TURKISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Turkish belongs to the Altay branch of the Ural-Altay linguistic family. Through the span of history, Turks have spread over a wide geographical area, taking their language with them. Turkish speaking people have lived in a wide area stretching from today's Mongolia to the north coast of the Black Sea, the Balkans, East Europe, Anatolia, Iraq and a wide area of northern Africa. Due to the distances involved, various dialects and accents have emerged. The history of the language is divided into three main groups, old Turkish (from the 7th to the 13th centuries), mid-Turkish (from the 13th to the 20th) and new Turkish from the 20th century onwards. During the Ottoman Empire period Arabic and Persian words invaded the Turkish language and it consequently became mixed with three different languages. During the Ottoman period which spanned five centuries, the natural development of Turkish was severely hampered.

Then there was the "new language" movement. In 1928, five years after the proclamation of the Republic, the Arabic alphabet was replaced by the Latin one, which in turn speeded up the movement to rid the language of foreign words. The Turkish Language Institute was established in 1932 to carry out linguistic research and contribute to the natural development of the language. As a consequence of these efforts, modern Turkish is a literary and cultural language developing naturally and free of foreign influences.

The history of Turkish Literature may be divided into three periods, reflecting the history of Turkish civilization as follows: the period up to the adoption of Islam, the Islamic period and the period under western influence.

Turkish Literature Prior to the Adoption of Islam

Turkish literature was the joint product of the Turkish clans and was mostly oral. The oldest known examples of Turkish writings are on obelisks dating from the late 7th and early 8th centuries. The Orhun monumental inscriptions written in 720 for Tonyukuk, in 732 for Kültekin and in 735 for Bilge Kagan are masterpieces of Turkish literature with their subject matter and perfect style. Turkish epics dating from those times include the Yaratilis, Saka, Oguz-Kagan, Göktürk, Uygur and Manas.

The "Book of Dede Korkut", put down in writing in the 14th century, is an extremely valuable work that preserves the memory of that epic era in beautiful language.

Turkish Literature After the Adoption of Islam

Following Turkish migrations into Anatolia in the wake of the Malazgirt victory in 1071, the establishment of various Beyliks in Anatolia and the eventual founding of the Seljuk and Ottoman Empires set the scene for Turkish literature to develop along two distinct lines, with "divan" or classical literature drawing its inspiration from the Arabic and Persian languages and Turkish folk literature still remaining deeply rooted in Central Asian traditions.
Divan poets did not have independent philosophies, they were content to express the same ideas in different ways. The magnificence of the poet came from his artistry in finding original and beautiful forms of expression. The most famous of the Divan poets were Baki, Fuzuli, Nedim and Nef'i.

Initially based on two foreign literary traditions, Arab and Persian, literature gradually stopped being merely imitative and took on Ottoman national characteristics.

To a certain extent, the Turkish folk literature which has survived till our day, reflects the influence of Islam and the new life style and form of the traditional literature of Central Asia after the adoption of Islam. Turkish folk literature comprised anonymous works of bard poems and Tekke (mystical religious retreats) literature. Yunus Emre who lived in the second half of the 13th and early 14th centuries was an epoch making poet and sufi (mystical philosopher) expert in all three areas of folk literature as well as divan poetry. Important figures of poetic literature were Karacaoglan, Atik Ömer, Erzurumlu Emrah and Kayserili Seyrani.

**Influence of Western Literature on Turkish Literature**

Turkish Literature was influenced by the Western Literature. Changes in social, economic and political life were reflected in the literature of the time and the quest for change continued till the proclamation of the Republic. The distinguishing characteristic of the era in literature was the concern with intellectual content rather than esthetic values or perfection of style. The latest period in literature, which is known as the Turkish Literature of the Republican period, came to be influenced by the following literary schools after Divan literary styles had been abandoned: Tanzimat (reforms), Servet-i Fünun (scientific wealth), Fecr-i Ati (dawn of the new age) and Ulusal Edebiyat (national literature).

Leading figures in the first period (1860-1880) in Tanzimat literature were Sinasi, Ziya Pasa, Namik Kemal, and Ahmet Mithat Efendi. Leading figures during the second period (1880-1896) were Recaihzade Mahmut Ekrem, Abdülhak Hamit, Sami Pasazade Sezai, and Nabizade Nazim.

Tevfik Fikret, Cenap Sahabettin, Süleyman Nazif, Halit Ziya Usakligil, Mehmet Rauf, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçin and Ahmet Hikmet Müftüoglu are the important representatives of this trend. Others who adopted the western approach, but who were outside the group, were Ahmet Rasim and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpinar who supported the new Turkish literature.

The most interesting Fecr-i Ati poet was Ahmet Hasim. Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu and Refik Halit Karay who initially were in the Fecr-i Ati at the start of their careers, attained their true literary identities later in the National Literature Movement.

Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Yahya Kemal Beyatli initially followed independent courses and later joined the National Literature movement. The Tanzimat, Servet-i Fünun and Fecr-i Ati groups who came together to create a modern Turkish literature made great strides towards this aim, but their works
stopped short of being a national literature with distinctive characteristics. In spirit, it was French-oriented, in language and style it was traditional and Ottoman.

National Literature was created between the years 1911 and 1923. The leading literary figures of the period were Ziya Gokalp, Ömer Seyfettin, Mehmet Emin Yurdakul, Yusuf Ziya Ortaç, Faruk Nafiz Camlibel, Enis Behiç Koryürek, Kemalettin Kamu, Aka Gündüz, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu, Halide Edip Adivar, Halit Karay, Resat Nuri Güntekin, Ahmet Hikmet Müftüoğlu, Necip Fazil Kisakürek, Halide Nusret Zorlutuna, Sükufe Nihal, Peyami Safa, and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar.

The Republic later encompassed practically all national literary figures in the fields of culture, ideology and literature. The first decade of the Republic bore the stamp of the National Literature movement, wherein the simple clear language, poetic forms and syllabic metre of folk literature and topics from Turkey were favoured.

The topics, written in simple language, were taken from real life and mirrored the conditions of the country. A unity was created in which all artists: Islamic, Ottoman, traditionalist and individualist could be a part, because the issue was not the concept of the trend of national literature, but the period itself of national literature.

Yahya Kemal Beyatli made his debut in 1912 and won fame during the War of Independence. Until the day he died he did not tire in his quest for pure poetry.

Mehmet Akif Ersoy, often considered an Islamic poet, made a great impact on both intellectuals and the masses with his book of poetry "Safahat" (stages) in which he treats the poverty and underdevelopment of various cities (primarily Istanbul) and countries and the alien aims of the intellectuals.

The first poets of the Republic used simple language and the syllabic metre. The advocates of the syllabic metre who won fame during the Truce Years were Orhan Seyfi Orhon, Yusuf Ziya Ortaç, Faruk Nafiz Camlibel and Kemalettin Kamu, all poets who stressed themes from Anatolia and the lives of ordinary people in their poems.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar wrote intensely profound poems full of hidden meaning, adapting Paul Valery's poetic notions to the Turkish language. Ahmet Kutsi Tecer was inspired in his work by folk sources, while Necip Fazil Kisakürek expressed the mystic tendencies of the Anatolian people in his poems and plays, using the Turkish language skillfully in an original and modern style reflecting his colorful character. Nazım Hikmet Ran, who went to Russia when he was young and returned with Marxist-materialist convictions, wrote revolutionary poems using the esthetic qualities of Turkish in a new way which bore the influence of Myakovsky. These poems were the beginning of a socialist trend which became common in Turkish literature in the 1960's. By contrast, Ahmet Muhip Dranas' poems reflected esthetic considerations only. Arif Nihat Asya was original in the richness of spirit and style of his poems.
Ömer Seyfettin, the founder and most successful representative of the short story tradition in Turkish literature became the most widely-read author in the country when the 144th edition of his books was published. The writings of Sait Faik Abasiyanik and Sabahattin Ali started two widely different trends. Sait Faik Abasiyanik picked on happenings in Istanbul with intense poetical feeling based on his own experiences. Sabahattin Ali, on the other hand, had a materialistic philosophy and specialized in objective description of simple events. With these two writers, daily life and events, opinions and expectations began to be reflected in literature, a trend that was to intensify in the 1960's.

Orhan Veli Kanik published his poems in a book entitled "Garip" in 1941, and two others who shared his style, Melih Cevdet Anday and Oktay Rifat, created a new poetic movement called "Garipciler", based on the elimination of such formal restrictions as metre, rhyme and analogy hitherto considered to be essential in poetry. They wanted poetry to become a simple expression of feelings. Orhan Veli's successful poems in free verse greatly influenced those who came after him. Cahit Sitki Taranci achieved the same simplicity through the use of metre and rhyme. Free verse spread rapidly. Asaf Halet Çelebi, Fazil Hüsnü Daglarca and Behçet Necatigil were some of the successful representatives of this style.

The most well-known and widely-read writers of the 1950-1990 period can be listed as follows: Tarik Dursun K., Atilla İhan, Yaşar Kemal, Orhan Kemal, Kemal Tahir, Tarik Bugra, Aziz Nesin, Mustafa Necati Sepetçioglu, Firuzan, Adalet Agaoglu, Sevgi Soysal, Tomris Uyar, Selim İleri, Cevat Sakir (Halikarnas Balıkçısı), Necati Cumali, Haldun Taner. Prominent poets in this period are: Behçet Kemal Çaglar, Necati Cumali, Oktay Rifat, Melih Cevdet Anday, Cemal Süreya, Edip Cansever, Özdemir İnce, Ataol Behramoğlu, İsmet Özel, Ece Ayhan, Turgut Uyar, Sezai Karakoç, Bahaettin Karakoç, Ümit Yasar Oğuzcan, Orhan Pamuk.