses on how linguistic expressions are intertwined with social structures, power relations, and ideological

codes (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993), my approach extends this perspective beyond language to include performance. In this context, both the interview data and the embodied, performative elements on stage are treated as discursive practices.

The analysis began with close readings of interview transcripts. Participants' narratives about queer identity, embodiment, and stage experiences were examined through recurrent linguistic patterns, metaphors, silences, and contradictions. Judith Butler's (1999) concepts of performativity and reiteration were used to explore how gender and identity are established through repetitive discourses and actions.

At the same time, stage performances, lyrics, choreographies, bodily gestures, and spatial arrangements were also analyzed as discursive tools. These were interpreted to identify moments when gender norms were either reproduced or disrupted. Michel Foucault's (1978) account of resistance emerging from within power relations also informed this analysis. Furthermore, Stacy Wolf's (2002) methodological contributions to analyzing the body, movement, and staging in musical theatre expanded this discourse-oriented lens, enabling an approach that goes beyond words to include embodied, multi-sensory, and spatial dimensions of meaning-making.

4.4.4. Content Analysis: Programmes, Posters, Reviews & Social Media

A directed content analysis of accompanying materials—playbills/programmes, posters, PR copy, press reviews, and public social-media comments—situated the productions within public discourse. The unit of analysis was the post/paragraph; the sampling frame covered the production window (May–June 2024) and four weeks before/after. Materials were captured as screenshots with URLs/timestamps and anonymized when necessary. A priori categories indexed camp/drag markers, Sue Blane costume references, participation prompts, spatial framing, and moral discourses.

4.4.5. Multimodal Performance Analysis (Video/Photo, Blocking, Costume, Sound/Light)

Recognizing performance as multimodal, rehearsal clips and performance photos were analyzed to map how blocking, proxemics, and design (costume, makeup, lighting,

sound) shape embodied queer presence. Timelines for key numbers (e.g., “Sweet Transvestite,” “Time Warp”) annotated entrances/exits, gaze directions, cluster formations, and audience address; visuals were cross-referenced with fieldnotes to triangulate moments of heightened audience response.

4.4.6. Integration & Triangulation (Convergent Design)

A convergent mixed methods design integrated performer interviews/ethnography, the audience study, content analysis, and multimodal performance analysis at interpretation. Convergences (e.g., performers’ intent to invite call-backs ↔ measured participation; poster rhetoric of “interactive camp” ↔ observed laughter peaks) strengthen validity. Divergences (e.g., discomfort reported but not visible) are read as productive tensions. Trustworthiness was supported via triangulation, peer debriefing, reflexive memos, and limited intercoder checks.

4.5. Affective Labor and Embodied Dynamics in Fieldwork

Fieldwork on queer performance entwines affect, embodiment, and positionality. Rather than treating affect as noise, this study treats it as data: reflective fieldnotes and a research diary tracked intensities (anxiety, joy, shame, exhilaration) during rehearsals and performances, reading gestures, proxemics, and rhythms alongside these sensations. This approach aligns with queer epistemologies that privilege lived, felt knowledge (Ahmed, 2006).

My embedded role produced an inside/outside tension while enabling empathic co-presence with participants. Shared affiliations sometimes increased candor, sometimes caution; both speech and silence were coded as meaningful. Interpretive bias was mitigated through reflexive memos, peer feedback, and triangulation across interviews, observation, and accompanying materials. I observed the spectators and their behavior towards the written materials.

Accordingly, knowledge here is relational and situated: affective peaks during performance intersect with audience participation and staging choices. The aim is not generalizability but to render positional, situational knowledge visible, preparing the ground for the embodied analyses that follow.

4.5.1. Participant Observation and Performance Analysis

Participant observation was done during the rehearsal, background process coverage, and performance days of the musical. Participant observation provides insights into how strangeness is enacted and negotiated in rehearsal and performance settings. Based on ethnographic traditions (Geertz, 1973), this work includes direct interaction with rehearsals, backstage interactions, and live performances, which allows for a deep understanding of embodied queer practices. Performance analysis is also an integral part of this research. Following the framework of Wolf's (2011) musical theatre analysis, the study examines how vocal presentation, choreography, costume, and staging contribute to queer representation. Attention is paid to the dramaturgical elements that construct and destabilize gender norms and place these performances in the broader discourses of queer regulation.

From the rehearsal process up to the premier night in June, participation in observation has been maintained wherein, in the process, observation of the physical expressions and acts that have been enacted or presented by actors, adaptation of the character they play, and interaction made on and within the collective performances analyzed, notes are taken accordingly. Meanwhile, body language and the actor's gestures on stage during the performance provided necessary data when observing the reflection of queer themes in the processes of staging.

According to Neuman (2014), participant observation is one of the qualitative research methods in which any researcher focuses on the environment of the people being researched, and researchers engage directly with the community (2014,434). "Therefore, theoretical contributions evolve from the observations and analysis of the conduct of the communities" (Neumann, 2014,434). The observation method differs according to the situations in which the researcher hides or discloses his identity and participates or does not participate in the research environment. When the rehearsals were watched, I shared my identity with the musical team and informed the team about my dissertation work. I attended rehearsals at certain intervals by making observations in time. I did not study the stream from the beginning to the end at the first rehearsal I attended. I only took notes by watching the stream from the beginning to the end of the rehearsal before the musical's representation. Still, I did not intervene or engage in

any interaction with the performers. Afterward, I used critical discourse analysis to combine the notes I received and the interviews I conducted with the performers and to make an overall assessment.

4.6. Challenges and Limitations

This research encountered several challenges that significantly shaped the study's scope, depth, and nature. One of the most fundamental limitations stemmed from the broader socio-political climate in Turkey, where openly queer-themed musical theatre productions remain rare due to political conservatism and increasing cultural censorship. The emergence of *The Rocky Horror Show* production during the research period was a fortuitous coincidence rather than a result of a planned case selection. It stood as one of the very few examples of queer musical theatre in contemporary Turkey, and this scarcity itself became a constraint on the diversity and comparability of the research sample.

Accessing the musical's production team was a complex and prolonged effort. Given the sensitivity of the topic and the political risks involved, the team initially expressed serious concerns about anonymity and exposure. Reaching them required mobilizing an informal network of intermediaries, including activists, mutual acquaintances, and arts professionals who could vouch for my intentions and credibility. These gatekeeping dynamics delayed initial contact and placed ethical and emotional pressures on the researcher-participant relationship.

Even after establishing contact, additional limitations arose due to censorship concerns expressed by the musical's sponsor organization. In the early stages of our communication, the organization requested that the performance location, city, and even the musical's name be anonymized or omitted from any written documentation. These conditions reflected the precarious status of queer expression in the public sphere and highlighted the vulnerability of the artists involved. Although a mutual agreement was eventually reached, this tension shaped the framing and boundaries of the fieldwork.

Furthermore, practical challenges emerged during the interview phase. The production team was not composed of full-time theatre professionals but rather volunteers who

managed the musical in addition to their everyday responsibilities—work, studies, caregiving, or social commitments. As a result, scheduling interviews required great flexibility and patience, often adapting to participants' limited availability and fluctuating emotional readiness.

The interviews themselves reflected a range of emotional responses. Each participant approached the conversation from a different psychological and experiential standpoint, influenced by their journeys of gender and identity formation. While some participants were eager to articulate their thoughts, others struggled with specific questions or needed pauses during emotionally sensitive topics. The effective texture of these interviews required me to adopt an empathetic, trauma-informed, and flexible interviewing style, accepting that not all narratives would be equally accessible or verbalized.

Finally, the topic's sensitivity, coupled with broader societal norms around sexuality, queerness, and artistic expression, meant that specific themes may have remained unspoken or under-explored despite the safe space I attempted to cultivate. The fear of misrepresentation or being "outed" through association with the study could have influenced how participants framed their answers.

These limitations, far from weakening the study, instead reflect the real-world constraints and affective complexities of conducting embodied queer research in politically charged and precarious environments. Recognizing these boundaries is essential for an honest and ethically grounded account of the knowledge produced.

4.7. Transition to Analysis

The methodological framework outlined above has been instrumental in shaping how the research was conducted, and its findings are interpreted. The embodied, affective, and reflexive dimensions of the fieldwork created a dynamic and relational space in which queer identities were not only observed but also co-experienced and critically negotiated.

Drawing upon the theoretical lens established in the previous chapter—namely the concepts of performativity (Butler), orientation (Ahmed), spatial regulation and

resistance (Foucault), and disidentification (Muñoz)—this study approaches queer performance as a site of becoming that exceeds fixed identity categories. The methods employed here—participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and critical discourse analysis—enable a layered reading of the performers' embodied narratives, creative practices, and spatial interactions within the queer musical stage.

This methodology has foregrounded what was said or performed and what was withheld, hesitated, or emotionally charged. These silences and intensities are crucial in understanding the affective landscape of queer performance under political and social pressures. Rather than aiming for empirical generalizability, this study embraces the partiality and situatedness of queer knowledge production; privileging lived experience and interpretive nuance.

In the following chapter, I will engage in a close analysis of how queer performers articulate and negotiate their identities within the context of *The Rocky Horror Show* in Turkey. By interweaving theoretical insights with empirical narratives, the analysis will explore how musical theatre becomes a generative space for queer embodiment, resistance, and reorientation. The aim is to illuminate not merely how queer lives are represented but how they are *embodied*—on stage, in rehearsal, and in everyday experience.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS: EMBODIED BECOMING IN QUEER MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

This chapter presents a critical, discourse-oriented content analysis of the 'Lemur Sanat' production of The Rocky Horror Show in Turkey. The narratives obtained from interviews and observations of the musical performance will be analyzed using the theoretical and methodological approaches detailed in the previous section. The chapter examines how queer embodiment and queer becoming are produced on stage through relations among bodies and gestures, scenography and proxemics, sound and tempo, vocality, and venue-level regulatory constraints. Adopting Puar's assemblage approach, I treat scenes as dynamic configurations whose effects emerge from relations, such as performer–audience proximity, aisle entries, lighting washes, costume supports and house rules, which determine what can be seen.

Rather than conducting a full linguistic CDA, I use a CDA-inspired critical cultural analysis of discourse that pays attention to gesture, posture, spatial organization, lighting and sound cues, costume-body couplings and affective atmospheres. The analysis draws on field notes and performance observations from the Lemur production (supplemented, where permitted, by paratexts such as programme notes and publicity materials). My observations and claims are limited to the Lemur run at TAD Coşkan Daş Stage; any external references appear only as contextual background, not as objects of analysis.

Drawing on Butler's performativity, Ahmed's queer orientation, Foucault's micro-techniques of discipline and Muñoz's notions of disidentification and utopian performativity, I analyze how particular combinations of bodies, objects, sounds and rules render queer presence visible, tangible and perilous on stage. The chapter

proceeds thematically, each section stating its scope/boundary, presenting scene-based evidence, and unpacking the relations that generate effects, followed by a micro-conclusion that explicitly advances the research questions.

Before proceeding to the analysis, it is necessary to remember the political and cultural context in which this transformation occurred. Systematic repressions, censorship mechanisms, limitation of public visibility, and heteronormative value judgments for a long time have surrounded queer existence in Turkey. The fact that LGBTQ+ representations find a place on the stage becomes an aesthetic issue and a political risk. The fact that some theatres cannot get support, have difficulty finding a stage or are targeted limits queer art production both in terms of content and spatiality. Under these conditions, queer musical theatre emerges not only as an alternative form of expression but also as a practice of resistance, a production of counter-memory, and a space of collective transformation. Creative deviations against normative gender fiction are being developed, primarily through bodily repetitions, gestures on the stage and spatial settlements. The following sections will analyze how this transformation occurred through the experiences passed down from the interviews through concrete practices on the stage.

5.1. Data & Sources

This analysis draws on my field notes and observations of the performance from the Lemur Sanat production of The Rocky Horror Show at the Türk Amerikan Derneği Coşkan Daş Stage (late May–early June 2024). The production was performed in English with Turkish surtitles projected above the primary sightline. Seating was intimate, with the front row flush with the stage, and tickets were available for those aged 18 and over. Where permitted, I supplemented the analysis with paratexts (e.g. publicity posts and programme notes) and brief, anonymized post-show feedback. Rather than collecting headcounts or audio levels, I trace patterned recurrences across nights (e.g. where laughter clusters, when first-mover attempts surface or retract, and how proxemics shift). In line with a critical cultural analysis inspired by CDA, I consider not only dialogue, but also gesture, posture, proxemics, light and sound cues, costume–body couplings and affective atmospheres.

Several recurring observations illustrate how these dynamics took shape. At the opening vamp, for instance, a cool frontal wash and a faint magenta rim framed Frank's entrance. However, many eyes immediately moved upwards to the surtitle band to catch the first punchline. A lone 'Say it!' rose from the middle-left of the audience, only to recede into an embarrassed smile, followed by clipped, hesitant laughter. Later, during the 'Time Warp', knees bounced in anticipation, and a spectator in an aisle seat half-rose before quickly sitting back down. The clapping began off-beat and was initially weak, but eventually stabilized by the chorus. However, full body standing never materialized. Throughout the performance, interjections remained sparse and whispered, laughter was more prevalent in the middle rows than at the front, and initial attempts to initiate call-backs or movement were often withdrawn when not immediately mirrored by others.

Taken together, these conditions demonstrate that queer embodiment in this production was co-produced by a specific combination of elements rather than simply expressed. The presence of surtitles created a constant toggle of attention between text and stage, introducing a half-beat lag that diffused the timing needed for call-backs. The black-box intimacy drew spectators physically closer to the performers; however, the ticketed, fully public setting heightened self-surveillance, making participation feel more like personal exposure than a norm of the house. Lighting choices and aisle adjacency subtly redirected gazes and torsos. However, in the absence of explicit participatory cues, these orientations remained fragile and under-ritualized. In this sense, queer embodiment emerged through the interplay of subtitles, proxemics, lighting and audience risk calculation — an assemblage that produced moments of hesitation, tentative play and small-scale subversion.

In summary, the dynamics observed in Lemur's staging form the empirical basis for the subsequent analyses. They illuminate how queer embodiment is enacted on stage, not as a fixed display, but through contingent relations involving gesture, costume, proxemics, light and timing. They also demonstrate how spectators are involved in this process through hesitation, laughter, whispered comments, and tentative physical responses, which influence the atmosphere as much as the actors do. Finally, they clarify which material and affective relations matter most within specific contexts — for example, how subtitles, audience composition and the public nature of the venue

affect participation and intensity of emotion. These insights will inform the subsequent thematic sections, in which the detailed workings of embodiment, orientation and affect will be explored in more depth. In Puar's terms, I treat each scene as an assemblage in which surtitles, sightlines, proxemics, audience composition, and tempo hold combine to produce timing frictions and only low-risk, small-scale uptake.

5.2. Performing the Queer Body: Embodiment Beyond Representation

In queer musical theatre, the body is not merely a vessel for representation; it is the site where meaning is produced, negotiated, and resisted. This study takes embodiment not as a static state but as a continuous process of becoming—shaped through interactions with space, discipline, performance, and affect. While classical theories of representation may position the stage as a mirror of identity, this chapter departs from that frame by focusing on how queer performers enact identities not to represent them but to make them happen. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's theory of orientation, Judith Butler's performativity, and Michel Foucault's spatial regulation, this section analyzes how queer embodiment on stage resists containment within normative scripts.

As Butler (1990) posits, gender is not something one is but something one does repeatedly under the force of regulatory norms. This performative repetition generates the illusion of a stable identity. However, for the queer bodies in this study, this repetition is not just reenactment—it is reconfiguration. One participant stated: "I didn't represent a character—I allowed the character to invade me, and we became something else." This moment marks a rupture in the representational logic of performance. The performer does not mimic an identity; embodiment becomes a space for transformation.

Ahmed's concept of orientation helps to theorize these transformations further. In her terms, orientation is how bodies become directed in space—toward objects, people, or possibilities (Ahmed, 2006). On stage, performers oriented themselves not toward the heterosexual norm but toward of bodily presence. One participant reflected: "When I walked onto the stage, I wasn't just playing someone. I felt like I was rewriting how my body can move publicly." The stage, then, becomes a reorienting device-disrupting normative expectations about gesture, posture, and movement.

These bodily reorientations also connect to Foucault's (1978) notion of disciplinary power. The musical stage often carries hidden codes—about how bodies should move, sound, and appear. But in this production of The Rocky Horror Show, those codes were queered. The choreography was deliberately fragmented, costumes refused gender coherence, and vocal registers transgressed expected ranges. These stylistic choices enabled a disidentification from the regulated body in aesthetic terms and lived experience.

This emphasis on embodied becoming does not render performance a purely personal or expressive act. Instead, it is always narrated by power, as Foucault reminds us. The body becomes a battleground where norms are repeated and resisted simultaneously. One actor described how they initially felt constrained by the musical format, which often demands clarity and coherence. Yet, through the rehearsal process, they began to use that constraint to expose its limits: "At first, I thought I had to fit into the musical. But then I realized I could make the musical fit into me." Such moments signal how queer embodiment interrupts the usual flow of theatrical time and narrative and instead allows for improvisation, incoherence, and ambiguity.

However, embodiment is produced not only in the performance itself, but also in the rehearsal process. Rehearsals operate as a disciplinary framework comprising blocking, counting, vocal drills and costume fittings that train bodies towards repeatable clarity. However, these same procedures also offer opportunities for resignification.

For example, a performer may adjust a gesture to make it feel more authentic, contest a costume element that causes discomfort, or insert a half-beat pause to change the way a line is delivered. These negotiations demonstrate that precision and deviation are complementary rather than opposed: discipline provides the framework within which resistance and transformation can flourish. Framed as an assemblage, this process unfolds as a chain — rule → bodily feel → technical support → negotiated change — showing how embodiment is continuously created. This lens clarifies how queer embodiment is enacted through micro-adjustments and negotiations, the supporting material and constraints that become decisive, and how ensemble members sustain affective ties of risk and care through these negotiations.

5.3. Spatial Resistance and the Orientation of Queer Desire

Queer desire is never just about the object of affection—it is also about the spatial and directional relations that frame how bodies move, touch, and appear in the world. In the context of musical theatre, this relationality becomes dramatically visible. Drawing from Sara Ahmed's theory of orientation and Michel Foucault's spatial regimes, this section explores how queer performers resist spatial normalization and generate alternative orientations on stage.

Sara Ahmed (2006) defines orientation as a physical direction and a social alignment: how bodies "face" certain norms, expectations, and histories. In mainstream theatrical spaces, normative scripts tend to align bodies with heterosexual desire and binary gender roles. However, in *The Rocky Horror Show*, these alignments were purposefully disrupted. Performers reoriented their gestures, voices, and gazes to deflect normative expectations and suggest other possibilities of intimacy, attraction, and belonging.

On the Lemur stage, performers repeatedly stepped off the frontal axis—diagonal movements toward the lip of the stage, sideways glances that lingered a beat too long, and brief incursions into the aisles. These gestures pulled spectators' torsos and gazes off-center, unsettling the proscenium logic that usually stabilizes attention. One performer recalled: *"Looking at another body wasn't just a romantic signal—it was political. A sideways glance became a way to say, 'I exist outside of this frame.''* This simple gesture—turning the head, holding a stare longer than expected—became a queer tactic of spatial resistance. The choreography often encouraged performers to avoid symmetry, to move in arcs rather than lines, and to destabilize the proscenium logic that centers the "normative" gaze. In Ahmed's terms, such gestures act as re-orientations: they redirect attention away from the straight line of passive looking and toward oblique vectors of relationality.

During *Sweet Transvestite*, a cool white top-light cut the stage while Turkish surtitles ticked above the sightline; eyes lifted and often stayed there. A first potential callback ("Say it!") surfaced as a smile more than a shout—audible only as a breathy "—it?" from the back right—while hands remained folded or clutching programmes. In *Time*

Warp, lyrics landed as a reading task: heads bobbed to keep pace with the surtitles; the iconic knee-bend showed up as ankle taps under the chairs. A pair near the back briefly half-rose on "jump to the left," glanced at their neighbors, and sat back down, laughing softly. A spectator later expressed the hesitation plainly: *"I wanted to stand for 'Time Warp,' but I wasn't sure if it was allowed here."* Read with Ahmed, bodies align to the vertical axis of reading rather than the diagonal axis of doing; with Butler, the missing first confident repetition means the act never sediments into a room-wide norm. In Foucault's terms, the fully public, ticketed frame tightens self-surveillance; with Muñoz, disidentification remains tentative—sotto voce mimicry rather than a collective rewrite.

Performers themselves sought to resist the demand for clarity. One explicitly asked to be lit in shadows "so the audience would squint, to not know." This refusal of legibility constitutes a spatial politics: against the disciplinary demand to be fully seen and defined. Such choices align with Muñoz's account of disidentification: performers neither assimilated to dominant spatial codes nor rejected them outright but instead bent them through exaggeration, irony, and choreographic messiness. Slips, collisions, and deliberately broken symmetry enacted this labor. The result was not chaos but a queer temporality—one that traced detours and reversals rather than clean lines of progress.

Michel Foucault's theory of disciplinary space helps us interpret these gestures not as random acts of expression but as resistant movements within a surveillance grid. The stage is not a neutral space—it is structured by cultural codes about what can be seen and how it should be seen. Queer performers, in this study, actively subverted these codes. One performer reflected: *"I didn't want to be lit the way they wanted. I asked for shadows. I wanted the audience to squint, to not know."* Refusing clarity was a spatial politics—against the demand for legibility, coherence, and definition.

This refusal to be easily read also aligns with José Esteban Muñoz's concept of *disidentification*. Rather than assimilating into dominant norms or entirely rejecting them, queer bodies on stage engaged with spatial expectations ambivalently—sometimes playing along, mocking, exploding them altogether. The musical's camp aesthetics made this disidentificatory work possible. Through exaggeration, irony, and

theatrical absurdity, performers redirected desire toward the excesses and failures of normative space.

For instance, a recurring motif in the musical involved bodies clashing into each other, slipping, falling—rather than perfect synchronization. This corporeal messiness was not accidental. It pointed toward a queer temporality and spatiality, where bodies don't follow prescribed lines but trace detours, pauses, and reversals. Such spatial behaviors echo Ahmed's idea that orientation is not just about where one goes but about which paths are available—or blocked.

By queering the spatial logics of musical theatre, performers opened new lines of flight for queer desire. These gestures were not merely expressive but political—they re-scripted theatrical space as a zone of potentiality rather than a site of regulation. As one actor said, *"When we stood still, we resisted. When we danced off-beat, we claimed space."*

Read as an assemblage (Puar, 2005), these dynamics emerge from the interplay of proxemics, lighting, surtitle tempo, and audience risk calculus. Orientation here is not merely a matter of where one looks; it is a relation between gaze, body, and infrastructural cue. Aisle adjacency, top-light washes, and the tick of subtitles collectively organize how spectators lean, pause, or withhold response. Spatial resistance is therefore co-produced: performers tilt the frame, but spectators' embodied hesitations and micro-responses complete the scene. The combination of top-light, surtitle tempo, close seating, and a heterogeneous audience-oriented spectators toward vertical reading and produced half-beat delays, which in turn generated micro-participation rather than mass uptake.

This analysis shows that spatial re-orientation is not a background effect but a key mechanism of queer becoming in Lemur's staging. By bending sightlines, playing with legibility, and mobilizing choreographic messiness, performers and spectators together open a counter-space of desire. These findings directly address how embodiment is enacted and how audiences are implicated, while also clarifying that proxemics, lighting, and textual mediation are decisive elements in shaping queer presence on stage.

5.4. The Affective Labor of Performing Queerness

Queer performance is not only a representational act—it is affective labor. On the musical stage, queer performers do not merely *play* roles; they *live through* them, navigating a dense emotional terrain shaped by risk, vulnerability, and desire. This section engages with the concept of affective labor, drawing from queer theory (particularly Ahmed and Muñoz), to illuminate how queer embodiment on stage becomes both an emotional and political practice.

Sara Ahmed (2004, 2010) has emphasized that emotions are not internal states but public orientations; they move between bodies, shape collectives, and define belonging. In this context, queer performers engaged in a form of emotional world-making. Their labor was not reducible to acting technique—it involved navigating internalized fear, shame, pride, and joy, often simultaneously. As one performer expressed: *"I wasn't just playing a queer character—I was exposing my memories, my family history, my pain."* This is not confession for its own sake but crafted disclosure, shaped through costume fit, breath marks, and lighting cues, so that vulnerability remains legible without collapsing the scene. Camp devices—winked asides, melodramatic elongations, micro-excess in gesture—further convert fragile affects into shareable rhythm, allowing the audience to join at low risk through soft laughter or foot taps before any louder uptake.

This emotional exposure is deeply entangled with what José Esteban Muñoz (2009) calls "utopian performativity"—the idea that queer performance can momentarily open spaces of potential and hope, even under oppressive conditions. *The Rocky Horror Show*'s camp aesthetics amplified this potential. Exaggeration, humor, and melodrama allowed performers to channel complex effects—especially shame—into a shared language of resilience. One cast member explained: *"We laughed because if we didn't, we'd collapse. It was survival."*

Early in the run, jokes often landed as contained giggles — two- or three-person eddies that did not travel — while shoulders remained squared, and hands stayed on programmes. The steady cadence of the surtitles created a breathing rhythm — read, glance down, breathe — that maintained comprehension while moderating vocal

expression. When a performer stretched a vamp or held eye contact for half a beat longer than necessary, the laughter would briefly warm and widen but would often slip back into a low register. One cast member described this calibration succinctly: “We push the joke until the room smiles with us, then we pull back before it tips.” Thus, affective work is revealed to be a matter of technique here: timing, pause and gaze are carefully modulated to raise the mood without forcing exposure.

The political climate intensified the emotional charge, but the performers approached exposure from a technical rather than rhetorical standpoint: breath marks were adjusted to prevent a joke from becoming embarrassing; samples were extended only if the audience was engaged; eye contact was maintained to extend a laugh, then broken off before it escalated. Several nights followed the same pattern: clipped chuckles → warmer pockets of laughter → a return to a safe, low register. As one cast member put it, “We push the joke until the room smiles with us, then pull back.” Here, effect is crafted through timing, gaze and fit, enabling spectators to join in with low-risk signals such as soft laughter and foot tapping before any louder uptake.

Moreover, the rehearsal space became an affective microcosm—sometimes nurturing and suffocating. Some participants noted the tension between group solidarity and internal competition. Others described moments of intimacy—crying during costume fittings, hugging after scenes—that blurred the boundary between professional labor and personal catharsis. The theatre became a stage and a temporary shelter for emotional excess.

Crucially, this emotional work is gendered and sexualized. Queer bodies are often expected to perform emotion “more”—to be expressive, flamboyant, and vulnerable. Several non-binary and trans participants spoke of the double burden of being both visible and misunderstood. One noted: “I was allowed to be queer as long as it made them laugh.” This points to a cultural economy in which queer affect is consumed but not always respected. Rather than closing with this remark, the point is that laughter functioned both as a gatekeeper and a shield—inviting recognition while simultaneously limiting how far visibility could rise in a fully public setting. Through all these effective negotiations, what emerged was not a coherent “message” but a lived intensity—a becoming. These embodied feelings, shaped by power yet never fully

contained by it, animated the queer presence on stage. As Ahmed reminds us, emotions stick—they attach to bodies, spaces, and narratives. In this study, they also became sites of resistance.

In turn, spectators participated effectively before they participated vocally. Clipped chuckles widened into warmer laughter; ankles tapped beneath the tables; and eyes met, only to quickly avert. These small, almost invisible gestures became the medium through which the mood of the room was regulated. When a wink from the front row was returned or a vamped pause elicited a clean laugh, the room briefly aligned with Muñoz's sense of a proximate 'then-and-there' — not a promise of transformation, but a felt pocket of possibility.

In this sense, this emotional work in Lemur Sanat was methodical and embodied. Performers shaped the atmosphere through timing, gaze, costume-body adjustments and calibrated camp, while spectators responded with small, legible signals that kept risk low yet allowed brief increases in intensity. This demonstrates how embodiment was enacted on stage through affective techniques, how audiences were involved through low-risk response patterns, and the material and relational elements — surtitle tempos, proxemics, lighting and rehearsal-derived micro-adjustments — that proved decisive in shaping queer presence.

5.5. Between Discipline and Resistance: Queer Bodies in Rehearsal Spaces

Rehearsal spaces are not neutral zones—norms, expectations, and power relations structure them. For queer performers, these spaces are often battlegrounds where bodies are disciplined, desires negotiated, and possibilities of resistance emerge. Drawing from Michel Foucault's theory of disciplinary power and Sara Ahmed's insights on orientation, this section explores how queer bodies are both regulated and reoriented within the rehearsal process of *The Rocky Horror Show*.

According to Foucault (1977), modern institutions operate through micro-technologies of control—rules, repetition, surveillance—that shape the body's behavior. In theatrical rehearsals, this appears in the form of blocking, vocal training, costume fitting, and choreographic precision. These processes discipline the performer's body to conform to a predetermined aesthetic or narrative logic. For queer performers,

however, this discipline often comes into tension with their embodied sense of self. One performer explained: *"They kept asking me to 'butch it up' for the role, even though I identify as femme. It felt like I had to unlearn my own body."* Such moments reveal how rehearsal demands can reproduce heteronormative codes, even in a queer-themed production. The point is not the confession itself but what it reveals about rehearsal as a site where aesthetic demands and gendered legibility collide. The queer body becomes a site of friction—between personal authenticity and performative expectation.

However, discipline does not operate unilaterally. As Foucault argues, where there is power, there is resistance. Queer performers do not passively submit to rehearsal norms; they reinterpret, subvert, and reorient them. Sara Ahmed's (2006) concept of orientation helps articulate how bodies move through space in ways that affirm or deviate from the normative lines. Rehearsals thus became spaces of orientation shifts: a performer adjusting a gesture to feel "more real" or challenging a director's instruction that felt dissonant with their gender expression. Throughout rehearsals and performances, performers reinterpret and reorient norms in small yet significant ways: a gesture is softened to avoid coming across as mockery; an element of the costume that causes dysphoria is replaced; a half-beat pause is inserted to allow laughter to die down before the next line; a line is delivered with a smirk or a glance at the front row. Following Butler, these are acts of resignification: repetition (of counts, cues and fittings) becomes a site of agency rather than mere compliance. According to Ahmed, they represent shifts in orientation — minute adjustments in body language, gaze and timing that move performance away from straightforward lines of legibility and towards alternative alignments that feel manageable to the performer and comprehensible to the audience.

In some cases, the resistance was subtle—an improvised wink, a smirk, a pause. In others, it was direct: refusing a costume that felt dysphoric or rewriting lines to reflect queer realities better. These acts of negotiation complicate the binary of submission vs. rebellion. Instead, they illustrate what Judith Butler (1993) describes as the "resignification" of norms—turning repetition into a site of agency. Moreover, the presence of queer bodies in the rehearsal space produced discomfort for some and relief for others. One non-binary performer recounted: *"There were moments*

when I felt I was 'too much'—too queer, too visible. But then, someone else would tell me they felt braver because I was there." This speaks to the relational dynamics of queer embodiment: resistance is not always loud or solo—it is often compelling, contagious, and shared.

The rehearsal process thus functioned as both a regulatory apparatus and a queer laboratory. It demanded precision and control while also making room—intentionally or not—for new gestures, postures, and effects. Through this tension, queer performers enacted what José Esteban Muñoz (1999) might call *"disidentifications"*: neither fully aligning with dominant norms nor entirely rejecting them but transforming them from within.

Through the lens of Puar's assemblage theory, rehearsal is not merely "training," but rather an ongoing process of establishing relationships — choreographic rules, bodily sensations, technical support (light, breath, mark, fit) and negotiated changes. The efficacy of a flourish or a pause does not belong to a single element; rather, it emerges from the coupling of these parts. For example, when a corset adjustment resets posture to ensure that a wrist flick lands cleanly under top-down light, or when a breath mark is shifted to prevent a joke from becoming embarrassing, precision and deviation are shown to be co-productive: discipline provides the framework within which resistance takes shape.

This 'queer laboratory' quality was apparent in Lemur Sanat's room. Notes often paired a technical cue with a care practice, such as 'hold the vamp for two counts, but only if the front row is with you' or 'keep the eyebrow and lose the shoulder so it doesn't read as a sneer'. Such calibrations distribute affective care across the company while maintaining narrative clarity. Resistance here is rarely loud; it is crafted in the micro, inside the very procedures that standardize bodies.

At Lemur, rehearsal operates as a discipline for resistance. Although micro-technologies such as blocking, timing and fit regulate bodies, it is precisely here that performers redefine norms through negotiated adjustments that alter gesture, gaze and tempo. This dynamic demonstrates how the physical manifestation is established during rehearsal. It explains how the gaze turning towards the audience and the timing

enable collaboration during performance. It defines the decisive elements — relationship clusters, choreographic rules, physical sensations, light/sound/breath cues and costume materials — as an assemblage.

Blocking and tempo counts, bodily sensations, and technical supports such as light, breath, or costume fit, when combined with negotiated adjustments, produce resignification. In this way, precision and deviation become co-productive: the micro-technologies of rehearsal not only discipline bodies but also generate the very loopholes through which resistance takes shape.

5.6. Queer Embodiment, Political Resistance, and Cultural Contexts

Queer embodiment in musical theatre is not simply an aesthetic or stylistic gesture—it is a political intervention. In spaces historically dominated by heteronormative and cisnormative ideals, queer performances interrupt normative expectations and stage alternative ways of being. This interruption is not abstract; it is lived, negotiated, and felt through the bodies of performers who occupy stages as both artists and political subjects. As Sara Ahmed (2006) argues, bodies that do not follow the straight lines of social expectation realign spaces, creating new orientations. Following Ahmed (2006), bodies that resist "straight lines" of expectation realign space; here, those realignments are calibrated within the constraints of Ankara's cultural climate and the practicalities of staging a ticketed public show.

This performative disruption is clearly articulated by one of the interview participants, who stated:

When I take on this role, I am not only thinking about a character but also about how the queer community is represented on stage. When I go on stage, I may feel unwelcome by some audience members, but this is the beginning of changing things.

This quote encapsulates Judith Butler's (1993) theory of performativity—not merely as a philosophical claim about identity but as an embodied, high-stakes political act.

Here, performing queerness is not just a representation; it is a reiterative act that exposes the fragility of gender norms. The performer's bodily presence becomes a site where social regulation is visible and open to challenge. Their discomfort—feeling

“unwelcome”—is not an obstacle to performance but part of the terrain of resistance. Interview accounts reveal how anticipatory compliance influenced publicity and performance. One actor recalled a sponsor requesting that the city name be removed from publicity materials. The company accepted this condition and adjusted the copy, ensuring that the run remained on schedule. This was not a heroic transcendence of constraints, but rather, in Foucault’s terms, a tactical response within a shifting power dynamic — visibility was reduced at the level of the poster so that it could occur on stage. Inside the room, performers continued with the same considerations: an 18+ note on the event page, brisk front-of-house messaging and surtitle use optimized for comprehension rather than audience noise. Each choice negotiated the threshold between legibility and exposure.

This performative discomfort connects with José Esteban Muñoz’s (1999) concept of *disidentification*. Rather than conforming to dominant narratives or rejecting them outright, disidentification describes marginalized subjects’ strategic navigation of power. Another participant described how they reinterpreted their role to add queer nuance without overtly violating the script: “They didn’t write the character as queer, but I played them as if they had a queer past. The director didn’t mind—it was subtle, but I knew what I was doing.” According to Muñoz (1999), this is disidentification: not an outright refusal of the script nor assimilation to it, but rather a careful inhabitation that redirects meaning without triggering sanction. According to Butler (1993), the key lies in reiteration — the coded choice must be consistently performed, night after night, to become a recognizable nuance rather than a one-off quirk. This act of queer coding without explicit acknowledgment shows how performers can use disidentification to inhabit mainstream roles while subtly redirecting their meanings. It is not just resistance; it is survival through creative subversion.

The spatial tactics that have already been analyzed, such as shadow requests, off-axis blocking and diagonal addresses, take on a political significance in this context. A performer may request to be lit in shadows so that the audience will squint and not know. The point is not to create an air of mystery, but to govern legibility. By managing what can be seen and when, the scene moves away from the norm of full exposure and shifts attention — an approach that protects the body from being fully captured by a policing gaze, while still maintaining contact with the room.

Political pressure also re-enters through effect. As stated previously, laughter would often remain localized; a vamp would raise the temperature and then subside. Rather than viewing this as a failure, it can be seen as a form of risk management: the company creates moments of exuberance but does not allow them to develop into a profile that could easily be targeted outside the room. In this sense, affective modulation is a political technology that maintains the balance between presence and over-visibility.

Michel Foucault's (1978) framework of power and resistance is also crucial here. Power, for Foucault, is not simply imposed from above; it circulates, is relational, and produces its own points of resistance. In the context of Turkish theatre, performers operate within layered systems of surveillance and censorship, as one actor shared: "We had to remove the name of the city from our posters. The sponsor didn't want to risk it. But we still staged it. We just didn't say where."

This act of partial visibility — staging the show while withholding the location — becomes a form of Foucauldian resistance. It reveals how queer performances are often not only subject to direct censorship, but also to anticipatory compliance, with markers of queerness being preemptively erased to survive.

Taken together, these practices demonstrate that the resistance is procedural and material rather than declarative. Posters are edited, copy is trimmed, lighting keeps edges soft, and gestures and gazes are confined to the score. Coded readings accumulate through repetition. In Foucault's terminology, power circulates — as do countermoves.

Following Ahmed, I treat *orientation* not as a claim about identity but as a set of practical adjustments: whom the body faces, what anchors the gaze, and how rhythm and light make certain paths available. In the Lemur run, shadow-heavy cues, a high surtitle band, and diagonal blocking re-aimed bodies without announcing a thesis—heads lifted to read, torsos tilted off the frontal axis, and pauses redistributed the room's attention. Queerness, here, is rehearsed as a way of moving together rather than declared.

From this footing, Muñoz helps name the politics of these practices. Instead of either rejecting the dominant frame or fully assimilating to it, performers repeated small

codings—an elongated vamp, a glance held a half-beat longer, a softened fabric transparency—night after night. These reiterated deviations accumulated as *disidentifications*: slow redirects of meaning that work inside the given frame without appealing to an impossible "outside." In this sense, legibility is governed through practice (who faces what, under which lights, at what tempo), and resistance is sustained through the gradual build-up of these coded repetitions.

Ahmed's concept of *queer orientation* helps us understand this resilience. Rather than reading orientation as a fixed identity or direction, Ahmed proposes that queerness emerges through misalignment—turning away from the expected and toward the improbable. The performers' insistence on staging *The Rocky Horror Show* in a politically tense environment, despite censorship and precarity, is an act of queer orientation. They did not wait for perfect conditions; they created a queer trajectory through embodied risk and collective care.

Thus, queer embodiment on the musical theatre stage functions as both a practice of self-expression and a mode of political world-making. These performers do not simply play characters—they reorient the stage as a space of becoming, visibility, and resistance. Through performativity, disidentification, resistance, and orientation, the stage becomes not only a mirror of social norms but a contested space where new queer realities are rehearsed and imagined.

In Lemur Sanat's production, queer embodiment functions as a political intervention through concrete adjustments such as publicity edits, proxemics, lighting, tempo and coded performance, rather than through grand declarations. It clarifies that embodiment is enacted through repeatable, situated techniques; that spectators are implicated, as these techniques solicit calibrated forms of response; and that decisive elements are the relations among publicity protocols, venue rules, light/text infrastructures, and performers' iterative choices. The chapter's politics therefore lie in how these relations are composed night after night to maintain a stage presence for the queer community.

Taken together, these practices are procedural rather than declarative: edited copy, venue negotiation, shadow-heavy cues, adjusted fabrics, timed glances. With Foucault,

power governs legibility; with Ahmed, orientation is a practical re-aiming of bodies and lights; with Muñoz, nightly coded repetitions accumulate as disidentifications that redirect meaning without triggering sanction. Together, publicity protocols, front-of-house rules, light and text infrastructures, and performers' micro-choices sustain a maintainable window of queer presence on stage.

5.6.1. *The Rocky Horror Show* and the Context of Turkey

This section analyzes how *The Rocky Horror Show* musical was staged in the context of Turkey, how it was received and what kind of possibilities and limitations it offers in terms of queer embodiment. The reason this musical was chosen is that it is one of the essential works of queer culture on an international scale and offers a special space where embodied resistance, non-normative gender expressions and erotic exaggeration are staged together. The reason for the choice of this musical is that it is one of the most important works of queer culture on an international scale and offers a special space where embodied resistance, non-normative gender expressions and erotic exaggeration are staged together. In a country like Turkey, which is still under intense control and censorship regarding sexuality, identity, and representation, the staging of this musical is a political act.

During the staging of the musical in Turkey, although censorship was not applied directly, some indirect obstacles were felt both in the participant narratives and in the way the performance was staged. One of the participants says:

When we heard that we were playing at Rocky, the venue stopped giving us a stage. Even the name was enough. This shows that not only the content of the game, but even its connotation cannot be tolerated.

This example shows that queer representations are excluded in Turkey not only because of the content, but also because of their symbolic meaning and public perception. The staging of a text in Turkey that openly celebrates sexual diversity, abnormal desires, and gender expression games such as *The Rocky Horror Show* is taking shape not only as an artistic activity, but also as an area of struggle. This situation also coincides with the approach of Michel Foucault (1978), who states that power operates through repression and "determining the unsayable." (Foucault, 1978,

p. 83) The visibility of queer bodies in Turkey often takes place within a sphere of power that is shaped not by explicit prohibitions, but by ridicule, discredit, exclusion and silence.

The aesthetic structure of the musical has been designed in such a way as to bring queer embodiment directly to the stage. The appearance of male characters on the stage with exaggerated makeup, transparent costumes and bodily representations challenges heteronormative audience expectations. This challenge is related not only to the representation's content, but also to the presence of the body on the stage. Considering Judith Butler's (2004, p. 10) idea that "every repetition makes a difference," *The Rocky Horror Show* reproduces a queer potential every time it is staged. However, this potential cannot always be seen with the same clarity in the context of Turkey; every bodily expression carries the risk of being censored or discredited. Another participant says that:

When I play Rocky, sometimes there are laughs, sometimes murmurs from the audience. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed of that moment. Because I see how much space I can occupy with this body.

This statement emphasizes that queer embodiment is not only a representation; it is also a form of resistance that occupies space on the stage and carries social meaning. The exhibition of the body in this way is a process that transforms not only the character, but also the actor himself. Queer becoming on this stage is not just about playing a role; it turns into a space where an individual's relationship with his body, his connection with the stage and his confrontation with social norms are rewritten.

As Roach (2024) notes, *The Rocky Horror Show* became a 1970s cultural phenomenon by challenging gender norms and staging gender fluidity; that repertoire travels internationally but is locally re-composed wherever it is staged.

These are not marginal details; they are the conditions that make the show possible. In Foucauldian terms, power operates less through overt bans than through the governance of legibility — what can be named, where, and by whom. The company's response was tactical: minimizing traceable markers outside the room to allow visibility of the stage inside it.

On stage, the politics of embodiment manifested as considered decisions rather than declarations. Performers reported adjusting makeup intensity, negotiating fabric transparency and requesting shadow-heavy cues to control what the audience could see and when. One actor described the payoff in bodily terms: “Sometimes there were laughs, sometimes murmurs. I wasn’t ashamed; I was checking how much space this body could occupy.” This statement is instructive in that occupying space was tested on a situational basis rather than being asserted once and for all.

These tactics align with the analytical themes of the chapter. With Ahmed, orientation is understood as shifts in practice: lighting that withholds full exposure, blocking that pulls diagonally towards the aisles and gaze that lingers just beyond the normative threshold. With Butler, the politics lie in repetition under constraint: coded readings, adjusted gestures and breath marks must be performed nightly to become recognizable choices rather than accidents. With Muñoz, such coding operates as disidentification— bending the traditional roles without incurring punishment, thereby redirecting the meaning of the text.

However, in societies like Turkey, where heteronormative structures are strong, the staging of queer representations has faced censorship and pressure. With this pressure, which I also saw at the beginning of my research, the actors and the musical team expressed their concerns about the staging of the musical. Before I started my research, the institution that provided the financial support for the musical asked me not to mention any stage, institution, or crew names when talking about the musical in the thesis due to the pressures in the country.

The Rocky Horror Show presents a structure that encourages queer individuals to express their gender identity and sexual orientation freely. “Scenes in which Frank-N-Furter challenges heteronormative expectations with songs such as ‘Sweet Transvestite’ push the audience to question gender roles. The film aims to create a safe space that allows queer individuals to discover themselves” (Šimková, 2010).

Finally, risk management was extended to textual mediation. The 18+ classification and Turkish surtitles prioritized comprehension and kept audience noise discretionary. This did not depoliticize the event; rather, its re-channeled exposure from the audience

back onto the stage. When participation did occur, it was in small, manageable pockets (soft laughter, foot tapping under seats, returned winks) that matched the room's risk calculus.

In this context, such works function both as a means of resistance and a platform of solidarity for queer individuals. In societies like Turkey, where queer representations are rarely recognized, such works often face censorship. For example, the banning of the film Queer at the MUBI Festival planned to be held in Istanbul shows that the pressure on queer art continues (Kaos GL, 2024).

In Turkey, staging The Rocky Horror Picture Show is a political act, not through slogans, but through the procedures involved: edited publicity, venue negotiation, calibrating the lighting and costumes, coded performances and controlled textual frames. These practices highlight the importance of material–affective relations, while also addressing how embodiment is enacted under constraint and how spectators are involved through low-risk responses. The result is a production that maintains an open stage for queer presence by creating its conditions rather than denying them.

5.6.1. Censorship and Social Perceptions

The production of queer representations in Turkey's performing arts is not only based on aesthetic preferences, but is also closely related to social control, censorship mechanisms, and hegemonic moral codes. Works that openly challenge queer norms, such as The Rocky Horror Show, reveal the reactions of both the audience and institutions in this context. Queer embodiment on stage still provokes discomfort, laughter, ridicule or silence from most viewers. One of the participants describes this situation as follows:

Some audience members roll their eyes, especially in certain scenes, laughing. Sometimes there are even looks that make me feel like I should be ashamed. However, I am also learning not to be embarrassed on stage.

This example shows that the presence of the queer body on the stage is an area of social negotiation in which not only the actor participates, but also the audience. The "affective orientation" conceptualized by Sara Ahmed (2006) is essential here. Bodies

are attracted or pushed to specific orientations through emotions. Laughter, uneasiness or silence directed at a queer body reveals how that body is oriented on a social level; how it is excluded from the norm.

Although direct censorship mechanisms in Turkey often do not operate in the form of an explicit prohibition, indirect censorship is effective through self-censorship and representative restriction. Practices such as not giving space, attracting support, audience targeting directly threaten the existence of queer staging. Michel Foucault's (1978) theory of the "limits of the expressible" is illuminating in this context: Queer scenes often exist not only on the stage, but also in ways that cannot be reached, heard and censored on the stage. Another of the participants states that: We wanted to play some scenes more openly, but we changed our decision during the rehearsal because we did not know the reaction. Is not that censorship, too?

This narrative is striking in the way that self-censorship shows how the queer body is limited on stage. Here, queer embodiment ceases to be only a bodily form of expression; it also becomes the subject of a series of political decisions, such as whether it can be staged, how much space it can take up, how to read.

Participants discussed the possible problems that the staging of a queer musical in Turkey might create in terms of social perceptions. In particular, the actress playing Janet expressed her hesitations about inviting her family to the play. As a result, she did not even tell her family that she was in the musical, let alone the subject of the musical she was in.

In Turkey, the visibility of queer individuals is systematically limited by bans on LGBTI+ events and content controls on digital platforms. According to the report prepared by Kaos GL (2021), the majority of LGBTI+ individuals are subjected to digital violence and social ridicule. Moreover, events like the Istanbul Pride March are banned regularly, referring to the "public order" (Euronews, 2021).

This situation makes the struggle for queer visibility through art and culture even more challenging. Despite censorship, there are queer representations like *The Rocky Horror Show* that reach a minority audience in Turkey. Thanks to this ownership, the musical was exhibited in Turkey for the first time in a copyrighted form. It attracted much

attention despite possible censorship or negative news about it. This ownership reflects queer individuals' efforts to create spaces of solidarity and resistance to existing norms in society.

Art creates a space of expression and resistance for queer communities. *The Rocky Horror Show* can be considered as a metaphor reflecting the experiences and struggles of queer individuals in Turkey. "Especially shadow broadcasts and costume performances are tools that increase the visibility of queer individuals" (Roach, 2024). However, censorship and social pressures prevent such performances from reaching large audiences.

The Rocky Horror Show provides a universal model for the visibility and social challenge that queers can create. In this context, however, although such works light a way for queer individuals in Turkey, their positive effects are limited because of censorship and social pressures. At the same time, the attempts of queer individuals to make some solitary space by using art and culture could help in forming a better inclusive society in the future.

As a result, the staging of queer embodiment in Turkey is not only aesthetic; it is also a profoundly political act. This action is carried to the stage by explicit representation and circumvention of boundaries, innuendo, digressions, and repetitions. Censorship is an attempt to break down the collective memory of the existence of the queer body; the body's attempt to find a place on the stage again, but also an effort to restore this memory.

5.6.2. Queer Embodiment as Political Resistance

5.6.2.1. Resistance to Social Norms

Queer embodiment is a form of active challenge that is not limited only to visibility, but also to the gender, desire and behavioral patterns presented by the normative order. In a context such as Turkey, where heteronormative structure dominates in everyday life and cultural representations, the presence of the queer body on the stage is often coded as "excessive," "exaggerated" or "disturbing." However, precisely this redundancy, when evaluated through Judith Butler's (1999) theory of performativity,

can produce a deviation and resistance from within the gender order based on repetition.

One of the participants describes this deviation as follows: ‘’I saw it as a right not to be normal on that stage. With my walk and voice, the more ‘inappropriate’ I was, the more I existed.”

This statement reveals that queer embodiment is not only a different aesthetic form, but also a form of resistance. As the body on the stage goes beyond what is “normal,” it pushes the boundaries of character and social norms. As Muñoz (1999) described, this situation is a kind of “disidentification” strategy: instead of completely rejecting the system’s language or the body policies, the subject generates new meanings by twisting and distorting them from within.

Some repetitions on the stage — for example, the persistent representation of an exaggerated gesture, the overdubbing of the staging style, or the “shifting” of sex with an unexpected body movement - can arouse discomfort or resistance in the audience. However, such gestures draw attention to the existence of “disturbing bodies” as described by Ahmed (2004). These bodies do not remind of the normative; on the contrary, they are bodies that hang out of it, overflow, and suggest new orientations.

In this context, queer embodiment is not only a representation of identity, but also the transformation of the body into a political reminder against norms. Especially the fact that emotions, touches, gestures are experienced and shared openly on stage shows that the queer body occupies a space in a political sense. The resistance of the body with its voice, contact, and movement re-establishes that sex is not just a label, but a livable body experience.

5.6.2.1 A Queer Resistance Space and the Future of Embodiment in Theatre

This section discusses how musical theatre functions not only as a space of expression, but also as a place of queer resistance and the transformative potentials that these forms of embodiment carry for the future of theatre. Especially in socially, culturally and politically restrictive environments such as Turkey, queer bodies on the stage not only offer identity, but also bodily declare that existence is otherwise possible.

The interviews revealed how the musical functions as a space of expression and resistance for queer individuals. The actor playing Frank emphasized the transformative power of the musical by saying, “It means a lot to me that even one person discovers the free world of Rocky.” The actors frequently stated that they found it very important to reach people and instill courage in them by taking part in Rocky, and that this was one of the reasons that pushed them to participate in such a production.

The Rocky Horror Show is one of the rarest areas of liberation in the performing arts through its queer representations and structure of disruption of societal norms. This musical celebrates the fluidity of gender and non-normative sexualities, allowing queers to express themselves. Judith Butler has described queer as the quest for transformation that “can be reorganized for political purposes and create a critical space” (Butler, 2014). In this case, *The Rocky Horror Show* is a venue where queerness is celebrated with an almost limitless freedom of aesthetic expression.

A frequent theme in the participants’ narratives is the emotional connection and collective transformation created by participating in the scene together. This experience creates not only the individual “becoming queer” of the actors, but also a practice of solidarity that strengthens as they act together. One participant stated that:

I was not alone when I was on stage. We have all turned into something else together. In that transformation, I was not just a character; I was not just myself. I became a new thing decoupled between the two.

This statement reveals that queer becoming is not only an individual, but a collective process; the body is transformed not only by the identity it carries, but also by the forms of association it participates in. This kind of collective queer embodiment is close to the “queer utopia” of Muñoz (2009): the possibility of a future that does not yet entirely exist, but is felt, oriented and embodied when we are together.

The Rocky Horror Show clashes with gender roles and heteronormative expectations of the audience’s perceived sense of gender and sexuality: “The character of Frank-N-Furter radically redefines gender performance. In this sense, the scenes in which he seduces both Brad and Janet blur the boundaries between heterosexuality and

homosexuality, showing the audience the limitlessness of sexual fluidity" (Roach, 2024; Šimková, 2010). Butler (2014: 321) defines queer as the necessity of radical criticism of social norms. This approach creates a space of resistance identical to the world presented by *Rocky Horror.*

Rocky Horror centers on the stories of queer individuals who are often ignored or marginalized. Warner (1993) argues that queer is a field that constantly struggles with normative rules such as gender, family, and individual freedom. "This struggle manifests itself in the narrative of *Rocky Horror*; characters like Brad and Janet questioning their own identities can be read as a metaphor for the oppression and marginalization that queer communities have faced throughout history" (Šimková, 2010). In this sense, the musical overcomes the lack of representation by looking at the life experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals from a multidimensional perspective.

The Rocky Horror Show allows queer individuals to come together and foster social dialogue. "Participatory actions such as shadow casting practices create both an artistic and social solidarity space for queer communities" (Roach, 2024). The comment of an actor playing the character of Frank, 'It means a lot to me that even one person discovers the free world of Rocky,' emphasizes the musical's individual and socially transformative effect. While *Rocky Horror* is a celebration of queer identities, it also critiques the very concept of homonormativity. These critiques are for maintaining differences and unique identities rather than the inclusion of queer representations into heteronormative social structures. Song (2020) comments on the contradictions of homonormativity and questions what that does to queer representations. In the same way, Greenwood (2021) points out the tension between individual freedom and social responsibility.

The Rocky Horror Show is an outstanding representation of queer representations of resistance and contestation of social standards, from rejoicing over the fluidity of gender to making a space for dialogues in social contexts, both in personal and social transformation. Indeed, as Warner (1993) and Butler (2014) insist, queer struggle is not about representation only but rather about a very radical critique of the structure of norms and building possible worlds.

When the interviews and the theoretical framework are taken together, it is seen that queer embodiment is not only an individual staging practice but also an area of sociopolitical struggle. Butler's theories of performativity (1993), Ahmed's theories of spatial orientation (2006), and Foucault's theories of power and resistance (1978) show that queer embodiment not only breaks norms but also creates new norms and makes alternative forms of existence possible.

The censorship, limitations, and neutralization faced by queer theatre artists in popular culture determine what kind of meanings queer embodiment takes in what context. However, the interviews show that despite the pressures, queer theatre remains a political sphere of existence. As one performer said: "There may be pressures, but the stage is a space where we can show everyone that it is possible to be queer. We are free there, and we give strength to each other."

This analysis shows how queer embodiment functions as a form of resistance and how it takes shape in different cultural contexts. Future research should also address how queer embodiment is constructed and challenged not only in the context of Western-centered theatre but also in other geographies.

In musical theatre, this future is established by repetitive acts, emotional intensities, and forms of staging. Every touch, song sung together, and position taken together is not just performative, it is political. As queer embodiment is repeated on stage, it not only gains visibility, but also stretches the boundaries of the normative understanding of theatre, rewrites and creates new forms of association.

As conceptualized by Ahmed (2006), queer orientation is not only a physical, but also a social and political change of direction. In this context, musical theatre is not only a representation of the queer subject, but a way of embodying the future through movement, contact and collective formation. Resistance is established here on the stage not with a loud appeal, but with a quiet but jarring effect created by coexistence.

The Lemur Sanat production models a forward-looking practice in which queer embodiment is sustained by technique: oriented movement, managed legibility, repeated coding and calibrated pauses. These practices answer by demonstrating how embodiment is realized under constraints, addressed by outlining how spectators are

involved through low-risk, legible invitations, and specify by identifying the decisive relations — proxemics, light, costume–gesture couplings, and institutional framing — that maintain a stage for queer presence. Rather than projecting a utopia, the production creates a sustainable space for queer bodies through nightly composition.

As a result, the potential that queer embodiment carries on the stage is not limited only to standing up to today's norms. At the same time, it has the power to reshape the theatre's vision of the future around a more open, fluid, and collective body-politics. This future can expand as much as the space that queer bodies occupy together on stage.

5.7. Embodied Resistance and the Possibility of Queer World-making

This chapter has attempted to show how the performers in this case study enact queer embodiment as a practice of world-making, resistance, and affective transformation. The following concluding chapter will summarize the key findings of this study and reflect on their implications for queer performance, cultural resistance, and methodological approaches to embodiment.

While this research focuses on a single musical in a particular socio-political context, its implications exceed the boundaries of that stage. It tells us that queer embodiment is not merely about visibility but about orientation—about what becomes possible when bodies move against the grain when desire is staged not as a transgression but as truth. The Turkish queer performers interviewed and observed in this study do not offer us fixed identities. They offer us movement, becoming excess.

Theatre, in this sense, becomes a queer method in itself: it refuses closure, resists simplification, and remains radically open to affect, contradiction, and becoming. As this thesis moves toward its conclusion, it insists on reading the musical theatre stage not as a metaphor but as a material and affective space of queer world-making—always incomplete, always excessive, and always already oriented toward otherwise.

The embodied nature of queer performance does not merely represent identities; it creates new affective and political possibilities. As Judith Butler (1993) suggests, the body is not a passive surface on which norms are inscribed but a site of resistance

where the materialization of gender and desire can be reworked. In the case of *The Rocky Horror Show* in Turkey, performers navigate this embodiment by challenging normative scripts both in their roles and in their lived experience as queer individuals.

A participant notes: "I didn't just play a character; I found a version of myself that had been denied. That stage became a place where I could exist without apology."

This quote echoes Sara Ahmed's (2006) theory of orientation. To be queer is to be disoriented from straight lines and normative trajectories. In performance, bodies reorient space, challenge dominant scripts, and propose other ways of moving, relating, and feeling. *The Rocky Horror* stage thus becomes a queer cartography—mapped not by fixed destinations but by the movement of bodies that refuse to stay in place.

Foucault's (1978) insight that power produces the conditions for resistance is also evident in the negotiation between censorship and subversion. The fact that the performance had to remain anonymous, the city's name censored, and specific gestures toned down highlights how regulation operates through visibility. Yet, the performers' embodied resistance turns these constraints into opportunities for subtle defiance.

José Esteban Muñoz's (1999) concept of disidentification further illuminates these performances. Rather than simply opposing dominant norms or fully assimilating into them, queer performers engage in a complex interplay—reworking, parodying, and distorting mainstream images to open alternative identifications. One performer explains: "I wasn't trying to be what they wanted me to be, but I wasn't rejecting the character entirely. I made it my way for us."

Here, disidentification becomes a queer methodology of survival, creation, and resistance. Through embodied performance, queer subjects carve out a space of becoming—where identity is not a given but a process of navigation, improvisation, and affective labor.

Ultimately, queer world-making in musical theatre is not only a critique of the present but a rehearsal for alternative futures. The stage becomes a speculative space where performers rehearse possibilities not yet imaginable in broader society. In these

embodied acts, we glimpse a utopian impulse: not as a blueprint, but as an orientation towards what Muñoz calls “the then and there of queer futurity” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1).

Across examples of Lemur Sanat, queer embodiment emerged in counter-orientations that shifted spectators’ focus away from a straight, front-facing gaze. Diagonal approaches to the stage, sideways glances and brief incursions into the aisles prompted spectators to turn their heads and torsos. In ‘Sweet Transvestite’, an overhead cool wash cut Frank’s figure while Turkish surtitles scrolled above the line of sight; eyes lifted to the text band, introducing a micro-delay that thinned the timing for call-backs. In ‘Time Warp’, knees bounced, but the first full-body rise retracted when it was not immediately mirrored. When considered as an assemblage, the combination of top lighting, surtitle ticking, close seating and a mixed audience directed attention towards reading rather than action, resulting in an appearance of contained micro-gestures (such as mouthed lyrics and under-seat footwork) rather than a room-wide choreography.

Spectators co-produced the scene through hesitation, subtle engagement and risk assessment. Where performers offered space — an elongated vamp or a smirk directed at the front row — responses emerged between two people (whispered echoes or small claps), but these rarely developed without an obvious ‘first’ to follow. In Butler’s work, repetition failed to become established as a local norm in the absence of an initial, confident response. In Ahmed’s work, bodies aligned more with the vertical axis of reading than the diagonal axis of action. Nevertheless, the spectators’ responses mattered: they completed the disidentificatory tone by confirming that participation was possible, even if softly staged.

Three factors were crucial: (i) Textual mediation (surtitles) controlled the pace of comprehension but introduced half-beat lags that caused the call-and-response to become desynchronized. (ii) Lighting and sightlines prioritized stage legibility over addressing the audience, thereby limiting the sanctioned ‘air pockets’ for interruption. (iii) Proxemics and audience composition (a heterogeneous, ticketed audience) increased self-monitoring, tightening the thresholds for audible or standing participation.

Together, these conditions did not eliminate queer presence, but rather channeled it into legible costume-gesture pairings (e.g. glove flicks under top-down lighting and corset-spine alignment enabling sharper wrist flourishes), as well as messy choreographic beats (e.g. slides and near-collisions) that enacted disidentification without necessitating a collective response.

In conclusion, the Lemur Sanat production shows that queer embodiment does not emerge as a single representational claim, but rather through the combination of surtitles, sightlines, proxemics, lighting, tempo and costume-gesture pairings. These configurations generate counter-orientations and legible micro-excess, situating embodiment as a contingent practice rather than a fixed identity. Spectators are involved through low-risk signals such as whispers, ankle taps, and contained laughter that co-produce the scene. However, in the absence of an early, confident citation, repetition does not become a norm for the whole room. Decisive relations lie in textual mediation (particularly subtitle cadence), lighting and sightlines, and the public venue regime. These factors together delineate thresholds for audible or standing participation. Simultaneously, adjustments in fit, breath and tempo modulate affective intensity, maintaining visibility without tipping into overexposure. These observations imply that design interventions—such as synchronizing subtitle timing with musical phrasing, inserting micro-pauses or light holds at cue lines, and orienting sightlines toward the audience—can lower first-move costs while preserving aesthetic integrity. The mechanisms identified here are context-bound to Lemur Sanat's Ankara staging.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis examines how queer embodiment takes shape on the musical theatre stage in contemporary Turkey, focusing on the Lemur Sanat production of The Rocky Horror Show. Rather than treating queerness as a matter of representation or visibility, the study foregrounds embodiment as a process of becoming — material, affective and political — enacted through relations among bodies, objects, space and risk. The choice to focus on Lemur Sanat is deliberate and distinctive, as it enables an in-depth analysis of how a publicly ticketed, fully urban venue in Ankara establishes and maintains a consistent presence of queerness night after night, without the need for comparison with other productions.

Guided by Ahmed's approach, Butler's concept of performativity, Foucault's notion of micro-technologies of discipline, Muñoz's idea of disidentification and Puar's concept of assemblage, the analysis reveals that the presence of queerness at Lemur was not a fixed symbol, but rather an outcome of relationships. Surtitles and sightlines directed attention vertically and introduced half-beat lags, while close seating and a heterogeneous audience heightened self-surveillance. Diagonal blocking and shadow-heavy lighting pulled gazes off-center, unsettling the proscenium's stabilizing logic. These conditions did not suppress queerness; rather, they redirected it into legible micro-excess — ankle taps, whispered echoes and returned winks — through which participation could occur without demanding full exposure.

In Butler's terms, repetition rarely became a room-wide norm without an initial confident example; with Ahmed, bodies were more inclined to observe than act; with Foucault, the public frame reinforced self-regulation; and with Muñoz, disidentification manifested as quiet mimicry rather than a wholesale rewrite. In Puar's terms, each scene functioned as an assemblage, the effects of which emerged from the

coupling of technical rules, bodily sensations, infrastructural support and negotiated change.

Together, rehearsal and performance formed the engine of this process of becoming. Blocking, tempo counts, costume fittings, breath marks and lighting notes disciplined the performers' bodies towards repeatable clarity. Yet these same procedures also generated loopholes through which resistance could take form. Performers adjusted their gestures to avoid mockery, swapped costume elements that caused discomfort, inserted half-beat pauses to reshape the timing and requested shadow cues to improve legibility. Precision and deviation were mutually productive: the score's micro-technologies produced both the norm and the means to bend it. This is resignification in Butler's sense, providing a practical answer to how embodiment is enacted under constraint.

Low-risk signals — contained laughter, ankle taps and brief half-rises that retracted when not mirrored — co-produced the atmosphere. Without an early, confident first mover, repetition did not congeal into a room-wide habit. Nevertheless, these micro-responses mattered. They confirmed that participation was possible, even if only subtly, and they fed back into the performers' calibration of vamps, pauses and gaze. Thus, orientation, in Ahmed's sense, operated relationally: across bodies and cues rather than within a single body.

The political arena was not separate from the theatre but was incorporated into its processes. Sponsorship protocols, anticipatory compliance and the removal of the city name from publicity materials were not marginal anecdotes, but constitutive conditions of the event. Inside the room, the same logic applied: The framing was 18+, surtitle use was optimized for comprehension, shadow- forward lighting was used, and carefully coded performance choices balanced presence against over-visibility. Power circulated as governance of legibility, what could be seen, when, and by whom, and resistance circulated as tactical misalignment: diagonal addresses, managed shadows and repeated coding that redirected meaning without inviting sanction. In Muñoz's terms, disidentification operated as a creative method of survival; in Ahmed's, queer orientation appeared as sustained misalignment from straight lines of expectation.

Returning to the research questions, the analysis shows that, at Lemur, embodiment was not expressed through singular representational claims, but rather through assemblages. Surtitles, sightlines, proxemics, light and tempo, and costume–gesture couplings combined to produce counter-orientations and legible micro-excess. Spectators were active participants in the scene, contributing low-risk signals such as whispers, ankle taps and restrained laughter. Without an early, confident citation, repetition never became a room- wide norm; however, these micro-uptakes still re-tuned the affective atmosphere. Finally, the study demonstrates that textual mediation (through subtitle timing) and lighting and sightlines decisively shaped thresholds for audible or standing participation, while costume fit, and breath and tempo calibration modulated affect without over-exposure.

The study makes a valuable contribution to queer performance scholarship by shifting the focus from representational diversity to embodied becoming. In doing so, it responds to the call posed in debates such as "What's Queer about Queer Performance Now?" (Dolan & Román, 2012) to clarify the nature of queer performance. It situates a non-Western, risk-charged context within this conversation and demonstrates how censorship, sponsorship and venue protocols can become integral to the performance rather than merely providing a backdrop. In practice, it suggests that small choices such as subtitle design synchronized with musical phrasing, brief light/tempo pauses at cue lines and house-facing sightlines can reduce the barriers to participation without compromising aesthetic integrity.

Finally, the project clarifies its place within the broader narrative of queer musical theatre. While historical accounts often focus on representation, this case demonstrates that embodiment — iterative techniques through which bodies orient, resist and create a livable stage — is what matters on the ground. Lemur Sanat's Rocky Horror did not announce politics; it composed them night after night through light, breath, costume, proxemics and affective calibration. In contemporary Turkey, this act of composition is political. Here, queer musical theatre emerges as embodied world-making: incomplete, excessive, relational and oriented towards the 'otherwise'.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

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ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

05 TEMMUZ 2024

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Fulden İbrahimhakkıoğlu

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Ekin Durmaz'ın ***"Müzikallerde Queer Temsil/Rocky Horror Picture Show Türkiye Temsili Örneği"*** başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek **0365-ODTUİAEK-2024** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

Prof.Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Ali Emre Turgut
Üye

Doç. Dr. Şerife SEVİNÇ
Üye

Doç.Dr. Murat Perit ÇAKIR
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Süreyya ÖZCAN KABASAKAL
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tez, modern müzikal tiyatronun tarihindeki kritik bir örnek olan *The Rocky Horror Show*'un Türkiye sahnelenişini inceleyerek, müzikalde ortaya çıkan queer bedenleşme biçimlerinin toplumsal cinsiyet ve cinsellik tartışmalarını nasıl dönüştürdüğünü ele almaktadır. Müzikalin özgün yapısı ve cesur temaları, onu yalnızca bir eğlence formu olmaktan çıkarıp beden, mekân ve duygu üzerinden işleyen bir müdahale olarak konumlar: yönelimleri (orientation) yeniden kurar, heteronormatif doğrultuları saptırır, sahneyi karşı-mekân olarak çalıştırır ve kolektif queer dünya kurma pratiklerini harekete geçirir. Türkiye'nin son yıllarda daralan kültürel alanı ve seçici kültür politikaları, *The Rocky Horror Show*'un alımlanmasını kurumsal normlar ve risk yönetimi üzerinden filtreleyerek biçimlendirmektedir. Bu bağlam, biletli/kent içi sahnelerde seyirci katılımının koşullarını, kullanılabilecek prop'ları ve bedenlerin mekânda nasıl 'yönlendirildiğini/şaşırtıldığını' doğrudan etkiler.

Sanatın çeşitli disiplinleri, toplumsal değişimlerin dinamiklerine paralel olarak sürekli bir dönüşüm ve evrim süreci yaşamıştır. 20. yüzyıl boyunca müzikal tiyatro, Broadway/West End ekseninde popüler bir formlaşma gösterirken, 1960'lar sonrasında toplumsal hareketlerin etkisiyle politik ve norm dışı içeriklere açılmış; *Hair* ve benzeri yapımlar bu dönüşümün zeminini kurmuştur.

Müzikal tiyatronun erken dönemlerinde, sahnedeki temsiller genellikle heteronormatif kalıplar ve ikili cinsiyet anlayışı etrafında şekillenmiştir. Erkek ve kadın rolleri keskin çizgilerle ayrılmış, alternatif cinsel kimliklere ve yönelimlere sahne üzerinde neredeyse hiç yer verilmemiştir (Wolf, 2011). Romantik aşk hikayeleri ve toplumsal normlara uygun yaşam biçimlerinin yüceltilmesi, bu dönemin müzikallerinin temelini oluşturmuştur. Ancak 1960'ların sonları ve 1970'ler, dünya çapında büyük toplumsal ve kültürel hareketlere sahne olmuştur. Feminist hareketler, eşcinsel özgürleşme hareketleri, sivil haklar hareketleri ve karşı-kültür akımları, geleneksel değerleri ve toplumsal normları sorgulamaya başlamıştır. Bu devrimci atmosfer, sanat dünyasını da derinden etkilemiş ve müzikal tiyatroda da daha politik, norm dışı ve deneysel

yaklaşımların ortaya çıkmasına yol açmıştır. Sahne içeriği ve seyirci ilişkileri bu dönemde önemli ölçüde çeşitlenmiş, queer temaların ve tezahürlerin doğrudan sahnede görünür hale gelmesi için uygun zemin hazırlanmıştır.

Bu bağlamda, Richard O'Brien tarafından yazılan ve bestelenen *The Rocky Horror Show* (1973) müzikali, bu dönüşümün hem bir sonucu hem de itici gücü olarak özel bir yere sahiptir. Müzikal, camp estetiği, drag performansı, cinsiyet geçişliliği ve erotizmi eşi benzeri görülmemiş bir şekilde aynı sahnede bir araya getirerek devrimci bir anlatı sunmuştur. Geleneksel olarak benimsenmiş iyi/kötü, normal/anormal ve erkek/kadın ikiliklerini cesurca yapısöküme uğratan bu eser, cinsel tabulara meydan okumuş ve queer temaları daha geniş bir kitleye yaygınlaştırmada önemli bir rol oynamıştır (Mizejewski, 2004).

Bu tez çalışması, *The Rocky Horror Show* müzikalinin Türkiye'deki sahnelenme sürecini çok yönlü bir şekilde incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, müzikalin tarihsel ve kültürel kökenlerine inerek, queer teori bağlamındaki yerini ve Türkiye toplumundaki potansiyel etkilerini araştırmaktadır. Özellikle müzikaldeki queer bedenleşme biçimlerinin (queer embodiment) nasıl tezahür ettiğine ve bu temsillerin toplumsal cinsiyet ile cinsel kimlik tartışmalarına nasıl katkı sağladığına odaklanılacaktır. Müzikalin 1970'lerin başında Batı toplumlarında ortaya çıkan cinsel özgürleşme hareketleri, toplumsal normlara meydan okuma ve queer kimliklerin görünürlüğü gibi temalarla nasıl iç içe geçtiği analiz edilecektir. Aynı zamanda, müzikalin Türkiye'deki sahnelenmesinin yerel kültürel ve politik dinamiklerle nasıl bir etkileşim kurduğu, seyirci algıları ve olası toplumsal yankıları da ele alınacaktır. Bu araştırma, *The Rocky Horror Show*'un Türkiye'de sadece bir sahne gösterisi olmanın ötesinde, toplumsal değişim ve kültürel etkileşimdeki rolünü ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Bu tezin temel amacı, *The Rocky Horror Show* müzikalinin Türkiye'de sahnelenmesinin, toplumsal cinsiyet, cinsellik ve kimlik temsilleri üzerindeki etkilerini queer teori çerçevesinde kapsamlı bir şekilde incelemektir. Bu genel amaç doğrultusunda aşağıdaki temel araştırma sorularına yanıt aranmaktadır:

1. *The Rocky Horror Show* müzikalinde yer alan oyuncuların sahnedeki cinsiyet kimlikleri ve performansları, onların kişisel benlik algıları ve bedenleriyle ilişkileri üzerinde nasıl bir dönüşüm yaratmıştır?

2. Müzikaldeki queer temsiller (cinsiyet akışkanlığı, heteronormatif dışı ilişkiler, cinsel özgürleşme), Türkiye'deki seyirci tarafından nasıl algılanmakta, yorumlanmakta ve ne tür tepkilerle karşılaşmaktadır?

3. Türkiye'nin kendine özgü sosyo-politik ve kültürel bağlamı, *The Rocky Horror Show*'un sahnelenme sürecini, içeriğinin adaptasyonunu ve kamusal alandaki tartışmaları nasıl etkilemiştir?

4. *The Rocky Horror Show*'un Türkiye'de sahnelenmesi, Türkiye'deki queer topluluğu için ne gibi anlamlar taşımakta ve bu topluluk üzerindeki potansiyel güçlendirici ya da zorlayıcı etkileri nelerdir?

5. Müzikalin yönetmeni ve oyuncularının *The Rocky Horror Show* deneyimleri, cinsiyet, cinsellik ve kimlik konularındaki kişisel görüşlerini, farkındalıklarını ve sanatsal yaklaşımlarını nasıl şekillendirmiştir?

Bu sorular, queer bedenleşmenin sahnede nasıl kurulduğu, katılımın hangi ritmik/mekânsal düzeneklerle yönlendirildiği ve Türkiye'de kurumsal/kamusal rejimlerin bu süreçleri nasıl sınırlayıp dönüştürdüğü ekseninde düğümlenir.

Bu çalışma, Ankara'daki Lemur Sanat prodüksiyonu üzerine kurulu, CDA-esinli eleştirel kültürel analizdir. Veri seti; katılımcı gözlem, yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, oyuncu/yaratıcı-ekiple ilgili alan notları, sınırlı görsel-işitsel izler ve paratekstlerden (duyurular, program notları) oluşur. Çözümlemede, mikro-jest izlemi, surtitle–sahne eşzamanlılığı, çağrı-yanıt örüntüleri, mekânsal yerleşimler ve giriş kuralları birlikte okunmuştur. Kuramsal yönelim, "orientation as method" ilkesidir: bedenlerin metne/oyuna yönlendirilme ya da ters-yönlendirilme biçimleri odakta tutulur. Tüm veriler tematik ve eleştirel söylem analiziyle kodlanmış; alan yazın ve bağlam tartışmalarıyla ilişkilendirilmiştir.

Lemur'da katılım, özellikle eşik anlarında (şarkı girişleri, punchline öncesi tempo tutuşları) yoğunlaşan bir "katılım metronomu" ile ritimlenir. Surtitle hizalanması, söz-metin eşzamanı üzerinden bedenleri çoğu kez dikey okuma yönüne hizalar; bu da çağrı-yanıt zamanlamasında yarım vuruşluk gecikmeler üreterek yüksek sesli/ayakta katılım eşiğini yükseltir. Giriş protokolleri, oturma düzeni ve sahne-seyirci yakınlığı,

kamusal bir 18+ rejimde öz-gözetimi artırır; tam-koro katılım yerine düşük riskli sinyaller (fısıltı, ayak ucu temposu, sınırlı kahkaha) öne çıkar. Işık ve sightline tercihleri ile kostüm-jest eşleşmeleri, okunabilir mikro-aşırılıklar üretirken; gölgelendirme talepleri, diagonal yaklaşımlar ve kırık simetri gibi sahnelemeler "düz çizgi"yi bükerek karşı-yönelimler yaratır. Oyuncu anlatıları, karakter çalışmasının kişisel norm ve sınırların yeniden müzakeresine yol açtığını; bazı izleyicilerde utanç/heyecan dalgalanmalarının katılım ritmini belirlediğini gösterir. Kısacası, queer bedenleşme sahnede yalnızca temsille değil; ritim, yazı (surtitle), ışık/görüş hattı, proxemikler ve kamusal rejimin birlikte işlediği operatif düzenekler üzerinden kurulur.

Bu sorulara verilecek yanıtlar, *The Rocky Horror Show*'un Türkiye'deki kültürel etkileşimini ve queer temsillerin daha geniş bir toplumsal kabul görme potansiyelini anlamak için kritik öneme sahiptir.

Müzikal tiyatro, Batı sanat geleneği içerisinde köklü bir geçmişe sahiptir ve Viktorya dönemi İngiltere'sindeki müzikli dramalardan, Fransız operetlerinden ve Amerikan minstrel gösterilerinden beslenerek evrilmiştir. 20. yüzyılın başlarında, özellikle New York'taki Broadway ve Londra'daki West End sahneleri, bu sanat formunun ticari ve sanatsal merkezi haline gelmiştir. Bu dönemde sahnelenen müzikaller genellikle basit, neşeli komediler olarak tasarlanmış, genellikle romantik aşk hikayelerini merkeze almış ve net bir "iyi" ile "kötü" ayrımı üzerine kurulmuştur. Cinsiyet rolleri katı ve gelenekseldir; erkekler güçlü ve koruyucu, kadınlar ise narin ve duygusal olarak resmedilir. Heteronormatif anlatılar, yani heteroseksüel ilişkinin tek doğal ve kabul edilebilir ilişki biçimi olduğu varsayımı, bu yapımların temelini oluşturur. Alternatif cinsel kimliklere veya cinsel yönelimlere sahip karakterler ya hiç yer almaz ya da karikatürize edilmiş, toplumsal normlara aykırı "ötekiler" olarak sunulur (Wolf, 2011). Bu durum, müzikalin ana akım izleyici kitlesinin beklentilerine ve o dönemin toplumsal değerlerine uyum sağlamasının bir sonucudur.

Ancak, 1960'ların sonları ve 1970'ler, küresel ölçekte büyük toplumsal ve kültürel çalkantıların yaşandığı bir dönem olmuştur. Vietnam Savaşı'na karşı protestolar, sivil haklar hareketleri, feminist hareketin yükselişi, çevrecilik bilincinin artması ve özellikle Stonewall ayaklanmasıyla ivme kazanan eşcinsel özgürleşme hareketleri, geleneksel otoriteleri, toplumsal yapıları ve ahlaki değerleri sorgulamıştır. Bu radikal

toplumsal değişimler, sanat dünyasını da derinden etkilemiş, sanatçılar ve prodüktörler mevcut normları eleştiren ve alternatif sesleri duyuran eserlere yönelmeye başlamıştır. Müzikal tiyatro da bu dönüşümden nasibini almış, ticari başarı odaklı eğlence formatının ötesine geçerek daha politik, deneysel ve norm dışı içeriklere kapı aralamıştır. Bu dönemde, "rock müzikali" gibi yeni alt türler ortaya çıkmış, müzikaller artık sadece romantik kaçış hikayeleri değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal eleştiriler, kimlik arayışları ve mevcut değerlere meydan okumalar için bir platform haline gelmiştir.

Bu değişimin en çarpıcı örneklerinden biri, 1968'de sahnelenen ve dönemin karşı-kültür hareketlerinin marşı haline gelen *Hair* müzikalidir. *Hair*, Vietnam Savaşı'na karşı protestoları, hippi yaşam tarzını, cinsel özgürleşmeyi ve ırk ayrımcılığına karşı duruşu cesurca sahneye taşımıştır. Bu tür yapımlar, müzikal tiyatronun sadece eğlendiren değil, aynı zamanda sorgulayan ve dönüştüren bir sanat formu olabileceğini göstermiştir. İşte bu zemin üzerinde, queer temaların ve kimliklerin sanatsal temsillerde doğrudan ve belirgin bir şekilde yer almaya başladığı bir dönem başlamıştır. Müzikaller, daha önce görünmez kılınan veya marjinalleştirilen cinsel kimliklerin ve yaşam tarzlarının görünürlük kazanması için önemli bir araç haline gelmiştir. Bu süreç, sahne sanatlarının toplumsal değişimin bir aynası olmasının yanı sıra, bu değişimi aktif olarak şekillendiren bir güç olduğunu da kanıtlamıştır.

The Rocky Horror Show, Richard O'Brien'ın kaleminden çıkan hem müziğini hem de sözlerini yazdığı, 1973 yılında Londra'daki Royal Court Theatre'ın küçük bir stüdyo sahnesinde prömiyerini yapan bir rock müzikalidir. Bu mütevazı başlangıca rağmen, müzikal kısa sürede büyük bir beğeni toplamış ve İngiliz tiyatro sahnesinde bir anda kült bir fenomen haline gelmiştir. Müzikalin özgünlüğü, geleneksel bilim kurgu ve korku filmi trop'larını (klişelerini) mizahi ve kışkırtıcı bir dille ele alarak bir parodi sunmasında yatıyordu. Ancak asıl devrimci yanı, bu parodiyi transseksüel ve cinsiyet akışkanlığı temalarıyla harmanlamasıydı.

Hikâye, masum ve son derece muhafazakâr bir nişanlı çift olan Brad Majors ve Janet Weiss'ın, fırtınanın ortasında arabalarının bozulması üzerine yardım arayışıyla başlamasıyla gelişir. Kendilerini, tuhaf ve eksantrik bir grup insanın yaşadığı ürkütücü bir şatoda bulurlar. Şatonun sahibi, Transseksüel Transilvanya gezegeninden gelen, bilim adamı ve travesti Dr. Frank-N-Furter'dır. Frank'ın amacı, mükemmel bir erkek

yaratmaktır ve bu süreçte Brad ve Janet'ın cinsel kimlikleri, cinsel yönelimleri ve toplumsal normlara olan inançları kökten sarsılır. Müzikal, bu olaylar zinciri aracılığıyla seyirciyi, cinsellik, ahlak ve kimlik üzerine geleneksel varsayımları sorgulamaya davet eder.

The Rocky Horror Show'un başarısı, 1975 yılında çekilen film uyarlaması *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* ile daha da pekişmiştir. Film, sinema tarihinde en uzun süre gösterimde kalan filmlerden biri olarak efsanevi bir statü kazanmış, özellikle interaktif gece yarısı gösterimleriyle kültürel bir fenomen haline gelmiştir. Bu gösterimlerde izleyiciler, karakterler gibi giyinir, repliklere eşlik eder, sahnedeki olaylara göre aksesuarlar (pirinç, gazete, su tabancası vb.) fırlatır ve şarkılara aktif olarak katılır. Bu interaktif katılım, pasif izleme deneyimini kolektif, kutlamalı bir performansa dönüştürerek seyirci ile gösteri arasında eşsiz bir bağ oluşturmuştur (Weinstock, 2008). Bu kültürel pratik, *Rocky Horror*'ı sadece bir eğlence aracı olmaktan çıkarıp, bir kimlik ve topluluk oluşturma aracına dönüştürmüştür.

Müzikalin en merkezi ve ikonik figürü kuşkusuz Dr. Frank-N-Furter'dır. Frank hem erkek hem de kadın kıyafetlerini giyerek, geleneksel cinsiyet rollerini bilinçli olarak karıştırarak ve cinsel normlara meydan okuyan tavırlarıyla toplumsal cinsiyetin performatif doğasını vurgular. Onun karakteri, biyolojik cinsiyet ile toplumsal cinsiyet arasındaki ayrımı bulanıklaştırır ve cinsel özgürleşme fikrini temsil eder. Frank'ın "Don't Dream It, Be It" (Hayal Etme, Ol!) çağrısı, bireysel özgürleşmenin ve otantik benliği kucaklamanın bir marşı haline gelmiştir. Brad ve Janet'ın şatoda yaşadıkları cinsel uyanış süreci de müzikalin önemli queer temalarından biridir. Başlangıçta muhafazakâr ve heteronormatif bir çift olan bu karakterler, Frank'ın etkisiyle kendi cinsel kimliklerini sorgulamaya başlar ve yeni cinsel deneyimler yaşarlar. Bu durum, cinselliğin sabit bir kategori olmadığını, aksine keşfedilebilir ve değişebilir bir spektrumda olduğunu gösterir. Müzikal hem içeriği hem de izleyici etkileşimiyle, toplumun dayattığı ahlaki ve cinsel normlara açıkça meydan okur. Bu meydan okuma, bireysel özgürleşme ve farklılıkların kabulü üzerine güçlü bir çağrı niteliğindedir.

Bu müzikal, özellikle LGBTQ+ topluluğu için bir mihenk taşı haline gelmiştir. O dönemde ana akım medyada nadiren görülen transseksüel ve travesti kimlikleri sahneye taşıyarak önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Müzikal, marjinalleşmiş bireylerin

kendilerini ifade edebilecekleri ve bir aidiyet duygusu bulabilecekleri güvenli bir alan sağlamıştır. *Rocky Horror*'ın etrafında oluşan kült hayran topluluğu, bu müzikali sadece bir eğlence aracı olarak değil, aynı zamanda queer bireyler için bir kimlik ve aidiyet alanı olarak benimsemiştir. Bu topluluk, müzikalin toplumsal etkilerini artıran önemli bir unsurdur; ortak ritüeller, kostümler ve interaktif katılım aracılığıyla, hayranlar kolektif olarak kimliklerini performe eder ve onaylarlar, böylece sahnenin ötesine uzanan güvenli ve özgürleştirici bir alan yaratırlar. Bu toplumsal yön, sanatsal ifadelerin nasıl bir aidiyet duygusunu teşvik edebileceğini ve egemen kültürel anlatılara meydan okuyabileceğini de açıkça göstermektedir (Dyer, 1993).

Bu tez çalışması, *The Rocky Horror Show* müzikalindeki temsilleri ve Türkiye bağlamındaki alımlanmasını derinlemesine analiz etmek için queer teorinin temel prensiplerini ve ilgili kavramları bir kuramsal çerçeve olarak kullanmaktadır. Queer teori, toplumsal cinsiyet ve cinsellik üzerine kurulu ikili yapıları (kadın/erkek, heteroseksüel/homoseksüel, normal/anormal gibi) sorgulayan, bu kategorilerin akışkanlığını, çokluğunu ve toplumsal olarak inşa edilmişliğini vurgulayan eleştirel bir yaklaşımdır. Queer teori, sabit kimlik kategorilerini reddeder ve kimliğin, toplumsal normlar ve söylemler aracılığıyla sürekli bir oluşum ve değişim halinde olduğunu ileri sürer. Bu bağlamda, tezin ana kavramsal araçları Judith Butler'ın performativite teorisi, queer bedenleşme (queer embodiment) ve Michel Foucault ile Sara Ahmed'in ilgili analizleri olmuştur.

Judith Butler'ın toplumsal cinsiyetin performatif doğası üzerine yaptığı çalışmalar, queer teorinin temel taşlarından biridir ve bu tezin analizinde merkezi bir rol oynamaktadır. Butler, *Cinsiyet Belası* (Gender Trouble) adlı çığır açıcı eserinde, toplumsal cinsiyetin biyolojik bir veri ya da içsel bir öz olmadığını, aksine "toplumsal cinsiyet performansı" adı verilen, tekrarlayan eylemler, jestler, söylemler ve stilizasyonlar aracılığıyla sürekli olarak inşa edilen ve yeniden üretilen bir olgu olduğunu savunur. Ona göre, toplumsal cinsiyet, bireyin kendisini belirli bir cinsiyet olarak "göstermesi" veya "oynaması" değil, tam da bu tekrarlayan "performanslar" aracılığıyla toplumsal cinsiyet normlarının kurulması ve pekiştirilmesidir. Ancak bu tekrarlama, aynı zamanda, normların sarsılabileceği, parodileştirilebileceği ve dönüştürülebileceği bir potansiyel de barındırır. *The Rocky Horror Show*'daki Dr. Frank-N-Furter gibi karakterler hem erkek hem de kadın kıyafetlerini giyerek, abartılı

jestler sergileyerek ve geleneksel cinsiyet rollerini bilinçli olarak karıştırarak cinsiyetin performatif doğasını vurgular. Frank'ın karakteri, biyolojik cinsiyet ile toplumsal cinsiyet arasındaki ayrımı bulanıklaştırır ve cinsel özgürleşme fikrini temsil eden, normatif kısıtlamalara başkaldıran bir figürdür. Bu performanslar, toplumsal cinsiyetin "doğal" ya da "verili" olmadığını, aksine kültürel bir inşa olduğunu ve dolayısıyla değiştirilebilir olduğunu gösterir.

Queer bedenleşme (queer embodiment) kavramı, norm dışı toplumsal cinsiyet ve cinsel kimliklerin fiziksel olarak nasıl tezahür ettiğini, ifade edildiğini ve performe edildiğini anlamak için hayati bir araçtır. Bu kavram, bedenin sadece pasif bir taşıyıcı olmadığını, aksine kimliklerin, arzuların ve toplumsal direnişin aktif bir alanı olduğunu vurgular. Queer bedenleşme, genellikle normatif beklentilerin dışına çıkan, geleneksel cinsiyet ifadelerini bozan veya cinsel normları ihlal eden bedenleri ve bedensel pratikleri kapsar. *The Rocky Horror Show*'da, karakterlerin kostümleri (özellikle korse, file çoraplar, makyaj), abartılı dansları ve cinsel etkileşimleri, queer bedenleşmenin görsel ve işitsel bir tezahürü olarak işlev görür. Bu bedenler, sahne üzerinde var olarak ve geleneksel temsilleri kırarak, queer kimliklerin sadece soyut kavramlar olmadığını, aynı zamanda somut, yaşayan ve direnen varoluş biçimleri olduğunu gösterir.

Michel Foucault'nun iktidar/direniş ilişkileri ve bedenin disipline edilmesi üzerine düşünceleri de bu tezin analitik çerçevesine önemli katkılar sunar. Foucault'ya göre iktidar, sadece yukarıdan aşağıya işleyen bir baskı mekanizması değil, aynı zamanda bedenler üzerinde işleyen, onları disipline eden ve normatif hale getiren yaygın bir ilişkiler ağıdır. Toplumsal normlar, cinsel davranışları ve cinsiyet ifadelerini "doğru" ve "yanlış", "normal" ve "sapkın" olarak kategorize ederek bedenleri sınırlar ve şekillendirir. Ancak Foucault, iktidarın olduğu her yerde direnişin de olduğunu belirtir. *The Rocky Horror Show*, sahnelediği karakterler ve onların bedenleşme pratikleri aracılığıyla bu iktidar ağlarına karşı bir direniş gösterir. Dr. Frank-N-Furter'ın şatosu, toplumsal normların dışına çıkmış, "marjinal" olarak kabul edilen bedenlerin bir araya geldiği, kuralların yeniden yazıldığı ve özgürleşmenin deneyimlendiği bir "heterotopya" olarak okunabilir. Bu şato, dış dünyanın disipline edici bakışlarından bir kaçış alanı sunarken, aynı zamanda içinde yeni normlar ve direniş biçimleri de üretir. Sara Ahmed'in yönelim (orientation) ve mekânsal farklılık yaratma (spatial

difference making) analizleri, müzikaldeki karakterlerin mekânla ve birbirleriyle kurduğu ilişkilerdeki queer dinamikleri anlamak için değerli bir perspektif sunar. Ahmed'e göre, belirli yönelimler (örneğin heteroseksüel yönelim), bireylerin dünyayı nasıl algıladığını, belirli nesnelere, kişilere veya yaşam biçimlerine nasıl yöneldiğini belirler. Bu yönelimler, aynı zamanda belirli mekânların "konforlu" veya "rahatsız edici" olarak algılanmasına yol açar. Queer bedenler, heteronormatif bir dünyada genellikle "yanlış yönelmiş" veya "mekânsal olarak uyumsuz" kabul edilir. *The Rocky Horror Show*'da, Brad ve Janet'ın başlangıçtaki "doğru" ve "heteronormatif" yönelimleri, Frank'ın şatosunda yaşanan deneyimlerle bozulur. Şato, onların geleneksel yönelimlerini şaşırtarak ve onları yeni cinsel deneyimlere "yönlendirerek" mekânsal bir farklılık yaratır. Bu durum, mekânın sadece bir arka plan olmadığını, aynı zamanda kimliklerin oluştuğu ve dönüştüğü bir arena olduğunu gösterir.

Bu kavramsal çerçeve, müzikalin sadece bir eğlence aracı olmanın ötesinde, toplumsal cinsiyet ve cinsellik üzerine nasıl eleştirel bir diyalog başlattığını anlamak için sağlam bir temel sağlamaktadır. *The Rocky Horror Show*'daki queer temsiller, bu teorik araçlar ile şu boyutlarda incelenmiştir:

- Frank-N-Furter Karakterinin Cinsiyet Performansı: Frank'ın abartılı makyajı, gösterişli kostümleri (özellikle korse ve yüksek topuklular), feminen ve maskülen jestleri bir arada kullanması, Butler'ın performativite teorisinin canlı bir örneğidir. Onun "transvestit" kimliği, toplumsal cinsiyetin akışkanlığını ve biyolojik cinsiyet ile toplumsal cinsiyet arasındaki keskin sınırların nasıl aşılabileceğini gösterir. Bu performans, izleyicinin kendi cinsiyet algılarını sorgulamasına neden olurken, aynı zamanda queer bireyler için bir özdeşleşme ve güçlenme figürü sunar.

- Brad ve Janet'ın Cinsel Uyanışı: Başlangıçta geleneksel, saf ve heteronormatif bir nişanlı çift olarak sunulan Brad ve Janet'ın, Frank'ın şatosunda yaşadıkları deneyimlerle (özellikle Frank ve Rocky ile olan cinsel etkileşimleri) cinsel kimliklerini sorgulamaları ve yeni cinsel deneyimlere açık hale gelmeleri, müzikalin önemli queer temalarından biridir. Bu durum, cinsel yönelimin keşfedilebilir ve değişebilir bir spektrumda olduğunu ve heteronormatif

kalıpların dışına çıkmanın mümkün olduğunu vurgular. Onların dönüşümü, cinselliğin tek boyutlu bir olgu olmadığını, aksine bireysel arzuların ve deneyimlerin çeşitliliğiyle şekillendiğini gösterir.

- Toplumsal Normlara Meydan Okuma: Müzikal hem içeriği hem de izleyici etkileşimiyle, toplumun dayattığı ahlaki ve cinsel normlara açıkça meydan okur. Frank'ın cinsel serbestliği, çok eşliliği ve cinsiyet sınırlarını aşan varoluşu, burjuva ahlakına ve muhafazakâr değerlere doğrudan bir darbe niteliğindedir. İzleyicilerin "time warp" dansına katılımı veya sahnede yaşananlara yorum yapması, pasif izleyici konumunu kırarak, bireysel özgürleşme ve farklılıkların kabulü üzerine kolektif bir çağrıya dönüşür. Bu interaktif yapı, Foucault'nun direniş kavramıyla uyumlu bir şekilde, iktidarın dayattığı normlara karşı kamusal bir başkaldırı alanı yaratır.

- Kült Topluluğu ve Kimlik Oluşumu: *The Rocky Horror Show*'un etrafında oluşan kült hayran topluluğu, müzikali sadece bir eğlence aracı olarak değil, aynı zamanda queer bireyler için bir kimlik ve aidiyet alanı olarak benimsemiştir. Bu topluluk, gösterimlere karakter kostümleriyle gelerek, repliklere eşlik ederek ve filmle/müzikalle aktif bir ilişki kurarak kendi queer bedenleşmelerini performe eder. Bu kolektif deneyim, bireylerin marjinalleşme hissini azaltırken, ortak bir kimlik etrafında birleşmelerini ve güçlenmelerini sağlar. Sara Ahmed'in belirttiği gibi, bu topluluk, normatif mekânlarda "yanlış yönelmiş" hissedebilecek bireyler için "doğru" bir yönelim ve aidiyet mekânı yaratır. Bu topluluk, müzikalin toplumsal etkilerini artıran ve onu bir sanat eserinin ötesine taşıyan önemli bir unsurdur.

Bu kavramsal çerçeve, tezin Türkiye bağlamındaki analizine sağlam bir zemin sunmaktadır. Özellikle Türkiye gibi toplumsal cinsiyet ve cinsel kimlik tartışmalarının hala hassas ve zaman zaman baskı altında olduğu bir coğrafyada, bu temsillerin nasıl algılandığı ve nasıl bir etki yarattığı, mülakat verileri ve gözlemler ışığında detaylı bir şekilde incelenecektir.

The Rocky Horror Show, küresel çapta bir kült fenomen olarak kabul edilse de farklı kültürel ve sosyo-politik bağlamlarda sahnelenmesi, müzikalin mesajlarının

alımlanması ve etkileşim biçimleri açısından benzersiz zorluklar ve fırsatlar ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Türkiye'de queer temsilin durumu, Batı'daki gelişmelerden oldukça farklı ve karmaşık bir yapıya sahiptir. Son yıllarda LGBTQ+ bireylerin ve hareketlerin görünürlüğü artmış olsa da muhafazakâr toplumsal normlar ve yasal kısıtlamalar, queer kimliğin kamusal alandaki ifadelerini genellikle sınırlamaktadır. Bu durum hem doğrudan sansür mekanizmaları hem de daha yaygın ve sinsi işleyen dolaylı baskılar, hatta sanatçıların ve prodüktörlerin kendi üzerlerinde uyguladıkları oto-sansür pratikleri aracılığıyla queer sanatsal yapımlar için oldukça kırılgan bir ortam yaratmaktadır.

Türkiye'de tiyatro ve müzikal sahnesi, son yıllarda önemli bir gelişim göstermiş hem yerli prodüksiyonlar hem de uluslararası adaptasyonlar daha geniş kitlelere ulaşmaya başlamıştır. İstanbul ve diğer büyük şehirlerde bağımsız tiyatro toplulukları ve özel tiyatrolar, çeşitli estetik ve tematik arayışlara girerek sahne sanatlarına yeni bir soluk getirmiştir. Ancak, toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri, cinsel kimlikler ve cinsel özgürlük gibi konular hala toplumun belirli kesimlerinde tabu olarak görülebilmekte ve hassasiyetle yaklaşılmaktadır. Bu durum, *The Rocky Horror Show* gibi, içeriğinde açıkça toplumsal cinsiyet akışkanlığı, transvestizm ve heteronormatif ilişkilerin sorgulanması gibi temaları barındıran bir eserin Türkiye'de sahnelenmesini hem bir cesaret örneği haline getirmekte hem de potansiyel olarak önemli toplumsal tartışmaları beraberinde getirmektedir.

Müzikalin Türkiye'deki serüveni, Batı'daki kültürel iklimden farklı bir bağlamda ele alınmalıdır. 1970'lerin Batı'sında yaşanan cinsel devrim, LGBTQ+ hareketlerinin yükselişi ve toplumsal normlara karşı koyuş, *The Rocky Horror Show*'un ortaya çıkış zeminini oluşturmuştur. Türkiye'de ise bu konular, çok daha farklı bir sosyo-politik ve kültürel zeminde tartışılmaktadır. Türkiye'de eşcinsellik yasadışı olmasa da devletin ve muhafazakâr kesimlerin baskıcı söylemleri ve politikaları, queer bireylerin kamusal alanda var olma mücadelesini zorlaştırmaktadır. Bu durum, müzikalin Türkiye'deki sahnelenmesinde hem bir meydan okuma hem de önemli bir fırsat sunmaktadır. Zira müzikal, Türkiye'de queer temsillerin sınırlı olduğu bir ortamda, farklı seslerin duyulmasına ve alternatif yaşam tarzlarının görünürlüğüne katkıda bulunabilir. Müzikalin eleştirel duruşu ve heteronormatif kalıpları yıkma potansiyeli, Türkiye gibi toplumsal cinsiyet normlarının güçlü olduğu bir toplumda daha da çarpıcı

ve dönüştürücü bir etki yaratabilir. Ancak, bu sınırlamalara rağmen, Türkiye'de alternatif tiyatro kolektifleri ve bağımsız sahne pratikleri, queer bedenlerin sahnede var olma ve kendilerini ifade etme çabalarını sürdürmektedir. Bu çabalar hem estetik hem de politik müdahale için kritik alanlar yaratmakta, marjinalleştirilmiş seslerin duyulabileceği ve alternatif anlatıların inşa edilebileceği platformlar sunmaktadır. *The Rocky Horror Show* gibi, açık queer temalara ve cinsiyet sınırlarını zorlayan karakterlere sahip bir müzikali Türkiye'de sahnelemek, bu anlamda sadece bir tiyatro prodüksiyonu olmanın ötesinde, önemli bir politik eylem ve kültürel bir müdahaledir. Bu tür bir prodüksiyon, toplumsal normlara karşı bir duruş sergileyebilir, önemli kamusal tartışmaları tetikleyebilir ve çeşitlilik ile kapsayıcılık hakkında daha geniş bir sohbetin başlamasına katkıda bulunabilir. Müzikalin mesajının Türkiye'deki alımlanması ve etkisi, Batı ülkelerindeki deneyimlerden farklı olmuştur; potansiyel olarak mevcut muhafazakâr görüşlere meydan okuyarak, farklı kimliklerin daha fazla anlaşılması ve kabulü için bir fırsat sunmuştur.

Bu tez çalışması, *The Rocky Horror Show*'un Türkiye prodüksiyonundaki queer bedenleşme ve temsil pratiklerini derinlemesine anlamak amacıyla nitel araştırma yöntemlerini benimsenmiştir. Nitel araştırma, karmaşık sosyal olguları doğal ortamlarında, katılımcıların deneyimleri ve yorumları aracılığıyla derinlemesine incelemeye olanak tanır. Bu bağlamda, veri toplama süreci, derinlemesine mülakatlar, içerik analizi ve gözlem tekniklerinin bir kombinasyonuyla yürütülmüştür.

Araştırmanın temel veri kaynağını, *The Rocky Horror Show* müzikalinde yer alan oyuncular ve yönetmen ile yapılacak yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar oluşturmuştur. Yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar, önceden belirlenmiş bir dizi temel soruya sahip olmakla birlikte, mülakatçının konuya ve katılımcının yanıtlarına göre esneklik göstermesine ve yeni sorular sormasına olanak tanır. Bu yöntem, katılımcıların deneyimlerini kendi kelimeleriyle ifade etmelerine ve araştırmacının beklenmedik içgörüler elde etmesine yardımcı olur. Mülakatlar, katılımcıların müzikaldeki rollerini nasıl içselleştirdikleri, karakterlerle kurdukları kişisel bağlar, kendi cinsiyet kimlikleri ve cinsel yönelimlerinin performanslarına etkisi, Türkiye'de böyle bir eseri sahnelemenin getirdiği zorluklar (sansür, toplumsal tepkiler vb.) ve müzikalin onlar için taşıdığı önem hakkındaki görüşlerini ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflemiştir. Örneğin, daha önceki bir konuşmamızda da belirttiğimiz gibi, Frank karakterini canlandıran

oyuncunun müzikaldeki rolünün fiziksel ve duygusal dönüşümüne dair deneyimleri gibi kişisel anlatılar, queer bedenleşmenin sahnede nasıl deneyimlendiğine dair zengin veriler sunmuştur. Mülakatlar, ses kaydı alınarak ve daha sonra titizlikle deşifre edilerek veri analizi için hazır hale getirilecektir. Katılımcıların gizliliği ve gönüllülük esası, etik ilkeler gereği araştırma süreci boyunca titizlikle gözetilmiştir.

Müzikalin metni, şarkı sözleri ve sahne direktifleri, queer teori perspektifinden detaylı bir içerik analiziyle incelenmiştir. Bu analizde, özellikle cinsiyet temsilleri, cinsel kimlik akışkanlığı, heteronormatif ilişkilerin sorgulanması ve toplumsal normlara meydan okuyan öğeler üzerinde durulmuştur. Örneğin, "Sweet Transvestite" veya "Time Warp" gibi ikonik şarkıların sözleri ve performansları, queer estetiği, cinsiyet bükme ve toplumsal cinsiyetin performatif doğası açısından incelenmiştir. Karakterlerin birbirleriyle olan ilişkileri, giyim tarzları ve bedensel ifadeleri, tezin kavramsal çerçevesinde yer alan queer bedenleşme, performativite ve iktidar/direniş analizleri ışığında değerlendirilmiştir.

Müzikal prodüksiyonun prova süreçleri ve/veya sahne performansları, imkân dahilinde gözlem yöntemiyle desteklenmiştir. Gözlem, mülakatlar ve içerik analizinin sunduğu sözel ve metinsel verilere ek, bedensel hareketleri, mekânsal düzenlemeleri, oyuncuların birbirleriyle ve seyirciyle olan etkileşimlerini doğrudan deneyimleme ve anlama fırsatı sunar. Bu gözlemler, oyuncuların karakterleriyle nasıl bütünleştiklerini, bedensel ifade biçimlerini ve genel sahne atmosferini anlamak için faydalı olmuştur. Örneğin, "Time Warp" dansının provalarında oyuncuların bedensel koordinasyonu, enerjisi ve bu dansın queer bedenleşmedeki rolü gözlemler aracılığıyla kaydedilebilir.

Toplanan tüm nitel veriler (deşifre edilmiş mülakatlar, içerik analizi notları ve gözlem kayıtları), eleştirel söylem analizi yöntemiyle değerlendirilmiştir. Tematik analiz, nitel verilerdeki ana temaları, kalıpları ve tekrarlayan anlamları belirlemeyi amaçlayan esnek bir yöntemdir. Bu analiz, mülakatlardan elde edilen bireysel anlatıları, içerik analizinden çıkan metinsel özellikleri ve gözlemlerden elde edilen bedensel ifadeleri bir araya getirerek tezin kavramsal çerçevesiyle ilişkilendirmeyi ve araştırma sorularına tutarlı, derinlemesine yanıtlar sunmayı hedeflemiştir. Bu sayede, *The Rocky Horror Show*'un Türkiye'deki sahnelenmesinin hem bireysel oyuncu deneyimleri hem de daha geniş toplumsal bağlamdaki etkileri bütüncül bir şekilde analiz edilmiştir.

Bu tez çalışması, *The Rocky Horror Show* müzikalinin Türkiye'deki sahnelenmesinin, toplumsal cinsiyet, cinsellik ve kimlik temsilleri üzerindeki çok katmanlı etkilerini queer teori çerçevesinde inceleyerek önemli bulgulara ulaşmıştır. Çalışma, müzikal tiyatronun 20. yüzyıldaki evrimini ve özellikle 1960'lar ve 70'lerdeki sosyal hareketlerin etkisiyle nasıl politik ve norm dışı bir platforma dönüştüğünü ortaya koymuştur. *The Rocky Horror Show*, bu dönüşümün hem bir sonucu hem de öncüsü olarak, camp estetiği, drag performansı, cinsiyet geçişliliği ve erotizmi sahneye taşıyarak heteronormatif anlatılara ve toplumsal cinsiyet ikiliklerine cesurca meydan okumuştur.

Araştırmanın temel bulguları, müzikaldeki queer bedenleşme biçimlerinin sadece karakter temsilleriyle sınırlı kalmayıp, oyuncuların kişisel dönüşümlerini, bedenleriyle ilişkilerini ve cinsel kimlik keşiflerini de derinden etkilediğini göstermiştir. Dr. Frank-N-Furter gibi karakterlerin sahnedeki performansı, Judith Butler'ın toplumsal cinsiyetin performatif doğası teorisiyle birebir örtüşmekte; biyolojik cinsiyet ile toplumsal cinsiyet arasındaki sınırların nasıl akışkan ve inşa edilmiş olduğunu gözler önüne sermektedir. Oyuncuların mülakatları, bu karakterleri canlandırmanın, kendi kişisel normlarını ve ön yargılarını sorgulamalarına, cinsel kimliklerini daha özgürce keşfetmelerine ve bedenlerini daha farklı bir perspektiften algılamalarına olanak tanıdığını ortaya koymuştur.

Türkiye'nin sosyo-politik ve kültürel bağlamı, müzikalin sahnelenme sürecini ve kamusal alımlanmasını belirgin bir şekilde şekillendirmiştir. Türkiye'de queer temsillerin hala sınırlı ve kırılgan olduğu bir ortamda, *The Rocky Horror Show*'un sahnelenmesi önemli bir cesaret eylemi olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Müzikal hem doğrudan sansür riskleriyle hem de toplumsal muhafazakârlığın getirdiği dolaylı baskılarla yüzleşmek zorunda kalmıştır. Ancak, tüm bu zorluklara rağmen, müzikal, queer bireyler için bir dayanışma ve görünürlük alanı oluşturarak, alternatif yaşam tarzlarının kamusal alanda temsiline katkıda bulunmuştur. Türkiye'deki seyirci algıları ve tepkileri hem müzikalin eleştirel mesajlarına açıklık hem de yerleşik normlara yönelik çekinceleri aynı anda barındırmıştır. Bu durum, Türkiye'de toplumsal cinsiyet ve cinsel kimlik tartışmalarının hala dinamik ve çelişkili bir zeminde ilerlediğini göstermektedir.

Müzikalin etrafında oluşan kült hayran topluluğu ve bu topluluğun interaktif katılımı, *Rocky Horror Show*'un Türkiye'deki etkileşiminde de önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu katılım, yalnızca bir eğlence biçimi olmaktan öte, queer bireyler ve müttefikleri için bir kimlik alanı, bir aidiyet duygusu ve normatif beklentilere karşı kolektif bir direniş biçimi olarak işlev görmüştür. Michel Foucault'nun iktidar/direniş analizleri ve Sara Ahmed'in mekânsal farklılık yaratma kavramları, müzikalin bu topluluğu nasıl bir araya getirdiğini ve onlar için nasıl özgürleştirici bir alan yarattığını anlamak için güçlü araçlar sunmuştur.

Bu tez, *The Rocky Horror Show*'u sadece bir sahne gösterisi olarak değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal bir ayna ve dönüştürücü bir güç olarak ele alarak, Türkiye'deki kültürel ve toplumsal tartışmalara yeni bir boyut kazandırmayı hedeflemiştir. Bu çalışma, yalnızca oyunun queer temsillerini değil, aynı zamanda Türkiye'deki prodüksiyonun orijinal metinden ne derece saptığını ve yerel kültürel bağlamla nasıl ilişkilendiğini de tartışmaktadır. Türkiye'deki heteronormatif düzen, Batı'daki örneklerden farklıdır; bu nedenle prodüksiyonun bu farklılıkları yansıtıp yansıtmadığı (veya özellikle yansıtmamayı tercih edip etmediği) önemli bir tartışma alanı sunmaktadır. Eğer bu kültürel farklılıklar sahneye yansıtılmadıysa, bu da ayrıca üzerinde durulması gereken bir meseledir: prodüksiyonun neden orijinaline sadık kaldığı, yerel bağlamı ne ölçüde görmezden geldiği ya da hangi stratejilerle uyarlama yaptığı önemli bir sorgulama noktasıdır. Dolayısıyla, oyun yalnızca bireysel kimlik dönüşümlerini tetikleyen bir sahneleme değil, aynı zamanda Türkiye'de queer temsillerin sahneye taşınmasında hangi kültürel eşiklerin aşıldığını veya hangi sınırların yeniden üretildiğini gösteren bir vaka çalışmasıdır.

Sanatın, zorlu toplumsal koşullar altında bile queer temsiller için nasıl bir alan açabileceğini, bireysel kimlik dönüşümlerini nasıl tetikleyebileceğini ve toplumsal farkındalığı nasıl artırabileceğini göstermiştir.

Bu tez, nitel araştırma yöntemleriyle derinlemesine bir analiz sunsa da bazı sınırlılıklara sahiptir. Mülakatların sayısı ve odak gruplarının çeşitliliği gibi faktörler, bulguların genellenebilirliğini kısıtlayabilir. Ayrıca, müzikalin geniş seyirci kitlesinin tüm katmanlarını kapsayan nicel verilerle desteklenmemiş olması, seyirci algılarına dair kapsamlı bir resim sunmayı zorlaştırmaktadır.

Çalışma, görünürlük merkezli okumaları aşarak bedensel teknik–ritim–mekân yönelişi ekseninde aktarılabilir bir analiz protokolü önerir; ‘katılım metronomu’ ve ‘surtitle hizalanması’ kavramsallaştırmalarını araçsallaştırır. Türkiye bağlamında, kurumsal/kamusal rejimlerin katılım protokollerini nasıl şekillendirdiğine dair karşılaştırmalı etnografik kanıt sunar ve ‘orientation as method’ yaklaşımını ampirik olarak sınar. Bu katkılar, tezin kuramsal, yöntemsel ve ampirik düzeydeki özgünlüğünü görünür kılar.

Gelecek araştırmalar için, *The Rocky Horror Show*’un farklı şehirlerdeki veya farklı tiyatro toplulukları tarafından yapılan prodüksiyonlarının karşılaştırmalı analizi yapılabilir. Müzikalin farklı yaş gruplarından ve sosyo-ekonomik arka planlardan gelen seyirciler üzerindeki etkileri, nicel anketler ve geniş çaplı odak grupları aracılığıyla daha detaylı incelenebilir. Ayrıca, müzikalin Türkiye’deki dijital platformlardaki alımlaması ve sosyal medyadaki tartışmaları da ayrı bir araştırma konusu olabilir. Son olarak, Türkiye’de queer temaları işleyen diğer sahne sanatları ve performans sanatları eserleri üzerine yapılacak karşılaştırmalı çalışmalar, queer temsilin Türkiye’deki genel gelişimini ve zorluklarını daha geniş bir perspektiften anlamamıza yardımcı olacaktır.

Görüşmelerde gizlilik ve gönüllülük esasları gözetilmiş, kayıtlar etik onay çerçevesinde işlenmiştir; araştırmacı konumlanması ve olası önyargılar, refleksif alan notları ile izlenmiştir.

Bu tez, Türkiye’de müzikal tiyatro, toplumsal cinsiyet ve queer çalışmalar alanında önemli bir boşluğu doldurarak, gelecek araştırmalar için sağlam bir temel oluşturmaktadır.

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