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POEMS FROM THE TURKISH

Bernard Lewis

My picture, my darling, my friend, my boon companion, my intimate, my soul,
my comrade, my confidant, my life, my spirit, my remedy for grief,
my sovereign, my moon, my sweetheart, my being, my sustenance, my spirit,
my refuge, my goal, my direction, my orbit, my thought, my soul,
my moon-featured, fairy-faced one, my merry and wanton charmer,
my jasmine scented, rose fragrant one, my cypress grown in a rose garden,
my delicate, my elegant one, my fair, my dear one, my peerless beloved,
my Hijaz, my Ka’ba, my Sinai, my paradise, my houri, my Ridvan*,
my rose, my sweet basil, my trees, my ambergris, my aloe wood,
my pearl, my precious metal, my ruby, my cornelian, my coral,
my heart illuminating, faithful, entrail-kindling tormentor,
my sovereign, my world conqueror, my ruler, my monarch and emperor,
my candle, my lamp, my light, my radiance, my star, my sun,
my nightingale, my bulbul, my rose, I am sweet toned Nesimi.

Nesimi
(d. 1405)

* the angel who guards the gate of Paradise
My purpose is to obey God's command to wage jihad
my zeal is for the faith of Islam alone.

By the grace of God and the brave men of God's army,
my purpose is to conquer the infidels entirely.

My trust is in the Prophets and the saints,
my hope of victory and conquest is in God's bounty.

What if I wage jihad with life and fortune?
Praise be to God, my desire for battle grows many thousandfold.

O Muhammad, by your own miracles
let my power triumph over the enemies of the faith.

Sultan Mehmed II
(reg. 1451 - 1481)

I opened my eyes from sleep and suddenly raised my head;
before me I saw standing a moon-faced, heart-rending beauty:
My star was lucky or, perhaps, I attained the Night of Power.

I saw the planet Jupiter rise in my street that night
I saw light flowing from his beauty,
he looked like a Muslim but wore the clothes of an unbeliever.

In the blink of an eye he vanished from sight,
but as I saw him he was either angel or sprite

Mihri is immortal until the day of resurrection, because she has attained the elixir of life,
because in the darkness of night she saw that Iskender plain.

Mihri Hatun
(d. after 1510)

Greetings from me to the Bey of Bolu.
Let him come and lean against these mountains
let the mountains echo and reecho
the sound of the clash of arrows.
The enemy has come, in ranks;
the black script of fate is written on my white brow;
the musket has come, manhood is spoilt;
the curved sword must rust in its scabbard.
Has Köroğlu fallen from his glory?
He sends many from the battlefield.
Our boots are filled, our garments are stained
with the horse's spittle and the foeman's blood.

Köroğlu
(16th century)

The beys of our lands
light their candles,
you drink and become lions
and twirl their glasses round.
They drink till they are full
and then go out to seek a foe.
They mount their Arab horses,
stretching out their necks.
But my heart has rotted, rotted,
and my guts melt inside.
The arms of the Beys are weary
from brandishing the sword.
Beys, now what shall we do?
Let us go off with the girls,
let us show off our horses in the square,
stretching out their necks.
Köroğlu says: I have grown old
I have aged and I have rotted
my horse is tired and I am tired
of giving girls a ride.
If I say that the skies have opened, the spring has come,  
I mean that my beloved has shown me some affection.  
If I say that the meadow is adorned with blossoms,  
it conveys that my sweetheart spoke to me with a smile.  

Galib  
(1759 - 1799)  

Pool  
Deep down, the night has massed again  
My darling smiles in her wonted place  
My darling who doesn’t come by day  
Appears at night by the pool.  

The moonlight a sash for her waist  
The heavens her secret veil  
The stars roses in her hand.  

Ahmet Haşim  
(1884 - 1933)  

I Had A Map  
I had a map, a souvenir from school  
With continents and seas and coloured countries.  
A splendid world, I hardly know it now,  
With happy men and peaceful smoking chimneys  
And continents and seas and coloured countries.  

And now I weep, our map is all in blood  
The blood Cain shed, that never could be staunched,  
Bringing a somber sameness to our world  
And torment to us all.  
And now I weep, our map is all in blood.  

Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı  
(1910 - 1956)