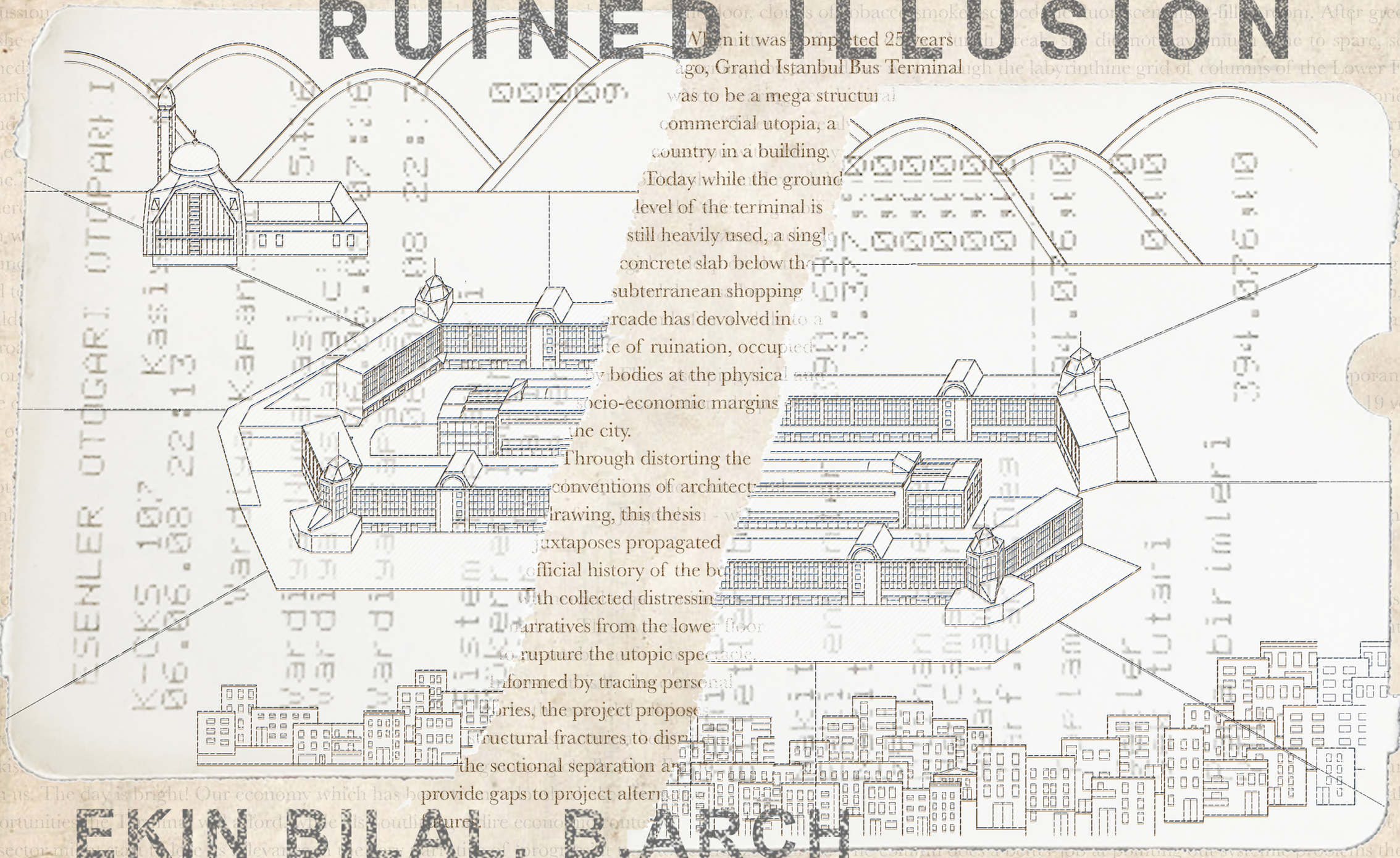
RUINED ILLUSION



When it was completed 25 years ago, Grand Istanbul Bus Terminal was to be a mega structural commercial utopia, a country in a building. Today while the ground level of the terminal is still heavily used, a single concrete slab below the subterranean shopping arcade has devolved into a state of ruination, occupied by bodies at the physical and socio-economic margins of the city.

Through distorting the conventions of architectural drawing, this thesis juxtaposes propagated official history of the building with collected distressing narratives from the lower floor to rupture the utopic spectacle. Informed by tracing personal histories, the project proposes structural fractures to disrupt the sectional separation and provide gaps to project alternative futures.

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Thanks to

ALEKSANDR MERGOLD
RYAN OTTERSON
for their endless wisdom and guidance

LORI KATCHADOURIAN
for her incredible help in my theory and research

ESRA AKCAN
for her influential advice

BEGÜM BIROL
for her boundless help and friendship

ETHEM PISKIN
FAHRETTIN BESLI
THE TEAM AT BOGAZICI YONETIM
for their crucial logistical support

MY INTERLOCUTORS
for their time and willingness to share their stories

AND MY FAMILY
without their loving support none of this would have been possible

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RUINING THE ILLUSION
Fracturing Mythos Through Allegories

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Part One Theory & Research

RUINING THE ILLUSION:
Fracturing Mythos Through Allegories

Introduction

This thesis investigates the Grand Istanbul Bus Terminal, the biggest bus terminal in Europe by the time of its completion 26 years ago. In the neoliberalizing Turkey of the 1980s it was the first build-operate-transfer project, where a private company runs a business that is co-funded with the government.

Today, the ground level of the bus terminal remains a major transport hub serving thousands every day. The remaining two and a half floors below ground have devolved into a space of ruination. Originally envisioned as an enormous shopping arcade, the subterranean floors have come to be known for their utter lack of any natural or synthetic light and their occupation by those who reside at the physical and the socio-economic margins of the city: from run-aways to overworked bus drivers, refugees to homeless domestic emigrants, gang members to addicts.

As soon as its construction was completed, the 'Lower Floor', as the locals refer to it, started to gradually fall into disuse and decay because the people who purchased most of the shops never moved in and those inhabiting the lower floor appropriated the empty shops according to their spatial needs. This research analyzes oral and documented histories of the terminal which I collected over a week in January 2020, and attempts to decipher how the people with the power to design and construct a project of this monumental scale misenvisioned the space's social, economic and architectural futures. By untangling the contradicting histories of the Lower and Upper floor, I analyze the material and spatial ruination of the "Lower Floor" that the private company, with government backing, permitted. As the same set of capital-oriented and architectonically utopian ideals were active in the conception and construction of both parts of the structure, how can these ideals have been both shattered and actualized at the same time?

> In the convulsions of the commodity economy, we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled.
>
> Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century"

Prelude

My fieldwork of the terminal created a dichotomy, aligned with the divided nature of the terminal's physical condition. Accounts of the upper floor actively constructed a perception that upheld neoliberal and utopian ideologies, while the stories of the lower floor refuted this idyllic perception. In this, the two floors told of different realities, in two distinct modes of story-telling. Conveying these the two modes as if they offered equally valid perceptions of the structure would not have been appropriate. The accounts from the Lower Floor were in person testimonials unearthing stories of trauma and struggle, while the majority of the material from Upstairs were newspaper articles and ideological academic treatises arguing for the totality of an ideological story, of an economic agenda.

In recollecting my fieldwork, I want to emphasize the distinction between the constructed condition of information from upstairs, and the personal and tangible nature of the conversations from downstairs by establishing a hierarchy in their relations to reality. However the propagation of perceptions are not only relics of the past. The economic power, private institutions of the neoliberal system, that disseminated the propaganda still persists within the unruined portions of the structure - the Upper Floor - which disallows the analytic clarity temporal distance would have provided in grasping the extent of perceptual manipulation the propaganda achieves. In other words, as the ideologies in power that catalyzed the construction of the Terminal are still altering reality, contesting their relation to reality is not as easy as it would have been to discuss a ruin from past centuries with its relations to sociality and economic power long dissolved. When the illusion is still active it is harder to dismiss it as fabricated.

In trying to emphasize and contrast the duality of stories from the terminal, I aim to establish a hierarchy in their relation to reality. For this, Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project and Trauerapiels, particularly the work's exposition of the allegorical technique and its relation to mythic forms, offer analytical purchase. Similar to the Terminal, in the Arcades Project, Benjamin, deals with ruination in its half state: In the monuments of capitalism and "progress" the linear story of modernity is ongoing while also failing to be a seamless complete whole as modernity professes to be. (Gordillo 2014, 81) In understanding Benjamin's articulation of this condition, Gastón R. Gordillo offers insight:

> "He was the first thinker to articulate that what we call "progress" is a bourgeois mythology that enchants what is a rubble- generating catastrophe. And this is an enchantment generated by "bourgeois monuments"— such as arcades, boulevards, or exhibitions — and by affective dispositions that turn commodities "into the realization of dream elements" and induce a state of complacent daydreaming. (...) What those objects hide, and what the smashing of their bourgeois encoding releases, is that they are torn apart by contradictions, the constellations that give them historical significance. Benjamin highlighted that the monuments of the bourgeoisie should be recognized 'as ruins even before they have crumbled'" (2014, 27)

In this process of "smashing" Benjamin makes use of Baudelaire's allegorical poetry. Baudelaire's allegorical gaze reveals the inevitable process of ruination indeed, already underway in the consumption space of the arcade. In this, the allegory exposes what has not been previously perceived as a myth, that is the extant frame of perception constructed by the power, which for Baudelaire is the phantasmagoria of 19th century Paris. When Andromache, who became a widow with the ruination of Troy, appears in Baudelaire's "The Swan" and is presented within the phantasmagoria of modern Paris, the splendor of the 'change-as-progress' (Buck-morss 1991, 47) modernity is projected as impending ruins, the state of daydreaming oversaturated with promises of commodity accumulation are disturbed. Baudelaire's allegorical writing fractures the mythic enchantment of material abundance. In this fracture the appropriation of a symbol of the past, Andromache, invites interpretation and multiplies the ways in which the illusion can be undermined. Instead of being an ideologically diametric calamity howler, or exclaiming another framework of power as the source of salvation, in its multiple meanings Boudlaire's allegory does not pretend to offer a convenient singular solution. That would have been progressing from one utopic vision to the next, abiding by the linear temporal development modernity presupposes. Opposed to utopic invocations of optimism, in his reading of Boudleaire, Benjamin suggests that pessimistic allegories instill a mistrust in the fate of surrounding frameworks of power, without falling in the trap of 'illusion of progress' (Benjamin, 55). This approach aspires not to utilize modes of storytelling to implicate a solution process for the impending ruination - critiquing a failing system in the favor of imagining and realizing another; instead it uses story-telling to unveil the nexus of economic and social forces that started dissolving, and in return catalyzed, ruination, making Benjamin's allegorical mode of seeing a particularly powerful heuristic.

In my adaptation of this mythic and allegoric methodology, I was able to discern the official histories, of the neoliberal gaze, as mythos and the oral histories

as allegories that bring about the fracturation of those mythos, not in the ways I dictate but in ways the interpreter engages. Thus in the allegorical mode, the stories from the Lower Floor are not only accounts of trauma catalyzed by the ruination of the mythos, they possess the agency to disrupt the mythos into fragments. These stories do not provide a road to salvation: they are not compasses guiding towards the points that need fixing. They don't offer a way to restore the utopia or help conceive the next. In their authenticity they compel the interpreter to face the fractures of ruination and instill a Benjaminian mistrust in utopian practices.

In mythos symbolic concepts convey and didactically present certain ideologies systems of power - religious institutions, nation-states, economic agendas, want to champion. The relevancy of these ideals are only present insofar as these systems of power that cultivate them persevere. In their failure, their symbols fall into ruination.

> "'As a 'thing,' a symbol has material reality and is experienced through the senses.' What an allegorical aesthetics then does to these formulae is to put the symbol in motion, to distort it by showing the social structuring of sense perception, and how a change in sociocultural factors alters perception, which then alters the symbols that give rise to thought." (Plate 2005, 47)

Contrary to the symbolic dependencies, Benjamin's allegory transcends the context of power surrounding the narrative of ideologies. It does not aspire for timeless mono-meaning indoctrination, it recognizes the inevitable decay of the surrounding systemic context. Instead of temporal infinity, by abstracting and appropriating the mythic symbols (characters) the allegory denies a singular meaning and provides infinite readings, of not only itself but also of the contemporary reality surrounding itself. So if monuments are and conveying the story the erecting power wants tell by being materializations of myths to withstand the 'test of time', in their production allegories admit that the monument is already in ruins, or will be eventually, the material will crumble and in the myriad pieces lying on the ground the fractures will tell of infinite stories disillusioning the gazer. As Buck-Morrss puts it:

> "In allegory history appeared as nature in decay or ruins and the temporal mode is one of the retrospective contemplation, but time enters as the symbol as an instantaneous present - "the mystical Nu" - in which the empirical and the transcendent appear momentarily fused with a fleeting, natural form. Organic nature that is fluid and changing is the stuff of symbol, whereas in allegory time finds expression in nature mortified, not in bud and bloom but in the overripeness and decay of her creations." (168)

To reiterate, the allegorization of the lower floor narratives I collected is not to suggest that they are fictional conjurings or altered with any fictional elements; on the contrary they are the accounts that are least constructed, they do not aim to tell a persuasive harmonious coherent story. The narratives are brought into the allegorical mode simply by replacing the name of the interlocutor with characters from ancient myths, in order to invoke the critically productive Benjaminian allegorical way of seeing. While providing anonymity for the interlocutors, these appropriations of symbols bring about a larger framework of interpretation for the implications of these traumatic accounts. In their allegorical reading through their openness to interpretation, these stories are afforded another layer of agency, beyond my analysis, to disrupt not only the mythos of the Terminal, but the entirety of the economic and architectural visions that spawned it.

Finally, following the theories outlined, sections are titled and paired as myths and allegories. The allegory chapters named after appropriated symbolic characters from contextual ancient myths set up the moment of disturbance in the propagated perceptions, permitting readings of the mythos only through the fractures they create.

Allegory of Ariadne

After navigating through a dark forest of columns and lines of shops compressed in between, amidst a plethora of goods but without any customer or vendor in sight, my two navigators and I reached the coffeehouse where we would meet Ariadne. The desolate and decaying concrete shop units surrounding were in stark contrast with the well-lit coffeehouse. Through its bright red signage declaring the coffeehouse the "Haji Baba's Place" the space looked like it was refusing to become a part of its ruinous context.

Earlier that day, in the backroom of the same coffeehouse, after an interrogative and intimidating discussion, in his thick Black Sea accent, Ariadne's father had granted his blessing for Ariadne to share her stories. As she opened the door, clouds of tobacco smoke escaped the fluorescent light-filled room. After greeting us, she sat down behind the desk her dad was sitting at moments ago and lit up her cigarette. As she was on her lunch break, she did not have much time to spare, so we immediately dove into her accounts of the building. Ariadne told me that she started learning how to find her way through the labyrinthine grid of columns of the Lower Floor as early as twelve because she had to visit her father's coffeehouse from time to time. Now nearing her thirties, she heard and witnessed in the past fifteen years many stories of friends and strangers getting lost down there. But she had to learn to find her way because:

> *"There were always drug addicts and perverts here. They would inhabit deep corners, and empty spaces. The way that people look at you down here disturbs you, they harass you with the way they gaze at your body, even back when I was twelve I felt them looking at me."*

Despite the "monsters" she had to pass through the Lower Floor so that she could reach home on her way back from the city center:

> *"There were a lot of paths that I would not take, I had to find the shortest but also the safest. I get off the metro, climb down the stairs to the Lower Floor, walkthrough to the path where the old turf accountant for horse races is. Some call that path the covered bazaar, and others the jewelers market. There, close to the old fire emergency meeting grounds is a backroad you can take to leave the terminal. One day, they put a girl to sleep on that stretch of the road I always took. She had left the metro and was taking that road to meet her older brother outside. Thankfully, the brother was just in time and the assailants ran away. After that happened I was afraid to take that route, but I had to, so I would prepare before my journey to feel a bit safer. I used to carry pepper spray and after a while I started carrying a knife. I would take it out when I would reach that part of the road."*

Myth of Progress

Through the years Ariadne rushed through the murky corners of the Lower Floor escaping terrorizing gazes and possibly dangers much less fathomable, contemporaneous issues of the newspaper 'World of Transport' published by International Anatolian and Thracian Turkish Bus Drivers Association (UATOD), the private company who had the rights to operate the Terminal for the past 19 years, told of stories of a distinctly contesting nature. Here is one telling of a pottery exhibit taking place in the Terminal::

"Chinese Pottery Exhibit at the Terminal

> Both for passengers and the Istanbulite economy it is a great fortune that China, the country with the most advanced production of ceramic pottery has chosen Grand Istanbul Bus Terminal as its center in Turkey. 30,000 pieces of ceramics from Jingdizhen - where there's a history of a thousand years of pottery-making, take their place in the East Arcades across the administrative offices." ("Büyük")

Through such articles this Terminal newspaper largely discussed commercial opportunities impending. However even when the company operating the Terminal was publishing these issues the disuse of the shop units in the Lower Floor was already taking place. The unit owners never moved in, neither did they intend to do so, for them it was largely an investment opportunity in the giant project of the Terminal. However they were unable to find tenants as the merchants from the city did not want to relocate into the building. Even though most of the shopping arcade was empty, 'World of Transport' was convinced by the commercial opportunities it offered.

> "Today, Grand Istanbul Bus Terminal is the symbol of progress. In the ever globalizing world, when we speak of freedom our options are ever limited. Everyday more and more professions lose their relevance. However, our sector of bus transportation keeps persevering in the name of freedom to travel. (...) By adapting to the latest technologies Turkish bus sector keeps modernizing and keeps its pioneering status globally. Our European and other international counterparts investigate our models of business to learn from us. The day is bright! Our economy which has been tremendously shaken is recuperating…"
> (Öztürk, 5)

In the column, Öztürk aimed to instill hope and excitement for the capital opportunities the Terminal will afford, while also outlining the dire economic context in which the Terminal is supposed to operate. Öztürk is perhaps aware of how the sector might start to lose its relevance in the very narrative of 'progress' which aspires to position itself. The column does a better job at pointing out systemic problems the structure and the sector are facing in the larger progressive narrative of capital accumulation, rather than what it is presumably set on to achieving: dispelling the mounting concerns for the future of the Terminal and proposing the structure as a glimmer of hope. In the column, the propagandistic agenda of the newspaper reveals itself as the myth of progressive development. Öztürk hopes to construct a hopeful outlook amongst the readers of the newspaper, mainly the workforce and the stakeholders of the terminal, however before doing so he frames the economic context in which hope should be cultivated. Öztürk's instinct to instill hope brings forth the question, when does one need hope, if not in the face of ominous trajectories? While aiming to relieve concerns, by having the motive to do so in the first place, Öztürk acknowledges the economic realities surrounding the illusionary narrative. Suddenly the utopian painting has a rip in it; and it is one of its painters who punctured it in trying to add another colorful stroke. this rip is not wide enough for one to see the entirety of the reality beyond, the reality Ariadne grew up in.

Interlude I

Even though the Terminal was not living up to the dream of being the commercial utopia the investors and the designers imagined it would be, the dedication to the mythos of growth continued. The pieces in the World of Transport were convinced of the consummatory salvation of the structure. This dedication was natural in the context of the political landscape of late 80s Turkey, which was marked by the government's aggressive adaptation of open-market policies. In this newly neoliberalizing economic structure the government and private investors were getting interested in developing the initial concept of the Terminal.

Since the founding of the republic in 1923, the Turkish economy has had a complicated relationship with forces of left and right wing models. Governmentalism was one of the seven 'founding principles of the republic', meaning a heavy governmental mandate over the economy in the early years of the republic (1995, Boratav). However, the founder of the republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk emphasized that governmentalist approach was 'not modeled after the socialist models' (1993 Derin, 3). This meant for much of its history the Turkish economic structure was neither a centrally planned and dictated socialist model, nor a free market economy with independent institutions regulating the system. In the late 1970s with the increasing domestic political turmoil, this complicated economic structure created the 'New Depression', marked by significant shortages. In the beginning of 1980, the newly elected Demirel administration definitively altered the system in favor of capitalism to recuperate the failing economy. Almost single-handedly overseen by the economy minister of the era, Turgut Ozal, foreign investment started flowing in, and aggressive industrial development was adopted. Ozal was an avid believer in the power and efficiency of the open market economy, and when he served as the prime minister between the years of 1983-1989 he solidified the Turkish economy as an emerging neo-liberal system. This meant that under heavy handed free market policies the Turkish economy rapidly and uncontrollably grew through foreign investment. However this economic growth did not resolve the high unemployment rates and inflation inherited from the late 70s; the growth mainly benefited the upper-middle class (2000 Çaha, 138). It was in this sudden transition into the open market economy that for the first time the government and the private sector joined forces in investment to conceive the initial concepts of the Terminal.

The Terminal was the first Build-Operate-Transfer project in Turkish history, where the privately owned UATOD and the government would co-fund the development, with UATOD having the rights to operate the Terminal for the following 20 years. Even though the first project of its kind, it was by no means a small venture. As the Terminal design was instigated at the peak of the economic growth in the mid 80s, the scope of the project was utopian. In its finalized design the Terminal was to host 168 ticket offices for different bus companies and have more than 2000 shops, most congested into the Lower Floor. The enormity of this vision could be explained by the drastic increase in domestic migration from rural settlements to Istanbul and other large cities with the adoption of the new neo-liberal agenda. This was due to the multiplication in the industrial facilities in the urban areas with the flow of capital, which created more employment opportunities in the city compared to the rural settlements. For the Terminal, this meant capital possibilities, for the gateway to the city would be immense. Further maximizing these monetary opportunities was the idea to declare the Terminal as the sole point of arrival and departure from Istanbul for busses, ensuring the importance of the structure as a commercial hub. Within the perpetual growth the new neo-liberal agenda was to ensure with the constant flow of foreign investment, the Terminal would be the valve of the artery feeding rapidly growing Istanbul.

Paralleling the nature of neo-liberal economic growth, most of the shop spaces were claimed by capital with foreign origin, for example Turkish migrants in Germany. These investors had no intention of starting up their own business in these spaces. As ensured by

the promises of economic growth supported by the commutory monopoly of the Terminal, they expected to easily find tenants and generate rent income. Though the Terminal became the hub it was legally ensured to turn into, because economic growth did not benefit the majority of the population, merchants across the city neither had the funds to relocate into the 'utopia' of the Terminal nor the confidence that the structure would create a significant increase in business. Thus, after the completion of the structure, most of the 2000 shops remained empty. Disillusioned by the unfulfilled promises of capital, for the owners the myth of endless growth that hyper capitalism cultivated fell short. Already residing in a foreign country, most investors became less and less interested in the state of their property. In this lack of interest, people, mostly those who were a part of society that did not benefit from the economic growth and lacked the funds to legally rent spaces elsewhere, started moving into the empty shops, using the space to start their own businesses, amongst other purposes. This is how Ariadne's father left his job in the Terminal toilets, and first started his coffeehouse in the Lower Floor.

Tracing the economic myths put in place when the idea of the Terminal was first cultivated reveals how Ariadne's experiences are ultimately catalyzed by these myths' shortcomings. The labyrinth of the Lower Floor, Ariadne finds herself in everyday is made up of remnants of the commercial promises of the terminal: the empty and appropriated shops. Her father's coffee house, the final destination in Ariadne's many journeys through the lower floor, is only made possible within the ruination of this myth. Apparent from their Black Sea accent, Ariadne's family is among the many that migrated from rural Turkey in the years of 'economic growth'. This further displays the defining effects of the neo-liberal myth on multiple temporal and social scales for Ariadne's experiences in the Lower Floor. As the Terminal is a monument produced by the same economic myths, in its newspaper it finds a need to further uphold the myth concealing the reality through which Ariadne walks. With dazing affirmations of 'freedom of travel' and 'commercial opportunities on a global scale' it provides, 'World of Transport' hopes to inhume the Lower Floor, where these mythic affirmations have fallen into ruin. However, allegory of Ariadne fractures, the echo chamber of myths and monuments perpetually reflecting off of each other. The ruins of the commercial illusion become painfully clear, proving it a utopian delusion.

Allegory of Utnapishtim

Though I had met with Utnapishtim in the administrative offices in the upper floor, he spent most of his time in the Terminal in the Lower Floor. Shortly after our introduction we took one of the only staircases leading downstairs. He led me to the Technical Office made up of two shop units combined, where he and his team waited for assignments. Everyone both upstairs and downstairs knew of him as the man that has witnessed most of the Terminal's lifetime. Even in the Lower Floor where unspoken rules define one's proximity to danger, in the very heterotopian sense, Utnapishtim is respected by almost all.

He told me that he worked in the Terminal even before the construction was completed. Initially he was employed in the construction site as an electrician, after the Terminal started functioning he became the head of the fire response team of the Terminal. Although he later added that he was the only person in the fire response team and for reasons still unclear to him he was titled 'the chief'. After some years his responsibilities changed a bit, and he was incorporated to the technical team where he would deal with any logistical issues the Terminal faced on a day to day basis, ranging from fixing electrical shortcuts to rodent extermination. When it became apparent that the shop units were being appropriated to illegal businesses and ad hoc living spaces, it was Utnapishtim's responsibility to permanently enclose the units' entryways and windows using sheet metal, aiming to prevent more people from illegally occupying the spaces.

Utnapishtim told me he has seen it all in the decades he spent working in the Lower Floor. During our conversation he was very hesitant to tell me of 'negative stories' of the Terminal, not wanting to paint a grim picture of the structure. However as we spent most of the day together down in the Technical office, he did end up telling me several stories that would have seemed unimaginable unless I had not experienced the condition of the Lower Floor. Amongst all, one particular event was particularly important for him. Due to his wide array of responsibilities once he had to spend more than 48 consecutive hours downstairs:

> *"After heavy rain started, at 13:45 my maintenance team and I noticed there was water overflow in the southern pipes, and started taking precautions to prevent the overflown pipes from flooding the level. However once the rain got heavier the water collector systems were overwhelmed and stopped functioning. The overflown pipes flooded the building. We started seeing water gushing out from ventilation pipes. The streams were so powerful that we witnessed pieces of concrete flying alongside manhole covers across the level. The water depth reached 120 cm. I had a single boat to try to get to the source of the heavy stream of water. I could not believe that the huge busses were swimming."*

After the fire department joined Utnapishtim's maintenance team's efforts to prevent the flooding from reaching the ground floor, he was finally able to go home and rest for a couple of hours only to return to the Lower Floor soon after, now resembling a cistern in its blinding darkness and submerged columns. In the following couple of days the overwhelmed pipes lazily drained the water leaving behind traces of its forceful presence: pools of water and hydrostatic damage on the seemingly indestructible concrete structure. The flood became an ever-present memory for Utnapishtim and added to the palimpsest of markers of ruination of the massive labyrinth downstairs.

Myth of Totality

Utnapishtim and his team of four other technicians did not only fight a stream of water gushing into a building, they fought to prevent a whole city from sharing the fate of Atlantis:

> " A City By Itself: Terminal
>
> One of the most impressive terminals of Europe, Grand Istanbul Terminal is the gateway of Istanbul to Anatolia and abroad. Everyday 80 thousand passengers and 3000 vehicles pass use the Terminal, but how much do they consume?
>
> Awake every moment of the day, the Terminal is famous for its capacity for consumption. In its facilities stretching across 342 thousand m^2, the amount of food, drink, cleaning supplies, water and bread consumed by the workforce and the passengers surpass those of a small city. In the Terminal in a single day 17 thousand, and in the course of a month half a million loaves of bread and 55 billion liras worth of electricity is consumed.
>
> Meat - daily: 3 tonnes
>
> Potable water - daily: 60 tonnes
>
> Toilet paper - daily: 7000 rolls (…)"
>
> ("Ayrı")

In this article from 'World of Transport', the consummatory power of the Terminal is

celebrated. Impressed by this vast ability to consume, the article uses it to declare the Terminal more than a large structure, but a city. It defines a 'city' primarily as a space of consumption -- overshadowing its every other aspect.

Another issue of the newspaper offers a slightly different take, offering a closer look into this market with great potential, arguably to offer some insights into the human condition within.

> "Glimpses at the Merchants
> Life in myriad colors finds a home in the Terminal. Here, life never stops. All the while the shops are the witnesses of it. Some sell doner kebab, some sell flowers... There's a vendor for everything in the Terminal, from dried fruits and nuts to haberdashery." ("Esnaf")

Even when there's a motive to examine the 'human cogs' in this enormous monument to the free-market, they are only defined through what makes them relevant in the process of consumption. The 'Colors of life' that the article brings up are very much so the colors of the diverse categories of commodities engulfing the Terminal. The article suggests everything one might need can be found in the vast arcades in the shops of the Lower Floor, though here 'everything' roughly means 'any commodity' as this commercial utopia does not register that there is much else someone could need.

> "Everything is at the Grand Istanbul Bus Terminal!
> There are 398 bus companies, 168 ticket offices and 2000 bus departures daily, carrying 100000 people to their destinations. There are also 1986 businesses with 6000 employees. To reiterate the importance, impressiveness and value of the Terminal we should have a look at the amounts of daily consumption.(...) If you like, compare the amounts: which Anatolian town in the country has more consumption than the Terminal? Or let's ask the same question in other words, which Anatolian town provides as much as the Terminal for the economy?" ("Her şey")

'World of Transport' unabashedly champions the idea that the Terminal is as important as any Anatolian town, if not more, simply because it is a giant lucrative machine of consumption. In the articles the Terminal is a perfectly designed, ever-consuming city that responds to every consummatory need of its inhabitants. However this mega machine that was generate income tremendously by offering myriad types of commodities, had formidable amounts of water leaking in.

Interlude II

It is not by coincidence that the articles portray the vast Terminal as a city. The enormous structure was actually not designed by an architect but an urban planner, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Çubuk. UOTAB and the local municipality agreed on Çubuk to design the Terminal instead of an architect because, according to Mustafa Yıldırım - one of the high ranking principals in UOTAB when the Terminal was first conceived in mid 1980s, "he was the dean of Architecture and Planning department at Mimar Sinan University, meaning no other architect (architecture professor) was senior to him and he would not have been content with one of his juniors appointed to the task." With this, the mythic 'cityness' of the structure started.

In its monumental scale and the vast array of programs argued to have been incorporated through the diversity of the commercial ventures, the Terminal poses striking similarity to Megastructuralist and Metabolist projects first conceived in the 50s and 60s.

In her book Open Architecture, Akcan states that following the end of World War II and the economic boom it brought with it, within architectural design circles ideas of adaptability and terms like 'open society' and 'open form' started gaining significant traction. (2018 Akcan, 18) Allison Smithson, an influential designer of the era, associated these terms with the ability to move freely: "An open society needs an open city. Freedom to move - good communication, motor ways and urban motorways, somewhere to go." (61) Under these ideals of adaptable openness Japanese Metabolists envisioned utopian urban projects identifying the sky and the sea as to offer brand new zones to project their ideals of ceaseless structural growth. This allowed their projects to offer a vision that surpassed the land limitations of rapidly growing Tokyo, allowing designs that would expand in accordance with ever increasing demand for life in the city. Within a single adaptable structural framework, the Metabolist buildings would allow efficient and open transportation of people and goods, and create an unending potential for economic growth. The users could plug-in their houses to the infrastructural skeletons of superstructure which hosted the motorways. In their scale these designs for new urban utopias guaranteed to satisfy every need, with maximized freedom. The metabolist design meant 'a city in a building' with the commitment to flexible adaptability so that the city can grow in sync with the economy.

My interview with Mustafa Yıldırım, one of the high ranking principals in UOTAB when the Terminal was first conceived in the mid 1980s, revealed that up until the very moment construction commenced the design of the building kept changing. This was first and foremost due to the increasing demand to financially invest in the Terminal. As the monumental endeavor was advertised as the design process was ongoing, more and more investors got surfaced. Pulling in more investment, Çubuk's design had to grow further, in a very metabolist fashion, and not only because the city motorways weaving into the structure defined the building layout. The initial design was composed of 80 identical ticket offices, and when the demand increased the identical units were simply multiplied within the site boundary constraints, until most of the site could not host any more. Later, the Lower Floor was added as an enormous skeletal negative space with a grid of columns in order to provide structural safety to the now massive building. Looking for uses for the Lower Floor, the design designated the gridular space as the shopping arcade so that the monumental Terminal could further increase its possibilities of generating income. Every unit of the square grid was dissected into three to maximize the amount of shops that can be plugged-in between each column. With the extensive shopping arcade, now the design supposably would respond to every need of the passengers coming to the city from all across the country. Compared to its metabolist counterparts the Terminal was even a bit more ambitious, rather than aspiring to be 'a city in a building', it was to be a country in a building, with migrants from all across Anatolia peddling their goods within.

Though the metabolist ambitions of achieving a freer society through flexible and hyper-connected design were grand, the monumentality of these utopian visions were paradoxical to user agency and openness of society. More often than not metabolist projects were designed top-down, with a disregard towards the users that would habituate the structure. The infrastructural transportation networks and over-designed units that were to plug into them were overbearing and contradicted the ideals of individual agency, freedom and democracy (2018 Akcan, 19). "From the metabolist point of view, people would paradoxically achieve freedom through comprehensive planning" (2010 Lin, 95).

A similar contradiction emerges in one of Çubuk's treatise on urban planning in his book İnandığım Şehircilik, (The Planning I Believe In). In the overwhelming majority of his writing Cubuk highlights the importance of democratic and less autocratic approaches to city master

planning. He criticizes the subsidiary roles urban planners had to play in designing the city: "The planner has largely been defined as the rationalizing person for politicians" (Çubuk, 132). Çubuk criticizes how planning was always subservient to political ambitions, with the design power ultimately in the hands of the politician. Çubuk then goes on to extensively discuss the roles of the architect and the urban planner and the unfair hierarchy of design agency between the two that disadvantages the planner's abilities to create efficient and effective urban landscapes. Though Çubuk is preoccupied in critiquing systems of design agency, in his treatise the question of the user agency never arises in these hierarchies. Çubuk is unsatisfied with the current state of distribution of agency in design practices; however, his ideal system resembles a technocracy more than a democracy. For him, the user agency or even input in design does not seem to be a relevant register. Mirroring the metabolist paradox, Çubuk's Terminal was to be a monument to a liberalizing society, an open-society, with individuals' unending liberties to travel, commerce and migrate, yet in its design philosophy it was disinterested in incorporating such an openness.

This paradoxical design philosophy inherent both in metabolism and the terminal could be due to the nature of a common architectural ancestor : the megastructure. In his book Megastructure, Reyner Brehem puts forth the argument that other contemporaneous massive utopian projects from across the world were connected endeavours and metabolism was a part of this lineage. Brehem points out that one of the earliest precedents for this avant-garde lineage is Le Corbusier's 1931 megastructural project Plan Obus for Algiers, an undeniably symbolic design for the colonial French dominance over the North African region. In his celebration of French investment in colonized Morocco, Le Corbusier's stance regarding the social role of his designs for the region are clear:

> "The Arab discovered his educator, his instructor. He did not bat an eyelid of doubt. With two hands outstretched, leaving all his hopeless deceit behind, he loved, admired, understood the new times and respected France with all his conviction. Architecture and urbanism can be the great educator." (1937, 47)

Though the megastructural movement that was institutionalized following World War II was outspokenly against colonial architecture in Africa (Deyong, 113), formal and programmatic ambitions of their designs posed striking similarities. With its highway on the top level, the multi-level Plan Obus had residential units plugging-in to the massive linear concrete structural frame alongside other programmatic elements, intrinsic characteristics of megastructural projects of the 1950s. This design lineage, in its utopian imagination, presented a vision that was comprehensively conceived under the gaze of the architect/planner, and as Çubuk might argue, consequently the political power. The conceptual contradictions of social agency and social engineering are too present in these top-down designs aspiring to harmonious totality.

A closer look at the Metabolist branch of this lineage also reveals that even within Japanese architectural history the movement has a convoluted relationship with colonialism. After the vast invasion of East and Southeast Asia, Japanese architects, including some leading figures of the Metabolist movement, identified the newly conquered lands as 'tabula rasa', suitable to project new 'utopian' designs of exhaustive planning. (2011 Koolhaas) Even the drive to find a contextual 'tabula rasa' is significantly present in the later Metabolist visions, as aforementioned they were drawn to the sky and the sea for their untapped potential for architectural development. This instinct to find a 'tabula rasa' is also present in the design of the Terminal, considering the treatment of the site that the government designated for the project. Prior to the development on the site, the Çırpıcı riverbed amongst other capillaries of waterways, effectively softening the soil and rendering the ground unsuitable for heavy structural development. Yet blinded by economic and architectural ambitions the site was chosen for the Terminal regardless, as it was an easier target for the government takeover compared to the surrounding lots, which were privately owned by affluent investors. (Yıldırım) This site, that was considered a 'tabula rasa' by ignoring the pre-existing riverbeds, would come to haunt the rest of the design construction process. When the design of the structure became almost three times the size of the initial formal iterations, due to increase in interest to invest in the venture, the concrete structure was way too massive for the mushy soil of the site. This was when the columns raising the structure away from the mushy soil were added to the previously flat design, which meant the creation of the Lower Floor. This unforeseen necessity for structural addition required more funds than invested by those already involved in the project, hence the design placed a shopping arcade in the Lower Floor to generate the funds needed. However, this expensive structural alteration proved insufficient to prevent nature from powerfully reminding the Terminal that its site was not a tabula rasa, and Utnapishtim and his team had to deal with it. Though the tens of concrete columns were able to provide the structural for the building, they could not protect it against the water when the pipes that were to mitigate the riverbed failed. The expected water force in the pipes increased when the surrounding neighborhood, as the neo-liberal system that devised the Terminal would have idealized, adding to the pressure on the riverbed, and finally flooding the building.

The hydrostatic damage of the flood did not only crack pieces off the concrete megastructure, it also fractured the myth of totality, which professed a comprehensive responsiveness through the megastructure. It showed that although only half of the building was subjected to physical decay, the totality of the mythos was already in ruins.

Allegory of Ishtar

The darkness of the Lower Floor was almost all encompassing, especially in places where daylight had never entered. In one of those moments where I felt like we were approaching a hungry dark abyss, flashes of neon pinks and blues caught my eye. These were glimpses of light emanating from the moving LED signs of the rare shops that were still in use. Some of the shop windows were wet with condensation, and consequently perplexingly opaque outlines of shadowy silhouettes visible behind. Some others were covered with pieces of cardboard and piles of merchandise, only letting out small streams of light, which reassured me the bright signages were advertising of actually functioning businesses. Though there was a handful of shop units in use closer to where the sunlight barely reached, the lit signages signaling open businesses were a rare sight, particularly in the dark depths of the level.

One of these flashing signs advertised toast, tea and delicious breakfast. Inside the shop there were a couple of tables and chairs, a short kitchen counter and on top of it a tea kettle with steam leaking from its spout. Outside, there were a couple more tables and stools with pieces of faux-grass laid out onto the concrete floor underneath and a white picket fence surrounding them. Though decently lit there was no one in sight, inside or outside the shop.

When I asked about to whom the store belonged, Ariadne told me of the patroness, Ishtar:

> *"They always wanted to use her. She has a son in the lower here as well. She is an ex-convict. She opened this cafe all by herself. The men down stairs talk badly about her how she is a sex worker and such but I know its not true. They say those things only because she is a woman working downstairs. She still persists to run her cafe. She does not let them control her."*

Myth of Perpetuity

AAs Ishtar worked to persevere in the darkness of the Lower Floor, the Terminal struggled to argue for the continuation of its mythos of progress totality, and perpetual stability. The economic and architectonic ideals which the Terminal was a symbolic testament, were to persevere through cultivating a sense of security in the stability of the Terminal itself.

"Continuing the Way with Galip Ozturk!

UATOD council gathers in order to restructure the sector, and elects Galip Ozturk and his mates for the administration for the third time in a row. Since its foundation 34 years ago, with its openness to change and progress UATOD has declared it a mission to unite all bus drivers of the county under one roof. This way the sector will make its voice louder. (...) The re-elected director Ozturk reiterated the importance of country-wide organization and thanked the council for the reassurance of their confidence in his leadership."

("Galip", 1)

Galip Ozturk was the infamous boss of the Terminal with majority shares in the company operating it as well as owning one of the biggest bus companies in the country. Since 1994 when the Terminal went into business, he was the head administrator overseeing the 'city.' Regardless of the state of the Terminal, Ozturk remained in control, his sole figure providing a sense of assurance despite any changes. Ozturk was also known as a mafia boss, due to the violent "alternative methods" of keeping the Terminal "safe" which he adopted through his private security company. (Utnapishtim)

"Pinnacle of Safety

The Grand Istanbul Terminal is one of the biggest bus terminals in Europe. The entire building is protected 24 hours a day by Tepe Security Inc. using state of the art technologies.

In accordance with 1986 agreement between Sisli Municipality and UATOD The Grand Terminal opened in 1994. In the 242000 m2 terminal there are almost 400 bus companies and 2000 shops, with 60000 passengers commuting every day.

In this very important context Tepe Security Inc. uses the latest defense technologies. In order to instantaneously intervene in any situation that deems it necessary the company uses 43 CCTV cameras. The company also has 117 security personnel patrolling the Terminal using motorized vehicles.

Since 01.12,2000 Tepe Security Inc has caught and turned in 621 beggars, 247 suspicious individuals, 58 unlicensed cab drivers, 400 unlicensed goods cart, 402 unlicensed goods peddlers and reported 26 suspicious packages to the police forces."

("Güvenlik")

In the article, all mythos told previously amalgamate. Though it seems like an irrelevant anecdote for an article about the private security company operating in the Terminal, both the amount of commercial space and the vastness of the structure are once again advertised. Again, the article indicates that the massiveness and the ability to commerce define the Terminal's importance, and make it crucial to ensure its safety. Emblematically, the 'criminal acts' prevented by this private security company seem to be mostly illegal economic acts, particularly unreported methods of generating income. The 'pinnacle of safety' the article advertises is the safety of the profits of the Terminal, or the private company operating it, by preventing any opportunity for commerce to go unnoticed. Aiming to declare total control over ways to profit further, however miniscule, the perpetual monopoly of the Terminal on the sector is reassured. Safety means stability and thus perpetuity of commercial possibilities.

When it was no longer profitable enough, the continuity of the comprehensive regulation that would have ensured the perseverance of the economic and architectural utopia of freedom fell short, and stories of perseverance unanticipated and undesired by the Terminal arose. These stories were catalyzed by the same power systems that produced the mythos the Terminal reproduced as a monument. Yet despite them, they were stories of survival, such as Ishtar's.

Epilogue

With the neo-liberal policies the possibility of finding a job in the city increased, but the opportunities of employment could not parallel steeper increase in the migration to the city. This meant that as the Terminal acted as the busy gateway for rural populations to settle in Istanbul, the unemployment percentages remained the same, even as urban density increased. The policies that were meant to enliven the economy only benefited the few who already had the ability to invest, invest in such utopian visions of the Terminal. However, despite the mythic manipulations of perception, the system was unable to alter the extent of reality in portions of it could not afford to, such as the Lower Floor. Paralleling the effect of the neo-liberal system, the architectonic utopia that was to be the monument of uninhibited progress in a totally encompassing nature was only protected in the parts where the neo-liberal agenda could persist, portions from which from which those in power were benefiting, namely the ground-floor.

In the Lower Floor it was clear the perpetual progress that the system propagated was by no means total. The dreams of an open-society were reserved for those who already had the power to create the economic systems that they can further benefit from. Those left with unfulfilled promises of progress and freedom were now in the city, trying to make sense of the myths told to them. The underside of the misenvisioned utopian monument acted as a shelter for some were brought to the city in their belief in the myths of progress. The systems of power started dissolving first for the spaces and the people the system did consider profitable. With the ruination of the mythos, the physical and spatial decay of the monument commenced. Ruination started in portions where the mythos dissolved the earliest, and where the physical aspects of the dissolution were also the least perceivable, so that those in power could maintain their conviction in them. Alongside a space of trauma, this partial ruination of the monument created a space to persevere for those deceived by the mythos.

By appropriating one of the shop units, Ishtar was able to make a living. By altering the space to make a place for herself amongst the ruination of the system, even her mere presence was fracturing the perception that the mythos hoped to achieve. Her shop signaled that the endless continuity of mythological progress and seamless completion have failed to be perpetual. The presence of her shop disturbed the temporal linearity, mythos tried to cultivate, and made present that the monument was unable to prevent diverging temporal rhythms and trajectories from being perceptible.

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Conclusion

Grand Istanbul Bus Terminal, the monument that was to bring economic growth and social openness in its half ruination became an indication of how those ideals

were not realized. In time, the grandness of the Terminal was only attestable for those who still had the means, and the incentive to advocate for it. The Terminal became a mirror rather than a monument for the ideologies that conceived it. In its concealed decay and by the presence of those who were made to seek refuge in it, the "utopian" Terminal stands as a testament to the spectacle oriented perceptual manipulation the neo-liberal modernity seeked to propagate. Despite the efforts of UOTAB and the neo-liberal government policies the mythos of modernity could not stand unbroken when faced with stories from the Lower Floor.

Piece by piece these stories witness the ruination of the social, architectural and economic ideologies that were to materialize in the collosal structure. They present how the ideological failures manifest themselves as daunting spatial conditions catalyzing stories of trauma and survival to unfold. The disillusionment they impel is beyond revealing the ruination of the structure, their genesis is tied to the disintegration of ideologies that spawned the Terminal.

The allegorized stories are the inhumed by-products of the lucrative business of producing commercially utopian visions. Like the Terminal, their inception lies with the intrusive mythic propagation of perpetual, total progress. In their recognition, they render the totality of the grand illusion disenfranchised. They dispel commodified enchantments by tracing temporal connections outside of the linear progress modernity presupposes. With each reading, they fracture the mythos further, and through the cracks compel us to see the real condition of the ruination beyond. In their trauma, shock, and perseverance they possess the perceptual power to rupture expensive consummatory delusions. These stories do not answer the question of future, but assure the pasts previously concealed will come to define it.

Allegories are, in the realm of thought, what ruins are in the realm of things.

Walter Benjamin,
The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility

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