

Aesthetic Perception in Modern Turkish Poetry: Groups, Communities and Movements 1850-1923*

Mustafa Özsarı**

Introduction

The term modern Turkish poetry is a general term given to the understanding of poetry that developed in Turkey, starting with the four (Kaside) odes that Şinasi wrote after returning from France to describe Reşit Pasha (1850-55) and his reforms, and until the declaration of the Republic Turkiye in 1923. The poetry of this period is also called new Turkish poetry, Turkish poetry of the modernization period, modern Turkish poetry, poetry developed under Western influence, etc. Many researchers have been suggested under different names about this period. But today, Turkish literature historians call this period Modern Turkish literature. This name is generally accepted by everyone. For this reason, I prefer to use the term modern Turkish poetry to avoid confusion in naming. In short, when we say modern Turkish poetry, we refer to the Turkish poetry that developed in the first half of the nineteenth century and the first 20 years of the twentieth century. In this article, the basic trends in Turkish poetry that developed between 1850 and 1923 will be analyzed in a descriptive way, taking into account stylistic issues.

The Main Problem

Different names were defined for Modern Turkish Poetry between 1850-1922. The names made about the poetic tendencies that developed during the modernization process in Turkey generally refer to fields other than literature. This situation is seen as a contradiction for researchers who focus on literature and

* This article was presented at the First Online Turkish-Korean Culture and Aesthetics Symposium held on December 22-23, 2023.

** Balıkesir University, Balıkesir Turkiye, email:mozsari@balikesir.edu.tr
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5230-014X>

poetry. In the background of this contradictory situation is the understanding of evaluating poetry with data from fields such as sociology, history, ideology, and even psychology. This situation is not sustainable for literary studies based on poetics and stylistic studies. However, in order to understand whether a text has poetic qualities, it is necessary to determine the aesthetic features of that text. As a matter of fact, historians of Turkish literature have evaluated Turkish poetry of the modernization period under various names, sometimes taking into account thematic, sometimes aesthetic and sometimes political criteria.

Islamic Effect in Turkish Poetry

Turks expressed their feelings in the form of poetry. Even scientific works that had to be written in prose, such as medical dictionaries, were written in poetry. This shows that not only literary texts, but even scientific texts are written with poetry in Turkish culture. That's why, when the history of Turkish literature is mentioned, the history of poetry comes to mind. Turkish poetry came under the influence of Persian and Arabic poetry to a large extent after the Turks accepted Islam in the 10th century. Poets learned Arabic and Persian in madrasahs and, under the influence of religion, imitated Arab and Persian poets. This is clearly seen in the themes, genres and styles of expression. For example, a trendy theme in Arabic literature has simultaneously become fashionable among the poets living around Istanbul Palaces and Mansions. Turkish poets imitated the style of their Iranian counterparts. The religion of Islam has a great influence on this imitation and interaction. In short, the most important sources of nutrition for Turkish poetry for 1000 years have been Arabic and Persian poetry under the influence of Islam.

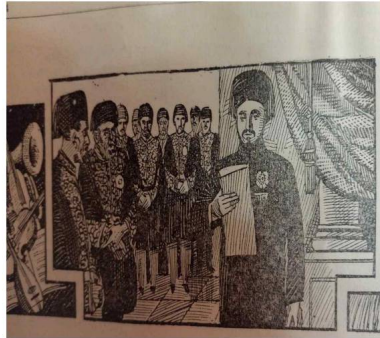


Declaration of Tazimat Edict: Movement of Western Cultures

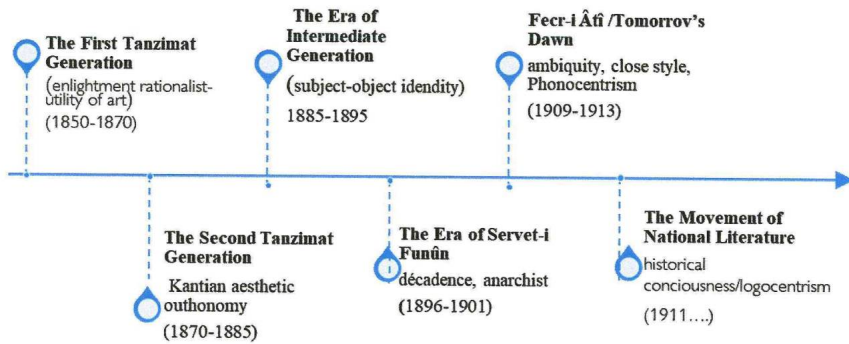
The dialogue of Turkish poetry with Arabic and Persian poetry lasted for about a thousand years. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ottoman dignitaries have turned towards Western culture, especially France. There are, of course, many reasons for this sharp turn. We are not going to list these reasons now. However, especially from the first half of the nineteenth century, westernization movements began in Turkey. As a result of Westernization, the Turkish state organization began to replace its old institutions, which had lost their function, with Western counterparts. This transformation, which emerged at the institutional level, also affected social institutions; Turkish artists also turned their direction towards the West.

The Tanzimat edict, declared on November 3, 1839, has an important place in the orientation of Turkey's Turks towards the Western way of life. With the Tanzimat edict, Türkiye left the circle of civilization it had been in for a thousand

years; It entered the circle of Western civilization. It had a significant impact on literary genres such as poetry, theatre, stories and novels in the Ottoman-Turkish society's return to the West. In this respect, Turkish poetry in the modernization period has changed and transformed in terms of aesthetics and stylistics; A new poetic language and a new understanding of poetry emerged. In parallel with the westernization process of society and the state, a new poetic language and a new way of perceiving poetry has emerged



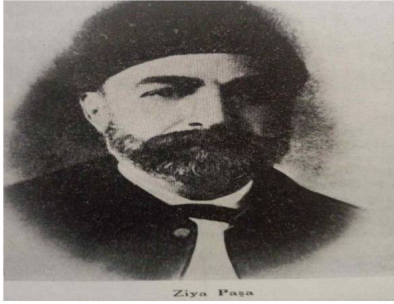
Pictures: Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşit Pasha Announces the Tanzimat Edict on 3 November 1839 in Istanbul



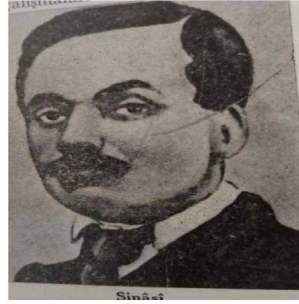
Time Line: Trends for Modern Turkish Poetry (1850-1923)

The First Tanzimat Generation: Namık Kemal-Şinasi-Ziya Paşa School

Namık Kemal-Şinasi-Ziya Pasha School/Enlightenment Social Utility. The poets of the First Tanzimat School published their poems mainly between 1850 and 1870. Its main representatives are Şinasi, Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha. The rationalism of the 18th century European Enlightenment had an active role in the development of this school. While describing the first generation artists of the Tanzimat period, Mehmet Kaplan described this period as the era of social and political ideas (Kaplan, 1992: 14). Yahya Kemâl Beyatlı also emphasizes that social and human concerns came to the fore in the literary works written in this period (Beyatlı, 1997: 41-42). Behind the understanding of instilling social and political ideas and expressing human concerns through literary works lies the idea of being useful to society through literature. This idea emerged when some of our intellectuals who started to get to know the West (The Question of Style in Literature - 89) attempted to create a new literature, seeing that the old Divan literature, which had already lost its vitality, would not be useful in reflecting the desires, feelings and thoughts of the new Turkish society (Özön, 1945:18). . In this new understanding of literature that developed under the influence of Western enlightenment thought, poets adopted an enlightenment view that gave importance to reason and combined existence with reason. From now on, the purpose of literature is nothing but the idea of educating the society and being useful to the society. The criterion that should be emphasized here is the criterion of usefulness. The idea that art in general, and literature in particular, should be beneficial to society and emphasizing the didactic aspect of literature is an understanding advocated by the rationalists of the Enlightenment Period in the West (Zima, 2006: 30). Rationalist thought and rationalist aesthetics are represented in France by thinkers such as Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau (Storing, 2011: 342-59). Rationalists adopted an understanding based on the didactic benefit criterion of art.



Ziya Pasha (1825-1880)



Sinasi (1826-1871)

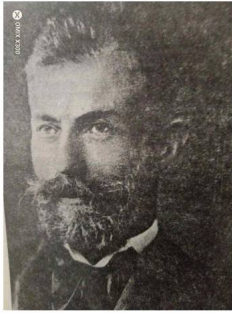
Rationalism, as a philosophical term, is based on the assumption that correct knowledge can be obtained through reason, not emotions, and that what is reasonable is right and what is right is reasonable (Okay, 2005:25). As a matter of fact, Şinasi, who emphasizes the superiority of reason at every opportunity in his works and bases himself on ideas rather than content, is of course under the influence of rationalism-based rationalism (Kaplan, 1992:274). Namık Kemal, who sees the main purpose of spreading certain ideas in his poems, directs the reader to be beneficial even in the behavior of his novel heroes, and instills social values that he thinks are beneficial at every opportunity with his theaters, is an apostle of art and culture who, in a way, devotes himself to educating the society he lives in. Traces of rationalism in terms of aesthetic understanding and ideology are also seen in Ziya Pasha, who was trying to impose some new ideas on society with old shapes. In short, the first generation artists of the Tanzimat emphasized the level of content; They adopted a logocentric literature. They didn't think much about the level of expression. They tried to convey new ideas through old forms and old means of expression. These ideas are nothing but a superficial view of the ideas of the rationalist philosophers and aestheticians of the Age of Enlightenment. In this case, when naming the literature created by the first period artists of the Tanzimat in terms of style, we can easily say that this group was under the influence of rationalist aesthetics. We couldn't want to say here that Şinasi, Namık

Kemâl and Ziya Pasha read the rationalist philosophers and writers of the Age of Enlightenment, entered into a direct dialogue with their works and were completely influenced by them. However, it is not possible for these three pioneers of Turkish enlightenment to be unaware of the philosophical and aesthetic understandings that developed in Europe during their time. Moreover, it is a known fact that Şinasi met and met with Ernest Renan, who evaluated Christianity through reason. Namık Kemal's Defense of Renan alone clearly shows that he followed Renan's writings. Ziya Pasha resided in various European capitals for many years and published newspapers there. All this reveals that the literary and aesthetic foundations of the early artists of Modern Turkish poetry were based on rationalist thought, as well as other indigenous forms of thought. In this case, Ziya Pasha-Namık Kemal-Şinasi Mektebi is a manifestation of Rationalist philosophy in Turkish poetry.

Ekrem-Hamid-Sezai School: Kantian aesthetic outhonomy 1870-1885

Representatives of 2th Tanzimat School are Recaizâde Mahmut Ekrem, Abdülhakhamit Tarhan and Samipaşazâde Sezai. These; Contrary to the first generation artists of Tanzimat who emphasized reason in literature, they focused on emotion in their poems. These generation is called the era of individualism, great passions and sufferings in the history of Turkish literature (Kaplan, 1992: 17). It is possible to see in various texts of Ekrem and Hamid that they put reason in the background and prioritize emotion. Abdülhak Hamit Bey is not alone in his approach to putting reason in the background in literature. This thought and aesthetic understanding also appears in Recâizâde Mahmut Ekrem's writings and poems. Ekrem Bey has repeatedly emphasized the unnecessaryness of emphasizing reason and logical thinking in literature in his various writings (Recâizâde Mahmut Ekrem, 1301:17-18). According to Recaizade, the beauty that penetrates the soul is not the mind, but the beauty that affects the heart. He also accepts that poetry is a work of emotion; It has limited the beauty of ideas, that is, conceptual thought. His prioritization of conceptual thought in poetry brings him closer to the concept

of aesthetic autonomy. Ekrem Bey also states that every beautiful thing can be the subject of poetry. Here, he clearly emphasizes that the subject is not important in poetry. What is important in poetry is the style of expression. In this case, 2th Tanzimatists adopted Kant's understanding of aesthetic autonomy in terms of their understanding of beauty. The most important source of Tanzimat poetry, as in almost every period of art, is Divan poetry. In short, the second generation of Tanzimat, that is, Ekrem-Hamit Sezai School, adopted Immanuel Kant's understanding of aesthetic autonomy in terms of style. This is the most distinctive feature of the second generation artists.

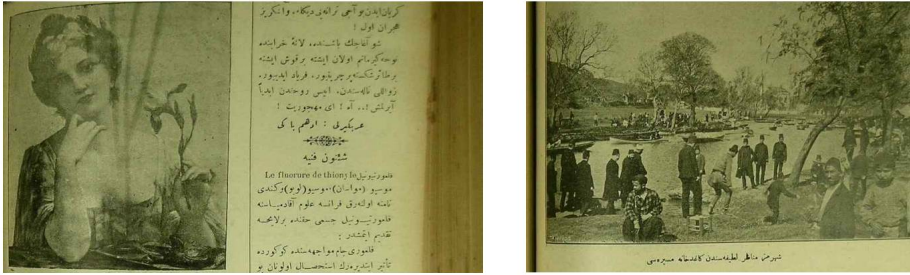


Recaizade Ekrem (1847-1914)-Samipaşazade Sezai (1859-1936)-Abdülhakhamit (1852-1937)

Intermediate Generation: The Period of Small Sensitives (1885-1895)

Intermediate Generation In modern Turkish poetry, there is a group of 25-30 people who published their poems between 1880-1895 and laid the foundations of a new aesthetic perception. Mehmet Kaplan named this group the "Intermediate Generation". The main representatives of this group in poetry, led by Muallim Naci, are poets such as Müstecabizade İsmet, Beşir Fuat, Mehmet Celal. These; Even if they did not put the idea in the background in poetry, they at least accepted the idea on equal footing with emotion. Moreover, it is possible to say that Muallim Naci and his followers adopted an approach based on the harmony of words and meaning in style. In short, Muallim Naci and his friends adopted an

understanding of art based on the harmony of meaning and wording, that is, the level of expression and the level of content. As a matter of fact, Muallim Naci saw literature aesthetically as a branch of fine arts related to sound; He gave importance to sound. More clearly, Naci adopted the phonocentric approach.

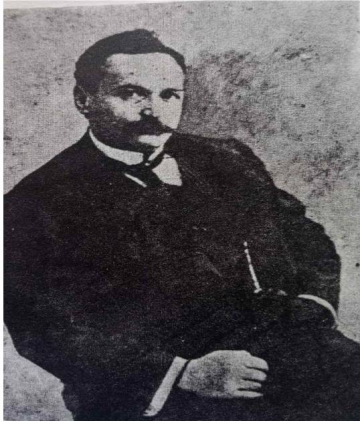


Pictures: Malumat magazines Pub. 1896, Istanbul

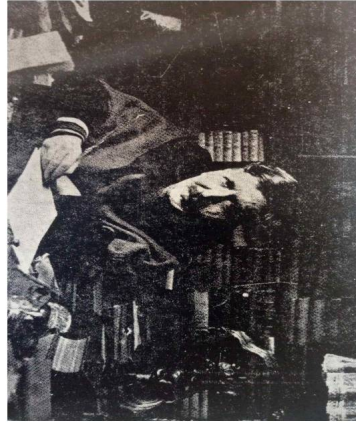
The Era of Servet-i Fünûn: Turkish Decadents 1896-1901

Servet-i Funûn literary community has an important place in the history of modern Turkish literature. Members of this community published their works mainly between 1886 and 1901. Servet-i Fünûn community artists have published important works in both poetry, stories and novels. The most important representatives of the Servet-i Fünûn community in poetry are Tevfik Fikret and Cenap Şahabettin. Servet-i Fünûn artists have created a unique style of their own. This style is an artistic style (style artiste). The most important feature of the Servet-i Fünûn style is that it has a common feeling and appearance. Moreover, Servet-i Fünûn poets realized that poetry is a work of emotion and appearance. However, Servet-i Fünun poets brought art closer to philosophy. For example, Tevfik Fikret described some social themes as subjects in his poetry. In terms of equating art with philosophy, Servet-i Fünûn artists bear traces of the German Romantic aesthetics developed by Friedric Schelegel and Schelling. On the other

hand, Servet-i Fünûn poets are associated with the Deans in terms of their understanding of rejecting all aesthetic features of traditional poetry. As a matter of fact, it is known that Hüseyin Cahit, an important representative of the Servet-i Fünûn community in the field of literary criticism, read Max Stirner and Feuerbach well and made translations from them. Therefore, it is possible to associate the Servet-i Fünûnists with the anarchists who were influential first in Germany and then in France in the second half of the 19th century.



Tevfik Fikret (1867-1915)

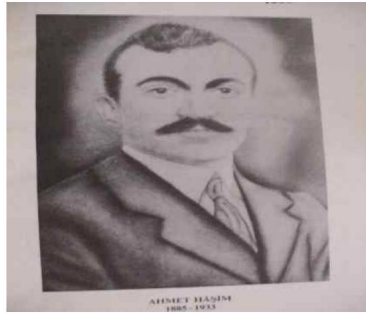


Cenap Şhabettin (1870-1934)

Fecr-i Âtî (1909-1913)

Fecr-i Âtî is a literary and artistic community that was influential in Turkey between 1909 and 1913. Among the artists of the Fecr-i Âtî community, there are representatives who have produced important works in different fields of literature, such as poets, storytellers, novelists, literary historians and literary critics. Fecr-i Âtî means the dawn of tomorrow. The most important representative of Fecr-i Âtî in poetry is Ahmet Hâşim. In fact, if you remove Ahmet Hâşim, there will be no community called Fecr-i Âtî. In this respect, it is necessary to consider Ahmet

Haşim's poetry style from the poetry style of Fecr-i Âtî. Ahmet Haşim is the creator of the hostile style in Turkish literature. The features of the Hashimâne style are as follows: 1. A closed style prevails in the poem. 2. It adopted a sound-centered approach. 3. Metaphors and similes have been used a lot. 4. Reality has been regarded as a mobile army of metaphors and metaphors. According to Fecr-i Âtî, the ideal person is the person of ancient times who values art, science and women. In this respect, Fecr-i Âtî can be interpreted as a symbol of the return to ancient times in Turkish poetry.



Ahmet Hashim(1887-1933)

National Literary Movement (1911-)

Between 1900 and 1922, the Turkish army fought in 5 major wars. These are the Tripoli War in Libya, the First and Second Balkan Wars in Rumelia, the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence. Great tragedies occurred in these wars, and the Ottoman Empire suffered great territorial losses. Almost every family and every person in Turkey has been affected by these wars. It is not possible for the poets to save themselves from the effects of these wars on social and state life. As a matter of fact, national feelings have become widespread among Turkish writers due to wars. There are many poets and novelists who accept art, especially poetry, as a tool to express national feelings. The literary works they

wrote were evaluated under the name of the national literature movement. It has become a fashion to focus on Anatolian Turkishness, to explain Anatolian nature, and to explain the culture of Anatolian Turkish people. In this fashion, it is not the signs themselves that are important, but their referents. Let us finish our conversation with a poem by Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, titled Art, published in 1926, as it is one of the most prominent examples of national literature.

In Conclusion

As briefly stated above, political, ideological and partly aesthetic criteria were mostly taken into account in the naming of periods and periods of Tanzimat literature. In these naming, the idea that literature is an object of aesthetic pleasure is ignored. In this regard, it is useful to take into account philosophical and aesthetic criteria in determining the stylistic qualities of Tanzimat period literature. Especially the rationalist aesthetics that developed in the 18th century influenced the first period artists of the Tanzimat, and Şinasi-Namık Kemâl and Ziya Pasha produced their works under the influence of the rationalist style. On the other hand, the second generation artists of the Tanzimat period were influenced by Immanuel Kant's views on art and aesthetics, considering their view of poetry and beauty, and they adhered to the idea of the German philosopher, who was the first philosopher to discover the idea of aesthetic autonomy. They also adapted the concepts of grotesque aesthetics and irrationality of Theodor Vischer, who can also be described as a neo-Kantian, to literature. In this regard, while determining the stylistic characteristics of the Second Tanzimatists, it is useful to carefully examine both their aesthetic autonomy and their concepts of grotesque aesthetics and irrationality. Thirdly, while determining the place of Muallim Naci and his friends in our literary history, their support for the old was always repeated. This statement is pure speculation and manipulation. Muallim Naci stands out as an artist who is

not a supporter of the old in art and literature, but rather an artist who knows the fashionable concepts of art and aesthetics of his time and who has adopted the phonocentric style based on word-meaning harmony in art and poetry. Similar wrong judgments also apply to the poetry of the literary community of Servet-i fûnûn. They are always decadent, topatan etc. It has been misjudged with epithets. In this regard, evaluations made about the style of the artists of the Servet-i Fünun literary community without knowing the philosophical and aesthetic debates developing in Europe, for example, without being familiar with the aesthetic understanding of anarchists and New Hegelian thinkers such as Max Stirner, Arnold Ruge, Theodor Vischer, or even Nietzsche and Feuerbach, may lead us to wrong conclusions. can take you away. This is the subject of another study.

References

- Akerson, Fatma Erkman (2010). *Edebiyat ve Kuramlar*, İstanbul: İthaki.
- Beyatlı, Yahya Kemâl (1997). “Eski ve Yeni Şiir”, *Edebiyata Dair*, İstanbul: Fetih Cemiyeti Yayınları.
- Enginün, İnci (2006). *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Tanzimattan Cumhuriyete*, İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları.
- Kaplan, Mehmet (1992) “Şinasi’nin Türk Şiirinde Yaptığı Yenilik”, *Türk Edebiyatı Üzerinde Araştırmalar-I*, İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, ss. 253-274.
- Kaplan, Mehmet(19939). *Tevfik Fikret (Devir-Şahsiyet-Eser)*, İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları.
- Okay, Orhan (2005). *Batılılaşma Devri Türk Edebiyatı*, İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları.
- Özön, Mustafa Nihat (1945). *Son Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, İstanbul: MEB Basımevi.
- Özsarı, Mustafa (2007). *Müstecabizade İsmet: Hayatı ve Eserleri*, İstanbul: 3F Yayınları.
- Özsarı, Mustafa (2013). *Ondokuzuncu Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Yaşamış Bir Neo-Klasik: Şeyh Vassı*, Ankara: Altınpost Yayınları.
- Recâizâde Mahmut Ekrem (mali calender 1301). *Zemzeme*, III. Kısım İstanbul.
- Recaizâde Mahmut Ekrem (mali calender 1301). *Takdîr-i Elhân*, Dersaadet.
- Störüng, Hans Joachim(2011). *Dünya Felsefe Tarihi*, (çev. Nilüfer Epçeli), İstanbul: Say Yayınları.
- Tanpınar, A. Hamdi (1988) *19. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, İstanbul: Çağlayan Kitabevi.
- Tarakçı, Celâl (1994). *Muallim Naci*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları.
- Zima, Peter V. (2006). *Modern Edebiyat Teorilerinin Felsefesi* (çev. Mustafa Özsarı), Ankara: Hece Yayınları.

[Abstract]

Aesthetic Perception in Modern Turkish Poetry: Groups, Communities and Movements 1850-1923

Mustafa Özşarı

The term modern Turkish poetry is a general term given to the understanding of poetry that developed in Turkey, starting with the four (Kaside) odes that Şinasi wrote after returning from Paris to describe Reşit Pasha who is Grand Vizier (1850-55) and his reforms, and until the declaration of the Republic of Modern Türkiye in 1923. The poetry of this period is also called new Turkish poetry, Turkish poetry of the modernization period, modern Turkish poetry, poetry developed under Western influence, etc. Many researchers have been suggested under different names about this period. But today, Turkish literature historians call this period Modern Turkish literature.

There are 6 basic groups, communities and movements in modern Turkish poetry. These communities or movements have developed under the influence of different aesthetic understandings. The basic philosophical and aesthetic understandings that developed in Europe since the beginning of the European Enlightenment Era have also influenced modern Turkish poetry. While the Namık Kemal-Ziya Pasha-Shinasi school followed the rationalist aesthetic approach, the second generation of Tanzimat adopted Immanuel Kant's aesthetic autonomy. While the committees of Servet-i Fünun's representatives adopted young Hegelian aesthetics, which developed in Germany in the second half of the 19th century, Fecr-i Ati adapted the Nietzschean phonecentric aesthetics. In this respect, the philosophical and aesthetic tendencies that develop in Europe, especially in the nineteenth century, also guided modern Turkish poetry. In this article, the basic

trends in Turkish poetry that developed between 1850 and 1923 will be analyzed in a descriptive way, taking into account aesthetic and philosophic tendencies.

Submission of Manuscript: 2024/5/8

Review of Manuscript: 2024/5/27

Publication Approval: 2024/6/7