

# Tradition and Modernism in the Works of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Turkish Writer A.H. Tanpinar

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## Abstract

The urgency of the problem under investigation is caused by the fact that the studies on the history of Turkish literature, in contrast with the previous eras, are marked by a certain dynamic that aims to identify the dominant trends in the development of Turkish literature that contributes to rethinking of the traditional breaking of consciousness and assessment of historical and cultural heritage of writers. The purpose of the article is to examine the processes leading to the change in traditional attitudes by modernist worldview; revealing the author's personality by interpreting the text; in the analysis of the writer's literary traditions, involving the transfer of cultural and artistic experience of the past. The methodological basis of the work is the comparative-historical method, which allows considering the philosophical views of the writer, as well as the ideological and emotional assessment of Tanpinar in relation to the literary phenomena of the studied period. The article may be useful in the development of special academic courses, and taken into account in the general courses on Turkish literature and literature of Asia and Africa, with the establishment of various training manuals - college textbooks and monographs.

**Keywords:** historical and literary process, literary trends, symbolism, author's identity, structure of studies, dialects

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Turkish literature of the early twentieth century continued to be under the influence of Western, especially French literature. This facilitated the pervasion of various literary movements, in particular symbolism that marked the urgent needs of society in the search for new topics and forms. It was typical for symbolism to see the art as an intuitive comprehension of world unity through the discovery of symbolic analogy. Symbolists believed that music was the foundation of life and art (Fesenko, 2005).

The basic principles of aesthetics of symbolism A.H. Tanpinar discovered in the works of French poets Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé. According to the statement that the symbolists extremely intensified the interest to the shell of the word, to what they called its musicality (Fesenko, 2005), caused in A.H. Tanpinar the desire to get acquainted with the outstanding musical works of Western composers. The first attempts to transfer musical techniques to literary works were undertaken by the French Symbolists. In the end of the 20s and 30s, the West continues to "export" to Turkey samples of its poetry of the XIX century, such as works of Baudelaire and Mallarme, aesthetic concepts and products of Dadaism, Surrealism and Futurism (Aizenshtein, 1968).

The problem of "synthesis of the arts" was replaced by the problem of literary analogy with the music A.H. Tanpinar demonstrated in the novel ("Serenity"), through the original compositional structure of the narrative. The author drew an analogy of the text with the structure of a musical work where the first chapter looked quite monotonous, the second - expressive, and the third was full of melancholy and the fourth regained a monotonous style.

Among the followers of the Turkish symbolism the names of Ahmed Hashim and Yahya Kemal should be mentioned. It was Yahya Kemal who drew Tanpinar's attention to the ability to master the art of using a language. Tanpinar said: "The Influence of Yahya Kemal on me and my art is expressed through a sense of perfection and

beauty of the language of his works. It was he who revealed the horizons of a language to us" (Kaplan, 2001).

Tanpinar's disagreement with many poets and writers of his time is fully reflected in his works, which clearly demonstrates the desire of the writer to be different. Tanpinar tried to prove that he did not support the denial of a new, but on the contrary, he was for the preservation of cultural and historical roots. Thus, Tanpinar sought to show the deep crisis of the Turkish intelligentsia, faced with the cultural influence of the West, and thus was firm in his beliefs, defending the aesthetic and artistic traditions of Turkish folk culture.

### *1.2 Status of a Problem*

The collection (Kerman, 1974) is of great interest in connection with the integrated approach to the study of life and work. This collection contains the facts about the writer's life, personal correspondence with friends and colleagues. Another source is a scientific work of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar (Tanpinar, 2003), which sets out his specific views on Turkish literature as a whole, and also provides information on the activities of some representatives of literature of the XIX century.

In order to identify the author's personality, Tanpinar's collections of poems, written in different periods of life (Ayyıldız, 2002; Eyüboğlu, 2005; Tutar, 2005) were studied, as well as a collection of stories (Tanpinar, 1983), an essay and a novel (Tanpinar, 2004). The material of the study is based on the works of Turkish researchers (Kaplan, 2001; Okay, 2000; Yazan & Karışman 2000) and others.

Analysis of theoretical studies, creative and scientific activity of the writer showed that the interest of researchers to the heritage of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar continued throughout the twentieth century. However, it should be mentioned that whereas the number of papers devoted to Tanpinar as a poet, writer, and just as a person is sufficiently representative, his scientific activity is not so widely researched. His works, which are the result of years of research, define a fairly narrow range of readers. Perhaps this was the reason for a fundamental change in the approach to the study of the creative and scientific heritage of Tanpinar.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### *2.1 Goals of Study*

The study addressed the following tasks: 1) to reveal the influence of symbolism on the outlook of Tanpinar through the analysis of the poetic heritage; 2) to analyze the ways which show the author's personality, to characterize compositional features; 3) to study Tanpinar's scientific work in order to identify traditional and contemporary views of the Turkish literary criticism.

### *2.2 Theoretical Methods*

A variety of complex methods, complementing each other, were used in the course of this study:

**Theoretical method** - analysis, study and generalization of the views of the Turkish researchers and the writer on the historical, cultural and literary processes;

**Descriptive method** - a consistent description of the creative heritage is represented, is it systematized in line with the research task.

**Cultural-historical method** - a literary study material is explained through major historical facts, as a product of social life and specific cultural and historical circumstances.

### *2.3 Sources of Study*

The sources of the study are represented by the artistic and scientific heritage of A.H. Tanpinar in the original language, as well as the works of Russian and Turkish researchers.

### *2.4 Research Milestones*

The study was conducted in three phases:

The first phase was devoted to Tanpinar's activity as a poet. As an integrated approach to studying poetic heritage poems written by A.H. Tanpinar in different periods of his life were analyzed. In the verses of the first period there is a "gloomy" spiritual mood of the poet. Further a partial "enlightenment" appears containing the symbols of happiness and joy. The third phase reveals that internal and external perception of the world, dreams and reality are equally important to A.H. Tanpinar. Descriptions of the outside world in the poems of A.H. Tanpinar occupy a central place, though there are calls to plunge into the world of illusions, retirement into one's shell. Modernist elements flowing to unrealistic trend in literature – symbolism clearly appear there. The most common themes of A.H. Tanpinar's poems are time, dream, music and infinity. The motives of death, fear, light, love and nature are also present. The fact that the private life of A.H. Tanpinar was a source of inspiration gives

an extraordinary sound and originality to the poetry.

The second stage was devoted to the analysis of prose works: a collection of short stories: «Abdullah efendi'nin rüyaları» («Dreams of Mr. Abdullah») (Tanpinar, 1983), journalism: an essay «Beş şehir» («Five cities») (Tanpinar, 2006) novel «Huzur» («Calm») (Tanpinar, 2004). Dream is one of the most encountered motives of his works. Tanpinar does not regard dream as a natural state of a man, but embeds it into the narrative as a psychological experience on the one hand and the element of the aesthetic value of the product on the other side. (Okay, 2000). Another theme is the motive of time. Past either stands at the forefront of the narrative in the memories of the writer or the characters, or is viewed on a larger scale in the national history. Spatial and temporal organization of the work of art, or *chronotopos* (Bakhtin, 1975), performs the function of the plot. All the stories compiled in a collection share a common feature - the psycho-emotional state of the protagonist. Tanpinar's skills as a stylist can be observed from the first pages. Little attention is given to the dialogues between characters. The magic lies in the style of the writer's descriptions. Tanpinar manages to write the seen true to the reality. Tanpinar's essay ("Five Cities") takes a special place among his works. The author managed to convey the aesthetic traditions and values of Turkish folk culture through the description of local customs, historical and social events. Despite the fact that the work was written in the mid of XX century, the text lacks new vocabulary, on the contrary, there are dialectical elements that could accurately convey the characteristics of the language used by the citizens of the described cities. Through the analysis of the novel ("Serenity") the attention is drawn to the original structural construction of the narrative, through which the author seeks to convey the main idea of the work. The author drew an analogy of the text with the structure of a musical work where the first chapter looked quite monotonous, the second - expressive, and the third was full of melancholy and the fourth regained a monotonous style. The individual examples show the prospects Turkish public life at a crossroads: the first chapter conveys the social problem represented by the theme of war; the second and third chapters are dominated by the idea of aesthetics, and the fourth shows the clash of cultural values. The novel clearly outlines Tanpinar's position towards the fact that the course taken to the Europeanization broke the connection of people with their past. There he saw the crisis of eastern and western civilizations

The third stage considers the analysis of A.H Tanpinar's scientific work. The problem of the author's personality is quite relevant for scientific and humanitarian text. An illustrative example - a scientific work of A.H. Tanpinar in which the author presented a detailed comment on the outstanding figures in literature of the XIX century and their literary heritage based on the documentary of the history of Turkey and Turkish literature.

The title of the scientific work "The History of Turkish literature of the XIX century" has caused a number of disputes. Tanpinar's predecessors investigating this period of literature tended to use names associated with the specific events of country's the history. The Western researchers have examined and studied the works of Turkish writers according to their belonging to one of the literary trends (Uçman & İnci, 2002). Tanpinar commented on the title of his work as following: "The history of Turkish literature of the XIX century" - is primarily a history of the internal structure, which slowly builds up around the beginning of the crisis in the Turkish man, new values and perspectives. We see a great importance of the image of this crisis in connection with its social and historical background" (Tanpinar, 2003). Here we see an obvious ideological and emotional evaluation of the author's research to the discussion of literary phenomena. A.H. Tanpinar's judgments and opinions do not take the position of a monopolist, but proved the arguments of other researchers of the literary era. The structure of the study does not lack originality. Obviously, Tanpinar did not resort to the analysis, limited only by the characterizing method. The researcher viewed his goal as to identify the individual characteristics of each representative of the era, based on the facts of history of Turkish literature.

### 3. Results

For Turkish literature, as well as in many other national literatures, the problem of tradition and modernism reflected in the work of poets and writers, was caused primarily by the trend of the era and came from life itself, from the very course of historical events.

One of the features of traditional Turkish literature is a strong influence of Arabic and Persian poetry, which formed the language and ideological themes of classical Turkish poetry for centuries. The beginning of literary transformations was initiated during the Enlightenment movement, which played a role of promodernism in Turkish literature.

The first period of Tanpinar's work testifies the poet's tendency to the tradition. Tanpinar was a supporter of the classical form of the poem. According to him, such literary phenomena as rhythm, rhyme and shape make a poem orderly and perfect. For this reason, the collection of poems published during his lifetime contains rhyme and rhythm. As the poet believed that the diversity of feelings and illusions do not fit into the narrow

confines of the classic poem, he therefore lifelong portrayed the experienced in prose. At the same time, Tanpinar wrote blank verse during the last years of his life. Ahmed Hamdi continuously worked towards the perfection of a form of the poem. This period is marked by the penetration of modernist elements into traditional poetry.

During the second period of his work the writer raises questions of Europeanization, in other words, the clash of East and West. The cultural crisis of public life is the main subject of his novels. As a clarification of this subject A. Tanpinar offers an excellent way to resolve it in the novel "Huzur" (Peace of Mind). The writer sees his goal in the necessity to eliminate the dual lifestyles, and the clash of two of its sides. We can call every novel of Tanpinar a cultural novel. Almost all the characters in the novels are spiritually rich, which is traceable in their monologues and dialogues on various topics, such as architecture, art, writing, music, philosophy and mysticism.

The third period is marked by the scientific research in which A. Tanpinar noted the main feature of the Enlightenment period of Turkish literature: literature is no longer confined to the traditional subjects; it seeks to raise questions of great public importance. Tanpinar's research helps to understand the activities of several writers of the period and the ideas of the cultural heritage of the past.

The artistic heritage of A. Tanpinar is distinguished by thematic and ideological inhomogeneity, which is explained, above all, by the artistic search of the writer. The study of A. Tanpinar's works allows us to understand the full depth of the changes in the literary process in Turkey in the beginning of the twentieth century which led to the changes we see in the works of Turkish writers of the late period with clearly noticeable traditional and contemporary elements.

#### **4. Discussions**

The current study of Turkish literature is conducted in many directions: it discusses the aesthetic foundations, studies literary interaction, studies the system of genres, aesthetics and poetics of the art world.

Turkish symbolism holds a special place in the study of the history of literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. On the one hand this is due, above all, to the influence of the poetry of the XX century, on another - questions of tradition and modernism in Turkish literature viewed as an example of symbolism as a unified literary movement, generate installation on the subjective nature of art, the right of the artist to reproduce the phenomenon of individual reality.

Tanpinar defended the aesthetic and artistic traditions of Turkish folk culture. He promoted the relationship between traditions and reforms, the need to know own traditions, which would help to adapt to the new realities of life and to assess the extent of interaction with the elements of modern Western civilization.

The Scientific work of Tanpinar helps to understand the activities of several writers of Tanzimat period, and an idea of the cultural heritage of the past. The originality and the contradictory nature of the national literature development draws attention. Historical and literary analysis of historical facts, foreign policy events, policy statements, public figures have a personal assessment of the researcher.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Tanpinar's individuality as an author is found primarily in the interpretation and the linguistic-stylistic structure of the text. Tanpinar sought to go beyond time in his poems. He shaped His favorite motive of an illusion in the crystal, making it a symbol of art. "The phenomenon of crystallization» (Kaplan, 2001) can be found in many works of the writer. The language used in the verses by Tanpinar is ambiguous. The meaning of the lexical unit depends on its location in the poem. The poet thought that the poem is shaped and is built with words. This kind of "crystallization" and was a feature of the poet's style.

The individual style is present in the genres of journalism close to the artistic type of the image. Essay «Beş şehir» («Five cities») (Tanpinar, 2006) holds a special place in the works of Tanpinar. It is mainly dominated by the original style of presentation, based not on the facts but on the observations of the writer. The author does not relate this work to such literary genres as memoirs and travel notes. The style of «Beş şehir» («Five Cities») is a harmonious fusion of essays, monographs with prevailing therein poetic style. The work, despite the fact that it was written in the mid-twentieth century is not full of new vocabulary. On the contrary, the author often uses archaisms and historicism in order to recreate the historical color of the Ottoman era and more ancient times. In addition, the writer uses the dialectical elements extensively, which also confirms Tanpinar's wish to show features of Turkish traditions and culture.

In the Turkish literature of the early twentieth century the process associated with the formation of the national realism literature accompanying the struggle of various literary movements is observed. The main ideological

directions of the literary era are represented by three ideologies: Westernism, Islamism and Turkism. Contradictions between these ideologies, according to A.H. Tanpınar, compose the history of Turkish literature (Aizenshtein, 1968).

Tanpınar's art viewed through the prism of his reception by Symbolists receives a different overview and allows taking another look at his personality and work. The fight against decadent art and its aesthetics was one of the characteristics of the progressive aesthetic thought in Turkey. Progressive Turkish writers have seen the expression of acute ideological struggle and tried to identify the roots of it in two directions of modern European literature (Aizenshtein, 1968).

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