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ESERİNE YAPISALCI BİR YAKLAŞIM

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A STRUCTURALIST ANALYSIS OF

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S "ROMEO AND JULIET"¹

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'İN "ROMEO VE JULIET" ESERİNE

YAPISALCI BİR YAKLAŞIM

Dr. Halit ALKAN

Abstract: Structuralism is an approach that defines the relationship between the part and the whole. This study aims to analyse William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" in terms of the structuralist approach. In the surface structure, there is love between Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet who are the children of hostile families. In terms of syntagmatic relation, Romeo and Juliet fall in love with each other, decide to marry and keep it in secret. In terms of paradigmatic relation, there is homology of relationship between the two hostile families. As for the surface structure, there is a symmetrical arrangement of plot between public scenes and private scenes. As for the surface meaning, there is the thematic conflict between hatred and love. As for the deep structure, its harmony operates on binary opposition between public hatred and private love. Its melody operates on the fixed cycle of public hatred and private love. As for the deep meaning, where there is public hatred, private love is helpless. Love can live forever only when society is in peace.

Key Words: Structuralism, hatred, love, William Shakespeare, "Romeo and Juliet".

Öz: Yapısalcılık parça ile bütün arasındaki ilişkiyi tanımlayan bir yaklaşımdır. Bu çalışma William Shakespeare'in "Romeo ve Juliet" eserini yapısalcı yaklaşım açısından incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Yüzeysel yapıda, düşman ailelerin çocukları olan Romeo Montague ile Juliet Capulet arasında bir aşk ilişkisi vardır. Dizimsel bağıntı açısından Romeo ve Juliet birbirlerine aşık olurlar, evlenmeye karar verirler ve bunu gizli tutarlar. Dizisel bağıntı açısından iki düşman aile arasındaki ilişkide eşyapılılık vardır. Eserin yüzeysel yapıda kamusal sahneler ve özel sahneler ara-

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sında simetrik bir olay örgüsü düzeni vardır. Yüzeysel anlamda ise nefret ve sevgi arasında tematik bir çatışma vardır. Derin yapıya gelince, eserin uyumu kamusal sahnelerdeki nefret ve özel sahnelerdeki aşk arasında ikili karşıtlığa dayanır. Derin anlamda ise kamusal alanda nefret varsa, özel alanda aşk çaresizdir. Aşk, ancak toplum barış içinde olduğu zaman sonsuza kadar yaşayabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yapısalcılık, nefret, aşk, William Shakespeare, "Romeo ve Juliet".

INTRODUCTION

In order to discover the deep structure of a textual work out of the surface structure, as a critical approach structuralism² aims to decode the encoded whole which is composed of a system (Lane, 1970: 14-15). Sources of structuralism are Ferdinand de Saussure, Russian Formalism and Prague School (Yüksel, 1995: 13, 33).³ The book *Course in General Linguistics* written by Ferdinand de Saussure which expresses the new linguistic approach is the first source of structuralism. Saussure considers the language as a system which is understandable, consistent, and self-sufficient (1976: 106). Three linguistics schools have been formed in terms of structural linguistic view: the Prague School, the Copenhagen School and the American School.

During the second decade of the 20th century, Russian formalism emerged in Russia as a reaction to social and symbolic point of view in the field of literature. In Russian formalism, "form" is a phenomenon that can be examined by itself as both the envelope of content and its own integrity (Eichenbaum, 1965: 112). The Russian formalists from Russia gathered under the roof of the Prague School and set the basic principles of the structuralist movement. The person who bridges Russian formalism and structuralism is Russian formalist Roman Jakobson. Jakobson mentions the following six functions in any act of verbal communication (1971: 95):

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| 1. Sender | 4. Contact |
| 2. Message | 5. Code |
| 3. Context | 6. Receiver |

Claude Levi-Strauss brings a structuralist approach to the human sciences. Levi-Strauss who tries to understand the human being examines them as interrelated items to form a general system of unrelated events (1963: 87). Every myth is considered to be a "word" that reveals the structure of "language". Narrative analysis of the epic, folk tale, myth, short story or novel takes up the subject-matter of the text such as the story, the characters, the actions, and the themes. The text which is a meaningful whole expressing a writer's state of mind is composed of events making up a story and manifesting characters in action. The meaning of the text is based on the meaning of its parts. The meaning of its every part is established by the events that might have happened in place of it without making nonsense of the whole. The text produces its meaning

² The theory of structuralism is retrieved from the article by Alkan, H. (2016). A Structuralist Analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre's "The Flies". *Artuklu Human and Social Science Journal*, 1(1), 64-71.

³ Quotes from Turkish references were translated into English by the author of this study.

through syntagmatic constraints, with regard for paradigmatic contrasts (Pettit, 1975: 42, 43). Vladimir Propp who is one of the Russian formalists makes the first narrative analysis in the field of structuralist literary criticism. Propp who has examined the contents of a hundred Russian folk tales find the seven spheres of action for all tales as the following (Alkan, 2016: 65):

1. Villain
2. Donor
3. Helper
4. Princes
5. Dispatcher
6. Hero
7. False Hero

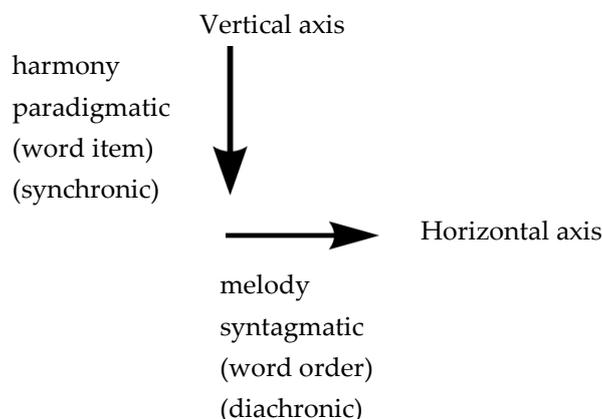
As for the actions of the characters in Russian folk tales, Propp mentions thirty-one functions, the sequence of which is always identical. In regard to their structure, all fairy tales are of one type (Propp, 2005: 22-23). Algirdas Julien Greimas proposes the actantial model by identifying the basic units that makes up the plot of the narrative. He divides an action into six actants that are also divided into three oppositions on the axis of desire, transmission and power (Greimas, 1983: 207):

1. Subject/Object
2. Sender/Receiver
3. Helper/Opponent

Noam Chomsky, who developed the work of the American structuralist linguistics school, provides a deep structure and surface structure for each sentence. While deep structure is the basic form of the meaning of the sentence, surface structure is the form of explanation of the meaning that exists in the deep structure. Surface structure refers to surface meaning, and deep structure refers to deep meaning (Chomsky, 1965: 16). Roland Barthes considers structuralist action as an intellectual process that is carried out in a systematic way. In order to reveal the laws of that object that is not obvious, he breaks up the object and re-constructs it. That object becomes an object of "ideational" (Barthes, 1972: 214-215).

Theoretical development of structuralism leads to the basic concepts and terms of structuralism. System which is invisible is a self-operating wholeness composed of parts. In this system, each part not only relates to the other part but also to the whole (Hawkes, 1989: 16). While synchronic linguistics deals with the status of a language in a specific time, diachronic linguistics analyses it at various periods in historical development (Culler, 1973: 8). Signifier is the element by which we refer to signified. The sign is created when the word "tree" establishes the concept of "tree" in the mind of listeners (Saussure, 1976: 61). Binary opposition means two theoretical opposites in terms of differences, not similarities such as woman/man, raw/cooked (Leach, 1973: 36-37). Syntagmatic relation is the horizontal relationships between units of a language. Each unit has to be in relationship with the next part and the whole. In order to organize a sentence, the words are set from left to right. Paradigmatic relation is the relations between the units of a language which can replace each other on the vertical axis, but cannot come together in the same statement (Aksan, 1977: 116). Harmony refers to the paradigmatic or vertical aspect of music. Melody is a linear succession of musical tones on the syntagmatic or horizontal

axis (Levi-Strauss, 1963: 212):



Homology means binary opposition between two things which forms together a homology. A homology does not deal only with two object or people, but also with two relationships (Hawkes, 1989: 53).

This study aims to analyse William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" in the context of a structuralist approach, only text-based and regardless of the author's biography and the period in which the play was written. This approach examines not only the relations of the elements but also determines the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships of the implicit signs based on binary oppositions in the text's surface structure. It makes them explicit signs to reach the deep structure and the deep meaning. According to William Shakespeare (1564-1616), human beings are neither wholly good nor wholly evil, but instead are more or less alike because they awake out of a dream and into reality, leading to the danger of hasty action. Shakespeare's aspect of human's relations is based on the binary opposition between hatred and love, and public scenes and private scenes. Shakespeare expresses this concept of human's relations in his play "Romeo and Juliet".

A Structuralist Analysis of "Romeo and Juliet"

This play is analysed synchronically. In the surface structure, there is the love between Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet who are the children of hostile aristocratic families in Verona, Italy. There is an age-old blood feud between their families into which they are born. There is hatred in the public scene because Tybalt who is the nephew to Capulet's wife and the cousin of Juliet insults Benvolio who is the nephew to Mountague and a friend to Romeo: "What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds? Turn thee Benvolio, look upon thy death" (Shakespeare, 2000: 37). Tybalt is ready to fight to death because he is a trouble-maker. Benvolio replies, "I do but keep the peace, put up thy sword, or manage it to part these men with me" (Shakespeare, 2000: 37). Benvolio does not want to fight because he is a peace-maker. The hatred in the public scene which has caused disturbance in social order is expressed by Prince of Verona: "By thee, old Capulet, and Montague, have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets... If ever you disturb our streets again, your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace" (Shakespeare, 2000: 38). Prince of Verona does not want the social order to be disturbed, and so he warns both families.

Paris, who is a kinsman to Prince, wants to marry Juliet Capulet. Since her father Mr Capulet approves that marriage, he holds a masked ball in order that Paris and Juliet can speak with each other. Romeo Montague who is in love with Rosaline, a relative of the Capulet, goes to the party in order to see her. In the hall of Capulet's house when Paris and Juliet are dancing, Romeo notices Juliet, praises her beauty and falls in love with her. Romeo has forgotten Rosaline since it was not a true love. Tybalt of Capulet, a trouble-maker, notices Romeo, his foe Montague. He has to leave Romeo to stay as a guest in order not to make disturbance. Romeo goes to Juliet and meets her. This is the first meeting between Romeo and Juliet. When Romeo finds the chance to touch Juliet's hand, he expresses his love to Juliet who responds in the same way:

Romeo: If I profane with my unworhiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

Juliet: For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

Romeo: O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair (Shakespeare, 2000: 54).

Here, the vocabulary of the body (hand, lips, kiss, palm) meets the vocabulary of religion (holy, shrine, pilgrims, saints). These young lovers compare their physical desire and attraction with their religious concerns in order to attest to the seriousness of their love. There is love in the private scene because of the first kiss between Romeo and Juliet. After Juliet leaves, Romeo learns that Juliet is the daughter of Mr Capulet, and he thinks his fate is fixed by saying "my life is my foe's debt" (Shakespeare, 2000: 55). In the same way, when Juliet learns that Romeo is the son of Mr Montague, she says "my only love sprung from my only hate" (Shakespeare, 2000: 55). This love remains a secret love because nobody knows of it. Romeo who wants to see Juliet again leaps over the garden wall of the Capulet. There is love in the private scene where there is the first balcony scene at night because Romeo, who stands in the garden and addresses Juliet at her window, compares the brightness of Juliet's eyes with the stars. In terms of paradigmatic relation, there is homology of relationship between the two hostile families because the Montague and the Capulet families continue their hostility towards each other and impose it on their children. Juliet offers Romeo to reject their identities by saying "deny thy father and refuse thy name; or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I'll no longer be a Capulet" (Shakespeare, 2000: 59). Romeo takes her at her word by saying "call me but love, and I'll be new baptized" (Shakespeare, 2000: 59). In terms of syntagmatic relation, Romeo and Juliet who fall in love with each other decide to marry and keep it in secret. Therefore, Juliet tells Romeo that she waits about the news for arranging their marriage: "If that thy bent of love be honourable, thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow... where and what time thou wilt perform the rite" (Shakespeare, 2000: 62)

On the following day, Romeo wants the nurse of Juliet to inform Juliet that she should come to Friar Lawrence's cell for arranging marriage. The nurse who is a helper and secret sharer informs Juliet about the marriage: "Then hide you hence to Friar Lawrence' cell; there stays a husband to make you a wife" (Shakespeare, 2000: 73). Friar Lawrence is a clergyman and

also a friend to Romeo. He thinks that there will be peace between these two hostile families if the only child of each family marries with each other. Romeo and Juliet get married, but keep it in secret.

There is hatred in the public scene in the daytime because Romeo's visiting the party has injured Tybalt who takes it personally. Tybalt calls Romeo a villain. After getting married with Juliet, Romeo who becomes a relative of Tybalt does not want to fight and says that he is not a villain: "Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee doth much excuse the appertaining rage to such a greeting. Villain am I none" (Shakespeare, 2000: 77). Upon these words, Tybalt who becomes very angry draws his sword. Tybalt under Romeo's arm wounds Mercutio who is a trouble-maker, a kinsman to Prince, and a friend to Romeo. Mercutio blames Romeo before dying: "Why the devil came you between us? I was hurt under your arm" (Shakespeare, 2000: 78). Romeo who feels guilty about Mercutio's death says; "Tybalt, take the 'villain' back again that late thou gav'st me, for Mercutio's soul is but a little way above our heads, staying for thine to keep him company" (Shakespeare, 2000: 79). Romeo kills Tybalt in order to pay him back. The Prince of Verona banishes Romeo: "Romeo slew him [Tybalt], he [Tybalt] slew Mercutio... And for that offence immediately we do exile him [Romeo] hence" (Shakespeare, 2000: 81). Juliet, who gets from her nurse the news about the death of her cousin Tybalt, does not blame Romeo who is her husband because she loves him much more than her cousin. Therefore, she reasons in an optimistic way by saying; "that villain cousin would have killed my husband" (Shakespeare, 2000: 84). As for the surface structure, there is a symmetrical arrangement of characters:

Prince of Verona				
Benvolio (peace-maker)	Mercutio	<i>hatred</i> <i>conflict</i> <i>love</i>	Paris	Tybalt (trouble-maker)
	Mountagues		Capulets	
	Romeo		Juliet	
	Friar Lawrence (helper) (share secret)		Nurse (helper) (share secret)	

There is love in the private scene where there is the second balcony scene at night because Romeo comes to see his lover Juliet. Romeo tells her that he is banished from Verona: "I must be gone and live, or stay and die" (Shakespeare, 2000: 92). There is love in the private scene because of the last kiss between Romeo and Juliet when Rome asks for one kiss: "Farewell, farewell, one kiss, and I'll descend" (Shakespeare, 2000: 93). They kiss, and Romeo descends.

Mr Capulet wants his daughter Juliet marry Paris, but Juliet who will kill herself rather marrying Paris consults Friar for a solution. Friar plans her fake death. Juliet gets from Friar a bottle of potion which will stop her pulse, take away her breath and her warmth so that she will look like a dead person for a short time. Juliet asks for it without hesitation: "Give me, give me! O tell not me of fear!" (Shakespeare, 2000: 103). Friar plans to send Romeo a letter informing him about the fake death in order that Romeo will come at night to take Juliet to Mantua. On the following day, the Capulet see that Juliet is dead. Unfortunately, the message of Juliet's fake

death fails to reach Romeo. Romeo who believes Juliet dead returns to Verona and buys poison. In the meantime, Romeo who writes about his secret love and marriage sends his letter to his father, Mr Montague. At Juliet's tomb at the monument of the Capulet, Paris charges Romeo with murder of Tybalt and believes that Romeo has "come to do some villanous shame to the dead bodies" (Shakespeare, 2000: 118). Romeo kills Paris who attacks him. Romeo does not want a life without Juliet and says; "here will I set up my everlasting rest. [...] Eyes, look your last. Arms, take your last embrace! And, lips, O you the doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss" (Shakespeare, 2000: 119).

Considering it a dateless bargain to engrossing death, Romeo drinks the poison just before Juliet wakes up. When Juliet finds a cup of poison in the hand of Romeo's corpse beside herself, she not only kisses his lips in order to take some poison, but also stabs herself with Romeo's dagger: "Then I'll be brief. O happy dagger. This is thy sheath. There rest, and let me die" (Shakespeare, 2000: 121). Romeo's letter is a proof for Friar's speech who tells Prince, the Montague, and the Capulet about what has happened. The hatred in the public scene is expressed by Prince of Verona:

Where be these enemies? Capulet, Montague,
See what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love!
And I, for winking at your discords too,
Have lost a brace of kinsmen. All are punish'd (Shakespeare, 2000: 125).

Both hostile families who have continued an age-old feud among themselves come to understand that their hatred is not only futile but also has caused the death of their only child. Because of their children's love and marriage, the two hostile families not only reconcile but also erect their children's statue. Therefore, social order is restored in the public scene.

As for the surface structure, there is a symmetrical arrangement of plot between public scene and private scene:

Public scene	Private scene	Private scene	Public scene	Private scene	Private scene	Public scene
<i>Hatred</i>	<i>Love</i> (First kiss)	<i>Love</i> (1.Balcony)	<i>Hatred</i>	<i>Love</i> (2.Balcony)	<i>Love</i> (Last kiss)	<i>Hatred</i>
Prince	Romeo and Juliet	Romeo and Juliet	Prince	Romeo and Juliet	Romeo and Juliet	Prince
Social order <i>disturbed</i>						Social order <i>restored</i>

As for the surface meaning, there is the thematic conflict between hatred and love. In the surface structure, *hatred* and *love* are implicit signs. These signs become explicit signs in the deep structure in the following sense: While the signifier is *hatred*, the signified is *a disturbed social order*; and while the signifier is *love*, the signified is *peace*. As for the deep structure, its

harmony operates on binary opposition between *public hatred* and *private love*. In public scenes, social order is disturbed because there is hatred between two hostile families. On the other hand, in private scenes there is love because Romeo and Juliet who are the children of hostile families continue to love each other, get married and keep it in secret. After their death, social order is restored. Its melody operates on the fixed cycle of *public hatred* and *private love*. As for the deep meaning, where there is public hatred, private love is helpless. When society is in peace, love can live forever.

Conclusion

Structuralism is an approach that defines the relationship between the part and the whole. This study aims to analyse William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" in terms of the structuralist approach. This play is analysed synchronically. In the surface structure, there is love between Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet who are the children of hostile families. In terms of syntagmatic relation, Romeo and Juliet fall in love with each other, decide to marry and keep it in secret. In terms of paradigmatic relation, there is homology of relationship between the two hostile families because the Montagues and the Capulets continue their hostility towards each other and impose it on their children. As for the surface structure, there is a symmetrical arrangement of plot between public scenes and private scenes. As for the surface meaning, there is the thematic conflict between hatred and love. In the surface structure, hatred and love are implicit signs. These signs become explicit signs in the deep structure in the following sense: While the signifier is hatred, the signified is a disturbed social order; and while the signifier is love, the signified is peace. As for the deep structure, its harmony operates on binary opposition between public hatred and private love. In public scenes, social order is disturbed because there is hatred between two hostile families. On the other hand, in private scenes there is love because Romeo and Juliet who are the children of hostile families continue to love each other, get married and keep it in secret. After their death, social order is restored. Its melody operates on the fixed cycle of public hatred and private love. As for the deep meaning, where there is public hatred, private love is helpless. Love can live forever only when society is in peace.

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