



Servet-I Fünun Literature: A Study on Tevfik Fikret and Cenab Sahabettin's Understanding of Poetry

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the aesthetic principles and literary expressions of the Servet-i Fünun period by focusing on the poetic works of Tevfik Fikret and Cenab Sahabettin. Emphasizing the movement's Western literary influences- particularly symbolism, parnassianism, and romanticism- the article examines how these poets integrated foreign stylistic elements. When we look at their the poems while considering the political and cultural tradition of the late Ottoman Empire in 20th century. Through a close analysis of Tevfik Fikret's Süha ve Pervin, Sis, and Bir Lahza-i Teahhur, and Cenab Sahabettin's Elhan-i Sita and Terâne-i Mehtab, the paper delineates differing poetic strategies in which Fikret's emotionally charged, socially conscious depictions versus Cenab's musical understanding in poems, painterly renderings of abstract landscapes. We can template a traditional poetic system contrast new writing system. They were from same literary tradition but term has effected their social and imaginary literacy. Both poets demonstrate musicality and formal innovation, yet with divergent focuses- Fikret on human experience, Cenab on aesthetic abstraction in poetic tradition. The paper concludes that while both figures expanded the boundaries of Turkish poetry, they did so through distinct yet complementary artistic visions.

KEY WORDS

Servet-I Fünun, Literature, Tevfik Fikret, Cenab Pahabettin, Symbolism, Turkish modern poetry.

The year the magazine was founded, 1905, is considered to be the beginning of the Servet-i Fünun

period. The poets and writers of the period had a good command of foreign languages as they had studied in Western schools and thus read and understood Western texts in the original language. Therefore, they closely followed western literature and successfully reflected movements such as symbolism, parnassism and realism in their works. The artists of Servet-i Funun were a group of young people who felt alienated from their homeland and had been educated in the West. They wanted to reflect what they gained from the West to their own country's understanding of poetry and literature. The political restrictions imposed by the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid caused them to be even more insistent in reflecting their understanding of poetry in their poetry. The traces of longing for unknown lands are clearly visible in their poetry. Their understanding of poetry can be more accurately explained with the words of Mehmet Kaplan, the greatest researcher of the new Turkish literature: "Reading Western works from their originals awakened in them the idea of a style different from that in Turkish and played an important role in their stylistic revolution" (Kaplan, *Tevfik Fikret: Devir-Pahsiyet-Eser*, 251).

The poets and writers of the Servet-i Funun period moved away from social content due to the political conditions of Sultan Abdülhamid's reign and saw nature as an expression of mood-spirituality. The individual's inner they focused on the reflection of emotions by turning towards the world. Here, when we look at the works of Turkish literature in general, we see the influence of symbolism and parnassism movements. Like the Tanzimat writers, they thought that the purpose of art was not social, which led them to adopt the view of art for art's sake. Although they expressed that they adopted this view, we see in the works produced in this period that this was not exactly the case. The artists of the period revealed their thoughts as a tool in their works. We see this situation in many works such as Tevfik Fikret's "*Haluk'un Defteri*", Halit Ziya's "*Mai and Siyah*", novels and poems.

The Servet-I Fünun period brought with it debates on language and style. According to them, music and harmony were the basic elements of poetry. This was related to the words chosen. Therefore, they brought Persian and Arabic words that had fallen out of use into the language. This led them to adopt the view of art for art's sake. Thus, they created a literary language separate from the spoken language and for this, they resorted to the lexicon.

Since the poets of Servet-i Fünun thought that everything could be the subject of poetry, they expanded the subject of poetry. The main themes of their poems are love and nature. They thought that rhyme was for the ear and therefore they did not look for rhyme and meter in poetry. According to them, rhyme provides the harmonic element of poetry. According to the Servet-i Fünun writers and poets, nature exists to inspire people. Therefore, they wanted to be poets of mood-spirit. According to them, the poet changes our world of perception with the help of imagination and reflects it in poetry. In this context, according to Ayin Nâdir, poetry is as follows:

Emotions are expressed in two types. Either the external world is described in a way that readers can visualize, or the poet describes the feelings he creates in himself from the external world. In both cases, the rules of eloquence and rhetoric, meter and rhyme are used to express emotions in a better way. (Ercilasun, 37)

Tevfik Fikret looks at poetry like a painter looks at a painting. In other words, according to him, poetry is a reflection of human nature. Therefore, we can see human nature and the feelings based on it in his poems. Mehmet Kaplan says the following about this subject:

"Emotion in the full sense of our literature, that is, feeling that is not mixed with abstract ideas and does not have a violent character like passion, finds its first analyzers only in the Servet-i Fünuncular. Indeed, this generation, which received the spiritual upbringing of two or three French literary movements - romanticism, realism and symbolism - devotes a great deal of space to the description and analysis of emotions. (Kaplan, *Tevfik Fikret: Era-Personality-Work*, 41).

As can be seen, we have so far talked about the general characteristics of Servet-i Fünun literature. We will discuss this period in the context of Tevfik Fikret's understanding of poetry. In Fikret's poetry, nature and mood-spirit are intertwined. He depicts nature as it is. This is also the case in the poem "Süha and Pervin". Here the location of the two lovers is described as follows:

"Under a cloudy sky in April, a calm and peaceful pine forest... A wide, long road that turns and turns, seemingly finding a kiss of a muddy, still sea... Every point of the forest, a little secluded, a little dark, is either a "melce-i mutecessise" (a shape of shadow), or two souls of love. Everyone, everywhere, everything is silent... Men and women, sometimes one or two, a few bodies slowly cross the road and disappear into the woods... (Enginün and Kerman 230)

In this part of the poem given above, Fikret describes the place as it is. Descriptions like this are frequently used in this poem. Süha and Pervin are placed in a suitable place in nature. While Süha is blond, has long hair and is self-controlled, Pervin is dark and has a bright complexion. There are many such details. This poem describes the collision of dream and reality. While Süha represents the imagination, Pervin represents the truth, Süha represents the soul and Pervin represents the body. Süha speaks of love, pure love, and wants to avoid relationships that prioritize materiality. Pervin, on the other hand, wants the opposite and prioritizes material relationships. Throughout their conversations, it becomes clear that the two lovers are very different from each other.

Pervin finds Süha very poetic and mocks him throughout the conversation. We see this in the line "- You are very poetic". The following lines also explain this situation:

-You're children!

"They are facing the last shams of the sun.

It points to the Sabbaths."

Look, there is a meeting in these pink clouds:

"Enough of childhood!" says meeting with beloved

It churns around us like a warm sea;

This is how I envy nature when I see it...

Why don't we make love? (232)

In the lines above, Pervin finds Süha's conversations, in other words his dreams, childish. Pervin's saying "Why don't we make love" shows that she wants a material relationship. Therefore, she mocks Süha, whom she finds poetic. The fact that she plays with her hair and snaps her fingers while talking to him is an indication that she is bored with Süha's poetic behavior based on imagination. Throughout the conversation Süha longs for a place far from reality. Since the sky represents the imaginary and the world he lives in represents the reality, he wants to escape from this world. At the end of the poem, the dream is defeated by the reality and Süha stares after Pervin. As can be seen, this poem is very important in that it contains many innovations such as the poem being close to prose, depicting nature like a painting, and revealing the mood-spirit.

Another important poem of Tevfik Fikret is "Sis". Although Servet-I Fünun writers adopted the principle of art for art's sake, they also included social issues in their poems. This poem is an example of this situation. With "Sis" Tevfik Fikret curses the 2nd Abdulhamid era, which he hated. In this poem, we see a high level of hatred as a result of Fikret's pessimism. Although the poem is dedicated to Istanbul, it is generally dedicated to a period. Tevfik Fikret depicts nature like a painting and provides a music with the compositions he chooses. In his poem "Sis" (Fog), he describes Istanbul in all its deta In the poem, the beauty of Istanbul is confessed with expressions such as "*zulmet-i beyza, bîve-i bâkir, sahn-i zisagsa'a-i hâilepîrâ, en kirli kadýnlar gibi munis...*". We can see Fikret's secret admiration for Istanbul in many lines. With the oxymorons used, both the beauty of Istanbul is mentioned and many negative situations such as moral deterioration, disorder and

injustice are described with Fikret's pessimism. Many structures of the city such as madrasahs, palaces, minarets, courts, tombs and houses are expressed with hatred. In addition to these, the injustice, pollution and ugliness of the people are also mentioned. And his desire to prevent all these negativities;ils. Here, oxymorons are used to reveal the material beauty and moral corruption of the city.

Örtün, evet, ey hâile... Örtün, evet ey, sehr;
Örtün, ve müebbed uyu, ey fâcîre-i dehr... (248)
(Cover, yes, O coward... Cover, yes, o city;
Cover yourself, and sleep forever, O polecat...)

He expressed it by repeating the lines. Mehmet Kaplan says the following about the style of Servet-i Fünun literature:

As already pointed out, the style of "Sis" is completely in line with the "picturesque and musical style" ideals of the Servet-i Fünuncu. This is the main reason for their fondness for foreign words and phrases. They were interested in describing entities separately and

The concern for description leads them to adjective and noun phrases. The Persian composition mechanism gave a unity to small images. The music of language also gave them. He made us love foreign words. If the verses of "Sis" are analyzed separately, many phonetic games can be seen in them. (Kaplan, Siir Tahlilleri 1, 114)

Mehmet Kaplan's words above summarize the style of this poem. Issues such as the music of the compositions chosen in the poem and the heavy language are a product of reflecting the understanding of art they adopted.

Fikret's inability to fully adopt the principle of art for art's sake is also seen in the poem "Bir Lahza-i Teahhur". The atmosphere of hatred in the poem "Sis" is also dominant in this poem. In this poem, he expressed his anger towards the sultan of the period with hatred, and he welcomed the assassination of the sultan with great affection, and wrote about it in his verses.

Bir darbe... Bir duman... Ve bütün bir gürûh-i sûr,
Bir magser-i vazî-i temâsâ, hasin, akur
Tirnaklariyle bir yed-i kahrýn, didik didik,
Yükseldi gavr-icevve bacak, kelle, kan, kemik. (Enginün ve Kerman 98)
(A blow... A smoke... And a whole horde,
A majestic, harsh, white
A seven-seventh power with its fingernails, ripped to shreds,
Rised suffering, head, blood, bone.)

Verse and rhyme are the elements that provide rhythm. However, as seen in the lines above, rhythm is provided by bringing words piece by piece. This rhythm is made with similar words that are fragmented. We see this expression throughout the poem "Bir Lahza-i Teahhur". Fikret used this expression in many poems. We also encounter this situation in his poem "Rain":

Küçük, muttarid, muhteriz darbeler
Kafeslerde, camlarda pür-i ihtizâz
Olur dem-be dem nevhâ-ger, nagme-sâz. (239)

The lack of words that fully describe the words in the verses and the fact that the understanding of poetry in the Ottoman poetry period was to make the poem intuitive. Here the regular, drop by drop, regular strokes of the rain are described. Since Fikret thought that there was a relationship between meter and emotions, he chose this kind of usage and provided the rhythm of the poem in this way.

We have analyzed some of Tevfik Fikret's poems within the framework of his and Edebiyat-i Cedide's understanding of art. Now we will look at the poems of Cenab Sahabettin, another important figure who grew up in this period, and discuss his poems in the context of the period's understanding of art.

According to Cenab, there is a similarity between the state of mind and nature. According to him, with the help of this similarity, the poet seeks a way to show his feelings and defines this as poetry. He gives importance to harmony and music in his poems. In his poems, he used depiction a lot by describing nature like a picture. In other words, he looked at nature with the eyes of a painter and reflected this in his works. Mehmet Kaplan's views on this subject are as follows:

Cenab assumes that there is a spirit in nature similar to the human spirit, a "spirit universe". However, they make their inner world and the spirit in nature as plastic and visible as the outer world. Depiction in prose and verse constitutes the basis of Servet-i Fünun literature. Servet-i Fünun writers loved music as well as painting. This love does not only manifest itself in the form of dealing with musical themes in their works; it also affects their style. Servet-i Fünun poetry is not only painting but also music. (Kaplan, Tevfik Fikret: Era-Personality-Work, 41).

When we look at Cenab's poem "Elhan-i Sita" in the context of these thoughts, we see that it is a vague poem. The rhythm of the poem is provided with visual images and sound repetitions. This poem has the character of a painting with its images. It describes a winter landscape in an unusual way. In addition, harmony is achieved through meter, the words chosen and the repetition of sounds. In other words, the poem has created music with these elements. In this poem, the attribution of new meanings to words, the expression of emotions through metaphors, the musicality of verses and

It is very important in terms of having features such as carrying the effects of symbolism. He gives more importance to the musicality of words than Tevfik Fikret. We can easily understand this from his poems. We also see the feeling of sadness in the poems of Servet-i Fünun in "Elhan-i Sita". In this poem, sadness is expressed through various means. Some of them are as follows:

Ki hamusâne dem-be-dem aglar
Ki semadan düser düser aglar
Ki havada uçar uçar aglar
Uçtunuz gittiniz siz ey kuslar
Gittiniz, gittiniz siz ey mürgan. (Enginün ve Kerman 270-71).
(Who cries in non-stop
Which falls from the sky and cries
Who flies in the air and cries
You have flown away, these birds
You are gone, you are gone, this inservient)

Cenab Pahabettin created a new literary style by inventing new terms and expressions. He was subjected to serious criticism by the defenders of the old literature. For this reason, another work of Cenab, his poem "Terâne-i Mehtab" also caused fierce debates. The phrase "sâ'ât-ý semen-fâm" meaning jasmine-colored hours in the poem was highly criticized. Cenab used such unorthodox expressions or phrases in his poems. In the poem "Terâne-i Mehtab", harmony was achieved with the words chosen. Music is provided with many elements such as expressions, terkibs and meter. In general, a negative landscape is described with grief. A picture based entirely on harmony is revealed.

Ay pîr-i fezanýn
Âgûsuna gitti
Ay battý...cihânýn

Rûsenligi bitti. (270)

CONCLUSION

Cenab Sahabettin created a new literary style by inventing new terms and expressions. He was subjected to serious criticism by the defenders of the old literature. For this reason, another work of Cenab, his poem “Terâne-i Mehtab” also caused fierce debates. The phrase “sâ’ât-ý semen-fâm” meaning jasmine-colored hours in the poem was highly criticized. Cenab used such unorthodox expressions or phrases in his poems. In the poem “Terâne-i Mehtab”, harmony was achieved with the words chosen. Music is provided with many elements such as expressions, terkibs and meter. In general, a negative landscape is described with grief. A picture based entirely on harmony is revealed. Kaplan’s statements summarize many of the things we want to say about Tevfik Fikret and Cenab Sehabettin based on Servet-i Fünun literature. Tevfik saw poetry as a means of conveying his feelings, and he resorted to description in order to do so. Therefore, we see many human emotions such as ambition, love and grief in his poems. Cenap Sehabettin, on the other hand, used poetry as a means of painting and resorted to imagery. He did not include human beings and their emotions in his poems, he created his art by painting through words. For this, music and depiction were utilized.

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