



Poems for...bridges to Anatolia

*have been selected from various collections
of Turkish poems published by Core Publications.
Each poem has an English translation printed alongside and opposite.*

*Core Publications is run by the Turkish poet Mevlut Ceylan
who translated the great majority of these poems into English.
The selection overall was made by Rogan Wolf
as part of the “Poems for...the wall” project.*

*“Poems for...the wall” is managed by the charity “Hyphen-21”
Its Director is Rogan Wolf*

<https://poemsforthewall.org>



from The Ruba'iyat of Mevlana

My Home

Sordum, « ey put : senin ma'bedin nerededir ? »

Dedi ki, « senin harab olan kalbindir

ben güneşim,

benim şuaım viranelere girer.

Ey sarhoş. İsterim ki senin kâşanende

büsbütün harab olsun ! »

Rumi (1207-1273)

I asked, “Where do you live, my well-spring ?”

She said, “In the wreck of your

enraptured heart.

I am the sun shining into your ruins.

Long may you call

this wild wasteland your home.”

*translated from the Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan,
with Rogan Wolf and
Zara Houshmand*

from “The Ruba'iyat of Mevlana - a selection” published by Core Publications, 2011. The poet Mevlana is also widely known as Rumi. He wrote in Persian, but lived in Konya, a city in what is now Turkey. The English translation here is taken from both the original Persian and a later Turkish translation. Reproduced by permission.

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from The Ruba'iyat of Mevlana

My heart...

Ey gönül, anlamıyorlar, seni üzerler,
rahatsız ederler ;

hatta seni deli, divâne ederler,
elini ayağını bağlarlar.

Sen içi tatlı, özlü bir yemişe benzersin,
bu yüzden

seni hep kırarlar.

My heart, as long as you're hurt or injured

and treated like a mad man in chains,

You are like a sweet fruit with a kernel.

That's why they peel and break you.

Rumi (1207-1273)

*translated from the Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan*

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Gözlerim Kimi Gördüler

odalarda oturdum
odaları kapladım

sokaklara çıktım
sokakları doldurdum

görünen her şey ben oldum
ve her şey beni gören göz oldu

ve ben görünmez oldum

Asaf Halet Çelebi (1907-1958)

Whom the eyes have seen

I sat in rooms
and became one with them

I went out into the streets
and the streets flowed into my veins

I changed into visible objects
and the objects into an eye that
keeps watching me

Yet I am not visible

*translated from the Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan*

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Güzelleme !

Evinizin önünde dolaşsam
Seni bulamazdım,
Sen gözlerinde bahçeler olan
Şimdi evimdeki karım.
Senin kadar güzel olsun çocuklarım

Gökyüzü bugün ne kadar da çok
Yıldızlarla dolu avuçların

Cahit Külebi (1917-1997)

Rhapsody

If I wandered around your house
I couldn't find you
Now that you are my wife in our own home
You who have gardens in your eyes
I want our children to be as beautiful as you are

Today how crowded the sky has become
Full of stars cupped in your palms

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by Mevlut Ceylan*

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Mektup

Sevdiğim,
Sana dair değil şarkılarım.
Şiirlerimde sen yoksun.
Deniz, yosun ve mehtap
kokmuyor mısralarımda.
Boyundan bosundan söz edemiyorum.
Senin için şiirler düzemiyorum,
Gücenme...
Dalgınım, derbederim,
Geceleri uyku girmez gözüme.
Kuşlarım uçar kimi zaman,
Kimi zaman ağlarım.
Dalgınım derbederim,
Lâkin senin yüzünden değil bu halim,
Gücenme...

Mufide Guzin Anadol (1925-2005)

The Letter

My love
You are neither in my songs
Nor in my poems.
There's no smell of sea or seaweed and
moonlight in the lines of my poems.
If I cannot describe your height and grace
If I cannot write poems for you
Don't be offended...
I'm untidy and absent-minded
I cannot sleep at nights
My birds fly sometimes
Sometimes I weep.
If I'm untidy and absent-minded
You're not the cause of my state
Don't be offended...

*translated from Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan*

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Gökyüzü Bunca Güzelken

Kirlenmiş bir mendil bu yüzyıl.
Ben artık gidiyorum
Mostar göklerinden yıldızlar alacağım yanıma,
ışıl ışıl
Bir de, gülümseyişlerini sevdiğim kadınların
Böcek seslerini toplayacağım,
çocukluğun ölümsüz kırlarından
saracağım yaprağına kır menekşelerinin
Belki, bir demet rüzgar, eylül akşamlarından
Gayrısını unutacağım
Kirlenmiş bir mendil bu yeryüzü.
Ben artık gidiyorum.

M. Mahzun Doğan (1964 -)

While the Sky is So Beautiful

While the sky is bright
This century is a dirty handkerchief
so I'm leaving
I'll take stars with me from Mostar's sky
sparkingly
And also the smiles of the women I loved

I shall gather the sound of insects from the
immortal countryside of childhood
And wrap it in leaves of wild violets
Perhaps with a bundle of wind
from September nights
I shall forget the rest
This earth is a dirty handkerchief
I am leaving now

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İstanbul Sokakları

şimdi bensiz ağlıyor her akşam
bu hazan mevsiminde İstanbul sokakları
yüreğimde sönmeyen ateşsiz hicranımın
son durağı aşına İstanbul sokakları

Müştehir Karakaya (1962 -)

The Streets of Istanbul

Every evening sheds tears without me
This autumn the streets of Istanbul
Burn
Grieving my heart

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by Mevlut Ceylan*

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İstanbul

Evin içinde bir oda, odada İstanbul
Odanın içinde bir ayna, aynada İstanbul

Adam sigarasını yaktı bir İstanbul dumanı
Kadın çantasını açtı, çantada İstanbul

Çocuk bir olta atmıştı denize, gördüm
Çekmeğe başladı, oltada İstanbul

Bu ne biçim su, bu nasıl şehir
Şişede İstanbul, masada İstanbul

Yürüsek yürüyor, dursak duruyor, şaşırдық
Bir yanda o, bir yanda ben, ortada İstanbul

İnsan bir kere sevmeye görsün, anladım
Nereye gidersen git, orada İstanbul.

Ümit Yaşar Oğuzcan (1926-1984)

Istanbul

A room in the house, in the room Istanbul
A mirror in the room, in the mirror Istanbul.

A man lit his cigarette ; Istanbul smoked,
A woman opened her bag and found Istanbul inside.

I saw the child cast his fishing line into the sea,
He started to pull it up, Istanbul on the hook.

What sort of water is this, what kind of city ?
Istanbul in the bottle, Istanbul on the table.

Whether we walk or stop it is there ; it's confusing.
She's on one side, I'm on the other, Istanbul between us.

Once you love, you're in trouble.
Wherever you go, Istanbul is there.

*translated from the Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan*

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İstanbul

İstanbul'da ne var deme,
İstanbul'da ne mi var ?
İstanbul'da İstanbul var.

Cahit Irgat (1916-1971)

Istanbul

Don't ask what's in Istanbul,
What's in Istanbul ?
All Istanbul's in Istanbul.

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Ceviz Ağacı

Başım köpük köpük bulut, içim dışım deniz,
Ben bir ceviz ağacıyım Gülhane Parkı'nda,
Budak budak, şerham şerham ihtiyar bir ceviz.
Ne sen bunun farkındasın, ne polis farkında.

Ben bir ceviz ağacıyım Gülhane Parkı'nda.
Yapraklarım suda balık gibi kıvıl kıvıl.
Yapraklarım ipek mendil gibi tiril tiril,
Koparıver, gözlerinin, gülüm, yaşını sil.
Yapraklarım ellerimdir, tam yüz bin elim var.
Yüz bin elle dokunurum sana, İstanbul'a.
Yapraklarım gözlerimdir, şaşarak bakarım.
Yüz bin gözle seyrederim seni, İstanbul'u.
Yüz bin yürek gibi çarpar, çarpar yapraklarım.

Ben bir ceviz ağacıyım Gülhane Parkı'nda.
Ne sen bunun farkındasın, ne polis farkında.

Nâzim Hikmet (1901-1963)

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The Walnut Tree

My head is a foaming cloud, inside and outside I'm the sea.
I am a walnut tree in Gulhane Park in Istanbul,
an old walnut tree with knots and scars.
You don't know this and the police don't either.

I am a walnut tree in Gulhane Park,
My leaves sparkle like fish in water,
My leaves flutter like silk handkerchiefs.
Break one off, my darling, and wipe your tears.
My leaves are my hands - I have a hundred thousand hands.
Istanbul, I touch you with a hundred thousand hands.
My leaves are my eyes, and I am shocked by what I see.

I look at you, Istanbul, with a hundred thousand eyes
And my leaves beat, beat with a hundred thousand hearts.
I am a walnut tree in Gulhane Park.
You don't know this and the police don't either.

(July 1, 1957)

*translated from the Turkish
by Richard McKane*

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Acısu

Bitik hayat! Kalbe vuran kargı! Anafor
Erişkin bir Bizanslı ayazmasında mağdûr
Yeorgios Francis'in anlatımıyla Paleologolos
yenik kral - o zamanki yiğit düşmanımızın -
Denizi bir kayıp su, aşkı yok, ölümü mağrûr
Özlemiyse, bir dost sesiyle süslenmiş güldür.

Cumali Ünalı (1949 -)

The Bitter End

Life shattered ! Heart speared through !
Georgios Francis leans back on an old Byzantine
fountain and tells the story of Paleologolos
The defeated king - our brave adversary -
He talks of the king's lost water, the sea,
His last moments, the loneliness, and the King
Who confronted death proudly ;
His longing was a rose beautified by the Conqueror.

*translated from the Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan*

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Şehrin Ölümü *den*

Duvarlar çıkıyor önüme
Şehrin mahpus yüklü duvarları
Hiçbir sır kalmamış ardında hiçbir duvarın
Nereye gitti diyorum benim elbisem nerede
Şehir soyunmuş diyor biri
Şehrin elbisesini çalmışlar
Bütün şehir çöküyor yüzünde bir insanın
Şehir boğuluyor içinde insanların kan gibi bir sesle
Mor bir kabus çöküyor üstümüze
Parkta son ağaç da ölüyor intiharı hatırlatan bir ölümle

Erdem Bayazıt (1939 - 2008)

from Death of the City

The walls before me
Are the guilty face of the city
There's no secret left behind the walls
Where are my clothes I say
The city has taken off her clothes someone says
Someone has stolen the city's attire
The whole city collapses on the face of a man
And the city is strangled inside a man bleeding
A nightmare envelops us and in the park
the last tree dies
A suicidal death

*translated from the Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan*

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Eski den

Bu kutsallık
Taşları gördün.
Nasıl geçiyorlarsa birbirlerine
Öylece geçiyorum ben de.
Vücudum bir şekil alıyor
Ve anlamıyorum
Ne kadarı eski
Ne kadarı bu günden.
Bir Kaplan gibi yürüdüğümü söylüyor o.
Halbuki içindeyim kaplanın
Bakışında
Çizgilerinde...

Bejan Matur

from “Old”

This holiness.
You’ve seen the stones.
The way they fit together
is my way too.
My body takes on a shape
and I don’t understand
how much is old
how much is today’s.
He says I walk like a tiger
but I’m in the tiger,
in his way of looking,
and in his stripes...

*translated from the Turkish
by Ruth Christie with Selçuk Berilgen*

This excerpt comes from a book-length poem “How Abraham Abandoned Me” by Bejan Matur, Arc Publications, 2012. Reproduced by permission

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Yuva dan

Bir ev
Konuşma evimiz
Bozkırın
Ve taşların evi.
Ölümün ve zalim babanın
Baba oluşunun.
Kayaların toprağa gömülü varlığı neyse
Bizim için o olan bir ev.
Bir gece ateş yakılacak
Ve uğultudan etekleri dalgalanan
bir kadın
Varlığı belleyecek bir eli
Bir bakışı hayatı sanacak.

Bejan Matur

from Home

A house
our home where we talk
a house of stone
and the steppe.
Of death and the tyrant father
of the father becoming a father.
A home which is just for us
like rocks whose being is rooted deep in earth.
One night a fire will be lit
And a woman, her skirt undulating
in the sighing wind,
will learn a gaze is her whole life
a hand is her being.

*translated from the Turkish
by Ruth Christie with Selçuk Berilgen*

This excerpt comes from a book-length poem "How Abraham Abandoned Me" by Bejan Matur, Arc Publications, 2012. Reproduced by permission

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Evrenin Efendisine

Dünyanın ağırlığına eklesek

yıldızları ayı güneşi

Gene de ağır basarsın ey kalbim ey

kalbimin güneşi

Erdem Bayazıt (1939 - 2008)

To the Heart of the Universe

If we add the moon, the sun and stars

to the weight of the world

You, light of my heart,

would outweigh them all.

*translated from the Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan*

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Alo İnfaz

O duvar da arkasındakiler de
De de BU DUVARLAR çökecek tamam

Nuri Pakdil (b. 1934)

Execution, Hi

Look, that wall and the people behind it
Look... look... THESE WALLS will collapse

*translated from the Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan*

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Balon

Bana bir balon al baba
Hadi durma

Öyle bir balon ki
Dünya kadar olsun
Ama
Dünya gibi patlamasın

Cahit Zarifoğlu (1940-1987)

Balloon

Daddy, please hurry
buy me a balloon

I want it to be
as big as the world
but I don't want it
to explode
like the last balloon

*translated from the Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan*

from "Child Songs" by Cahit Zarifoğlu, published by Core Publications, 2010. Reproduced here by permission.

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Dünya

Dünya büyük
Ben küçüğüm

Köyümüzde
Kocaman
Bir çınar ağacı var

Çınarın yanında
Çağlayarak akan
Bir nehir

Nehirde
Büyük şelale
Ve balıklar

Dünya büyük
Daha sayısız köy
O kadar çınar
O kadar nehir
Ve kimbilir
Ne kadar balık var

Cahit Zarifoğlu (1940-1987)

World

The world is big
I'm small

in our village
there is a huge
plane tree

near the plane tree
a river flows
like a song

the river has
big waterfalls
and many fishes

the world is so big
who knows
how many more villages there are
who can count all the plane trees
all the rivers
all the fishes

*translated from the Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan*

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O ninniye istiyorum

Cok uğraştım
Anlatmak istedim
Onlar da anlasın artık
İhtiyacım var
Bir ninniye

Ne kadar ayıp
Diyor ninem
Kazık kadar oldun
Yiyebiliyorsun
Yemeğini tek başına
Koşabiliyorsun

Hatta çember çeviriyorsun
Ama nine
Anlasana
Küçükken
Bir tane eksik dinlemişim
Ninneleri ben

Cahit Zarifoğlu (1940-1987)

from "Child Songs" by Cahit Zarifoğlu, published by Core Publications, 2010. Reproduced here by permission.

I want that lullaby

I tried my best
I tried so hard to explain
it is time they understood
I need
a lullaby

Shame on you
says my granny
you're a big boy now
you can eat your dinner
all by yourself
you can run
you can even roll a hoop

but granny can't you
understand
out of all the lullabies
sung to me when I was little
there was one that I missed
that's the one I need now

*translated from the Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan*

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Anne

Yüzümde duyuyorum
Bakışını

Uyurken de
Ellerin
Öyle sıcak ki

Kış gecesinde
Sen olmasan
Kimden duyardım ben
Yavrum kelimesini

Evimiz senle dolu
Sokaklar
Niçin güzel
Sana dönüşü var diye

Anne
Ne olur
Eksilme hiç
Başımızdan

Cahit Zarifoğlu (1940-1987)

from "Child Songs" by Cahit Zarifoğlu, published by Core Publications, 2010. Reproduced here by permission.

Mother

I feel your eyes
on my face
even when I sleep

your hands
are so warm
during winter nights

if you were not here
who else would call me
"my little one"

our home is full of you
streets
are lovely
because they lead back to you

mother
please
be with us
stand by us always

*translated from the Turkish
by Mevlut Ceylan*



Traditional Turkish Lullabies (1)

Karga karga gak dedi,
Çık tepeye bak dedi
Seni bana Hak verdi,
Uyusun yavrum, ninni !

“Caw, caw” croaked the crow.
“Go uphill and see !”
God has sent you to me.
Sleep, my darling, sleep

Kapıda söğüt,
Bacada söğüt,
Beşikte uyur,
Bir nazlı yiğit !

A willow tree by the gate,
A willow tree in the chimney.
A shy brave heart
Sleeps in the cradle-cart.

Ninni desem dağlar uyur,
Dağlarda laleler büyür,
Benim yavrum şimdi uyur,
Ninni ninni yavrum ninni !

If I sing lullabies, the mountains will sleep
And on the mountains tulips will flower ;
Do not cry, my baby, you just sleep.
Hush-a-bye-baby !
Hush-a-bye !

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Traditional Turkish Lullabies (2)

Meyvasız ağaçların dibine de,
Oturulmaz da kuzum nen, nen, nen, Nen !
Şu çektiğim kara yazılar,
Evlatsızlık yüzünerdir kuzum, nen,
Nen, nen !

Yüksek odalara attım postumu
Bilemedim düşmanımı dostumu,
Benim yavrum bana küstü mü ?

Yüce dağ başında bir kuzu meler,
Kuzunun meleyişi bağrımı deler !
Ninni kuzum ninni !

I can't sit under
Fruitless trees, my love.
Close your eyes ;
Go to sleep, my dove.
All my sufferings bear no child, my love.
Go to sleep ; sleep, my dove.

I have stayed in so many places.
I don't know who are my friends or foes.
My baby, are you cross with me ?

A lamb is bleating far off on high ground ;
It pierces through to my heart, that sound.
Lullaby, my little lamb, lullaby !

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Sebat

Bir tek, bir çift, bir tek, bir çift...
zaman mı bebek patiklerinden daha ağır olan?
damarlar mı?
susamış otlar mı?
trenin çarkları uyandırır sebatını.
Bir tek, bir çift

İpek Şenel

Persistence

Knit one, purl one, knit one, purl one..
Is time more heavy than baby shoes?
Are veins?
Are thirsty blades of grass?
Knit one, purl one...
Wheels of train waken her persistence.
Knit one, purl one...

*translated from the Turkish
by the author*

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