

TURKIC FICTION

EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Timeless Tales

Folktales, second only to poetry, have been alive as a constant genre in Turkish literature. A great many traditional Turkish tales were, and still are introduced with the following tekerleme (a formulaic jingle with numerous variants):

A long, long time ago,
when the sieve was inside the straw,
when the donkey was the town crier
and the camel was the barber . . .
Once there was; once there wasn't.
God's creatures were as plentiful as grains and
talking too much was a sin . . .

In this lilting overtures, one finds the spirit and some of the essential features of the Turkish folktale: the vivid imagination, irreconcilable paradoxes, rhythmic structure (with built-in syllabic meters and internal rhymes), a comic sense bordering on the absurd, a sense of the mutability of the world, the aesthetic urge to avoid loquaciousness, the continuing presence of the past, and the narrative's predilection to maintain freedom from time and place.

In Anatolia's culture, oral literature has played a vibrant role since the earliest times. Aesop came from Phrygia, whose capital, Gordion, stood on a site not far from Ankara, the capital of modern Turkey. Homer was probably born and reared near present-day Izmir and wandered up and down the Aegean coast amassing the tales and legends that came to be enshrined in his Iliad and Odyssey.

Several millennia of the narrative arts have bequeathed to Asia Minor a dazzling treasury—creation myths, Babylonian stories, The Epic of Gilgamesh, Hittite tales, biblical lore, Greek and Roman myths, Armenian and Byzantine anecdotes. The peninsula's mythical and historical ages nurtured dramatic accounts of deities, kings, heroes, and lovers. Pagan cults, ancient faiths, the Greek pantheon, Judaism, Roman religions, Christianity, Islam, mystical sects, and diverse spiritual movements left behind an inexhaustible body of legends and moralistic stories that survived throughout the centuries in their original forms or in many modified versions. Anatolia's narrative art is a testament to the Turkish passion for stories about heroism, love, and honor.

As the Turks embraced Islam and its civilization and founded the Selçuk state (mid-eleventh century) and then the Ottoman state (in the closing years of the thirteenth century), they developed a passion for the rich written and oral literature of the Arabs and Persians. Having brought along their own indigenous narratives in their horizontal move from Central Asia to Asia Minor, they now acquired the vertical heritage of the earlier millennia of Anatolian cultures, cults, and epic imagination as well as the Islamic narrative tradition in its

Arabo-Persian context. The resulting synthesis was to yield a vast reservoir of stories. It would also give impetus to the creation of countless new tales down through the ages, for all ages.

The synthesis was significantly enriched by the lore of Islamic mysticism. Romantic and didactic *mesnevis* (long narratives composed in rhymed couplets) compelled the elite poets' attention. Perhaps the most profoundly influential masterpiece of the genre was the *Mesnevi* written in Persian by the prominent thirteenth-century Sufi thinker Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi (1207-73). Referred to as the "Koran of Mysticism" and the "Inner Truth of the Koran," this massive work of close to twenty-six thousand couplets comprises a wealth of mystico-moralistic tales, fables, and stories of wisdom.

Ottoman elite poets produced—often with the inspiration or story lines they took from *The Thousand and One Nights*, *Kalila wa Dimna*, Firdawsi's *Shahnamah*, Attar's *Mantiq at Tayr*, Nizami's *Khamsa* (Five Narratives), and many others—impressive *mesnevis* including *Leyla vü Mecnun* (*Leylā and Mejnūn*) by Fuzuli (d. 1556) and *Hüsn ü Aşk* (*Beauty and Love*) by Şeyh Galib (d. 1799), both allegories of mystical love; *Hikâyat-i Deli Birader* (*Mad Brother's Anecdotes*), a garland of humorous and salacious stories, by Mehmed Gazali (d. 1535); and *Şevkengiz*, a funny debate between a ladies' man and a pederast by Vehbi (d. 1809).

From the urban-establishment writers came some remarkable works that incorporate stories from the oral tradition, principally the *Seyahatname*, the massive travelogue and cultural commentary by Evliya Çelebi (d. 1682) and the fascinating *Muhayyelât* (*Imaginary Lives*) by Aziz Efendi (d. 1798), a collection of three unrelated novellas that amalgamate fantastic tales, novelistic depictions of life in Istanbul, preternatural occurrences, mystical components, and selections from the repertoires of Ottoman professional storytellers.

But Ottoman oral creativity flourished less in written works than on its own *terra firma*. In the rural areas, it was, along with poetry, music, and dance, a focal performing art. It enchanted everyone from seven to seventy, as the saying goes, at home or at gatherings in villages and small towns. In Istanbul and other major cities, particularly after the mid-sixteenth century, it held audiences captive in coffeehouses; it was a natural expression of the common people, of the man in the street, of the lumpenproletariat who had little else for diversion or entertainment, of the men and women who kept their cultural norms and values alive in giving free rein to their imaginative resources. The leading figures of Ottoman history never ceased to fire the people's imagination. Mehmed "the Conqueror," Prince Cem, Selim "the Grim," Süleyman "the Magnificent," Selim "the Sot", İbrahim "the Mad," Hürrem Sultan (née Roxelana), and Empresses Kösem and Nakşidil (née Aimée) became mythic names, synonymous with the empire's triumphs and defeats, glories and treacheries. A testament to the popularity of storytelling is the number of terms that identify the various genres within oral narrative: *kissa*, *hikâye*, *rivayet*, *masal*, *fıkra*, *letaif*, *destan*, *efsane*, *esatir*, *menkibe*, *mesel*, and so forth.

The art of the tale was predominantly a continuation of the tradition that the Turkish communities had brought with them from their centuries in Asia. Their shamans from the outset had relied on mesmerizing verses and instructive tales in shaping the spiritual life of the tribes. Tales were at that time talismans and thaumaturgical potions. During the process of conversion to Islam, missionaries and proselytizers used the legends and the historical accounts of the new faith to good advantage.

Storytelling was nurtured also by children's tales told by mothers. In coffeehouses, where the art of storytelling flourished, the *Meddahs* were male professional comics. Their performances offered humorous stories and a broad range of imitations and impersonations. Whereas the *Karagöz* repertoire (notwithstanding its colorful comedic representations of the

life of the common people in an urban setting) was relatively fixed in its content, the Meddah stories held infinite possibilities of improvisation and originality.

In a society where the rate of literacy remained lower than 10 percent until the mid-1920s, oral narratives played a major role in cultural transmission—hence, the vast corpus of narrative material and the preponderance and success of the short-story genre in recent decades.

Turkish tales are nothing if not fanciful. Most of them have leaps of the imagination into the realm of phantasmagoria. Even realistic and moralistic stories usually have an element of whimsy. Bizarre transformations abound, as well as abrupt turns of events and inexplicable changes of identity.

The supreme figure of Turkish tales was and remains, Nasreddin Hoca, a wit and raconteur who presumably lived in the thirteenth century. A culmination of the earlier tradition, he became the wellspring of the succeeding centuries of folk humor and satire. Popular all over the Middle East, the Balkans, North Africa, and many parts of Asia, he disproves the assumption that one nation's laughter is often another nation's bafflement or boredom. He is Aesop, the Shakespearean clown, Till Eulenspiegel, Mark Twain, and Will Rogers all rolled into one. His humor incorporates subtle irony and black comedy, whimsical observations about human foibles and outrageous pranks, self-satire, banter with God, twists of practical logic, and the outlandishly absurd. But his universal appeal is based always on *ridetern dicere verum*.

Other figures of comic wisdom also appear in folktales, of course: the Ottoman centuries reveled in the humor of Bekri Mustafa, İncili Çavuş, and a host of other comedic characters including those from the Ottoman minorities. With their irreverence and nonchalance, the Bektashi dervishes generated a huge number of quips and anecdotes that have come down through the ages. But Nasreddin Hoca is the humorist par excellence. His universality has been recognized in Europe and America as well. Since the nineteenth century, the Hoca tales have been translated into the world's major languages, primarily English.

Perhaps Nasreddin Hoca's most telling sight gag is the best metaphor for the openness and accessibility of national humor, although initially it might seem forbidding. His tomb in the central Anatolian town of Akşehir originally had walls surrounding it and an iron gate with a huge padlock. In time, the walls came down, but the iron gate with the padlock still stands.

Today, conversations and some types of popular writing in Turkey (and elsewhere) sparkle with Hoca gags or punch lines. The lore has remarkably grown by leaps and bounds through the centuries because much new material has been ascribed or adapted to him by the public imagination.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, Western narrative traditions have penetrated Turkey at an ever-quicken pace. La Fontaine is a prime example: Şinasi (d. 1871), a poet-playwright and a pioneer of Ottoman enlightenment, adapted some of La Fontaine's fables into Turkish verse and composed a few of his own in a similar vein. A century later two great figures, Orhan Veli Kanık and Sabahattin Eyuboğlu, offered their splendid translations of the fables in separate books. Feverish translation activity has likewise contributed to the Turkish synthesis the best of the narrative literature of Europe and America: the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, Perrault, and others in the field of children's tales; Boccaccio, Chaucer, Rabelais, and others in tales for adults. The list is long, and the influences run deep.

Turkish stories—traditional and contemporary—range from simple parables to elaborate stories of quest, from spare narratives to tekerlemes, from the heroic deeds of a Turkish Robin Hood to the bizarre doings of jinns and fairies. There are drolleries, cock-and-bull stories, old wives' tales, but also artful stories of psychological insight and spiritual profundity. The versatility is striking: picaresque, picturesque, humoresque, burlesque.

Also, the diversity of tales is quite impressive. Some have elaborate story lines and many layers of meaning; some are so streamlined as to seem puristic. Many possess outright or subtle political criticism, but a few are straight love stories. The action varies from cliff-hangers to the tame. Fatalism alternates with a defiant, almost revolutionary spirit. Many belong to the pure masal (tale) genre told for pleasure, whereas some are mesel (parables with a moral). In them, we can find dragons, giants, witches, villains, and weird creatures, but also innocent children, lovable characters, romantic lovers, guardian angels. Many tales strike the reader as complete in themselves, commanding quintessential power, but some might well be fragments of an epic or parts of a cycle. The demands on the listener's or reader's mind may be like the suspense of an Agatha Christie thriller, but they can often require one to suspend belief. The vision can change from perfect clarity to trompe l'oeil.

Virtually all tales provide their stimulation through two functions, moral and morale. In this sense, they constitute a strategy for living. For common people oppressed by poverty and other deprivations, they are a diversion, an entertainment to be sure. Kelođlan tales are compelling examples: the everyboy, who will grow up to be Everyman, proves time and again that the meek—although they might not soon inherit the earth—will endure, sometimes prevail, and at times triumph.

Folktales in the Turkish experience, as elsewhere, are notable not only for their ways of overcoming a weakness or frustration, bringing about the fulfillment of dreams and wishes, and even achieving the impossible, but also for their serving as a continuing critique of and a challenge to entrenched authority, especially against unjust rule. They are not merely a type of refoulement, but a form of resistance against tyranny, inequality, or any iniquity. Because most of them possess freedom from time and place, they function in terms of eternal and universal validity. But because they are narrated at a specific moment and locale and couched in the vocabulary of a particular culture, they have as their targets the symbols of an identifiable society (sultan or vizier, religious judge or feudal lord).

Folktales hold a special place in Turkey's culture and mass communication. Their transcription came much later than comparable work in the West and took place on a much more limited basis. As a consequence, the oral tradition has continued well into our time without becoming frozen on the printed page: it remains alive with new versions and adaptations as well as completely new oral narratives. Even today, despite the intrusions of radio and television, storytelling is alive in many parts of rural Turkey.

Nasreddin Hoca

The thirteenth century was fertile: the Turks of Anatolia proved impressively creative in many genres from the decorative arts to music. In satire, too. A Nasreddin Hoca emerged—wit, raconteur, master of humor. Nasreddin Hoca anecdotes were popular as folk humor, but also in terms of their mystical implications. Unesco declared 1996–97 "The International Nasreddin Hoca Year."

One of his tales of wisdom is about justice delayed:

One day the Hoca is walking in the bazaar. A thug comes over and slaps him as hard as he can. People run over and apprehend the roughneck. They all go before the judge, who

sentences the thug to pay the Hoca one gold coin in damages. The man says: "Your honor, I haven't got a gold coin on me. Allow me to go home and get it." The judge agrees. The Hoca is skeptical. But the judge tells him to sit in the rear of the courtroom and wait for the gold coin. The Hoca doubts if thoroughneck will ever show up, but he sits and waits. A couple of hours later, he walks over to the judge: "Your honor," he says, "I've a lot of things to do. I can't wait any longer." The judge insists: "He'll bring the gold coin. Sit down and wait." Another couple of hours pass—no sight of the thug—the Hoca just can't wait any longer. He slowly gets up, walks over to the judge, slaps him as hard as he can, and says: "When he comes, you get the gold coin."

19th CENTURY

The Turkish venture into the realm of European-type **fiction** started in the 1870s. In the early decades, there was lack of clarity about the basic terms—short story or novella or novel? The pioneering works of fiction came from Ahmet Mithat Efendi (1844–1912), Emin Nihat (d. ca. 1875), and Şemsettin Sami (1850–1904). Of these writers, Ahmet Mithat Efendi, remarkably prolific with scores of novels and collections of short stories he wrote or translated, popularized fiction. Emin Nihat, who died young, produced a single work, *Müsameretname*, a mélange of Boccaccio-like stories, mainly about love and adventure. Şemsettin Sami is generally credited as the author of the first Turkish novel; it deals with the need of schooling for girls and with the problems of arranged marriages.

The prominent poet Namık Kemal produced two novels: *İntibah* (Vigilance), which cautions virtuous people about dissolute living and wicked deeds perpetrated against them, and *Cezmi*, which shows better writing skill and was the first Turkish historical novel. In his only novel, *Mizancı Murat* (1854–1917), a respected intellectual and historian, gave voice to his critical views of sociopolitical problems and offered the idea of Islamic unity as a panacea. Promising short stories came from Samipaşazade Sezai (1859–1936) whose novel *Sergüzeşt* (1888), about human bondage introduced the techniques of realism in a firm manner. From Nabizade Nâzım (1862–1893) came the first novella of a Turkish village that heralded naturalism. He also wrote perhaps the earliest specimen of psychological fiction, *Zehra* (published posthumously in 1894), depicting a case of pathological jealousy.

Recaizade Ekrem, a leading poet and *littérateur*, who also emerged as an important theoretician of aesthetics and a major critic, produced late in his career a satirical novel entitled *Araba Sevdası* (Love for Surrey, 1896), introducing as its protagonist an Ottoman dandy caught in the web of family troubles. This novel successfully caricatured the excesses of Europeanization.

The Ottoman East–West syndrome in the search for European type of reform was perhaps best delineated by Ahmet Mithat Efendi, who assumed for himself the mission of educating the public by dint of literary works. His fiction and essays strove to preserve the best of Islamic values in the Westernizing endeavor of the Ottomans. His 1876 novel with a Europeanized protagonist, Felatun Bey, and the virtuous traditionalist, Rakım Efendi, cautioned modernizers regarding the risk of losing their authentic identity.

Ahmet Mithat and most of the late-nineteenth-century novelists maintained a utilitarian stance about the function of fiction—mainly to educate readers, to sensitize them concerning the status and rights of women, to create a better social system.

When the ideal of "art for art's sake" gained strength with the establishment of the *Servet-i Fünun* group, the turn of the century witnessed the appearance of the first truly refined Turkish novel, *Aşk-ı Memnu* (Forbidden Love) by Halit Ziya (Uşaklıgil) (1866–1945). This well-constructed novel depicts the life and the tribulations of a prosperous Istanbul family. Its narrative technique is gripping, its story line strong, with characters well delineated and dialogue vivid. First serialized in a daily newspaper, it was published in book form in 1900. *Aşk-ı Memnu* can arguably vie with some of Europe's best novels of the time. Halit Ziya authored several other major works, *Mai ve Siyah* (The Blue and the Black, 1897), and *Kırk Hayatlar* (Broken Lives, 1924), mostly about human suffering.

A year after *Aşk-ı Memnu* appeared on the literary scene, another major talent, Mehmet Rauf (1874–1931), published a psychological tour de force entitled *Eylül* (September, 1901).

Thus, the start of the twentieth century augured well for the Turkish novel, which was destined to take strides toward impressive diversity and workmanship in the ensuing era, eventually culminating in the Nobel Prize.

Attaching themselves to the rising star of fiction, numerous late Ottoman authors—principally Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar (1864–1944), Refik Halit Karay (1888–1965), Halide Edib Adivar (1884–1964), Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (1889–1974), and Reşat Nuri Güntekin (1889–1956) produced easily readable works whose characters are identifiable and whose dialogues in the simple vernacular. Güntekin's *Çalıkuşu* (1922; *The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl*, 1949), about a young woman who works in the rural areas as a schoolteacher, became a sensation and remained a best-seller for many decades. Güntekin and the others dominated the fiction of the early decades of the republic as well.

20th CENTURY

Early Fiction. The early novels of the republic depicted the disintegration of Ottoman society, ferocious political enmities, and the immoral lives of some members of religious sects, as well as the conflicts between urban intellectuals and poverty-stricken peasants—as in the novels of Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (1889–1974). Turkey's major female intellectual and advocate of women's rights, Halide Edib Adivar (1882–1964), produced sagas of the War of Liberation, psychological novels, and panoramas of city life. Her novelistic art culminated in *Sinekli Bakkal* (1936), which she originally published in English in 1935 under the title *The Clown and His Daughter*.

Anatolian Fiction. The harsh realities of Anatolia found fertile ground in the literature of engagement after World War II. Sabahattin Ali (1907–48) was a pioneer of forceful fiction about the trials and tribulations of the lower classes. Two books, both published in 1950 — *Bizim Köy* (*Our Village; A Village in Anatolia*) by Mahmut Makal (b. 1930) and *Toprak Ana* by Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca — exerted a shattering impact on political and intellectual circles by dramatically exposing conditions in villages. The first, available in English translation, is a series of vignettes written by Makal, a teenage peasant who became a village teacher after graduating from one of the controversial Institutes for Village Teachers. The book reveals the abject poverty of the Anatolian village:

Village Novel. In the mid-1950s a brave new genre emerged—the “Village Novel,” which reached its apogee with Yaşar Kemal's *İnce Memed* (translated into English under the title *Memed, My Hawk*, 1961). Yaşar Kemal (b. 1923), the most famous twentieth-century Turkish novelist at home and abroad was frequently mentioned not only in Turkey but also in the world press and literary circles as a strong candidate for the Nobel Prize. His impressive corpus of fiction, written in a virtually poetic style, ranks as one of the truly stirring achievements in the history of Turkish literature.

Dealing with the merciless reality of poverty, village literature portrays the peasant threatened by natural disaster and man's inhumanity. The drama is enacted in terms of economic and psychological deprivation, blood feuds, stagnation and starvation, droughts, the tyranny of the *gendarmes* and petty officials, and exploitation at the hands of landowners and politicians. The lithe style records local dialects with an almost flawless accuracy. A pessimistic tone pervades much of village literature: its delineations are bleak even when occasional flashes of humor or a glimmer of hope or descriptions of nature's beauty appear. A great strength of the genre is its freedom from the rhetoric that mars much of the poetry of social protest. When presenting deprived men and women pitted against hostile forces, the best practitioners offered an affirmation of the human spirit. Their works are often testaments to the dauntless determination of the peasant to survive and to resist—sometimes through rebellion—the forces of oppression.

Urban Fiction. Urban writers deal with a broad diversity of social problems in major cities. Accomplished novelist Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar (1888–1963) enjoys fame for nostalgic and sometimes satiric depictions of high-class life in old Istanbul. Peyami Safa (1899–1961), one of Turkey's most prolific authors, dealt with social problems, cultural tensions, and psychic crises in his many highly readable novels.

Fiction about the urban poor shares some of the strengths of the Village Novel—engrossing plot, effective narration, realistic dialogue—and suffers from some of the comparable flaws—lack of subtlety and of psychological depth. The leading writer of fiction depicting the tribulations of working-class people is Orhan Kemal (1914–70). Necati Cumalı (1921–2001), a prolific poet and playwright, wrote tellingly about poverty-stricken individuals in rural and coastal areas. Osman Cemal Kaygılı (1890–1945) penned poignant stories of the lumpenproletariat and the gypsies.

Sait Faik The short-story writer Sait Faik (1906–54) is admired for his meditative, rambling romantic fiction, full of intriguing insights into the human soul, capturing the pathos and the bathos of urban life in a style unique for its poetic yet colloquial flair.

Sait Faik's career, which spanned barely twenty-five years from about 1929 to 1954, yielded an output that displays a considerable variety of themes and techniques although virtually all of his stories have certain similarities—his unmistakable style, the focal importance of the narrator, the preoccupation with social outcasts and marginal groups, and an unflinching ear for colloquial speech. His stories can in their range of feeling and creative strategies be likened to many disparate works by some of his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors outside Turkey. One occasionally finds plots worthy of a de Maupassant, moods reminiscent of a Chekhov, and sometimes the lucidity of a Maugham, although none of these writers—not even some of the French writers Sait Faik presumably read during his stay in Grenoble—seems to have had any direct influence on him. In some stories, the Turkish writer gives us a blend of fantasy and concrete fact as well as the interplay of different levels of reality in the Faulknerian manner. In others, one finds a structural clarity and a crispness of language typical of Hemingway. Sait Faik's later stories occasionally read like Donald Barthelme's early work, sharing the same eerie sensations of a foray into the realms of fantasy.

Cevat Sakir Cevat Şakir (1886–1973), who adopted the pen name “Halikarnas Balıkcısı” (The Fisherman of Halicarnassus), a polyglot who also wrote in English, produced gripping novels about common people, especially fishermen, on the Aegean coast.

Historical Fiction. An awakening of interest in Ottoman history after several decades of neglect gave rise to a massive semidocumentary novel by Kemal Tahir (1910–73), *Devlet Ana* (Mother State, 1967), a saga of the emergence of the Ottoman state in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The Turkish War of Liberation (1919–22), as in the previous decades, inspired numerous major novels—Yorgun Savaşçı (The Tired Warrior, 1965) by Kemal Tahir, *Kalpakkıllar* (Men in Fur Caps, 1962) and *Doludizgin* (Full Gallop, 1963) by Samim Kocagöz (1916–93), and *Kutsal İsyan* (The Sacred Uprising, 1966–68), in eight volumes, by Hasan İzzettin Dinamo (1909–89).

Attilâ İlhan produced a two-volume portrayal (à la Dos Passos's U.S.A.) of the crises of Turkish society following World War II, entitled *Kurtlar Sofrası* (A Feast for Wolves, 1963)

Social Realists. The best social realists in the second half of the twentieth century included Fakir Baykurt (1929–99), Çetin Altan (b. 1927), Dursun Akçam (1930–2003), Talip Apaydın (b. 1926), Tarık Dursun K. (b. 1931), Vedat Türkali (b. 1919), Kemal Bilbaşar (1910–83), Mehmet Seyda (1919–86), and Zeyyat Selimoğlu (1922–2000). Highly imaginative fiction came from Nahit Sırrı Örik (1894–1960), who wrote compellingly about the late Ottoman period, as did Hıfzı Topuz (b. 1923), a writer of semidocumentary fiction. Another major figure is Peride Celal (b. 1916), whose work evolved from popular novels to sophisticated psychological fiction and an epic treatment of democracy beset by conflicts. Sevim Burak (1931–83) was a successful practitioner of Faulknerian narrative techniques. A multitalented author, Zülfü Livaneli (b. 1946) has to his credit many diverse novels, some of which have enjoyed considerable success in Turkey as have their translations abroad. The short-story scene, which was dominated in the mid-twentieth century by such figures as Sait Faik, Memduh Şevket Esendal (1883–1952), and Nezihe Meriç (1925–2009), and later by Tomris Uyar (1941–2003) and Sevgi Soysal (1936–76), now flourishes, thanks to the work of Cemil Kavukçu (b. 1951), Hasan Ali Toptaş (b. 1958), and others.

1980's Since the 1980s, the art of the novel has taken giant strides thanks in part to the growing corpus of Yaşar Kemal and to the impressive work of Adalet Ağaoğlu (b. 1929), Tahsin Yücel (b. 1933), Vüs'at O. Bener (1922–2005), Erhan Bener (1929–2007), Attilâ İlhan, and others. Elif Şafak (b. 1971) enjoys wide fame internationally thanks to her provocative novels that interfuse traditional values and innovative features. The first decade of the twenty-first century has enjoyed what can be characterized as “the post-postmodern” fiction of numerous younger writers—for instance, Tuna Kiremitçi, Müge İplikçi, Perihan Mağden, Cezmi Ersöz, Şebnem İyigüzel, Sema Kaygusuz as well as Ahmet Ümit (b. 1960), who is gaining wide recognition as a master of suspense thrillers, a rare genre in Turkey.

Orhan Pamuk In Turkey and abroad, Orhan Pamuk (b. 1952) has emerged as a compelling precursor of new dimensions in the Turkish novelistic art. His major works have been successfully translated into nearly fifty languages, the English versions attracting wide attention and winning a number of major international awards. Pamuk's meteoric rise culminated in his winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2006. It is significantly that this first Nobel Prize won by a Turk in any field went to a literary figure because literature remains the premier cultural genre among Turks. Pamuk himself asserted that the prize was awarded principally to Turkish language and literature. Although some intellectuals acknowledge this to be a fact, many believe that the prize was awarded in recognition of Pamuk's own creative work; some claim he received the prize because he made damaging remarks

about incidents in Ottoman history and contemporary life. Pamuk's formula for success has been postmodernism plus some Turkish exoticism. He has been likened to several giants of modern literature. Such kinships tend to provide a fairly easy passage to fame abroad. The risk involved, however, is that similarities may not sustain the inherent value of the oeuvre for long—unless the writer from the other culture finds a voice uniquely his own, explores new forms, and creates a synthesis beyond a pat formula based on what is in fashion.

It would not be incorrect, however, to assert that Pamuk is at present proceeding away from “influences” toward an authentic, original novelistic art—a new synthesis as evinced by his first post-Nobel novel, *Masumiyet Müzesi* (2008; *The Museum of Innocence*, 2009). His first novel, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları* (*Cevdet Bey and His Sons*, 1982) is a *Buddenbrooks* type of work in three volumes that traces a family's life over three generations as well as the process of Turkish modernization from the early twentieth century onward. *Sessiz Ev* (*Quiet House*, 1983) skillfully fuses modern and traditional novelistic techniques, utilizing five major characters who narrate the story through their stream of consciousness. The later two works remain untranslated into English, although both have fascinating features. *Beyaz Kale* (1985), published in English translation in 1990 as *The White Castle*, is a tour de force about the intriguing interaction between a Venetian and an Ottoman look-alike who symbolize diverse aspects of the cultural tensions between East and West.

Kara Kitap (1990; *The Black Book* of 1994 and 2006) was hailed as a masterwork, especially in Europe and the United States and solidified Pamuk's reputation. It masterfully depicts the mysteries of Istanbul and evokes the traditional values of Sufism. *Yeni Hayat* (1995; *The New Life*, 1997) is a travel novel woven in a poetic style that deals with imagination gone awry, youthful despair, and republican idealism thwarted.

The success of two novels in particular—*Benim Adım Kırmızı* (1998; *My Name is Red*, 2001), a powerful novel about miniature painters in the Ottoman capital in 1591, and *Kar* (2002; *Snow* 2004), Pamuk's most patently political work—led to his Nobel Prize. His *İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir* (2003; *İstanbul: Memories and the City*, 2005), a beguilingly evocative description of his beloved and sorrowful city, enhanced his international prestige. His *Masumiyet Müzesi* is avowedly a novel of love, marriage, friendship, sexuality, family life, and happiness. Pamuk was crowned the novel's success by opening a museum by the same name in Istanbul.

Talat S. Halman, *A Millennium of Turkish Literature: A Concise History*, ed. Jayne L. Warner, rev. ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011). First edition published by Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2008.