

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY FEHİM PAŞA KONAĞI

FEHİM PAŞA KONAĞI ADLI OYUNUN GÖSTERGEBİLİMSEL ANALİZİ

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ABSTRACT

Semiotic study of drama analyses the text according to the scientific terms. It is known that the signs such as costumes, light, make-up, props, music etc. are important for the director, actors/actresses, and audience in order to get the point of the performed text. In this study the well-known Turkish playwright Turgut Özakman's play Fehim Paşa Konağı is going to be analysed in terms of semiotic studies. In fact it is a historical play, but the playwright achieves to reach modern audience through the subjects he deals with in the text. He consciously uses traditional Turkish theatre features in the play such as shadow play, Karagöz and Hacivat, play within a play technique and also narrator to underline the colour of these elements in modern texts. In the play the playwright discusses the term bravado during the reign of II. Abdülhamid. He consciously uses coffee house in order to give the life-style and understanding of those days's people colourfully. This play was performed by Selçuk University Dilek Sabancı Conservatory, Performance of Art Department's students and directed by Murat Atak in 2015 at Selçuk University. The director follows the direction and intention of the playwright and is careful in using costumes, light, make-up, music etc. on the stage to create the atmosphere correctly. In this essay, the relation between signified and signifier of this performed text is going to be studied and its influence on the success of the play is analysed. In other words the relation between audience, director, actor/actress, light, costumes, music, make-up etc. is going to be analysed.

Keywords: Fehim Paşa Konağı, Turgut Özakman, Semiotic Study

ÖZ

Göstergebilim çalışmaları bir drama metnini bilimsel ölçütlerle değerlendiren bilim dalıdır. Kostüm, ışık, makyaj, aksesuar, müzik gibi unsurlar yönetmen, oyuncu ve seyirci için metni değerlendirme önemli unsurlardır. Bu çalışmada Turgut Özakman'ın Fehim Paşa Konağı adlı oyunu göstergebilimsel olarak incelenecektir. Yönetmen tarihi bir oyunu modern seyircinin beğenisine sunmuştur. Gölge oyunu, Karagöz-Hacivat, oyun içinde oyun tekniklerini ve anlatıcıyı bilinçli bir şekilde kullanan yönetmen böylece modern seyirciyi geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu'nun özellikleriyle tanıştırmıştır. Ayrıca özellikle o dönemin atmosferini yansıtan kahve ortamındaki kabadayılık kavramını ele alır. Bu oyun 2015 yılında Selçuk Üniversitesi Dilek Sabancı Devlet Konservatuarı Tiyatro Anasanat Dalı öğrencileri tarafından Murat Atak'ın yönetmenliğinde seyirciyle buluşmuştur. Yönetmen, yazarın amacını ve o dönemin atmosferini vermek için kostüm, ışık, makyaj, müzik vs. gibi unsurları dikkatle kullanmıştır. Bu çalışmada gösterilen ve gösteren arasındaki ilişki ve bunun oyunun başarısındaki etkisi üzerinde durulmuştur. Bir başka deyişle seyirci, yönetmen, aktör, ışık, kostüm, müzik, makyaj vs. gibi unsurların birbirleriyle ilişkilerine değinilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fehim Paşa Konağı, Turgut Özakman, Göstergebilim

1. INTRODUCTION

It can be said that the theatre is concerned with conveying meaning and understanding through signs rather than capturing a detailed illusion of reality. It is the fact that all significant activity of drama; smiles, gestures, tones of voice, blocking, music, light, character development and etc. are signs of drama. In other words 'all that is on the stage is a sign'. (Elam, 1980, 7). Ideally, theatrical signs should combine to transmit clear messages and to hierarchise the message sent. The playwrights's intentionality is perceived within a complex matrix of interpretation by director, actor/actress, designer, audience, etc. (Fortier, 2002, 137)

'Once the "doing" of theatre is reinstated, then the notion of individual authorship is also changed, given that the 'doing' also requires the collaboration of the performers, directors, technical staff, and so on, all of whom contribute to the making of the theatrical event. At this

point, one begins to grasp the plurality and complexity of the theatrical process'.
(Aston&Savona, 2007,2)

Especially the director nowadays has control over the theatrical shape and is faced with the task of organising the signifying systems of theatre at her/his disposal- lighting, scenery, props and so on- into a codified process appropriate to the production of a text. If the director fails in this task, then the performance will not make sense to the audience. In theatre everything is put before audience and has a panoramic view as opposed to a partial and pre-selected view of the stage. The audience is engaged in a project of creative collaboration, with the director and actor, in the interest of a more complete realisation of the performance. The audience is invited to participate in the construction and operation of imaginative space, and to learn such conventions as will facilitate effective participation.

In this sense Umberto Eco is agree with Charles Morris on the subject that the dynamics of signifier depends on not the intention of it but just on the interpretation of audience. The object can be a signifier just if it is regarded as a signifier by one of the audience. (Carlson, 2014, 64). In general, where the audience is invited to make sense of what they see in a production, theatre draws on the elements of theatrical language at its disposal to establish a meaningful and hierarchised system of signification simultaneously. (Pavis, 1990, 51). Such a hierarchy is constantly shifting: a shipwreck may be signified by the use of lighting effects, its aftermath by soothing music, and its impact by the entrance of actors clothed in bedraggled costuming. Although theatre offers a system of signs which have been artificially placed and purposively thought out to create meaning, levels of interpretation must vary between individual spectators. Audience's world view, cultural understanding or placement, class and gender condition shape his/her response.

2. METHOD

Semiotic studies of drama describes how to choose and arrange the elements of drama and how to create interaction among them. It is clear that the semiotic enquiry into how meaning is created and communicated through systems of encodable and decodable signs, have changed the understanding of drama. In this study the well-known Turkish playwright Turgut Özakman's play Fehim Paşa Konağı is analysed in terms of semiotic studies. This play was performed by Selçuk University Dilek Sabancı Conservatory, Performance of Art Department's students and directed by Murat Atak in 2015 at Selçuk University. In this study, the relation between signified and signifier of this performed text is studied. In other words the relation between audience, director, actor/actress, light, costumes, music etc. is analysed and the influence of this harmony on the success of the play is discussed. In this study it is proposed to see how meaning is generated through the elements involved in the scripting of drama, and how meaning is created within a performance context.

3. FEHİM PAŞA KONAĞI

Turgut Özakman is one of the contemporary Turkish playwrights. He generally writes historical plays and successfully joins the western understanding of drama and traditions of Turkish Drama. One of the features of his style is using narrator in his works to underline the fact that everything that are seen on the stage is just a play. Turgut Özakman generally uses play within a play technique just to create alienation which functions to give the inner world of the character and make clear the relationship between the characters. Historical background of the play also creates alienation. Because the playwright gives those days's atmosphere through costume, language and relationship between characters.

It is ironic that the feature of alienation that are used in the plays of Turgut Özakman does not function like the Brechtian style. Brecht makes recurrent use of direct address to the audience, breaking down the conventional barriers, spatial and in terms of participation, between actor and audience. Turgut Özakman uses features of alienation as the elements of traditional Turkish drama to create a comic atmosphere, but does not use them to cause the audience question and analyse the reality and life, etc. like Brecht does.

Fehim Paşa Konağı is a historical play that all the events happen during the reign of II. Abdülhamit in Ottoman Period in the end of 19. century. In those days some people are ready to declare constitutional monarchy, some people are afraid of it without knowing its meaning. In the coffee house of Rasim Baba the folk's understanding and expectation from government and constitutional monarchy are foregrounded. During the reign of II. Abdülhamit most of the people earn their life through using violence against innocent, poor people just to show that they are close man of II. Abdülhamit. In this sense the term bravado is foregrounded in the play. Because the play is the story of Rasim Baba who is one of the bravado of II. Abdülhamit's undercover man Fehim Paşa. Rasim Baba was very popular when he was young and powerful. But by the time he lost his reputation and has to open a coffee house. He wants his son to be a bully like

himself but Yusuf is just the opposite of his father in the sense of his interest in art. Yusuf enters the mansion of Fehim Paşa to entertain the women by the help of his ability on art. Because in the mansion he sings songs or plays Karagöz and Hacivat to the women of mansion. Although its forbidden to look at any woman he falls in love with the daughter of Fehim Paşa. He runs away from the mansion and drinks because of his impossible love but the neighbours think that he decides to be a bully like his father by just looking at his drunken manners. He tries to make clear the fact that he cannot be a bully but nobody wants to believe in him. In the end of the play Yusuf underlines the reality that people run after the power and in order to get that power they don't hesitate to use violence against people, they ignore the terms; being human, freedom, love, art, etc. For him, people have a chance to earn their life with their honour and live in peace if they really want.

In Fehim Paşa Konağı, Turgut Özakman and also the director uses Karagöz and Hacivat, traditional shadow plays, as play within play technique just to give Yusuf's chance to enter the mansion. It takes its name from its main characters, Karagöz. It was performed by a single puppet master, who voiced all of the characters, and accompanied by tambourine. It is said that the play came into Anatolia after Yavuz Sultan Selim, who had conquered Egypt in 1517, had brought the shadow play artists to his court. It is interesting to see that the playwright/director combine the modern play with the traditional Turkish drama and they want audience not to forget Turkish dramatic values.



Image 1. Traditional shadow play, Karagöz and Hacivat, in the play.

3.1. Set Design

Set design is one of the important sign of drama that it is the visual environment which gives time, place and creates the proper atmosphere. The play is a historical one, thus the director creates the atmosphere by regarding this fact. The director prefers to use changing scenery to give different place in a short time on the stage. In the play the events occur in Fehim Paşa Mansion, Deli Suat Paşa Mansion, and the coffee house of Rasim Baba. In this sense timing is very important like all other plays. But this play has a fast rhythm especially in the change of scenery throughout the play. (Yüksel, 2000, 80). The changing scenery is turned by the actor, first year students of drama department, who are seen also by the audience. But they do not show any mimic to evaluate the play. Their only duty is to arrange the changing scenery just on time.

The setting coffee house is the common place in Ottoman period that men came together, play cards or chat each other. They talk about daily problems, politics, etc. The other setting Mansion is related to people's social statue. Fehim Paşa and Deli Suat Paşa are rich and have a power among the people. This situation is also foregrounded by the place that they live. It is seen that men and women do not stay at the same place

because of the religious belief in the mansion. Although men are portrayed as powerful in the play the women control the mansion. They like to dance, listen to music, and etc.



Image 2: Harem in Fehim Paşa Konağı

The director does not use lots of props on the stage. This preference is suitable to the style of the play, also. Because the play combines the features of traditional Turkish drama and modern drama. For instance the director achieves to create the atmosphere of mansion director by using only a throne/armchair, he creates the atmosphere of a coffee house by using only old chairs.

In the back of the stage the musicians are seen in a height. All of them are seen by the audience by this way the director implies that they are part of the play/events. In the beginning of the play they are beside a black veil. The play starts with their music and the veil is opened slowly. The director does not use light on them when they do not have any role but they have to follow the events on the stage again regarding the timing of the music.

3.2. Actors/ Actresses

It is the fact that actor is in the center of performance; he/she is the connection of playwright, director and audience. (Pavis, 1996, 79).

‘The most common case of the subject in the drama is the figure of the actor. The figure of the actor is the dynamic unity of an entire set of signs, the carrier of which may be the actor’s body, voice, movements, but also various objects, from parts of the costume to the set. The important thing is, however, and may do so to such an extent that by his actions he may replace all the sign carriers...’ (Veltrusky, 1964, 84).

We can address the complexity of the actor as a sign by separating out some of the key ways in which the sign of performer is constituted, by examining the actor as the conveyor of the text, and as the site of interconnecting sign-systems.

In this play it is seen that Turgut Özakman prefers to create type instead of character just to analyse the characteristic human behaviour that are seen from Ottoman period to nowadays. And the actors/actresses create their role according to this understanding.



Image 3: All the actors/actresses of the play with the musicians.

The narrator is described as information necessary to the spectator's understanding of the developing action is furnished on a regular basis. It may be offered by a character or characters within or outside the framework of the narrative, or by a formal chorus with a collective identity.

Özakman uses narrator as one of the character of the play, that is; the narrator tells the play, but it is not enough for him/her. He/she wants the major character's role, he/she does not like the performance of the others, he/she quarrels about the play with them. This situation improves the function of alienation at the same time. Gökhan Kum successfully creates a narrator who tells the story and joins the episodes but at the same time he does not hesitate to prevent the other's role on the stage. He sometimes makes comments on the attitudes of Yusuf as the voice of common. He changes his costume on the stage, sometimes by using only a fez, sometimes by using only a jacket he plays different types.

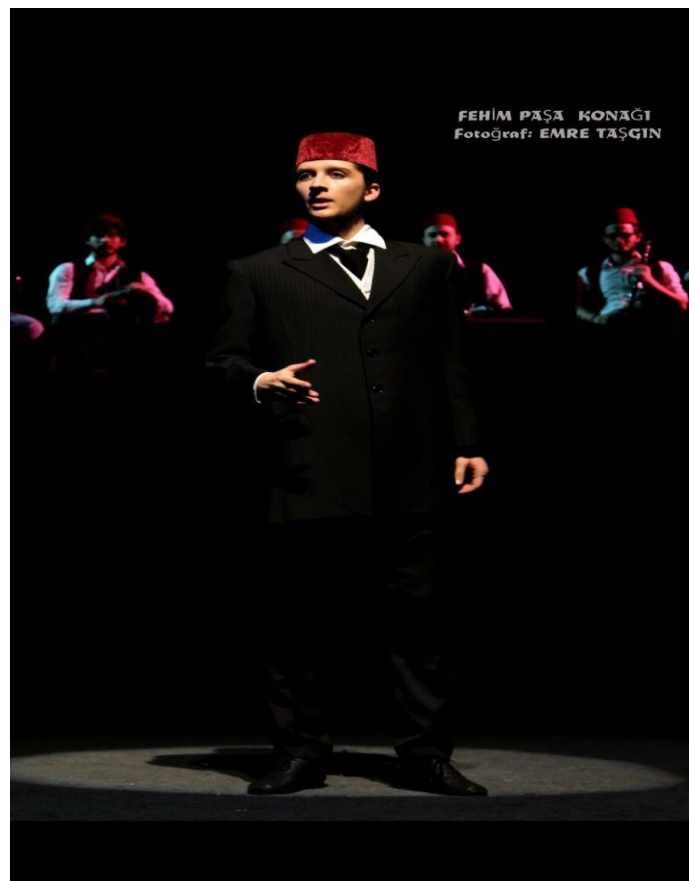


Image 4: The narrator of the play

Rasim Baba was one of the well-known bully when he was young. Now he is very old and he has healthy problems. Thus he has to open a coffee house just to earn his life. In this place he talks to his old friends and remembers the old days. His only aim is to see his son as a well-know bully like him. Because he is not educated and does not know any other way of living. Burak Günsayar achieves to give his inner conflict and his boy language as a bully on the stage.

Pertev Bey is the friend of Rasim Baba. He is a musician in the mansion. He does not think objectively. Because it is clear that the love between Yusuf and the daughter of Fehim Paşa is not possible, but he believes that they can come together. He is emotional in this sense. Ahmet Çakır creates this naive role by using a smooth voice and clean face. He also plays oud on the stage to make his type real. Fehim Paşa is a political symbol in the play. He is afraid of democracy/freedom. Because he knows folk begins to question his behaviour if freedom exists in the society. Because he all the time follows the unlawful way to reach his aim, such as using violence or getting bribery. In the play it is underlined that in fact he does not have any idealism, he just want to be closer to the powerful one. The director consciously creates a comic atmosphere through the physical appearance of the actor. Orkun Huylu is a short actor and this situation contrasts with his eager to use violence. Thus throughout the play he jumps like a ball to show his anger and not having enough power to use violence.



Image 5: Fehim Paşa and Yusuf in the play

Deli Suat Paşa is the rival of Fehim Paşa in the play. It is seen he is on the side of people who really wants democracy/freedom. But he does not have any idea about this terms. He is just like Fehim Paşa. Both of them believe in that people can be governed only by using violence and pressure on them. Burak Öztürk succesfully gives comic side of this type and his eager to use violence. Wife gains the control of mansion. She knows the weakness of Fehim Paşa and uses it succesfully. She does not also have any idea about the term freedom. She just wants to be powerful in the society. The director successfully achieves to create the contrast between wife and husband. Irmak Bavkır (wife) is taller than his husband, Orkun Huylu. Thus their dialogue and discussions become comic on the stage. It is also ironic that Fehim Paşa cannot use pressure even on his wife, but he wants everyone to be afraid of him. Especially in palace and mansion the women stay at their home and waste their time by getting lesson about being a lady which includes playing an instrument. They do not allow to be outside. They do not have any idea about the outside world. So they have to improve themselves by reading or playing an instrument. Wife and Mihriban is one of the representatives of this understanding of those days.



Image 6: Fehim Paşa with his wife

Mihriban is a beautiful girl and does not want to marry Yusuf because he is an artist which means nothing for him. In fact her attitude gives us a clue about the situation of artist in the Ottoman society. Because the artist does not have any importance in the society in those days. Ceren Kayış with his blonde hair and green eyes achieves to give a snob daughter of Paşa who pay attention to richness and power. Yusuf is son of Rasim Baba. He is interested in theatre and music. He does not want to be a bully like his father. He does not believe that violence is a solution. Instead he wants to read books, sings songs which are related to love. He enters Fehim Paşa Mansion to play Karagöz and Hacivat and falls in love with Mihriban. Ersen Ocak creates this type with his naive manners and smooth voice, also.

Aziz-Arif symbolize neighbourhood that is a very common usage in traditional Turkish drama. In the coffee house they gossip and gives every detail about what is happened in the neighbourhood. But their decision is the turning point of the play. That is; when Fehim Paşa turn Yusuf out of the mansion they organize everyone in the mansion not to give any service to him and his family. They left him alone. These two characters also create comic atmosphere when they are telling the events in the neighbourhood sometimes by dancing sometimes by animating. The director prefers to study with Doruk Altunkaya and Fatih Yağlıcan that their physical appearance is alike like twins. So on the stage they complete each other. Düztaban Osman's life story implies the understanding of bully in those days. Because he wants to be like Rasim Baba. He enjoys to let out a yell which is the symbol of being a bully. Hasan Pehlivanoğlu achieves to use his body and voice like a bully who is very naive, in fact. He is the one also who does not hesitate to say reality in the play.

3.3. Language

It is known that the function of dialogue is to create the reality of the dramatic universe on the stage. In Fehim Paşa Konağı, Rasim Baba and Düztaban Osman uses slang words throughout the play which is suitable to their social position in the society. They use 'kill, knife, violence, death, money, honour' several times in the play which are important in their life. Both of them also let out a yell in the play to foreground their personality.

Fehim Paşa and Deli Suat Paşa uses aristocratic language because of their social situation. Their language is sometimes difficult to understand because they prefer to speak Ottoman Turkish Language. Sometimes they use slang words, too. Because they are bully like their man, in fact. Pertev Bey and Yusuf's style are completely different from the others. Both of them are very naive and interested in love, equality, and

humanbeing, etc. Thus it is surprising to see Yusuf when he is drunk and trying to behave like a bully. Because that language does not suit to his personality.

It is seen that in the play the playwright/director uses leitmotives such as freedom and bravado. It is ironic that in fact nobody has any idea about freedom. In the coffee house they ask the meaning of freedom to each other and could not find out the meaning and importance of it, even Perteve Bey who is an educated man. It is the same in the family of Fehim Paşa, he and his family questions the term and cannot say anything exactly about it and Fehim Paşa onyl decides that they do not have any right to live when it comes to society. In a sense he accepts he behaves badly to people.

3.4. Music

Throughout the play music helps to change the scenery. By the help of narrator and music the set design and characters have enough time for the next setting. In the play traditional Turkish music is used which is suitable to the time of the play. In those days woman learns to play an instrument and sing songs in their mansion. Also in the play Mihriban, daughter of Fehim Paşa, plays oud and sing a song to tell her inner world. The same situation is seen in Yusuf, too. He sings a song which tells his love in the play. It is clear that the music in the play portray the psychology of the characters, and sometimes it is used to entertain the audience. (Pekman, 2002, 101).

3.5. Lighting Design

The director has to get the idea of lighting designer to make the connection between actor's attitude among the setting and director's aim in giving visualiyt of the play. Appia is the first director who pays attention to the importance of lighting on the stage. If it is used successfully it gives atmosphere, colour, perspective and depth to setting. In the play floodlights and spotlights are used to give the psychology of the characters and atmosphere of the scene. For instance in the beginning of the play the stage is dimmed because it is a coffee house and candles are used to light that place in those days. The spotlights are used on the narrator when he was on the stage. This also implies the timing of changing scenery. For every episode local lightning is used in the play. (Uyan, 2008, 103).

3.6. Make-Up and Costume

Costume is employed to index the dramatist personae in terms of character, self-image and self-presentation, and social and economic status. Costume is the first sign of audience to make connection between actor and his role. It gives the first impression about character's personality, social position, etc.



Image 7: The actresses and actors of the play with their costume and make-up

In the play the costumes are chosen by regarding the time of the play. Because it is also historical play that men and women's costumes has to be suitable to that Ottoman period and character's social class. The costumes of bully are different from the costumes of Fehim Paşa and Deli Suat Paşa. For instance Rasim

Baba and Düztaban Osman wear white sleeve and black waistcoat and fez. Deli Suat Paşa and Fehim Paşa uses medal on their jacket to improve their power. But the director uses the medals even on their night dress to imply their understanding. Fez is one of the signifier that throughout the play all the men even the musicians wear. Beard is another sign of actors which is common in those days. Only Yusuf and Pertev Bey do not have beard which symbolize their naivety. The women's costumes are also colourful and they use veil to close their face in the case of sudden entrance of any man to their room. The character's make-up is not exaggerated that their mimics and gestures can easily be seen. Only İlayda Alakoç has to be coloured in black because she is one of the concubine in Fehim Paşa Mansion and she is Arabian. Her make-up is made according to this reality.

3.7. Audience

The audience's reactions give clue about their understanding. Although we are in 21. century the attitude and costumes are not so far away because of the historical films on TV and cinema which also tell that time. Thus the audience enjoy the play. The performed text's audience consists of not only university students but also matures from different backgrounds. It is the fact that the plot of the play is so common and the way it is performed is not so complex that lots of the people do not hesitate to come with their family especially with their children. In the play it is clear that the discourse is social rather than philosophical. Human behaviour is subject to comic scrutiny but the playwright and also the director wants the audience to pay attention to universal concepts such as; love, freedom, art, etc. Thus the audience knows that the events occur in the beginnings of 19. century but they also recognize that still people have problem with the understanding and usage of freedom, love. And it is ironic that still violence is one of the big problem of this century. Only its shape, and its style is changed nowadays. People still try to find out a peaceful life.

The audience also follows the contrast between Rasim Baba and his son and also the concepts of bravado and freedom. From the beginning of the play in fact it is implied that Yusuf cannot be a bully. Thus at the end of the play Rasim Baba has to accept this fact. Also audience gets the function of Aziz and Arif correctly that they laugh at them most of the time, and appreciate their decision about Fehim Paşa. It can be said that audience understands the play and gives the right reaction to the character's utterances and behaviours. Because in the end they share the idea of Yusuf.

4. CONCLUSION

Semiotic studies of the drama concerns relationship between audience, director, actors/actresses, designers, etc. with the performed text (Çamurdan, 1996,37). In this study it is seen that the signs that are used on the stage give the main theme of the play, Fehim Paşa Konağı. The actors/actresses achieve to use the signifiers to give the meaning of the text. The director creates the play's world through costumes, make-up, language and set design successfully. As a result, the performed text reaches the audience and this means that the audience, the actors/actresses, the director, the designers share an experience together.

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