

Republican Turkish Poets: Representative Poems with Turkish Texts and their English Translations

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1. Introduction

Along with Arabic and Persian poetry, Turkish poetry may be considered one of several summits, both of past intellectual achievement as well as current literary activity, in a large region stretching from North Africa through the Middle East as far as the frontiers of Pakistan. Eastwards, this mountain range acquires a new and later peak, that of Urdu poetry. In the Islamic heartlands, especially in the past, literature has always comprised poetry *par excellence*.

Poetry flourished in Turkey during the Seljuk Turkish Empire, which spanned the time period from 1060 A.D. to about 1300 A.D. At its greatest extent, this empire covered much of present day Turkey, Iran, Syria, Iraq and parts of Central Asia. Though the official language of the Seljuk State was Persian, Turkish served as a *lingua franca* and was widely spoken. The great poets of this period include Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi¹ who wrote in Persian, and Yunus Emre,² who wrote in Turkish that is understandable even today.

The Ottoman Empire was the successor of the Seljuk Empire and was one of the largest and longest lasting empires of all time, occupying the political stage over parts of the Middle East, South-East Europe and North Africa from about 1300 A.D. to 1922 A.D., when it disappeared from the stage of history. During this long span of over six centuries there were, as would be expected, large numbers of major poets writing in Turkish.³

The Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 as the successor of the Ottoman Empire, which had suffered major defeats in the First World War

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of 1914 – 1918. After a military and political struggle that lasted four years, the Turks under Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha [later Atatürk] regained their freedom and proclaimed a Republic. The intention in the present article is to introduce [in original and in English translation⁴] a highly limited selection of Turkish poetry produced during the first half-century of the Republic, between 1923 and 1973. As such, contributions have only been included by poets who are no longer living, and whose work is therefore complete.

2. Ottoman Turkish Poetry

Much material is available, in many languages, on the vast corpus of Ottoman Turkish poetry. Most notable by far is the six volume work of Elias John Wilkinson Gibb called *A History of Ottoman Poetry*.⁵ Of these volumes, only the first was published during the lifetime of Gibb, and though the remainder was fairly complete, it was assembled and edited from Gibb's manuscripts and papers by E. G. Browne,⁶ a professor at the University of Cambridge and also a famous scholar of Oriental languages. It is of interest to recall that Elias John Wilkinson Gibb, who came from a Scottish family and had some learned Turkish friends, learned Turkish with his own efforts and never set foot in the Ottoman Empire. The first page of each volume of this work has the same epigraph,⁷ a *hadith* whose translation in English is as follows:

God hath Treasuries aneath the Throne, the Keys whereof are the Tongues of the Poets.

Gibb's comprehensive historical analysis of Ottoman poetry is an achievement of a very high order, so much so that it has also been translated into Turkish in two large volumes.⁸

It might be worth pointing out that, if a chronological selection were to be made by different scholars of the greatest Ottoman poets treated in Gibb's work, the names of Süleyman Çelebi,⁹ Fuzûlî,¹⁰ Bâkî,¹¹ Nefî,¹² Nâbi,¹³ Nedim¹⁴ and Şeyh Galib¹⁵ would probably feature on all lists.

For an introductory account of Ottoman poetry during its last major phase, taking up from where Gibb left off and ending more or less with the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, reference may be made to the book on late Ottoman poetry by Wasti.¹⁶ Of the poets presented in this

work, the last three major poets, Mehmed Âkif Ersoy, Ahmed Hâşim and Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, lived their final years after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic. In style, content and in volume, their poetry belongs to the late Ottoman period, which is why their output has been considered in detail in the above-mentioned book. However, they are also included below for the sake of completeness.

3. REPUBLICAN TURKISH POETRY

For the time span of five decades of poetic activity between 1923 and the arbitrarily chosen cut-off date of 1973 A.D. the selection, both of poets and their work, must necessarily be subjective. It is proposed, within the limited compass of the present article, to introduce the following Turkish poets¹⁷ and to give, both in the original Turkish and in English translation, **two** representative poems from the works of each poet. In each case, the poem chosen is first given in the original Turkish [in italics] and in English translation immediately after the Turkish text.

- Mehmed Akif Ersoy
- Ahmed Haşim
- Yahya Kemal Beyatlı
- Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel
- Nazım Hikmet Ran
- Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar
- Necip Fazıl Kısakürek
- Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı
- Fazıl Hüsni Dağlarca
- Melih Cevdet Anday

Mehmed Akif Ersoy was born in Istanbul in 1873 and graduated from the Faculty of Veterinary Sciences. He was deeply patriotic and religious, and developed a high level of proficiency in Arabic, Persian and French. Mehmed Akif began to publish both poetry and prose articles in the learned journals of Istanbul. For a while, he also served on missions for the *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa* [the Ottoman Intelligence Organization created by Enver Pasha]. Mehmet Akif joined the struggle for Turkish independence by migrating to Ankara to serve in the Turkish resistance. When the Turkish Grand National Assembly was convened in 1920, he was chosen as the Deputy for Burdur where a newly established University bears his name. His entry for the words of the National Anthem of Turkey was

chosen with acclamation by the Assembly [although he passed on the prize money to a charity for women]. In later years, he taught Turkish at the University in Egypt. Mehmed Akif died in Istanbul in 1936.

KISSADAN HİSSE

*Geçmişten adam hisse kaparmış... Ne masal şey!
Beş bin senelik kıssa yarım hisse mi verdi?
"Tarih"i "tekerrür" diye tarif ediyorlar;
Hiç ibret alınsaydı, tekerrür mü ederdi?*

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

So, Mankind learns something from the past – what a big fable!
To teach us, have millennia of History been able?
‘History repeats itself’ is the dictum they prefer;
Had any lesson been learnt, why would it have to recur?

BÜLBÜL

*Bütün dünyâya küskündüm, dün akşam pek bunalmıştım;
Nihayet, bir zaman kırlarda gezmiş, köyde kalmıştım.
Şehirden kaçmak isterken sular zaten kararmıştı,
Pek ıssız bir karanlık sonradan vâdiyi sarmıştı.
Işık yok, yolcu yok, ses yok, bütün hilkat kesilmiş lâl...
Bu istiğrâkı tek bir nefha olsun etmiyor ihlâl
Muhîtin hâli "insâniyyet" in timsâlidir, sandım;
Dönüp mâzîye tırmandım, ne hicranlar, neden andım!
Taşarken haşrolup beynimden artık bin müsel sel yâd,
Zalâmın sinesinden fışkıran memdûd bir feryâd,
O müstağrak, o durgun vecdi nâgâh öyle coşturdu
Ki vâdiden bütün, yer yer, enînler çağlayıp durdu.
Ne muhrik nağmeler, yâ Rab, ne mevcâmevc demlerdi;
Ağaçlar, taşlar ürpermişti, gûya Sûr-i Mahşerdi!*

*-Eşin var, âşîyanın var, baharın var, ki beklerdin;
Kıyâmetler koparmak neydi, ey bülbül, nedir derdin ?
O zümriid tahta kondun, bir semâvî saltanat kurdun;
Cihânın yurdu hep çiğnense, çiğnenmez senin yurdun,
Bugün bir yemyeşil vâdi, yarın bir kıpkızıl gülşen,
Gezersin, hân mânun şen, için şen, kâinatın şen.
Hazansız bir zemin isterse, şâyed rûh-i ser-bâzın,*

Ufuklar, bu'd-i mutlaklar bütün mahkûm-i pervâzın.
 Değil bir kayda, sığmazsın - kanadlandım mı - eb'âda;
 Hayâtın en muhayyel gayedir ahrâra dünyâda,
 Neden öyleyse mâtemlerle eyyâmın perîşandır?
 Niçin bir damlacık göğsünde bir umman hurûşandır?
 Hayır, mâtem senin hakkın değil... Mâtem benim hakkım:
 Asırlar var ki, aydınlık nedir, hiç bilmez âfâkım!
 Tesellîden nasîbim yok, hazân ağlar bahârımda;
 Bugün bir hânmansız serseriyim öz diyârımda!
 Ne husrandır ki: Şark'ın ben vefâsız, kansız evlâdı,
 Serâpâ Garba çiğnettim de çıktım hâk-i ecdâdı!
 Hayâlîmden geçerken şimdi, fikrim herc ü merc oldu,
 SALÂHADDİN-İ EYYÛBÎ'lerin, FATİH'lerin yurdu.
 Ne zilletir ki: nâkûs inlesin beyninde OSMAN'ın;
 Ezan sussun, fezâlardan silinsin yâdı Mevlâ'nın!
 Ne hicrandır ki: en şevketli bir mâzi serâp olsun;
 O kudretler, o satvetler harâb olsun, tûrâb olsun!
 Çökük bir kubbe kalsın ma'bedinden YILDIRIM Hân'ın;
 Şenâatlerle çiğnensin muazzam Kabri ORHAN'ın!
 Ne heybettir ki: vahdet-gâhı dînin devrilip, taş taş,
 Sürünsün şimdi milyonlarca me'vâsız kalan dindaş!

Yıkılmış hân mânlar yerde işkenceyle kıvransın;
 Serilmiş gövdeler, binlerce, yüz binlerce doğransın!
 Dolaşsın, sonra, İslâm'ın harem-gâhında nâ-mahrem...
 Benim hakkım, sus ey bülbül, senin hakkın değil mâtem!

NIGHTINGALE ¹⁸

Last evening the world much upset me and my spirits dropped.
 Wandering through the countryside, at a village I stopped.
 When I escaped from the town, the light had begun to fade,
 And a silent, lonely darkness the valley overlaid.
 No light, no traveller, no sound – all creation was mute,
 No gust of wind – this trance-like condition was absolute.
 My surroundings reflected the state of humanity –
 I turned my thoughts to the past, and much sorrow engulfed me!

A thousand memories became collected in my brain;
 From some chest of injustice burst forth a lament of pain!

The quiet, dreamy solitude was suddenly aflame,
The silent valley a valley of moans and sighs became!
With such scorching tunes, O Lord, did this music oscillate,
As if the Last Trumpet sounded, did trees and stones vibrate!

A mate you have, and a nest, and the long-awaited Spring,
Why do you wail, O Nightingale, what is your suffering?
On a throne-like green bough you sit, just singing at the sky,
Were the world trampled underfoot, you would be high and dry;
Today a green valley, tomorrow a rose garden too,
Flit about, filled with joy, all creation belongs to you!
If your freedom-loving soul now wants an autumn-free place,
All you need do is to fly away and just conquer space!
Once you take wing, distance cannot contain you, it would seem
In this world, to freedom-lovers, your life is like a dream!
So why spoil your days with lament, and surge with emotion?
In your tiny breast why do you hide a restless ocean?

No, you have no reason for sorrow – mourning is *my* right!
For centuries, my horizons have shown no ray of light!
Without consolation am I; Autumn weeps in my Spring;
In my own home a vagabond – condemned to wandering!
How tragic that I, the unfaithful, weak son of the East,
Have let the West trample the soil of my fathers deceased!
Memories of the glorious past have led my thoughts astray,
To the lands where SALADIN and SULTAN MEHMED held sway.
Shameful that, within OSMAN's brain, church bells should resonate,
That the *azan* and prayers to God no more reverberate!
What pain, that like a mirage, disappears the past august,
That pomp and might are destroyed, and transmuted into dust!
That YILDIRIM's tomb be reduced into a collapsed dome
And o'er the grave of the great ORHAN pagan boots should roam!
Fearsome that mosques saying 'God is One' be crushed into stone,
That millions of believers should out of their homes be thrown!
Battered families writhe under torture and violence,
Hundreds of thousands of the poor bear their pains with silence!
In Islam's sacred sancta, foreigners themselves regale,
It is *my* right to grieve, not yours; be silent, Nightingale!

Ahmed Haşim was born in Baghdad in 1884 and came to Istanbul to join the Galatasaray Lycée at the age of 12. He had a genuine talent for poetry – and he followed the French Impressionists in writing poetry that radiates both colour and music. In addition to his poetical collections, his prose essays are also remarkable for their charm, humour and wide-ranging observations. After serving for some years in the public and private sectors, Ahmed Haşim was appointed to teach Aesthetics in the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul. He died of illness in 1933.

BAHÇE

*Bir Acem bahçesi, bir seccâde
Dolduran havzı ateşten bâde.
Ne kadar gamlı bu akşam vakti
Bakışın benzemiyor mu 'tâde.
Gök yeşil, yer sarı, mercan dallar
Dalmış üstündeki kuşlar yâde.
Bize bir zevk-i tahattur kaldı
Bu sönen, gölgelenen dünyâda!*

GARDEN ¹⁹

A Persian garden, a prayer carpet;
As if full of fiery wine the pond lies.
How sorrowful now is this eventide –
And unfamiliar the look in your eyes.
Green sky, yellow earth, branches of coral
On which, as though in sleep, the birds recline.
Only the joy of memories remains
In this darkly withering world of mine.

BAŞIM

*Bî-haber gövdeme gelmiş, konmuş,
Müteheyyiç, mütekallis bir baş;
Ayırır sanki bu baştan etimi,
Ömr-i ehrâma muâdil bir yaş!*

*Ürkerim kendi hayâlâtımdan,
Sanki kandır şakağımdan akıyor...
Bir kızıl çehrede âteş gözler,
Bana gûyâ ki içimden bakıyor!*

*Bu cehennemde yetişmiş kafaya,
Kanlı bir lokmadır ancak mihenim,
Âh yâ Rabbi, nasıl birleşti,
Bu çetin başla bu suçsuz bedenim?*

*Dişi, turnakları geçmiş etime,
Gövdem üzerinde duran ifritin.
Bir küçük lâhza-i ârâma fedâ,
Bütün âlâyişi nâm ü sıytin!”*

MY HEAD

To my body has been attached, somehow,
An excited and shrunken-looking head;
Between this head and my own flesh, I vow,
A gap old as the Pyramids is spread!

My fantasies all make me feel afraid,
And down my temples, streams of blood do flow,
Eyes of fire in my red face parade,
And penetrate my insides with their glow!

To this strange head of mine nurtured in Hell,
Just a juicy morsel is all my pain,
Oh My Lord! For me can anyone tell,
How perverse head, and pure flesh, one remain?

Its sharp teeth and nails have entered my skin,
This demon that, to my being, lays claim;
For peace of mind I would throw in the bin,
All trappings of fame and power and name!

Yahya Kemal Beyathı was born in Skopje [the capital of the present-day Republic of Macedonia] in 1884; his real name was Ahmed Agâh. He came to Istanbul in 1902, from where he fled to Paris seeking a more congenial political and cultural atmosphere. Returning to Istanbul in 1912, he began to pursue a career in teaching and writing. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, he spent many years

serving as Turkish Ambassador – in Spain, Poland and elsewhere. In 1947, he was appointed as Turkey's first Ambassador to the then newly established state of Pakistan. He died in 1958 in Istanbul.

BERGAMA HEYKELTRAŞLARI

*Pek taze penbe tenlere benzer bu taşları
Yontarken eski Bergama heykeltıraşları
İlham eden vücûdun edasıyle mest imiş;
Heykeltıraş demek o zaman putperest imiş.
İnsan vücûdu bazan açık, bazan örtülü,
Her çizgisiyle san'atı canlandıran büyü.
Artık dehaya eski güzellikler sinmiyor.
Gördük ki yer yüzünde ilahlar gezinmiyor.*

THE SCULPTORS OF BERGAMA ²⁰

The Bergama sculptors of old, who these stones shaped
To look so very fresh, so flesh-like pink and fine
Were entranced by the charm of the body indeed;
Idol worship must then have been the sculptor's creed.
The human body, sometimes nude and sometimes draped,
The magic, imparting life to art with each line,
Imbues not talent now with the beauty of yore.
On the face of the earth the gods do roam no more.

MÂHÛRDAN GAZEL

Gördüm, ol meh dūşuna bir şal atıp Lâhûr'dan,
Gül yanaklar üstüne yaşmak tutunmuş nûrdan.
Nerdübanlar bûşiş-î nermîn-i dâmânıyle mest,
İndi bin işveyle bir kâşâne-î fağfûrdan.
Atladı, dâmen tutup, üç çifte bir zevrakçeye;
Geçti sandım mâh-ı nev âyîne-î billûrdan.
Halk-ı Sa'd-âbâd iki sâhil boyunca fevc fevç
Va'de-î teşrîfine alkış tutarken dûrdan,
Cedvel-î Sîm'in kenârından bu âvâzın Kemâl,
Koptu bir fevvâre-î zerrin gibi mâhûrdan.

GHAZAL [IN THE MAHUR²¹ MODE]

I saw that moon, with a Lahore shawl on her shoulder flung,
And a transparent veil of light from her rose-red cheeks hung.
Even the stairs were joyful with the caress of her gown,
As from the porcelain tower she coquettishly came down.
She stepped into a rowboat with six oars, minding her dress,
Like the new moon seen in a crystal mirror, I confess!
The milling crowds of Sa'dabad on both banks stood in view,
Cheering from afar the promise of her visit anew;
Kemal, this voice of yours from the Silver Channel of old,
Sings, in the Mahur mode, like a water fountain of gold.

Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel was born in Istanbul in 1898 and died in 1973. Although he spent some years studying medicine, he dropped out and became a teacher of Turkish literature in high schools and Teacher Training Colleges in Istanbul, Ankara and Kayseri. Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel has written poetry both in the traditional style as well as in modern verse forms. His poetry frequently reflects the attitudes, aspirations and sensitivities of rural Turkey. Çamlıbel was elected as a Member of the Turkish Parliament as a member of the Democrat Party of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes between the years 1946 and 1960 A.D. His literary output consists of 13 books of poetry, 5 plays and one novel.

GİZLİ BAKIŞLAR

*Bir bakış ki açıyor gönül muammasını,
İki sevdalı kalbin en gizli yarasını,
Bir bakış ki kudreti hiç bir lisan da yoktur,
Bir bakış ki bazen şifa, bazen zehirli oktur.*

*Bir bakış, bir aşığa neler anlatır,
Bir bakış, bir aşığı saatlerce ağlatır
Bir bakış, bir aşığı aşkından emin eder,
Seven insanlar daima gözleriyle yemin eder.*

SECRET GLANCES

A look that solves the riddle of the heart,
The hidden wound of love might ease in part;
A look, making words futile and narrow,
A glance that cures, or a poisoned arrow.

A lover's look, so full of meaning rare
Or resulting in hours of despair;
A look that can confirm the lover's prize
For true love is pledged always with the eyes.

MELEK

*Annesi dün Zeynebe
"Melek yavrum!" diyordu,
İşitince bu sözü
Kız merak etti, sordu:*

*Melek yavrum ne demek?
Doğrusu anlamadım.
Melek kanatlı olur;
Hani benim kanadım?*

*Cevap verdi annesi:
Üç yavrum daha vardı,
Onlar kanatlanarak
Elimden uçmuşlardı.*

*Hepsi yalnız bıraktı,
Bu talihsiz kadını,
Bari sen uçma diye
Kopardım kanadını!*

ANGEL

To Zeyneb, her mother yesterday
Said: 'My very own, my angel child!'
These words, when she heard the mother say,
Her little daughter eagerly smiled.

'My angel child' – Mum, what does it mean?
I find this statement hard to catch on;
In all paintings, angels' wings are seen
Where then, tell me, have my own wings gone?
Answered the mother to her offspring
Alas, I had other children three

But like little angels they took wing
And left me lonely in misery.

They went, leaving me alone to stay
I was bereaved, and in full dismay
I feared that you too might go one day
At your birth I took your wings away.

Nazım Hikmet Ran was born into an aristocratic family in Thessaloniki [now in Greece but then part of the Ottoman Empire] in 1902. He graduated from the Naval Academy in Istanbul but illness forced him to leave the Services. Impressed by the Russian Revolution, he also studied in Moscow as a young man. He became a prolific poet and playwright, using mainly free verse as his medium of expression. Later, Nazım Hikmet became known as the ‘Romantic Communist’ because of his political leanings, and spent over 10 years in different prisons in Turkey before finally leaving his homeland surreptitiously to escape to Moscow in June 1951. He was stripped of Turkish nationality a month later.²² He was married several times; he died and was buried in Moscow in 1963.

SENİ DÜŞÜNMEK

*Seni düşünmek güzel şey, ümitli şey,
Dünyanın en güzel sesinden
En güzel şarkıyı dinlemek gibi birşey...
Fakat artık ümit yetmiyor bana,
Ben artık şarkı dinlemek değil,
Şarkı söylemek istiyorum.*

THINKING OF YOU

How lovely to think of you; with hope it fills me
Like listening to a refrain of rare beauty
Chanted for me by the world’s most beautiful voice –
But, alas, in this I can no longer rejoice
No more do I desire to hear songs all day long –
I just want to sing my own song!

24 Eylül 1945

*En güzel deniz:
henüz gidilmemiş olanıdır.*

*En güzel çocuk:
henüz büyümedi.
En güzel günlerimiz:
henüz yaşamadıklarımız.
Ve sana söylemek istediğim en güzel söz:
Henüz söylememiş olduğum sözdür...*

24 September 1945

The most beautiful of seas:
is the one not yet reached or known.
The most beautiful small child:
is the one who has not yet grown.
And our most beautiful days:
are those which have yet to occur.
The most beautiful words I wish to say to you:
are those I have yet to utter.

Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar was born in Istanbul in 1902 and died there in 1963. He graduated in Turkish Literature from the University of Istanbul. He taught in high schools and later became Professor of Turkish Literature at Istanbul University. Between 1942 and 1946 he was elected as a Member of the Turkish Parliament, after which he returned to teaching.

Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar was the author of many well-known books, including a comprehensive History of XIXth Century Turkish Literature. Although considered by many people to be the greatest Turkish novelist of the 20th century, he is also a major poet.

RIHTIMDA UYUYAN GEMİ

*Rıhtımda uyuyan gemi
Hatırladın mı engini?
Sert dalgaları, yosunu
Suların uğultusunu?*

*N'ohur bir sabah vakti
Çağırsa bizi sonsuzluk
Birden demir alsa gemi
Başlasa güzel yolculuk.*

*Yırtılan yelkenler gibi
Enginle başbaşa kalsak.
Ve bir şafak serinliği
İçinde, uykuya dalsak.*

*Rıhtımda uyuyan gemi
Hatırladın mı engini?
Gidip de gelmeyenleri
Beyhude bekleyenleri?*

THE SHIP THAT SLEEPS AT THE QUAYSIDE

O ship that now sleeps at the quay
Do you remember the ocean?
Strong waves, and the weeds of the sea,
And the water's loud commotion?

Great it would be, if one morning
We got a call from the unknown
And the ship left without warning
To start a long journey alone

Like sails that from the mast are torn
Left alone with the boundless deep
In the cool of the night forlorn
We could gently fall into sleep

O ship that now sleeps at the quay
Do you remember the ocean?
The ones who left as if to flee
And those waiting with emotion?

BAŞIMIZIN ÜSTÜNDE BİR BULUTUN

*Başımızın üstünde bir bulutun
Güneşe asılmış gölgesi,
Uzakta toz halinde dağılan
Yoğurtçu sesi,
Gün bitmeden başladı içimizde
Yarımsız insanların gecesi.*

THE CLOUD ABOVE OUR HEADS

Right on top of our heads the shadow stays,
Of a cloud hung from the sun in the sky;
And crumbling to dust in the distant haze
Is the yogurt seller's weakening cry;
Before daylight fades, begins with sorrow
The night of those who have no tomorrow.

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek was born in Istanbul in 1904. He is the author of many books [including plays and novels] but is primarily famous as a poet. He studied both in Paris and at Istanbul University. Although his earlier years were spent in somewhat bohemian surroundings, he later turned to religion and edited a journal called *Büyük Doğu* [The Grand East] which had a traditional and conservative approach. Necip Fazıl died in Istanbul in 1983.

DÖNEMEÇ

*Bir gündü, hava ılık
Ve cadde kalabalık...
Bir kadın sapıverdi önümden dönemece;
Yalnız bir endam gördüm arkasından, ipince.
Ve görmeden sevdiğim, işte bu kadın dedim.
Çarpıldım, sendeledim.*

*Bir gündü, mevsim bayat
Ve esnemekte hayat...
Dönemeçten bir tabut çıktı ve üç beş adam;
Yalnız bir ahenk sezdim, çerçevede bir endam.
Ve tabutta, incecik o kadın var, anladım;
Bir köşede ağladım...*

THE CORNER

One day gentle was the heat,
And people crowded the street...
A woman turned the corner in front of me;
From behind a slender figure did I see.
This is the woman I love unseen, I said.
Dumbfounded I was, and faltering my tread.

One day the weather was stale
And a yawn did life exhale...
From the corner, carried by a few, a coffin came;
I just sensed a rhythm, a profile within the frame.
And then I understood that the slim woman had died;
In a corner I sat down and cried.

MANSUR

*Mercan mercan, uçuk dudağında kan,
İnci inci, soluk şakağında ter.
Ne baş yedi, ne kan içti bu meydan!
Bu meydan âşıktan canını ister.*

*Tatlıydı akrebin sana kışkacı,
Acıya acıda buldun ilâcı;
Diyordun, geldikçe üstüiste acı:
Bir azap isterim bundan da beter.
Sana taş attılar, sen gülümsedin,
Dervişin bir çiçek attı, inledin,
Bağrımı delmeye taş yetmez dedin,
Halden anlayanın bir gülü yeter!...*

MANSUR²³

On your faded lip the stain of blood like coral is set,
And like a pearl on your pale temple is each drop of sweat.
In this field have so many heads rolled, and so much blood spilled,
With demands for the soul of the lover is this ground filled.

Almost sweet for you, it might be said, was the scorpion's sting,
You found a cure for pain by increasing your suffering;
And, as the increasing torment, pain and more pain supplied,
Try to give me something even worse than all this, you cried.

All you did was to smile when the crowd pelted you with stones,
When a dervish threw a flower at you, painful were your moans;
My chest will not shatter, you said, with stones thrown by those hands;
Much more powerful is a rose from one who understands!

Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı was born in Dıyrbakır in south-east Turkey in 1910. He was sent to Istanbul for further education, and later left for Paris. He returned to Turkey when the Second World War began in 1939 and worked as a Translator in various government departments. He subscribed to the 'Art for Art's sake' approach in his writings.

Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı's poetry is mainly romantic and fraught with much melancholy. He died of illness at an early age in 1956 and lies buried in Ankara.

GÜN EKSİLMESİN PENCEREMDEN

*Ne doğan güne hükmüm geçer,
Ne halden anlayan bulur;
Ah aklımdan ölümüm geçer;
Sonra bu kuş, bu bahçe, bu mur.
Ve gömül Tanrısına der ki:
Pervam yok verdiğin elemden;
Her mihnet kabulüm, yeter ki
Gün eksilmesin pencereden!*

LET DAYLIGHT NOT QUIT MY WINDOW

The dawning day I do not command
Nor find someone who might understand;
The thought of my death crosses my mind,
With this bird, garden and light, combined.
And the heart to God does dare to say:
I shall brave each sorrow on my way –
I shall suffer and accept each blow
Just let daylight stay at my window.

OTUZ BEŞ YAŞ

*Yaş otuz beş! yolun yarısı eder.
Dante gibi ortasındayız ömrün.
Delikanlı çağımızdaki cevher,
Yalvarmak, yakarmak nafile bugün,
Gözünün yaşına bakmadan gider.*

*Şakaklarıma kar mı yağdı ne var?
Benim mi Allahım bu çizgili yüz?*

*Ya gözler altındaki mor halkalar?
Neden böyle düşman görünüyorsunuz,
Yıllar yılı dost bildiğim aynalar?*

*Zamanla nasıl değişiyor insan!
Hangi resmime baksam ben değilim.
Nerde o günler, o şevk, o heyecan?
Bu güler yüzlü adam ben değilim;
Yalandır kaygısız olduğum yalan.*

*Hayal meyal şeylerden ilk aşkımız;
Hatırası bile yabancı gelir.
Hayata beraber başladığımız,
Dostlarla da yollar ayrıldı bir bir;
Gittikçe artıyor yalnızlığımız.*

*Gökyüzünün başka rengi de varmış!
Geç farkettim taşın sert olduğunu.
Su insanı boğar, ateş yakarmış!
Her doğan günün bir dert olduğumu,
İnsan bu yaşa gelince anlarmış.*

*Ayva sarı nar kırmızı sonbahar!
Her yıl biraz daha benimsediğim.
Ne dönüp duruyor havada kuşlar?*

*Nerden çıktı bu cenaze? ölen kim?
Bu kaçınıcı bahçe gördüm tarumar?*

*Neylersin ölüm herkesin başında.
Uyudun uyanamadın olacak.
Kimbilir nerde, nasıl, kaç yaşında?
Bir namazlık saltanatın olacak,
Taht misali o musalla taşında.*

AGE THIRTY FIVE ²⁴

Thirty five years old! Gone is half the way –
Like Dante at life's midpoint, so to say;
The promise held by the years of our youth –

How useless to beg or complain today,
Heedless of all your tears has ebbed away.

Do I see snow upon my temples shine?
O my God! Could this strange creased face be mine!
And those purple rings just below my eyes?
Why do they stare back at me – so malign,
The mirrors I thought were all friends of mine?

How appearance changes with time, I see;
Every picture I observe is not me –
Where are those days, that joy and excitement?
This smiling man I really cannot be –
It is not true that I am trouble-free!

My first love is but a vague memory
The thought of it is so foreign to me!
The friends with whom we started together,
Each has parted and gone his own way free;
Our loneliness increases, certainly!

That the sky has so many coloured planes,
That water chokes, that stones hurt and cause pains,
And fire burns, I learnt, alas, too late!
That each new day brings its problems and strains,
One only learns when one this age attains!

Tints of yellow and pomegranate red,
These autumn colours now suit me instead!
Why are these birds now circling in the air?
Where is this funeral from? Who is dead?
Joy from so many gardens has now fled!

Weak you are – for death round the corner stares –
You sleep and wake not; death will work its snares,
Who knows where, how or even at what age?
Your kingdom will last just during the prayers,
When the throne-like stone-rest your coffin bears!

Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca was the son of a military officer, and was born in Istanbul in 1914. He went to military schools and graduated as an Officer from the Turkish War Academy. However, he retired early to devote himself to writing. He was a prolific writer and is considered one of the great poets of his period, partly because of his efforts to express himself in his poetry in a plain and chaste form of Turkish. He died in Istanbul in 2008. Many of Dağlarca's poems have been translated into English by Talât Sait Halman.²⁵

DOLU SOKAK

*Ne korkuyorsun
Uyanıp geceleri
Ölüm yaşayacağını yokedebilir
Yaşadığını değil*

FULL STREET

Why do you shiver and succumb to fright
And get up in the middle of the night?
Death can only spoil what is not begun –
Not what you have already lived and done!

YALNIZLIĞIM

*Ilık bir su gibidir içimde yalnızlığım,
Yalnızlığım, ruhumda uzak bir ses gibidir.
Her sabah ufuklardan mavi şarkılar gelir,
Ve her sabah ürperir içimde yalnızlığım*

*Güneşim aydan sarı, yarınım düünden zorsa,
Sarsın artık ömrümü tunç kandillerin isi
Üşüyen ellerimden tutmalıydı birisi,
Eğer benim gözlerim onları görmüyorsa.*

*Bir camın arkasında açılıyor güllerim,
Havuzum pırıl pırıl... yıkar bakışlarımı.
İşler temiz ziyalar suya nakışlarımı;
Ruhumun dünyasından eser tahayyüllerim*

*Rüya rüzgarlarında bir yaprak yalnızlığım
Düşüncem bir neydir ki ürperir perde perde*

*Belki bu mısralarım esecek gönüllerde
Fakat herkese uzak kalacak,yalnızlığım.*

MY LONELINESS

Inside me, my solitude courses like a slow, warm stream
Or it echoes like a faraway voice within my soul
Blue songs from the horizon come each morning in a dream
Each morning within me loneliness does shiver and roll

If my sun is paler than the moon, and worse is each day
Let the dark soot from bronze oil lamps wrap my life as disguise
Should not someone have held my frozen hands in help and play?
Even if I was unable to see them with my eyes.

My roses only bloom from behind a curtain of glass
My pool is shimmering water – it washes my glances!
Designs on the water's surface painted by light amass,
My imagination on the stage of my soul dances!

Like a leaf in the winds of dreams my loneliness races
My thoughts are like a reed flute which shivers from note to note
Maybe these lines of mine in others' hearts will find places
But my loneliness from all is and will remain remote.

Melih Cevdet Anday was born in Istanbul in 1915. His literary output is huge – he was a poet, dramatist, novelist, translator, essayist and journalist. He did not belong to any traditional literary school. His poems are sometimes didactic and convey social and even political messages without being saturated with too much sentiment. A lot of his work was published under various pseudonyms. Melih Cevdet died in Istanbul in 2002.

ÖLMÜŞ BİR ARKADAŞTAN MEKTUP

*Eskisi gibi yaşıyorum
Gezerek, düşünerek..
Yalnız biletsiz biniyorum vapura, trene
Pazarlıksız alış-veriş ediyorum.
Geceleri evimdeyim, rahatım yerinde
(Bir de sıkılınca pencereyi açabilsem)*

*Ah... başımı kaşımak, çiçek koparmak
El sıkamak istiyorum arada bir..*

LETTER FROM A DEAD FRIEND

I live much the same as I did before,
Wandering and thinking a lot, for sure;
But I travel free on all trains and ships,
And do not bargain on my shopping trips.

I am in comfort at my home at night,
Though to use a window I have no right;
To scratch the head, pick a flower, would be grand,
And once in a while to shake someone's hand.

YALAN

*Ben güzel günlerin şairiyim
Saadetten alıyorum ilhâmımı
Kızlara çeyizlerinden bahsediyorum
Mahpuslara affı umûmiden...
Çocuklara müjdelere veriyorum
Babası cephede kalan çocuklara...
Fakat güç oluyor bu işler
Güç oluyor yalan söylemek...*

FALSEHOOD

I am the poet of all beautiful days
True happiness is what inspires me;
To young girls I talk of large dowry trays
To prisoners of total amnesty;
I give glad tidings to those children poor
Whose fathers are away fighting some war;
But I am irked by such activity,
For telling lies is by no means easy!

4. CONCLUSIONS

It may be observed, from the few examples of Republican Turkish poetry presented above, that there is some detachment from the traditional themes, traditions as well as types of Turkish poetry. Ottoman Turkish poetry over the centuries was addressed to the citizens of a vast Empire;

after the collapse of the old order and the birth of a young and modern Republic in the smaller Turkish heartlands of Anatolia, new directions and new emphases were inevitably created. Furthermore, in Turkish poetry of the 20th century, Western literary influences have also made themselves felt, whether in content or prosody or style. The *ghazal* is no longer the main yardstick by which a poet's merit or appeal is measured. Poetry, in Turkey and elsewhere, is seen to become more of a private affair in our times. It is the wordsmith's craft and way with words, as well as the depth of both thought and emotion, that attract the reader.

While extensive information on all periods and aspects of Turkish poetry is available in Turkish sources, it is also possible to give some additional references for Turkish poetry available in English translation.²⁶

NOTES:

1. In Turkish, the name is written as Mevlâna Celaleddin-i Rûmî. Rumi was born in present-day Afghanistan in 1207 A.D. and migrated to the Seljuk Empire where he settled in the capital city of Konya. He authored several works, of which the most famous is the *Masnawi* [in Arabic, *Mathnawi* and in Turkish *Mesnevi*]. Rumi's thought and mystic poetry continue to influence people greatly even today (a search on Rumi in Google gives millions of results). Rumi died in Konya in 1273 A.D. and his mausoleum attracts visitors from all over the world.
2. Yunus Emre is said to have lived between 1240 and 1320 A.D. in the region of Eskişehir. A great mystic poet who used a fairly pure form of Turkish, little is known about his life or death, and tombs at several places in Central Anatolia are said to be his. The collection of his poetical works, known as *Yunus Emre Divanı* is available in several editions. Translations of some poems by Yunus Emre into English are given in Talât S. Halman, 'Selected Poems of Yunus Emre' in Kemal Silay [Ed.] *An Anthology of Turkish Literature*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Cem Publishing, 2006), pp. 34 – 41. An essay entitled 'Yunus Emre' by Annemarie Schimmel is also to be found in the same volume, pp. 42 – 57. For the rendering of poems of Yunus Emre into Urdu, see Dr N. A. Asrar [translator], *Yunus Emre*, (Islamabad: Pakistan Academy of Letters, 1991), 361 pp.
3. The index to Gibb's *History of Ottoman Poetry* [See Endnote No. 5] contains references to no fewer than 125 major Ottoman Turkish poets.
4. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations into English given in the text have been done by the author of the present article.
5. Published by the E J W Gibb Memorial Trust, Cambridge in several different editions since their original publication (London: Luzac & Co.) at the beginning of the 20th century. The approximate periods covered by the different volumes are as follows:
Volume I [454 pp.] covers the time frame from the foundation of the Ottoman Empire till before the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 A.D.

Volume II [405 pp.] treats the period between the conquest of Istanbul by the Turks till the accession to the throne in 1520 A.D. of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent.

Volume III [381 pp.] spans the long reign of Sultan Süleyman (1520 – 1566) and ends in 1600 A.D. The second part of Volume III deals with the period 1600 – 1700 A.D., i.e., roughly from the accession of the Sultan Ahmed I till the accession of the Sultan Ahmed III.

Volume IV [364 pp.] contains what Gibb calls the “Transition Period” of Ottoman poetry over the period 1700 – 1850 A.D., otherwise also called the “Romantic Period”.

Volume V [250 pp.] covers essentially the short duration of 30 years, 1850 – 1880 A.D., i.e., the beginning of what is called the ‘late Ottoman period’.

Finally, Volume VI [384 pp.] is a compendium of the Turkish texts of the poems that have been referred to in the previous volumes.

6. Edward Granville Browne (1862 – 1926) took a degree in medicine, but switched to Oriental Studies, becoming a Fellow of Pembroke college and Sir Thomas Adams’ Professor at Cambridge University. He was highly proficient in Arabic, Persian and Turkish.
7. Called Hadis-i Sherif. The Arabic text of the hadith is also given. The hadith is testimony to the high position accorded to poets in Arabian society.
8. Ali Çavuşoğlu [Translator], *E.J.W. Gibb – Osmanlı Şiir Tarihi* [E.J.W. Gibb – History of Ottoman Poetry], (Ankara: Akçağ, 1999). Volume I, 553 pp. and Volume II, 584 pp.
9. Süleyman Çelebi was born in Bursa in 1351 and died there in 1422. Bursa was then the capital of the Ottoman State, and he came from a well-known family. He received a good education and later became the Imam of the Great Mosque at Bursa. All that remains of his poetical output is the *Mevlid* [Mawlid in Arabic], the most famous Turkish devotional poem celebrating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad in 732 couplets, a small part of which is recited at all religious gatherings in Turkey even today.
10. Süleyman Muhammed Fuzûlî [poetical name Fuzûlî] was born between 1480 and 1490 A.D. in Karbala and died in 1556 A.D. in Baghdad. Both places are now in Iraq but were then in the Ottoman Empire. He has left behind poetry in Turkish, Persian and Arabic and, by virtue of his influence, has claim to being regarded as the greatest Ottoman Turkish poet.
11. Mahmud Abdülbâkî [poetical name Bâkî] was born in Istanbul in 1526 and died there in 1600 A.D. His life span coincided with the zenith of the Ottoman Empire, and his sonorous and majestic poetry is testimony to the glory of the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent.
12. Ömer [poetical name Nef’î] was born in Hasankale in Eastern Turkey in 1572. Well versed in Turkish and Persian, he moved to Istanbul and became a civil servant. Although he has left behind collections of verse, his penchant for satire and his

- severe poetical criticism of several high-ranking Ottoman courtiers eventually led to his being put to death in 1635.
13. Yusuf Nâbi was born in Urfa in south-east Turkey in 1641 and died in Istanbul in 1712. He has left behind a *Divan* of Turkish poetry, which also includes a famous *na'at* [religious song] composed by him on a visit to the Prophet's tomb in Medina after performing the Hajj.
 14. Ahmed [poetical name Nedim] was born in Istanbul in 1681 and died in 1730 A.D. His *Divan* contains all types of poetry including songs, but he is best known as an elegant composer of the *ghazal* [in Turkish, *gazel*].
 15. Mehmed Es'ad [poetical name Galib] is considered the last Ottoman poet of major importance before the onset of the 19th century. Born in Istanbul in 1757, he died in 1799. He joined the Mevlevî order of dervishes after completing a monastic training lasting three years.
 16. Syed Tanvir Wasti, *An Introduction to Late Ottoman Poetry*, (Berkeley, California: Computers and Structures International; 2012), pp. 288. This volume spans the dates 1839 – 1922 A.D. and treats in detail the poetical works of the major poets of this period: İbrahim Şinâsî, Ziya Pasha, Namık Kemal, Abdülhak Hâmid, Recaizâde Mahmud Ekrem, Muallim Naci, Tevfik Fikret, Mehmed Âkif Ersoy, Ahmed Hâşim and Yahya Kemal Beyatlı.
 17. The order has been chosen in accordance with the years of birth of the poets.
 18. Mehmed Akif composed the following poem on 7 May 1921 while living in Ankara as a member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. It was a dark time for the Turks after their defeat in the First World War. The Greeks had seized vast areas of Western Turkey and the first Ottoman capital, Bursa, had fallen to the invading Greeks in July 1920. Hence the poem contains references to the graves of the founding sultans of the Ottoman state, i.e. Osman, Orhan and Yıldırım, who lie buried in Bursa. Mehmet Akif dedicated the poem to his friend Hasan Basri Çantay.
 19. This translation was also published in the Endnotes to my article:
S. Tanvir Wasti, 'Eight Months in the Life of Yahya Kemal', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 1, (January 2011), pp. 137 – 149.
 20. This translation was also published in the Endnotes to my article:
S. Tanvir Wasti, 'Eight Months in the Life of Yahya Kemal', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 1, (January 2011), pp. 137 – 149.
 21. Of the many different modes of classical Middle Eastern music, the Mahur mode is one of the oldest and most well-established. Sa'dabad was a famous playground of palaces and parks on the banks of the Golden Horn in Istanbul; the Silver Channel refers to a large marble canal constructed there in the 18th century.
 22. This order was repealed by a Turkish governmental decree several decades after Nazım Hikmet's death, in 2009.
 23. Husayn b. Mansur al-Hallaj (857 – 922 A.D.), the famous Persian mystic.
 24. It is sad to relate that the author of this very famous poem died only 11 years later, at the young age of 46.
 25. Talât Sait Halman (1931 – 2014) was a poet, translator, author and cultural historian who studied and taught in several universities in Turkey and North America. He also served after 1971 as Turkey's first Minister of Culture. His translation of Dağlarca's

poems was published as: Talât S. Halman [Translator], *Selected Poems: Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press), 1969, 195 pp.

26. References to the works by Gibb and Silay have already been given. In chronological order of publication, the following sources may be mentioned:

Derek Patmore, *The Star and the Crescent – An Anthology of Modern Turkish Poetry*, (London: Constable, 1946), 50 pp.

Nermin Menemencioglu and Fahir İz [Editors], *The Penguin Book of Turkish Verse*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1978), 414 pp.

Feyyaz Kayacan Fergar [Editor], *Modern Turkish Poetry*, (Ware, Hertfordshire: The Rockingham Press, 1992), 189 pp.

Walter G. Andrews, Najaat Black and Mehmet Kalpaklı [Editors and Translators], *Ottoman Lyric Poetry – An Anthology*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 336 pp.

ABSTRACT

Turkish poetry, centred within the heartlands of a large area covering the Middle East and Central Asia, may be said to have reached its maximum aesthetic and stylistic development during the six centuries of the Ottoman Empire. After this Empire departed from the stage of history and was replaced by the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the poetical legacy of the past sought new channels and modes of expression. The article introduces a couple of poems each by 10 major poets of the first 50 years of the Turkish Republic both in original and in English translation.

Keywords: Republican Turkish Poetry, Translations of Modern Turkish Poetry, Major Poets of the 20th century in Turkey, Summary Overview of Turkish poetry