

LATE 19TH CENTURY

AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY'S ARTISTIC AND AESTHETIC REPRESENTATION OF WORLD LITERARY CURRENTS IN TURKISH POETRY

REPRESENTACIÓN ARTÍSTICA Y ESTÉTICA DE LAS CORRIENTES LITERARIAS MUNDIALES EN LA POESÍA TURCA DE FINALES DEL SIGLO XIX Y PRINCIPIOS DEL SIGLO XX

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ABSTRACT

The late 19th and early 20th centuries in Turkish literature marked a transitional period in prose and poetry, during which Turkish national literature began to take shape. This era was marked by significant competition and interaction between internal traditions and external influences, as well as the clash between classical Eastern poetics and emerging Western aesthetics. Turkish poetry, which had evolved over centuries, experienced a transformation influenced by various literary traditions, ultimately developing into a unique form. The objective of this study is to explore how Turkish poets integrated and reinterpreted foreign literary influences within the context of a developing national literary identity, by analyzing the impact of European aesthetic canons on Turkish poetry through the works of key authors. It was found that despite its relatively short duration, it was one of the most complex and pivotal phases in Turkish national life, characterized by important events and a rich artistic landscape, including literary movements, trends, schools, and groups. This era also saw the integration of modernism with traditionalism. The investigation of Turkish poetry from this period highlights the dynamic interplay of literary currents, reflecting both the historical context and artistic innovations. While the period is considered transitional, we believed it played a crucial role in the formation of modern Turkish literature.

Keywords: Literary process, Literary currents, Poetry, Literature, Romanticism.

RESUMEN

El final del siglo XIX y principios del XX marcaron un período de transición en la literatura turca, tanto en prosa como en poesía, durante el cual la literatura nacional turca comenzó a tomar forma. Esta época se caracterizó por una importante competencia e interacción entre las tradiciones internas y las influencias externas, así como por el choque entre la poética clásica oriental y la emergente estética occidental. La poesía turca, que había evolucionado a lo largo de siglos, experimentó una transformación influenciada por diversas tradiciones literarias, hasta llegar a convertirse en una forma única. El objetivo de este estudio es explorar cómo los poetas turcos integraron y reinterpretaron las influencias literarias extranjeras en el contexto de una identidad literaria nacional en desarrollo, analizando el impacto de los cánones estéticos europeos en la poesía turca a través de las obras de autores clave. Se concluyó que, a pesar de su relativamente corta duración, fue una de las fases más complejas y cruciales de la vida nacional turca, caracterizada por acontecimientos importantes y un rico panorama artístico, que incluía movimientos, tendencias, escuelas y grupos literarios. Esta época también presenció la integración del modernismo con el tradicionalismo. La investigación de la poesía turca de este período destaca la dinámica interacción de las corrientes literarias, reflejando tanto el contexto histórico como las innovaciones artísticas. Si bien este período se considera de transición, consideramos que desempeñó un papel crucial en la formación de la literatura turca moderna.

Palabras clave: Proceso literario, Corrientes literarias, Poesía, Literatura, Romanticismo.

INTRODUCTION

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Ottoman Empire was undergoing a profound process of political, social, and cultural transformation driven by the Tanzimat reforms and the growing openness to the West. In this context, Turkish poetry experienced an unprecedented renewal as it came into contact with the global literary currents that dominated the European landscape (Karaaslan, 2024). Until then, Ottoman poetry had been anchored in classical forms influenced by Persian and Arabic traditions, with an aesthetic marked by courtly symbolism and highly ornate language. However, the rise of new aesthetic sensibilities derived from European Romanticism, Realism, Symbolism, and Parnassianism penetrated the Turkish literary sphere through translations, periodical publications, and intellectual exchange, promoting a radical change in the way poetry was conceived (Samsakci, 2023).

But it should be noted that it is not accurate to claim that all world literary currents were present in Turkish poetry at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. For instance, literary currents such as imagism (S. Yesenin), futurism (V. Mayakovski), and acmeism (L. Gumilyov) that emerged in Russian literature in the late 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century were not observed in Turkish poetry. On the other hand, we do not encounter the literary-ideological movements that developed and flourished in Turkish literature during the last quarter of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century, such as Ottomanism (Ottoman nationalism), Turkism (Turancism), and Islamism (communitarianism), in the literatures of developed Western countries.

Conversely, it is an undeniable reality that in contemporary literary studies and humanitarian thought, the traditional forms of romanticism and realism (educational and critical) are directly observable in the works of Turkish authors like Namık Kemal, İbrahim Şinasi, Ziya Paşa, Abdülhak Hamid, Tevîk Fikret, Halid Ziya, and Mehmet Rauf. However, the leading characteristics of literary currents such as naturalism, parnassism, dadaism, decadence, symbolism, surrealism, and cubism can only be found in the works of a portion of Turkish artists (e.g., Ahmed Midhat, Nabizade Nazım, Hüseyin Rahmi, Yahya Kemal, and Ahmed Hashim). Regarding literary groups and schools, two major literary communities ("Tanzimat" and "Servet-i Funun") emerged in the second half of the 19th century; and although both groups partially united under common grounds in terms of literary currents, they held irreconcilable positions on the perspective of literature, literary methods, and styles. The Tanzimatists adopted

the ideology that "art is for the people (society)" aligned with educational thought, while the "Servet-i Funun" group embraced the theory of "art for art's sake" and the ideology that "art is personal and private".

In general, this external influence condition more than a simple imitation, a complex process of adaptation, reinterpretation, and resistance, in which Turkish poets sought ways to integrate these foreign elements into an evolving national literary identity (Budun, 2023). Analyzing the artistic and aesthetic representation of these global currents in Turkish poetry allows us not only to understand the intercultural dialogue that marked this era, but also to assess the originality with which local poets reinterpreted European aesthetic canons. This work examines this phenomenon through the study of representative authors and their most emblematic works, identifying the imprints of the main international literary currents and analyzing how these influences modified the language, themes, and formal structures of Turkish poetry. The study is organized into different sections that address the peculiarities of the historical and literary context of the period, an analysis of the main literary currents and their reception in the Ottoman context, and an approach to the key authors whose works reflect this profound interaction between tradition and innovation.

DEVELOPMENT

It is known that a new stage, school, current, or trend in the literary process also means the emergence of new signatures, literary journals or newspapers, or associations that gather around these signature holders; it indicates that topics and issues conforming to the demands of the time, current ideas, and relevant types have become the objects of literary research, as well as the emergence of new subjects and new literary-aesthetic forms and styles through the complete dismissal or renewal of previous works. In the Turkish literature of the late 19th century and early 20th century, we observe that the literary artists of the period exhibited various tendencies toward ideological, political, and philosophical currents and trends, mainly focusing on realism and its forms (educational realism, critical realism, social realism) and romanticism (including revolutionary romanticism) (Shiloah et al., 2024).

It is understood that while the narrative plane of events in any work may be sufficiently succinct and dynamic, capturing attention, the decisive factor that creates the artistic text is something else. The events, plot, and intrigue are the upper layers that provide dynamism to the work. In other words, the essence of the work does not consist of notions such as coincidence, unexpected events, or surprise. The plot and fabula are media that reveal the

deeper philosophical, social, and psychological meanings and significances.

In the 70s and 90s of the 19th centuries, interesting and completely new plots observed in Turkish novels reflected the philosophical-spiritual and socio-psychological content of these works. During this period, romantic aesthetics, along with enlightenment realism, sought to gradually reject dogmatic social morality codes, emphasize feelings of internal freedom, and overcome ethnic-social prohibitions as much as possible (Abiyev, 2007). Thus, the first critical realist novels of Turkish writers, who essentially adopted lyrical-realist psychology as a literary method, began to emerge. Parallel to Namiq Kamal's enlightenment-realist work ("İntibah") and Ahmad Midhat Efendi's enlightenment-romantic piece ("Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi"), Shamsaddin Sami's realist work (characterized by Turkish literature scholars as the "first novel written in western style", "Taashuki-Talat and Fitnat") (Kabaklı, 1997), Khalid Ziya's lyrical-psychological realist ("Ashki-memnu"), Nabizade Nazim's critical realist (the writer himself uses the term "hakikiyyun"), and the naturalist-realist works influenced by Émile Zola, including the novellas ("Kara Bibik", "Haspa", "Zehra") (Turkish literature scholars use the term "long story" in this sense) were being created (Kabaklı, 1997).

Serious innovations in Turkish poetry manifested themselves more in terms of political-ideological tendencies than in literary movements and methods. Alongside Namiq Kamal's enlightenment-romantic ("Hürriyet" poem), Tevfik Fikret's revolutionary-romantic ("Sis") (Kabaklı, 1997), and Mehmet Ashraf's critical-satirical ("Dejja") poems, Mehmet Emin Yurdakul's and Ziya Gekalp's Turkish nationalist works (Abiyev, 2007), Mehmet Akif Ersoy's Islamic-themed poems, and Yahya Kamal Beyatlı's Ottomanist-themed poetry (Beyatlı, 1967) represented the leading literary-ideological and philosophical currents of the era's poetry. The representatives of poetry and prose during this period aimed to take literature beyond the Istanbul environment and the topics of the city and patriarchy, to incorporate rural life and women into literature, and to affirm the right of Turkish people to be themselves and preserve their ethnic identity.

Certainly, affirming this right was not easy; it presented painful, sometimes tragic, and sometimes exotic manifestations in the literary context of the day. Alongside general literary criteria gleaned from European literature, it was also necessary to maintain traditional poetic-aesthetic rules. This stage manifested itself in Turkish literature as a "multi-method literature" concept, similar to contemporary world literature.

Romantic and realist methods

It is known that from the earliest days of literary works until now, two artistic forms of thought—artistic methods—have governed the world literary process. One of these is the romantic method, and the other is the realist method. A representative of either literature unwittingly employs one of these methods in their creative process. It is clear that an artist does not say in advance, "I will write a work relying on this or that method." Theoretically, it is impossible to create a method in terms of thought and apply it to artistic creation; rather, artistic creation itself, the works written in various genres, act as a guarantor of one of those methods. Romanticism, as a literary current, has preserved both the romantic method and the romantic style (Burwick, 2022).

It is natural that the romantic method, which vividly embodies harmony (verse, division, rhyme, rhythm) in poetry, became the most common literary phenomenon of the era's poetry, even manifesting itself in the newly forming prose works. The artistic creativity of the vast majority of artists examined during this period was based on the romantic method. This is entirely understandable. The romantic method increases a person's internal energy, elevates them to the heavens, while simultaneously anchoring them firmly to life. Elevating a person to the heavens with artistic words and works from various domains of art and tying that elevation back to life is not a contradictory notion. Internal, spiritual elevation means a greater love for life.

It is essential to pay attention to the connection between the romantic method and the literary current of romanticism. By the late 18th century, romanticism based on the romantic method began to emerge and develop in European literature. Though it originated for the first time in the West—Europe, the literary current of romanticism, while based on the romantic method, constitutes a different literary theory term; thus, while the "romantic method" and the "romanticism literary current" are interconnected, they are different expressions and concepts (İnci Enginun). The literary current of European romanticism was born as a product of existing social-historical conditions, meaning it has a date of birth, but this date is not tied to a specific year, month, or day; rather, it is linked to a particular socio-political event. Even the end of this romanticism is known. The main distinction between literary currents and artistic methods is that these currents have specific birth and death dates. European romanticism was born in the late 18th century and lasted until the end of the 19th century (Vincent, 2023).

In Turkish literature, modern romanticism is a literary phenomenon from the 1870s to the early 20th century. Since the “Tanzimat” (Reorganization) period, the socio-historical context, including the Young Turks movement, has become the basis for the literary current of romanticism in Turkey. The common consensus among our literary scholars is that Turkish artists such as Abdulhak Hamid, Namik Kemal, and Tofik Fikret significantly contributed to the development and formation of Azerbaijani romanticism in the early 20th century.

Regarding the relationship between the realist method and the realism literary current, it is important to note that the features of the realist method were recognized later compared to the romantic method in the global literary process. Of course, realism, as a literary current, went through several phases before fully forming, during which the terms “realist method” and “realist artistic thought,” which scholars justifiably refer to as “early realism,” were used.

The formation of realism in Turkish literature dates back to the period after the 1870s. It is well known that realism proposed the accurate, truthful, comprehensive, and typified reflection of life as an aesthetic principle. Initially, the term realism, reflecting literary events of the period, was used in the form of “heqiqiyyun.” Its wide scope of content, enduring presence over an extended period, historical changes in social-political events and societies during this period, as well as the abundance and richness of literary products related to realism, endowed this current with new typological characteristics compared to romanticism. In this regard, realism initially manifested in two forms—enlightenment realism and critical realism, later complemented by what Turkish literary scholars called “social realism” or “social realism.” Realism, as a literary current, encompasses both the realist method and the realist style. Pathos and celebration, as well as lyric-psychological moments, can constitute the romantic style within the realist method, and discussions on the lyrical and epic styles of romanticism can also be held.

The concept of “literary school” needs clarification here. Typically, literary schools are associated with the names of individual artists, and the characteristics of their artistic legacy are developed by their contemporaries and successors. Only artists who write ideologically and artistically original works that open new paths in literary history and whose ideas are defended by their followers can create a literary school. The challenge is that groups of artists without their own publishing organs face difficulties in becoming a school. Although there were literary councils in various parts of the Ottoman Empire before the 19th century (for example, the “Council of Poets” led by

Khinalizade Hasan Celebi in Aleppo in the 16th century, and the “Enjuman-i shuara community” led by Leskofchali Galip in Istanbul in 1861-1862), they could not become a literary school since they lacked their own publishing organs. For the first time, literary schools or communities (Tanzimat, Servet-i Funun, Fejriati, Besh hejachilar) emerged within the historical-chronological boundaries we are examining, or around that time. However, although all these schools consisted of different groups of artists, the literary methods and currents they employed were, in all their forms, romanticism and realism.

Each form of literature has its own peculiar characteristics in understanding and reflecting life realities. Every literary genre solves its specific tasks and approaches life material accordingly, generalizing it in its unique ways. For instance, scientific literature and journalism understand life realities through logical reasoning and scientific thought, analyzing facts, drawing social-political conclusions, making generalizations, unveiling the essence of events, and assessing them, either affirming or denying them. Artistic literature, on the other hand, understands life through images and artistic thought, meaningfully interpreting events, striving to unveil human character and create its representation. New writers primarily began to draw various forms of understanding life in prose and drama from Western literature. Nevertheless, the intellectuals of this period considered that serving the people did not solely end with writing works on unfamiliar subjects in new forms and genres. Therefore, prominent writers of the era regarded it equally important and valuable to write traditional themes in new forms. It was not coincidental that they sought to reflect life realities in the forms and genres of modern Western prose through national artistic images while striving to adhere to local customs and Islamic values in the depiction and diction of life events. In other words, the new classical-traditional novels were both traditional and modern. In these works, there is an organic complementarity between material and moral, objective reality and religious values, as well as scientific-logical propositions and components of Islamic thinking in the language of artistic characters, in their states and actions, dialogues, and internal monologues, as well as in the narrative of the author.

It is known that artistic literature arises from imagination and creativity, while religious (conservative) content works emerge from metaphysical philosophical thought. Yet both originate from the same material, which is language. However, while literature expresses ideas, thoughts, and aesthetic ideals through images with the help of the writer's imagination, in religious works, words are expressed based on the philosophy of faith (Islam). The mission of the

realist writer is to find the precise address and to convey the ideational content of the work in an artistic-aesthetic form to that address, just as the task of a traditional author is to transform real-life facts into artistic material through both creative imagination and Islamic wisdom. While artistic expression targets the emotions of the reader, artistic-religious expression also addresses consciousness and intellect.

In the new type of traditional prose, these two approaches to the subject coexist synchronously, synthesized and executed in such a special way that where feelings and emotions cease, intellect and logic take over, and when the real-world ends, the metaphysical realm intervenes. In difficult-to-understand moments, the writer comes to the rescue, helping the reader extract meaning from the narrative. Thus, the works of new Turkish literature are not merely events in belles-lettres or aesthetic products; they also represent an aesthetic presentation of the traditional-Islamic values of the period. The overall enlightening essence of the literature from the period under investigation, the diverse generic nature of the authors' works—whether in stories, novels, or dramas—as well as their creative quests and innovations, should be sought in the reflection of entirely new genres, previously unaddressed topics, and a fresh perspective in the light of Islamic values, and in the synthesis of Eastern poetics and Western aesthetics.

Proving the truth of a universal idea or thought is accomplished through the formulation of that thought and idea into poetic language in the most appropriate form. Even if this idea is borrowed from the West, it is presented in the style of Eastern aesthetics. Life's reality is not presented in its naked form but elevated to an artistic level. To depict the objective reality of an event and narrative, the most suitable artistic-aesthetic mold—romanticism (traditional-classical or revolutionary), realism (critical or enlightening)—is found. Within the artistic-aesthetic forms of these literary currents, stream of consciousness, lyricism and poetic quality, epic elements, fantasy, and magical realism—from the narrator's perspective to their view of life's reality—are all included, encompassing the entire spectrum from reality to imagination.

Indeed, during this period, the most significant and serious changes and renewals within the socio-political and literary-cultural landscape of the Ottoman Empire predominantly occurred in Turkish prose and drama. Additionally, beginning in the second half of the 19th century, with the advent of the "Tanzimat" (1860–1895) and "Servet-i Fünun" (1896–1901) periods, and alongside the emergence and formation of entirely new genres of tales, novels, dramas, and journalistic forms (known as "edebiyat-ı cedide") in

Turkish literature, innovations in Turkish poetry also arose. New or hybrid poetic forms borrowed from Western poetry appeared alongside traditional genres, resulting in written examples of national poetry in syllabic meter.

During this period, the literary community "Fecr-i Ati" ("Light of the Future"), which was established by several young artists within the "Servet-i Fünun" literary group in 1908, began to gradually dissolve from 1911 onwards. This group included future famous Turkish poets, writers, and literary scholars such as Ahmet Haşim, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Refik Halit Karay, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, Celal Sahir Erozan, Şehabettin Süleyman, Faik Ali Ozansoy, Mehmet Fuat Köprülü, and others (Kabaklı, 1997).

Changes in form and content in Turkish literature

From the 13th to the 18th centuries, classical Ottoman-Turkish poetry was primarily shaped by traditional Eastern poetics—namely Arabic and Persian literary traditions—and Sufism, maintaining its conservative character over the centuries and exhibiting resistance to external (particularly Western) influences. One cannot speak of a defined literary-ideological movement within classical literature during this period. However, at various times, particularly in the capital and other developed cities, circles of poets often formed around a leading figure who commanded respect. These poets regarded such a figure as their master, emulated their style, followed their path, and composed verses in a similar fashion—an arrangement resembling what is now understood as a literary school. Although these poets adhered to classical Eastern forms in terms of structure, their works could be broadly categorized as either secular or Sufi, depending on the themes and ideational content they explored (Feldman, 2022).

Poetry composed in Ottoman Turkish—an amalgamation of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish linguistic elements—rooted in classical Eastern genres and employing the aruz meter, stood in contrast to works produced in the folk vernacular, within oral folk traditions, folklore, and the ashik literature, which typically utilized the hece (syllabic) meter. Some poets, however, composed in both aruz and hece, and these groups were further subdivided into Sufi (folk-takiyya) artists. During this era, new stylistic influences, such as the "sebk-i hindi" (Indian style), began to surface, shaped by other Eastern literary traditions (Akbulut et al., 2018).

According to the findings of Russian Turkologist Y.I. Mashtakova, the earliest shifts in form and content within Turkish literature began to appear at the end of the 17th century, though major transformations did not take place until the late 18th and the first half of the 19th century, when

Turkish literature—including traditional Turkish poetry—started gradually moving toward change (Mashtakova, 1984, p. 26). The most significant changes and innovations occurred in the second half of the 19th century, a period often referred to as *edebiyat-ı cedide* (“new literature”), marking a clear departure from classical conventions. Turkish poetry, during the second half of the 19th century and into the first quarter of the 20th, continued its development along three distinct trajectories.

The first direction in Turkish poetry during this period continued the traditions of classical *divan* poetry, with its adherents maintaining both the traditional form and ideological content in a conservative manner. The second group of poets preserved the formal structure of traditional poetry but introduced new thematic content. That is, while the outward form of their poems remained rooted in classical conventions, the subject matter reflected modern sensibilities, expressing the poet's response to contemporary life and events. The third direction, in contrast, was characterized by innovation both in form and content, as these poets adopted entirely new poetic genres inspired by Western literature—genres that had not previously existed in classical Turkish poetry.

Prominent among the poets of the third direction were the founders of the *Servet-i Fünun* literary movement, particularly its two leading figures, Tevfik Fikret and Cenap Şehabeddin. Though their poetic paths diverged—Fikret's being revolutionary-romantic and focused on enlightenment realism, while Şehabeddin leaned toward symbolist-romanticism—they each played a crucial role in the development of modern Turkish poetry (Abiyev, 2007). Tevfik Fikret, unlike many of his contemporaries in the same literary circle, was a staunch believer in the social function of literature. In one of his conversations, he lamented that modern literature had become deeply ill—not due to stylistic faults or superficial innovation, but because of a profound existential void. He remarked:

Modern literature has a flaw. It resembles a disease more than a flaw. This disease is not of a type that stems from erroneous compositions, wrong interpretations, or unwarranted innovations concerning the external aspects of literature. There is pallor, bloodlessness, an aura of withering in our poems, stories, and depictions. There is nothing that will comfort you, empower you, or lift you up. You wait for a while, hoping for it to give you some life force so you can resurrect it with renewed vigor and strength, but alas, none of them are capable! (Abiyev, 2007).

In response to this perceived literary malaise, Tevfik Fikret dedicated himself to creating works with strong social and political engagement. Throughout his career, he wrote

about the sufferings of the lower classes, used his poetry to make bold statements, and raised his voice in defense of justice and truth. His contribution to Turkish literature extended beyond thematic innovation; he also introduced new poetic forms. Viewing history through a humanitarian lens, he opposed wars and the enmity that divides nations.

During the 1908 revolution, Tevfik Fikret distinguished himself from his contemporaries by openly opposing the ruling elite and persistently advocating for freedom in his poetry, making the ideal of liberty a recurring theme in his work. His poem “National Song” even became the unofficial anthem of the Young Turks' revolution. Fikret's evolution into a revolutionary poet was gradual and complex. While he explored diverse themes and forms during the *Servet-i Fünun* period, his artistic direction shifted dramatically after breaking away from the journal, as he began to focus on revolutionary themes and directly criticize the authoritarian rule of Abdulhamid II. No longer preoccupied with conventional subjects such as love or sorrow, Fikret turned to more politically charged themes in poems like *Life* (1902), *To the Ancient Clock* (1902), *Signs* (1902), *Sis* (Mist, 1902), *For My Sister* (1903), and *If Tomorrow Comes* (1905).

Among his socially engaged works, *Sis* holds a particularly significant place and is often hailed as Fikret's poetic masterpiece. Many scholars believe this poem was instrumental in establishing his literary prominence, and he has even been nicknamed the “Poet of Mist” as a result. Written during Abdulhamid's oppressive rule, *Sis* boldly critiques the regime through an extended metaphor of nature: the pervasive fog symbolizes the suffocating tyranny engulfing Istanbul. The poet uses this imagery to illuminate the broader social decay, portraying the city as submerged in a thick, unnatural mist beneath which injustice and hostility thrive. This mist does not merely describe a meteorological condition, but represents the darkness of despotism. In the poem's opening, Istanbul is depicted as a place plagued by oppression and sorrow, not due to its inherent nature, but because of the political atmosphere imposed by the regime. Fikret's invective is thus aimed not at the city itself, but at the repressive forces that have turned it into a site of suffering.

“Cover up, yes, oh city, cover up, yes, oh city

Cover up and rest, oh tragic one of worlds.”

Then the poet talks about the wealthy classes residing in Istanbul. While depicting a stratum living a rich and extravagant life, on the other hand, he speaks of the people living in poverty, in ruined houses, suffering from hunger. The culprits of the people's miserable situation are

precisely the wealthy masses living in luxury, indifferent to the suffering of others:

"Oh, loud crowds, oh glories, oh parades

You, oh killer towers, oh prison palaces!"

Throughout the poem, Tefvik Fikret employs a direct, oratorical address throughout the poem, as though he were standing before a crowd and condemning those responsible for the nation's decline. Though these indictments seem directed at the broader population, they are symbolically aimed at Istanbul, which in the poem personifies the individuals and powers who have sought shelter in its embrace yet contributed to its moral decay. The city, as a living witness and silent accomplice to tyranny, becomes the bearer of the poet's harshest accusations. This masterfully crafted piece stands as a fervent appeal to the progressive elements of society, urging them toward struggle, liberation, and revolution.

Among the writers of the Servet-i Fünun era, Cenab Şahabeddin stand as a distinctive voice, known for the originality of his poetic vision. A graduate of the Askeri Tibbiye (Military Medical School) in 1886, Şahabeddin's academic excellence earned him a scholarship to study in Paris, where he encountered the vibrant literary scene of the French Symbolists and Parnassians. Deeply influenced by poets such as Verlaine, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé, Şahabeddin adopted their aesthetic principles and began composing poetry reflective of these movements. Embracing the credo of "art for art's sake," he promoted the idea that literature's primary aim was the pursuit of beauty, deliberately distancing his work from social or political engagement. This retreat from societal themes was common among Servet-i Fünun writers, who operated under the suffocating censorship of Sultan Abdulhamid II's regime. Consequently, their poetry gravitated toward introspective, emotional, and often melancholic themes. In this context, Şahabeddin innovated by introducing a refined poetic language, rich in complex expressions, novel adjectives, and original noun constructions—linguistic innovations that marked a turning point in Turkish literary style.

We can say that Jenab Shehabeddin returned from Paris in 1894 with a completely new understanding of European poetry. The poet, who greatly valued beauty, music, and art, had enjoyed village life during his childhood, capturing the delicate feelings awakened by the beauty of naked nature. From his earliest creative periods, the poet never strayed from themes related to the world of beauty. In 1896, Tofiq Fikret invited Jenab Shehabeddin to collaborate with the Servet-i Fünun journal. It was here that he published the poems he had written under the

influence of French symbolists, which brought him fame. Among the new-style poems, those like "nkisar-i bazice" and "Yakazat-i leyliye" were received with considerable affection. The unusual structure of the triplet stanzas in "Yakazat-i leyliye" was innovative. By utilizing verses in such a format, the poet managed to convey the sound of a piano. Until Jenab Shehabeddin, such poems had not been found in Turkish literature. For this reason, the poems attracted great interest. He was proclaimed the leader of the symbolists and decadents. Following the success of Jenab Shehabeddin's poems, a new literary generation began to emerge in Turkey—symbolists. The popularity of Jenab Shehabeddin even began to disturb the sultanic regime. After the closure of Servet-i Fünun, a ban was placed on the publication of the poet's poems. The main concern stemmed from the concealed meanings within the poems. The ambiguity and enigma characteristic of the symbolists began to disturb the sultanic regime. The poet did not publish any poems until 1908.

Symbolism was a literary movement that became popular in France from 1895 to 1909. It aimed to evoke emotions through music and symbols. Symbolists avoided the harshness in the external appearance of objects, trying instead to present them in the shadows, under a weak lamp, or in sunlight. The main characteristics of this movement are as follows: seeking refuge in the realm of dreams and seeing everything as if it were in a dream, escaping reality, and depicting objects behind a hazy veil. Symbolists preferred to depict lonely parks, withered leaves, and sunsets in their works. Colors also occupied a significant place in their depictions. One of the most important aspects that symbolists valued in poetry was music. Conveying music through verses and achieving a musical harmony in selected lines were characteristic of the symbolists. In this regard, it was easier for Turkish poets to convey music in their verses. With the rhythm of the aruz meter capable of creating complete music, Jenab Shehabeddin succeeded in creating musical harmony in his poems by skillfully utilizing all its measures.

Jenab Shehabeddin's depiction of nature differs from that of other poets. When describing natural scenery, he aimed to portray what he observed in nature. His nature scenes also resemble those present in classical literature. The landscapes filled with colors illuminated by moonlight, adorned with metaphors and fantasies detached from real nature, are central depictions in Jenab Shehabeddin's poems concerning nature. When addressing nature descriptions, he created verses influenced by the ambiguity typical of the symbolists and by the belief that objects possess souls. The original combinations of imagery constructed through associations encountered

in Servet-i Fünun poetry are generally attributed to Jenab Shehabeddin. The internal music and sonic power conveyed in the poet's verses are extremely strong. The poet, who proposed the idea that "poetry equals prose plus music," placed great importance on ensuring that verses sound like music to the ear. This idea gives special significance to the poem Yakazat-i Leyliye. In this poem, Jenab Shehabeddin attempts to express the music of the night.

"Come on, let's enjoy this evening freely, my dear,

Let's listen to the nightly murmur

(A faraway piano is playing

A woman is undoubtedly touching the keys)"

(Kabakli, 1997, p. 96)

In the poem that begins with these lines, the poet attempts to express the night's silence through the melodies of a piano. He skillfully uses the rhythms of the aruz meter and succeeds in conveying both music and fluency in his poetry.

Realism in Mehmed Akif's Poetry

Watching the decline of the Ottoman Empire with a heart full of sorrow, Mehmed Akif earned his place in the Turkish poetry of his time through his Islamism (unity-based) works (Ersoy, 1990), while Yahya Kemal wrote poems about the glorious historical past of the Turkish people, filled with victories (Beyatlı, 1967). Mehmed Akif was born in the Sarıgözel district of Istanbul, known for its religious environment. With the help of his father, Akif acquired religious knowledge. The poet's Muslim philosophy placed science above all else and opposed religious superstition. Akif was a realist poet; he himself noted that it is impossible to find a fantasy realm in his poems, as he only wrote what he saw with his eyes. Indeed, in his poems, he condemned the social problems of the people and blamed the faithful for using Islam to impede the enlightenment of society. His ideas of Islamism aligned with the progressive thoughts of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. Akif's perspective on issues was Islamic, and he repeatedly addressed educational problems, aspiring to transform Islam into the consciousness of the century. He writes:

Taking inspiration directly from the Quran,

We must bring Islam into the understanding of our century (Ersoy, 1990, p. 254).

Akif criticized the system in educational institutions for failing to produce qualified specialists. In many of his poems, he called on the people not to dwell on the past but to face the future. Among the poems he wrote on this subject, the poem *Awaken* especially stands out. In this poem, Akif

addresses his nation, urging them to awaken from their state of negligence, to work, and to struggle for progress.

Mehmed Akif emphasized the importance of looking toward the future and taking steps toward advancement. He urged his nation by stating that God opens the doors to the future, yet they continue to look back and make no effort to move forward. Akif saw the West progressing and wished for the Muslim East to develop while preserving Islamic values. He believed in human intellect and held that one who lacks intellect also lacks religion. Throughout his life, he sought to explain that Islam is a progressive religion by familiarizing himself with the works of Islamic scholars.

As we analyze Mehmed Akif's creativity, we see that he was a realist artist. All of the poet's poems carry social-didactic characteristics. In Akif's poetry, there is no love or world of dreams; he only writes what he sees. The poet's creativity is realist-naturalist. While depicting the bitter realities of his time in some poems, Akif creates strikingly realistic images and sometimes resorts to naturalistic descriptions to enhance the impact of these images.

Yahya Kemal's Ottomanism Thought in Poetry

In the history of Turkish literature, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı is known as the founder of the Ottomanism movement. To explain this movement, it should be noted that its representatives sought to reinvigorate a spiritually and morally declining nation by calling the people to take pride in their spiritual roots and by striving to keep the victories of the Ottoman period alive. Yahya Kemal was indeed such a poet. However, this does not mean that he was indifferent to the accomplishments of the new era or merely glorified the Ottoman past.

What captivates attention in Yahya Kemal's poetry is, above all, the musicality and plasticity of his work. The structural integrity and compositional perfection are among the defining features of Beyatlı's poetry. He skillfully and freely employed various forms of the aruz meter, placing great emphasis on the harmony of words and on alliteration. By using words with similar articulatory features, he achieved a melodious quality in his lines.

Yahya Kemal's poetry is free from monotony. He did not confine his expressions within rigid molds when utilizing different meters of aruz. In general, his poems preserve the natural form of words; they are never distorted to fit the verse. On the contrary, he presents words as they are heard in everyday speech. Even foreign words, in his usage, carry the distinctive imprint of Turkish.

Yahya Kemal's aesthetic principles differ significantly from those of other poets. He appears to have aimed at

enriching the centuries-old Turkish poetic identity with vibrant new colors—and succeeded in doing so.

In his works, Yahya Kemal placed great importance on the sound and structure of the Turkish language. A profound connoisseur of Turkish history, he studied the evolution of the language and deeply valued the centuries of effort made by the Turkish people to enrich and refine it. He possessed an intimate understanding of Turkish history, culture, and national identity. In one of his conversations, the poet remarked:

The Turkish language is the bond that has protected us as one nation from eternity to eternity—the bond that connects us. This bond is so strong that it will not break even if the boundaries of the homeland are severed; even beyond borders, it will keep us united. It does not divide millions of Turks; rather, it is a thread that passes from mind to mind, from heart to heart. If a dynamic and flourishing period of Turkish literature arises, it will elevate this mass as a whole by transmitting the national spirit like an electric current through all those minds and hearts. (Abiyev, 2007).

Although Yahya Kemal wrote on a variety of themes throughout his literary career, many common elements create a sense of unity across his oeuvre. His poetry encompasses themes such as love, nature, history, Istanbul, life, death, art, and foreign lands. For instance, his love poems often echo motifs of history and Istanbul. In nearly every verse, he confesses his affection for the city, praising Istanbul while simultaneously invoking the grandeur of Turkish history. In this way, the themes of love, history, and the city become intricately woven together within a single poem.

In Yahya Kemal's work, the organic unity of history and modernity is clearly expressed. He envisioned a prosperous and secure future through a reconciliation of the past and present. According to him, fostering a healthy national spirit in the younger generation is impossible without a deep understanding of history. Poems such as *Akıncı*, *Mohach Song*, *Arrow*, 1918, 26 August 1922, and *The Holiday Morning in Suleymaniye* are particularly noteworthy in this regard.

CONCLUSIONS

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Turkish poetry primarily coalesced around the ideological currents of realism (encompassing enlightenment, critical, and social themes) and romanticism (including revolutionary romanticism). These poets, influenced by the ideological, political, and philosophical movements they supported, sometimes adopted the “art for art’s sake” theory (especially the *Serveti-funun* proponents, notably Jenab Shahabeddin), positioning themselves at various poles. In other words,

poets from different schools of thought gathered around divergent creative ideas. Notably, significant innovations in Turkish poetry during this period were more evident in the realm of political-ideological stances than in literary currents or methods.

Tevfik Fikret's revolutionary-romantic and enlightenment-realist poetry, Jenab Shahabeddin's sentimental symbolism, Mehmet Emin and Ziya Gekalp's Turkism, Mehmet Akif's Islamic vision, and Yahya Kemal's Ottomanism represented the leading literary-ideological and philosophical movements of the time. The European-influenced literature of this period, both in form and content, starkly contrasted with the Ottoman literary tradition. Reformist figures such as İbrahim Şinasi, Namık Kemal, Ziya Pasha, Abdülhak Hamid, Rejai Zade Mahmud Ekrem, and others stood out for their efforts. These poets were eager to forge a new literature, seeking to move away from the classical forms and rules of *divan* literature. They engaged with the works of contemporary European poets such as Rousseau and Voltaire and endeavored to incorporate their themes into Turkish literature. During this era of reformist literature, romanticism emerged as the dominant literary trend.

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