

The Metaphor of Women Extending from Being a Symbol of Turkish Modernization to Being Instrumentalized for Political Lynching Purposes: Ayhan Aydan

Research Article

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Abstract

The Republic of Türkiye was intended to exist as a modern state. In this sense, it was thought that it would be necessary to bring Western institutions to Türkiye. Art and cultural activities were also included in this situation. In this sense, while genres such as novels were included in Turkish literature since the Tanzimat Period, this situation continued to develop in the Republic Period. Opera was seen as an important tool for the modernization of Turkish music. The founding cadres of the Republic believed that the construction of a modern Türkiye would be possible with the construction of a modern female identity within the country. The granting of the right to vote and be elected to women can also be evaluated in this context. Despite the granting of such a right, low rates of female representation in politics were observed. This situation revealed the need

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to further expand educational opportunities and cultural activities for women. However, economic, social and cultural reasons prevented all women from being included in this process. For this reason, some models should be put before the society in order to adopt a modern female identity. Names such as Afet İnan and Sabiha Gökçen can be evaluated in this respect. Female opera singers are also included in this. They also represented the modern face of Türkiye by giving concerts and performing plays for foreign statesmen who came to Türkiye. The construction of women's identity has sometimes been a subject of debate. The opponents of the Republic have also taken their place here. It can be said that the instrumentalization of some names that were said to represent modern women in the name of political reckoning or lynching has made it difficult to understand what modern Türkiye is with the construction of modern women. In this context, the name of the opera singer Ayhan Aydan, whose name was mentioned during the May 27 Military Coup and Yassıada Trials, was examined as a sample case in our study. Content analysis was applied as a method. Information obtained from some newspapers of the period was compared with information obtained from printed works.

Keywords: Women, Modern Türkiye, military coup, Turkish history, women's studies.

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Türk Modernleşmesinin Sembolü Olma Durumundan Siyasal Linç Amacıyla Araçsallaştırılmasına Uzanan Kadın Metaforu: Ayhan Aydan

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Öz

Her sanat eseri, yalnızca içerik olarak değil, biçim olarak da kendi dönemi üzerine önemli şeyler söyler. Çok sayıda yönetmen, filmlerini kapalı bir anlam bütünlüğü içerisinde inşa etmez. Filmin genişleyen bir anlam evreni oluşturmasının yollarını arar. Modern dönemin bir sanatı olan sinema, günümüz insanının dünya ile kurduğu karmaşık bağı başarılı bir biçimde yansıtmaya gücüne sahip en güçlü sanatsal dışavurum aracıdır. Daniel Frampton tarafından kaleme alınan *Filmozofî* kitabı, filmlerin bu türden bir düşünce üretimi gerçekleştirme becerisini tartışır. Yazar, filmin bizzatı kendisinin de düşünen bir özne haline

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gelebileceğini ifade eder. Yalnızca hikâye düzleminde değil, filmin diğer bütün unsurlarının da seyircinin anlamı kavramasına olanak tanıdığını belirtir. Bu da çoğunlukla yönetmeni de aşan filmsel bir anlamın var olmasından dolayıdır. Bu çalışmada, Berlin Okulu bağlamında değerlendirilen Alman yönetmen Christian Petzold'un sineması, *Transit* (2018) filmi özelinde olmak üzere filmozofi kavramı ekseninde ele alınmıştır. *Transit*, hikayesi İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda geçen tarihi bir yapımdır. Filmde Nazi güçlerinden kaçmak için Paris'ten Marsilya'ya gider Georg'un göçmenlik halleri ve kimlik dönüşümleri tarihi bir set oluşturulmadan, günümüz dünyasında perdeye yansır. Film, günümüz göçmenliği ile bir alegori inşa ederken, Alman halkının İkinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında yaşadıklarına dair genel geçer ifadelerin de dışına çıkar. Bununla, bir tartışma ortamı kurar. Çalışmada, filmin ortaya koyduğu bu derin katmanlar açığa çıkartılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Christian Petzold, Alman Sineması, Temsil, Kimlik, Tarihsel Hafıza, Kurgusal İnşa, Filmozofi.

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	Makalenin Yazımı (CRediT 12-13)	Yazar -1 (%40)	Yazar -2 (%20)	Yazar -3 (%20)	Yazar -4 (%20)
	Metnin Tashihi ve Geliştirilmesi (CRediT 14)	Yazar -1 (%40)	Yazar -2 (%20)	Yazar -3 (%20)	Yazar -4 (%20)

Yapay Zeka Kullanımı

Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde yapay zeka tabanlı herhangi bir araç veya uygulama kullanılmamıştır. Çalışmanın tüm içeriği, yazar(lar) tarafından bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri ve akademik etik ilkelere uygun şekilde üretilmiştir

S. Kalkınma Amaçları

10 Eşitsizliklerin Azaltılması
16 Barış, Adalet ve Güçlü Kurumlar

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Introduction

The construction of the modern female identity in Türkiye took time. Modern women benefit from the right and opportunities for education and produce useful work for society within the society. They can make their own decisions from choosing a spouse to their clothing. In Türkiye, the marriage of a girl to a man by her family in return for a certain amount of money (Başlık) continued to be effective in certain regions for a long time. In some regions, a woman whose husband died was married to her husband's brother (Berdel). Such incidents had a serious impact on society even in 1973, the fiftieth year of the Republic of Türkiye. Some of the problems experienced in these matters were mentioned in some period films (Duru: 1975). For example, the subject of "berdel" was sometimes told in a tragicomic way in Turkish cinema (Refiğ: 1973). The fact that such situations were seen even in the second half century of the Republic shows that the construction of the modern female identity has not yet been completed. One of the fundamental problems here is that while women were used as an icon and myth for the construction of modernization, the metaphor of women was also instrumentalized very quickly in terms of political lynching. It can be said that these two contradictory situations are one of the reasons why the construction of the modern female identity was interrupted. In the early years of the Republic, the state's policies regarding women were progressive and rational. However, this was not reflected in the media. Later, it can be said that women were instrumentalized for political lynching by some elements in control of the state apparatus. It can be argued that while women were wanted to be given an active role in social transformation during the construction of modern Türkiye, turning them into iconic and symbolic figures and discrediting them for political lynching purposes actually made the construction of modern Türkiye difficult.

The cadres who founded the Republic believed that the construction of a modern Turkey would be possible with the existence of a modern female identity. Modernism was brought to Türkiye by Western influence. For this reason, women were encouraged to take part in Western-originated art and cultural activities. There were significant educational problems in the country. Literacy rates, especially among women, were very low. Due to some cultural, social and economic obstacles, it was possible to include very few women in the process in Türkiye at the beginning. The women who were included in the process were a model for their fellow women in terms of the construction of modernism in Turkey. At the same time, they were introduced to the outside world as the face of modern Türkiye. It can be said that there was an increase in the number of foreign heads of state and their men visiting

Türkiye, especially in the 1950s, due to the spread and acceleration of civil aviation and the increasing diplomatic traffic in the bipolar world. US President Eisenhower, Yugoslavian President Tito, Shah of Iran Reza Pahlavi, King Hussein of Jordan are a few of them. It is known that during the visits of these statesmen and presidents to Türkiye, especially female opera singers gave concerts in visitors honor.

There are many indicators and milestones of Turkish modernization. One of these is opera. Opera entered Turkish cultural life together with the process of Westernization. In the early years of the Republic, despite limited resources, students were sent abroad to train opera singers and composers. Names such as Cemal Reşit Rey (1904-1985), Hasan Ferid Alnar (1906-1978), Ulvi Cemal Erkin (1906-1972), Ahmed Adnan Saygun (1907-1991) and Necil Kazım Akses (1908-1999), known as the first generation Turkish composers or the Turkish Five, emerged in this way. These people were quick to compose new compositions inspired by Turkish music and culture. These compositions were performed by new generation tenors and sopranos (Saydam, 2010: pp.15-18). While men were at the forefront due to social and cultural factors in terms of opera composition and performing art, women later made a name for themselves in these areas. It is seen that the first generation of opera artists made a significant effort for women to be trained in this field. For example, Leyla Gencer, one of the important sopranos of Turkish opera, was a student of Cemal Reşit Rey.

In the sense of opera, the concepts of tenor in men and soprano in women come to the fore. According to the electronic dictionary of the Turkish Language Association, the word soprano means “the highest voice in women or children, a vocal artist with a high voice, a musical instrument that produces the highest voices in an instrument group” (<https://sozluk.gov.tr/> Access Date: 18.04.2023). Not every vocal artist has the possibility of becoming a soprano even if they want to. In some medical and anatomical studies, it has been determined that soprano artists are different from others in terms of the structure of their vocal cords. The size of the vocal cords of sopranos varies between 14 mm and 17 mm. For this reason, it has been observed that their whistling sound reaches 4000 Hz. The voice of sopranos can reach 43 Hz in the lowest tone and 2610 Hz in the highest tone (Doğanyığıt, 2010: p.12). Names such as Leyla Gencer, Mesude Çağlayan (Hürriyet, July 31, 2011), Sevda Aydan (Hürriyet, April 7, 2018), Meral Menderes (Cumhuriyet, December 27, 2011), İclal Ar are among the first soprano artists of the Republican generation (Hürriyet, October 5, 2007).

Case Study:

The Democrat Party (DP), which came to power with the 1950 General Elections, remained in power for about ten years. Although different reasons have been put forward, the last years of this party's rule were tense. The DP government collapsed with the Military Coup of May 27, 1960. All activities of the party were suspended and the party was closed. The party leaders were tried in the Yassıada Courts. A significant number of them received serious sentences. Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, Finance Minister Hasan Polatkan and Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu were sentenced to death at the Yassıada Courts. They were executed after the National Unity Committee (MBK) approved their sentences. While the Yassıada trials were ongoing, a separate case called the Baby Case was filed against Adnan Menderes. The May 27, 1960 Coup was the first coup in the history of the Republic of Türkiye. The Yassıada Courts also ended in a way that shook society. For all of these, efforts emerged to partially reduce the reaction of society and to legitimize the situation. In this sense, the claim that Adnan Menderes, who was married and had children, had an affair with another woman and that he had ended the life of the baby born from this affair could have attracted the attention of the public. The impression gained during the trial in question is that the metaphor of women was used for political lynching purposes through honor and child agitation. However, this female metaphor also represented the opera that mediated the construction of Modern Türkiye and the Modern Turkish Female identity. This was a contradictory situation.

Ayhan Aydan

Born in 1924, Ayhan Aydan is one of the first generation sopranos. Along with Ayhan Aydan, the artists mentioned above played important roles in the Westernization process of Türkiye. On the other hand, they became symbolic names for the development of women's status and women's rights. They contributed to the establishment of Western elitist music in Turkish society. Ayhan Aydan's physical capabilities and characteristics were noticed by Hasan Ferid Alnar, one of the five great Turkish musicians. Thereupon, Aydan was accepted to the Ankara Hacettepe University State Conservatory. After a long education process, especially based on singing, he graduated from here as an opera singer. Hasan Ferid Alnar and Ayhan Aydan got married in 1944. Aydan had a child named Aydın from this marriage in 1947. Alnar was both an orchestra conductor and an opera composer. He also adapted Turkish works into opera very effectively. It is seen that Aydan's star in opera rose more and more during her marriage to Alnar. Because Aydan successfully

performed the soprano role in almost all operatic works prepared or directed by her husband. Aydan was married to Alnar for about seven years before her marriage ended in 1950. Ayhan Aydan's ex-husband Ferid Alnar composed some of Yunus Emre's poems in opera form. While she is known as a Republic's plane tree due to many works she made like this, Ayhan Aydan is considered the most important performer of these compositions. During the period of the first generation opera artists, gazinos (luxury music hall) became increasingly powerful in big cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, Adana and Ankara. Many vocal artists who sang in these places became rich in a short time. In those years, it was seen that many artists left opera and turned to this field. Ayhan Aydan did not resort to such a path throughout his artistic life. Aydan's wife Alnar explains this situation as follows: Atatürk was interested in an opera show I prepared for four hours. He always gave great importance to opera works for the westernization of Türkiye. For this reason, he assigned a special duty to opera artists. In this respect, I do not approve of some artists leaving opera and working in gazinos to earn more money. If I had worked in gazinos, I would have been a millionaire by now (Altınköprü, 2004: p.67).” Gazinos emerged as a consumption tool for the upper classes in that period (Hürriyet, March 1, 1977). In addition to Alnar's statements, gazino artists are more well-known in society than opera artists.



Figure 1: One of the gazino advertisements given to newspapers as a sign of the gazino culture that started to become effective in Türkiye from the 1960s onwards (Hürriyet, January 15, 1977).

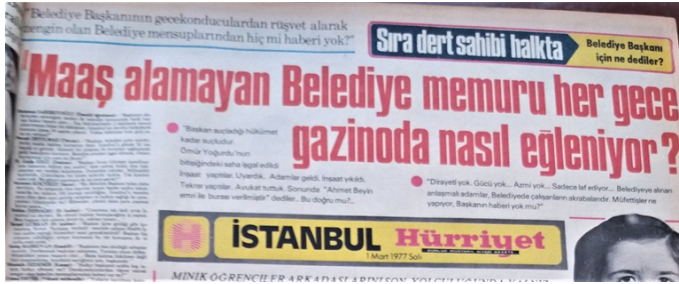


Figure 2: A newspaper article imagining that casinos are luxury consumption tools (Hürriyet, March 1, 1977).

Ayhan Aydan, who was not widely known in society because he was a soprano, was first heard in the public during the Baby Case held between October 31 and November 22, 1960 at the Yassıada Courts, where former Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, former President Celal Bayar and many members of the Democrat Party were tried after the May 27, 1960 Coup. Ayhan Aydan met Adnan Menderes at a party given by the then Ziraat Bankası General Manager Mithat Dülge at the summer resort of Çubuk Dam in Ankara, shortly after Adnan Menderes became prime minister. This was how the relationship between Adnan Menderes and Ayhan Aydan began. Aydan's baby from this relationship was the subject of a lawsuit at the Yassıada Courts. The Hürriyet newspaper announced that Ayhan Aydan would be brought before the court in Yassıada, emphasizing his vocal skills with the headline "Let's see if he can speak as comfortably on Yassıada as he does on stage?" (Hürriyet, October 28, 1960). The rude and offensive attitude of the court panel towards Adnan Menderes and Ayhan Aydan in the Yassıada Courts was reflected in the newspapers of that day (Akşam, November 1, 1960). Former TBMM Speaker İsmet Sezgin, who was the Mayor of Aydın Municipality between November 18, 1955 and May 31, 1960 and was dismissed after the coup, claimed that the majority of the society was in fear after the May 27, 1960 Coup. According to his statements, the only place left in Aydın was Adnan Menderes' picture in Berber Mustafa's shop on Government Boulevard. For this reason, the official security forces beat Berber Mustafa very badly (Interview with İsmet Sezgin, March 22, 2016). In such an environment, it can be said that Ayhan Aydan's statement, "I loved Menderes very much. I wanted to have a child from him," was an example of courage (Akşam, November 2, 1960). The events that took place in court during the Baby Case were broadcast on the radio (Interview with Nabi Sabuncu, December 5, 2015). A program called "Düşükler Saati" was organized on the radio. As a result of the case that lasted seven hearings, Adnan

Menderes was acquitted (Turgut 2007, p.63). The case in question was opened mostly for the purpose of discrediting Adnan Menderes. Ayhan Aydan, on the other hand, did not share this understanding (Akdağ 2018, pp.252-271). The privacy of the private life of a person who practices an important art was violated in the name of a political cause. In the case, Adnan Menderes was accused of having eliminated Ayhan Aydan's baby. Ayhan Aydan denied this accusation. Ayhan Aydan was brought before Dr. This was supported by the statement of Nurse Fatma Çoban Zeybek, who went to intervene with Fahrettin Atabey at Aydan's birth, that they wanted the baby to live (Akşam, November 2, 1960). The press and radio, which acted contrary to the presumption of innocence at the beginning of the case, were reluctant to announce to the public that the case had ended in an acquittal. The rude and offensive attitude of the court panel towards Adnan Menderes and Ayhan Aydan, especially during the baby case in the Yassıada Courts, was reflected in the newspapers of that day (Akşam, November 1, 1960). At the end of the case in question, which lasted seven hearings, Adnan Menderes and Doctor Fahri Atabey were acquitted of this case. The only case in which Adnan Menderes was acquitted as a result of the trials in the Yassıada courts was the baby case (Turgut 2007, p.63). The events in the court were broadcast on the radio throughout the Baby Case (Interview with Nabi Sabuncu, December 5, 2015). While the allegations against Adnan Menderes and Ayhan Aydan were widely covered in the press and radio throughout the trial, the press and radio did not focus much on the issue after the case ended with an acquittal (Akdağ 2018, pp.252-271). This strengthens the claims that this issue was intended to be used for political reputation assassination purposes.

It is possible that Ayhan Aydan was hurt during the trial process. The court prosecutor in Yassıada claimed that Ayhan Aydan and Adnan Menderes had known each other since 1948. In this way, they wanted to create the perception of Aydan as a woman who cheated on her husband and Menderes as a man who destroyed a married woman's home. Ayhan Aydan and Adnan Menderes denied these claims (Akşam, November 20, 1960). On the other hand, despite the statements of the witnesses, a request was made by the Ankara Government Physician Nuri Sezer at the hearing for the grave of the baby who had died to be opened and an autopsy to be performed on the baby (Akşam, November 4, 1960). The court postponed the decision on the request to November 5, 1960 (Son Havadis, November 4, 1960). At the hearing that day, Dr. Fahri Atabey stated that it would not be possible to understand whether a baby who died 5 years ago was born prematurely at 8 months by opening the grave of the baby. The court did not take into consideration Atabey's opinion and the relevant words of Menderes' lawyers. It decided that the issue would be examined by the forensic medicine. The court adjourned the

hearing to November 12, 1960 for the next forensic medicine report to be discussed (Akşam, November 6, 1960). On November 13, 1960, the court rejected the defendants' requests for acquittal on the grounds that the forensic medicine report had not yet reached the court (Akşam, November 13, 1960). When asked about his father's relationship with Ayhan Aydan, Aydın Menderes, one of Adnan Menderes' sons, stated that his family relationship was not affected much by this (Milliyet, September 18, 2011). However, Ayhan Aydan's statements in court were effective in Adnan Menderes' acquittal in the Baby Case. Aydan did not testify against Adnan Menderes at the risk of being offended. After all that offending, Ayhan Aydan avoided appearing in public or making statements to the press after the Yassıada Trials. Despite the news about her relationship with Adnan Menderes coming out after the Yassıada Trials and the truth often being twisted, Aydan preferred not to speak. It must have been a difficult situation for a woman to have a relationship made public and to have her privacy eliminated in the name of settling scores for a period. Although Ayhan Aydan sometimes had financial difficulties, he did not accept the newspapers' offers of interviews despite all the wage offers. He did not consider working in nightclubs. Ayhan Aydan started working in the opera again in 1962. Aydan's son died in London in 1963. This death shook Aydan very much. Aydan celebrated her fortieth year in art and her jubilee on April 17, 1970 in Ankara. During this period, Aydan moved from Ankara to Izmir. She married Sadun Barış, a businessman from Izmir, in 1982. Barış died of cancer in 1995 at the age of fifty-six. Aydan lived in Alsancak, Izmir for a while. Aydan, who settled in Çeşme, Izmir, struggled with a number of health problems in her last three years. She died of lung failure in Çeşme on February 19, 2009 at the age of eighty-five (Hürriyet, February 19, 2009). Aydan's grave is in Alaçatı, Çeşme. Shortly after Ayhan Aydan's death, his nephew, actor Ege Aydan, stated that after the death of Aydan's husband Sadun Bey, his aunt Ayhan Aydan became very lonely. Ege Aydan stated that even in the 1990s when private television channels were introduced in Türkiye and the Televole culture was dominant, her aunt remained silent about the issue, let alone making statements to the press and television, even to her family members (Milliyet, February 21, 2009). It can be said that Aydan lost her baby from Adnan Menderes, that her baby's body was buried in an orphanage, and that she lost her son named Aydan, to whom she gave her own maiden name, deeply affected Aydan. It can be said that the instrumentalization of a woman and womanhood in the name of political lynching and the treatment she was subjected to in the Yassıada Courts wore Aydan down. Finally, the loss of her second wife Sadun Barış caused her to withdraw completely into her own world. Eleven years after Aydan's death, Mehmet Karabel, a writer for the Ege'de Son Söz newspaper, one of the newspapers

in İzmir, wrote an article about Aydan on the anniversary of her death under the title “What a Loving Woman Does Not Do”. In her article, Karabel pointed out Aydan’s attitude in the Yassıada Courts and evaluated the situation by saying, “eleven years ago, the brave lover said goodbye to the world” (Son Söz in the Ege, February 19, 2020).

Conclusion

In the early years of the Republic of Turkey, a serious importance was given to the construction of a modern female identity for the sake of the construction of Turkish modernism. In those years, due to some social, cultural and economic obstacles, it cannot be said that all women benefited from the efforts made in terms of modernization in Turkey under equal conditions. This rate was already quite low at the beginning. While the aforementioned mass of women were presented as a model in terms of modernization to Anatolian women, they also represented the modern face of Turkey to the outside world. It is known that women, children, etc. affect societies. It is understandable that a special importance is given to women in this case for the sake of Turkish modernization. However, in the following process, it is a contradictory situation that the aforementioned female potential is instrumentalized in a political case with the aim of discrediting it. One of the reasons for the delay or interruption of Turkish modernization in the eyes of women is this contradictory situation. As a result of our study, it is understood that Ayhan Aydan is an effective example of the situation in question.

Akdağ, M., Çiçek, E., Ünlü, S. & Küçükkuru, Y. (2025). The metaphor of women extending from being a symbol of Turkish modernization to being instrumentalized for political lynching purposes: Ayhan Aydan, *Journal of Interdisciplinary Communication and Media Studies ICOMS-J*, 1(1), 45-58.

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