

İKİNCİ YENİ (SECOND NEW)

—Turkish Poetry in Transmission—

translated by Fulya Peker

Hyperion, Volume V, issue 2, November 2010

HYPERION

On the future of aesthetics

TRANSLATION

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In the history of Turkish literature, poetry has been the most important form of oral and written expression, yet maybe the most neglected one. From the Divan Poetry of the Ottoman palaces to the Folk Poetry of the Anatolian lowlands and the Social Realist Poetry of the Turkish Republic, it is possible to witness a continual transformation in Turkish caused by the cultural and political transmission between the Middle East and Europe. After World War II, the short circuit in the nervous system of the world not only gave birth to new global conductors but also new forms of conductivity in languages, in other words the renewal of the world order sparked new currents in the word order. In Turkey, the *Garip* (*strange/forlorn*) poetry movement, also called the “first new,” stripped poetic expression of its traditional rules and emphasized simplicity while addressing the growing masses; subsequently *İkinci Yeni* (*Second New*) resisted the tendency of writing poetry that conversed with the common sense and aimed at fusing together poetry and philosophy.

The *İkinci Yeni* movement reached its peak during the 50s and 60s as a response to the *Garip* movement and the Social Realist poetry of the 1940s. Along with the leading poets of the movement—Edip Cansever, İlhan Berk, Cemal Süreya, Turgut Uyar and Ece Ayhan—many other established poets of the time were also carried by the tidal waves of the *İkinci Yeni* and began writing poems inspired by this momentum. Today, many contemporary poets still cannot help but gaze out of the windows this movement opened up in poetry. The name *İkinci Yeni* was first used by Muzaffer İlhan Erdost to characterize this specific form of poetry in “İkinci Yeni,” a short essay published in *Son Havadis* on 19 August 1956. Although there are specific poets who were accepted as representatives of the *İkinci Yeni* movement by critics, and although some of those poets were very close friends, there is no manifesto or book that they wrote and signed together. Moreover, they never launched themselves as a collective movement under a given name. Although each *İkinci Yeni* poet can be identified with his own unique color and style, it is evident in their poetry that there is an underlying common struggle they were engaged in: that of resculpting Turkish as used poetically.

Many of the leading poets of this movement were at the same time translating works of European philosophy and literature into Turkish, and this influence is apparent in their experiments on new poetic patterns and textures. Inspired by the European avant-garde, some of the principal aspects of *İkinci Yeni* poetry include the breaking of word order and grammatical rules, deformation and fragmentation of words, the usage of free association, abstraction, ambiguity, clashes of antonyms/synonyms/homonyms, the creation of synaesthetic

experiences through metaphoric indulgences in a Surrealist texture, etc. Stripped of meaning and reason, in *İkinci Yeni* poetry the sensual experience of words appeared to be more dominant than the linear narrative style of earlier Turkish poetry. While moving towards a Heideggerian connection between thought and poetry, these poets tended towards composing language with a new notation that broke the frame of learned patterns of thinking led by reason, freeing the words from their calluses by creating novel equations that would trigger a new form of poetic experience. In terms of content, *İkinci Yeni* poetry was existential and the poets were digging deeper into the alienation and introversion of the individual. Although their works gained approval and respect as time went by, such poets were often reproved by certain critics of the time for turning their backs on society and being obscurantists, formalists, and solipsists, and their poems were denounced by some as absurdist, euphuistic and elliptical.

Experimental forms of Turkish poetry are in many ways literary binoculars through which it is possible to explore the philosophical and linguistic transformations experienced in Turkey, where the circulation of the air between the east and the west is most powerful. Through translations a broader experience of this circulation will be possible and the transitions in Turkish poetry will gain more recognition with readers less familiar with it. In offering the translations of the following poems, which are not widely known or available in English, I would like to draw attention to one of the most important transitions in Turkish poetry. Although there are many other extreme examples of *İkinci Yeni* poems that reflect the playfulness of literary transgression, to help the reader recognize the underlying philosophical aims of the *İkinci Yeni* movement I have chosen to present poems that only crack but do not shatter the frame of reason. Resisting the fragmentary nature of a descriptive survey, this would be a better start for non-native linguistic farming in a foreign soil, as it is never possible to truly digest a poem through a single translation.

İLHAN BERK (1918-2008)

AĞAÇLARDAN ARKADAŞLARIM OLDU

“Adlarla doldurdum sessizliği.” Şeyleri kodladım. Gökyüzünün, ağaçların çocukluğunu bilirim. Ağaçlardan arkadaşlarım oldu. Hâla da var. Samanyolunu anlamadım. Sayıları da. (Sayılar daha bulunmamış gibi davranıyorlardı.) Yalnız sekizle (5 + 3) içli dışlı oldum. (Kim olmamıştır ki?) Biraz da sıfırla (Sıfırın bulunması kolay olmamıştır.) Üç için çok kötü şeyler söylenmiştir. Niçin? Bilmem. Bilmek sayıdır. Bir de biri tanıdım. Bir ile düşünülüyor. Bazı sayılar suçlu doğmuştur. Bir, bunlardan biridir. Anlamadan sevdim taşları. Çakıl taşının adıyla biçimi arasında hiçbir ilişki kurulamamıştır. Oltu taşının geçmişini bulamadım. Olsun. Gizem her şeydir. Kimi sessiz harfleri sökemedim. (Harflerin tini sessiz harflerde gezer. Kızılderililer bilir bunu.) Kuşlarla gittim geldim. Kuşlar sayıları bilmez, yusufcuk hariç. Doğu’da atların düş görmediğini anladım. (Homeros’da atlar ağlar.) Yürürken gördüm dağları. Dağlar yürürken düşünüyorlardı. Tanımak usu durduruyor. Dünya bizimdir! diye konuşuyorlardı aralarında sümüklüböcekler. Anladım diyemem. Anlamadım da. Sümüklüböcekleri okumalı.

Sen ırmaklardan söz ederken konuşuyor ırmaklar, otlar gözlerinde. Zaman bir izdüşümdür. Bir yerlere yaz bunu. Tinin dışarıya penceresi olmadığı doğru değildir. İsa’nın hayaleti hala dünyanın üzerinde dolaşüyor. (Yalnız soruyorum. Sormak için yazar insan.) Gençliğini bilmeyen sabah tökezler. Gül ki adıyla vardır. Taş adını yüzü bulununca aldı. (Duvarcıların avucunda taş bunun için döner durur.)

Ben senin gözlerine dönmek istiyorum. Sonra da ... Sonra diye bir şey yoktur. Tarih dışıdır, sonra.

THERE HAVE BEEN FRIENDS I MADE WITH TREES

“With names I filled the silence.” I codified things. I know the childhood of the sky, the trees. There have been friends I made with trees, there still are. I did not understand the Milky Way. Nor the numbers. (The numbers were pretending to be unfound as yet.) Only with eight (5+3), I became intimate. (Well, who didn’t?) With zero, too, a little. (Finding zero has not been easy.) Very bad things have been said for three. Why? I don’t know. To know is a number. One more; I got to know one. One cannot think with one. Some numbers were born guilty. One, is one of them. I loved stones without understanding. No relationship could be established between the name and the shape of pebbles. I could not find the past of black amber. So be it. Mystery is everything. I could not decipher some consonants. (Spirit of letters wanders around in consonants, American Indians know this.) I came and went with birds. Birds don’t know the numbers, except the dragonfly. I understood that horses do not dream in the East. (Horses do weep in Homer.) I saw the mountains while walking. Mountains were thinking while walking. To get to know stops reason. “The world is ours!” the snails were talking amongst themselves, I cannot say I understood. Nor I did not understand. One should read the snails.

As you speak of rivers, talking rivers, grasses in your eyes. Time is a projection. Write this down somewhere. It is not true that spirit does not have a window facing out. Christ’s ghost is still roaming around on earth. (Only asking. One writes only to ask.) One who does not know one’s youth, stumbles in the morning. Rose exists with its name. Stone got its name when its face was found. (That is why stones keep turning around in the palms of the masons.)

I want to turn to your eyes. And then... There is nothing called “then.” Then, is out of history.

TURGUT UYAR (1927-1985)

KURTARMAK BÜTÜN KAYGILARI

Sularsa akmak birgün birgün birgün
Birgün dağlara çıkmak birer birer dağlara çıkmak birgün
Çıkmak çıkmak birer birer birgün dağlara dağlara birgün
Birgün birer birer dağlara
Ah nasıl dağlara birgün
Ey birgün
Çiçek açmak birgün
Dağlara dağlara birer birer dağlara

Otları büyötmek birgün
Birgün köyler kentler yıkanık damlar geri dönmek birgün
Birgün yeni dönmek
Birgün dağlara çıkmak birer birer çıkmak çıkmak
Su yürömek güneş bilmek
Yeniden orda otlarda orda yeniden orda orda
Bitkin birgül bulmak ve geri dönenler birgün
Ey yorgun atlar, sayı bilmiyen çocuklar
Ey bütün hazır elbiseciler ey,
Birgün olmak, küskün keşişlerden olmamak birgün
Dağlara dağlara çıkmak sular köprüler sular birgün çıkmak
Eski kaba arabalardan inip birgün çıkmak
Dağlara dağlara dağlara başka hiç
Birgün dağlara.

TO SAVE ALL THE WORRIES

Waters to flow one day one day
One day to climb to the mountains one by one to climb to the mountains one day
To climb to climb one by one one day to the mountains to the mountains one day
One day one by one to the mountains
Ah, how to the mountains one day
Hey one day
To blossom one day
To the mountains to the mountains one by one to the mountains

To raise the grasses one day
One day villages towns washed rooftops to return one day
One day to return anew
One day to climb to the mountains one by one to climb to climb
Water to walk sun to know
Again there on the grasses there again there there
To find an exhausted rose and the returned ones one day
Hey, tired horses, kids that don't know numbers
Hey all confectionists hey
One day to be not to be one of the sullen hermits one day
To the mountains to the mountains to climb waters bridges waters one day to climb
To get off the old coarse cars one day to climb
To the mountains to the mountains to the mountains nothing else
One day to the mountains

EDİP CANSEVER (1928-1986)

MASA DA MASAYMIŞ, HA!

Adam yaşama sevinci içinde
Masaya anahtarlarını koydu
Bakır kâseye çiçekleri koydu
Sütünü yumurtasını koydu
Pencereden gelen ışığı koydu
Bisiklet sesini çırkık sesini
Ekmeğin havanın yumuşaklığını koydu
Adam masaya
Aklında olup bitenleri koydu
Ne yapmak istiyordu hayatta
İşte onu koydu
Kimi seviyordu kimi sevmiyordu
Adam masaya onları da koydu
Üç kere üç dokuz ederci
Adam koydu masaya dokuzu
Pencere yanındaydı gökyüzü yanında
Uzandı masaya sonsuzu koydu
Bir bira içmek istiyordu kaç gündür
Masaya biranın dökülüşünü koydu
Uykusunu koydu uyanıklığını koydu
Tokluğunu açlığını koydu

Masa da masaymış ha
Bana mısın demedi bu kadar yüke
Bir iki sallandı durdu
Adam ha babam koyuyordu.

THE TABLE WAS QUITE A TABLE, HA!

The man, filled with the joy of living
Put his keys on the table
Put the flowers into the copper bowl
Put his milk and egg on
Put the light coming in through the window on
Sound of the bike, sound of the wheel
Softness of the bread and the air he put on
The man, on the table
Put the things happening in his mind
What does he want to do in life
That he put on
Whom he loves whom he does not
The man put those also on the table
Three times three is nine
The man put on the table the nine
Window was near, the sky was near
He reached out put eternity on the table
He was wanting to drink beer for days
He put the spilling of the beer on the table
His fullness and his hunger

The table was quite a table, ha!
Did not complain after this much of a burden
It swung a few times, then stood still
The man went on putting on.

CEMAL SÜREYA (1931-1990)

BENİ ÖP, SONRA DOĞUR BENİ

Şimdi
utançtır tanelenen
sarışın çocukların başaklarında.

Ovadan
gözü bağlı bir leylak kokusu ovadan
çeviriyor o küçücük güneşimizi.

Taşarak evlerden taraçalardan
gelip sesime yerleşiyor.

Sesimin esnek baldıranı
sesimin alaca baldıranı.

Ve kuşlara doğru
fildişi: rüzgarın tavrı.
Dağ: güneş iskeleti.

Tahta heykeller arasında
denizin yavrusu kocaman.

Kan görüyorum taş görüyorum
bütün heykeller arasında
karabasan ılık acemi
—uykusuzluğun sütlü inciri—
kovanlara sızıyor.

Annem çok küçükken öldü
beni öp, sonra doğur beni.

KISS ME, THEN GIVE BIRTH TO ME

Now
it is shame that is shelled
in the ears of blonde children.

From the plains
blindfolded lilac scent from the plains
turns that little sun of ours.

Overflowing from houses from patios
comes and settles in my voice.

Limber hemlock of my voice
variegated hemlock of my voice.

And towards the birds
tusk: wind's attitude
Mountain: sun's skeleton.

Amongst the wooden sculptures
The infant of the sea is huge.

I see blood, I see stones
amongst all statues
Incubus warm novice
—milky fig of insomnia—
does not leak into beehives.

My mother died when I was little
Kiss me, then give birth to me.

ECE AYHAN (1931-2002)

BİR ÖLÜ MACAR CAMBAZ

Sonra korkunç gülümsemeler bitti
Sonra hiç kimseyi göremedim
Herkes beni arıyordu.
Bir ölü macar cambaz buldu beni buldu beni
Samyeli esiyordu denizden.

ONE DEAD HUNGARIAN ROPE-WALKER

Then the horrifying grimaces ended.

Then I could not see anyone

Everyone was searching for me.

One dead Hungarian rope-walker found me found me

Sameyel was blowing from the sea.