

TAHSIN YÜCEL'S ENVIRONMENTAL SENSIVITY IN HIS NOVEL "THE SKYSCRAPER"

CELAL ASLAN

Department of Turkish Language and Literature Education, Van/Turkey
E-mail: celalasan@yyu.edu.tr

Abstract- Tahsin Yücel's *The Skyscraper* was published in 2006. It is a futuristic novel telling Istanbul and Turkey in year 2073. The basic feature of the novel is conflict between city and nature in Istanbul in which ecological system was destroyed, politics and justice are used unlimitedly for the sake of the interests in year 2073. In this study, *The Skyscraper* is discussed within ecocritical framework. The novel focusing on the problems caused by environmental destruction, opposition to the city and the nature and economic interest in which it is tried to determine environmental approach.

Index terms- Ecocriticism, Tahsin Yücel, *The Skyscraper*, Turkish novel.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nature/environment has been used as a basic element in construction of the fiction world. Environment factor is mostly described as a stage in which events come about. Ecocriticism /environmental criticism carries environment/place, which is basic element of literary text, as the basic problem of criticism. Ecocriticism is actually based on defensive philosophy; It fed from the belief that environmental awareness should be also reflected by the literary channel. Ecocriticism recommends to approach a more descriptive analysis to literary texts that belong to time in which environmental problems were not seen. It tries to describe the philosophy of nature in cultural codes by using fictions. Critical approach recommended by ecocriticism on nature-themed works has become today through various stages. Descriptive approach of environmental critique has gained a multi-disciplinary character by being evolved. There aren't so much examples for literature studies based on environmental criticism in Turkish literature comparing the other critical theories.

Tahsin Yücel's *Skyscraper* is a novel that relates environmental sensitivity to urbanization in Turkish literature. Yücel made a dystopian discourse about the development activities of Istanbul in 2073, with political and environmental sensitivity in his work which was published in 2006. A novel character, New Yorker Temel, who has the idea of bringing Istanbul to New York, or even surpassing it, leaves no avenue unexplored to realize the dream of rebuilding Istanbul with skyscrapers resembling each other. Lawyer Can Tezcan, the top character of the novel, establishes cooperation with the government and eventually enacts the "privatization of the law", and this give way to Niyorklu Temel to reach his dreams.

II. ENVIROMENTAL SENSIVITY TROUGH POLITICAL CRITIQUE

"Growth for growth is the ideology of the cancer cell." Edward Abbey

Tahsin Yücel presents a political criticism about environment and urbanization with his novel *Skyscraper*. Political rhetoric is dominant to the novel in an eco-socialist framework. The top character of the novel is a lawyer and this is one of the strong dynamics that fosters systematic criticism. Can Tezcan, a former Marxist, can not escape being one of the actors of the capitalist / anamnestic order because of his interests, in spite of being trapped in an ideological nostalgia. The idea of the privatization of the legal system of Can Tezcan is seen as essential to urbanization, more precisely, the elevation of skyscrapers without any obstacles.

Temel Diker, who transformed Istanbul into a gigantic construction site with skyscrapers, is the second most important character in novel. The struggle of Temel Diker with the system starts when Hikmet Bey, the owner of the one-garden house that prevents the construction of the skyscraper, does not want to transfer his house. The idea of "privatization of the law" described through the irony that it will be a model for the whole world begins to enforce with the simple but most important key to this conflict. The construction of skyscrapers is prevented by the only one-garden house of the city and this leads to an arrangement that will change whole country's legal and social system. The passages that are depicted Mr. Hikmet's house are the parts where the environmentalist sensitivity in the novel appears concrete.

The house of Mr. Hikmet is the only natural survivor of the city, which is surrounded by skyscrapers built of concrete and steel. It is the only place that symbolizes nature as opposed to the skyscrapers.

The garden house of Hikmet Bey, depicted as a single natural place despite the large number of skyscrapers that are identical to each other, shows that nature has been massacred completely. Concretion, the destruction of historical artifacts, depiction of a country that is torn from the earth reflects the environmental sensitivity of the novel.

These criticisms directed towards the urbanization policies of Turkey in recent years, especially in

Istanbul and all cities of the world, are the reflections of the novel which are based on environmental sensitivity.

III. GOKDELEN INSANLARI / YILKI ADAMLARI

Tahsin Yücel's Skyscraper novel is described as a dystopic fiction. (Tilbe, 2012; Karaca Küçük, 2015).

The skyscraper is the focus concept of the novel as an anti-nature metaphor. About the aforementioned contrary plane of the novel Tahsin Yücel;

"...we can say that the opposite of the skyscraper is the nature, and here divergence from nature in other words isolation is topic. In other words, the people sitting on the skyscraper insulate themselves from the rest of the society and they are becoming between skyscrapers in a way." (Aygündüz) says.

The skyscraper, which is against the house, is used as a symbol reminiscent of social decomposition. Skyscrapers depicting the technological development and capitalist power of change are a sign of unrestricted use of nature for comfort. It is concrete examples of modernist politics that remove social equality.

The skyscrapers rising in Istanbul in 2073 make an impossible wall that can not be overcome between the city and nature. Rich people broke up from the earth and the nature in the skyscrapers that they live. They live a uniform life. Istanbul is now on its way to become New York. The only downfall is Statue of Liberty according to Temel Diker. The founder of the skyscraper, constructor Temel Diker's goal is to make Istanbul a second New York City.

The city, which is surrounded by the skyscrapers, is insulated from nature at every angle. However, this isolation is described as 'development, modernity, consistency' for the residents of the skyscraper: The city must be rebuilt. A character from the novel thinks "... in the level of earth, it is unavoidable from dirt, microbe and virus, as they multiply, many birds and many plants become extinct rapidly, and the number of people decreases rapidly. So the solution is to get away from the earth level as much as possible and live in the clean environment of skyscrapers." (Yücel, 2006, 36) like this. The skyscrapers are designed as sterile living centers free of all external hazards and pollution.

However, there is a world that is not even aware of its existence as opposed to this design: Yılkı men's world. The expression of the Yılkı men comes from the expression of "yılkı atı (jade)" used in Anatolia. In the winter months, the peasants leave their horses and donkeys which they can not feed to the mountains and bring them back in the spring to use them. In the novel Yılkı men are used to describe good for nothing, unemployed and powerless people in the city built from skyscrapers.

In the novel "Yılkı men" are described as follows:

"People are forced to retreat to places far from the eyes, mountains, hills for a long time, Old, young, female, male, child, doves yes doves; barefoot, half naked in filth, they are wandering like ghosts remaining from prehistory as such. Worm, frog, rat, grasshopper, weed, shell, moss, eat whatever they find, attacking each other for a dead crow. Even their approach to the farms is prohibited, spankers are waiting these places with the machine rifles in their hands, the people they killed do not count as dead, just as the living ones do not count as alive." (Yücel, 2006: 96).

The idea of "Everywhere is equal, everywhere is equivalent" (32) becomes a fixed idea for Temel Diker. With his modernist approach, which expresses the position against the diversity and distinctness of nature, he aims to transform Istanbul into a city built solely of monotonous skyscrapers with different figures and colors. Spatial disintegration of the city from the nature does not originate solely from the reconstruction activities of Temel Diker. Political and economic policies distinguish society from each other with clear lines. Yılkı men are the conclusion of brutal and cruel capitalist politics. The only way to live in this system depends on the state of struggle with the life like the animals in the mountains and lowlands that the state discards and ignores.

In the city that the skyscrapers surround, the natural areas are devastated. The cats have gone extinct and the houses with gardens did not stay. Hikmet teacher's house is the only remaining garden house. This house that remains among the skyscrapers is a sign of skyscraper-nature opposition.

In the novel, it is expressed that the population of Yılkı men is "two and a half, three million, or four " (Yücel, 2006, 115) million. It is stated that the number of these people who live not only in Turkey but also in Africa is much higher and that they sometimes loot cities (Yücel, 2006, 115). All media remain silent against this global problem. Because there is a "silent agreement on the national and international level", the reason is clear: "It is dangerous to evince the situation because it can upset the economy." (Yücel, 2006, 115).

Critical rhetoric based on the novel's socialist and environmentalist sensitivities against the metaphor of skyscraper / Yılkı men; is realized through the problems such as destruction of the natural environment desperately, people use all kinds of technology to live in sterile cities, the extinction of animal and plant generations.

At the end of the novel; Yılkı men of the wild nature begin to flow from every direction with a proletarian rebellion parallel to the theoretical structure of the

socialist revolutions. The last words of the top character of the novel are quite meaningful: "...as if the world is becoming itself again." (Yücel, 2006, 287).

CONCLUSION

The irony that prevailed in Yücel's other novels used all the possibilities of a dystopic discourse in Skyscraper. The projection, which was held to 67 after years of Turkey, actually reflects the present day. Thus, the novel, which has traveled between dystopia or science-fiction, is reserved the critiques directed to Istanbul's concretizing architecture, destruction of old structures desperately in its deep structure.

The Skyscraper novel, framed around the themes that cities isolated from nature for the sake of economy, luxury and a conformist life, ruthlessly slaughtered land and everything belonging to land, destruction of everything natural by the capitalist order, can be

considered as one of the examples of environmental sensitivity in Turkish novel.

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