

Ottoman Lyric Poetry

An Anthology

EXPANDED EDITION

Edited and translated by

Walter G. Andrews, Najaat Black,
and Mehmet Kalpaklı

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2. Ahmed-i Da'i

d. ca. 1500

The torture of the beloved is no punishment
at all

Thank God for the faithfulness of your cruelty

There are many beloveds with cypress-bodies,
witch-eyes, and trouble-making brows

But not one of them has been so enticing
as you!

If those who thirst for the wine of your rubied lips
gave one thousand lives

One thousand lives for just the dregs—
it would be cheap!

No matter how much I am separated from you,
no matter how far

Your image remains constant within my soul

Oh my beloved, why do you withhold our union?

It does not befit you to torment your slave
this way!

Do a favor for the lovers, bring joy and captivate
their hearts

One must be faithful, for we know beauty
does not last

From my heart, I love you dearly,
more than life itself

Believe me, God knows there is no error
in what I say

3. Sheyhî

1375-1431

Your sun-face is a mirror of the soul
I know

An image of both worlds is found within
I know

The artist who could paint one point
on the circle of your beauty
Would be famed as a master in this world
I know

Your glance says, "I will lay waste to the city
of your heart!"

This is a royal order from the Sultan
I know

I can't understand the deceptions of your eye
and brow

One is sedition, the other disaster
I know

You've recognized your slaves with the favor
of torment

But it's been long since you've thought of me
I know

Oh sufi, who sees goodness in your hypocrisy
Abandon such thoughts, it slanders the faith
I know

Oh Sheyhî, you need the garden, the beloved,
wine and the saz
All that's left is the life of this moment—
grief and sadness
I know

6. Ahmet Pasha

Is there any heart not bleeding
from the arrows of your glance?
Is there any life not sacrificed
to the bow of your brow?

A life spent without you is a life
lived in vain
If your true love is absent,
your own soul has fled

My beloved, with her glance,
she slays one thousand lovers
Yet that's nothing compared
to the trouble she might cause!

That idol has covered her woman's tresses,
but not abandoned her pagan ways
She has cut the belt around her delicate waist,
but not yet become a Muslim

I have wept so much blood longing
for your rubied lips
Every door and wall of your town
are made coral from my tears

When the moth of my soul recalls
the shining lamp of your beauty
There is no party not warmed
by our passion, our verse

All our hearts are gathered in your dark curls—
what if the wind unbinds them?
Will there be any of us not disheveled
and crazed with thoughts of love?

At dawn Ahmed catches the scent of the rose,
and in his anguish sighs, ahhh!
There's not a nightingale in the garden
whose heart is not burned by love

8. Nejâtî

The heart is pleased when black down covers
your shining cheek
The sun of the love-thief rises when the moon
is dark

My beloved, is it fitting that you long
for the empty steppe?
There your glance will become a thief,
your eye a wild gazelle

Oh my idol, when there is the dust of the places
you have been
To say "Paradise!" would be using sand to cleanse
for prayer, when there is water

Since I became a lover, I eat only trouble
and torment
When one falls sick, he craves food
of the strangest kind!

Following the path of the beloved, I shout
"yâ hû"!
And hope that loving spirit will turn
and give her glance to me

The east wind told the musk of China about the scent
of your dark curl
Saying, "Why go to Anatolia when the perfumed one
is there?"

Don't call me crazy when I don't follow
your advice
Those who are wise will mind their
own affairs!

12. Mihri Hatun

At times, my longing for the beloved slays me
At times, union with him and the passing
of time slay me too

My enemy laughs at my condition, but I cry
on and on

How can my spirit endure this sorrow which kills
us all?

Oh you who doctors the sick heart with his image
The trouble is medicines, like poison, kill me

This day, all my friends and enemies, come crying
I've not yet met my fated end, but these perplexities
kill me

Oh my rival, if Mihri dies on the thorn of love,
why grieve?

You dog! The grave-keeper slays you, but the
rose-mouthed one slays him too

13. Mihri Hatun

My heart burns in flames of sorrow
Sparks and smoke rise turning to the sky

Within me, the heart has taken fire
like a candle
My body, whirling, is a lighthouse
illuminated by your image

See the rope-dancer of the soul, reaching
for your ruby lips
Spinning, descending the twist of your curl

The sun and moon came to your quarter,
circling in the sky
Bowling to you, faces in the dust
before your feet

Oh you with the bright face, radiant as Venus
The moon twisted into a crescent to resemble
your arching brow

When longing for an image of your lips
had befallen my heart
Oh Mihri, then my heart burned
in flames of sorrow

29. Nisâyî

d. ca. 1550–1560

We are the Mejnûn of our age, we dwell in the wilderness
of seclusion
We have abandoned the many for the one, we dwell
in the loneliness of solitude.
We are companions at the celebration of grief, we await
sweet talk with the *na'y*
Oh *zâhid*, do not believe we are waiting for a safe path
to Paradise
We are the tormented lovers, we haunt the place
of blame
Like Mejnûn, we have made our home in the wilderness
of freedom
Like the Phoenix, we have made a nest on the summit
of annihilation
We are hidden treasure, and we do not reveal the secret
of the heart
In the retreat free from care, how many treasures
we have found
We have abandoned the dervish crown and throne,
we haunt the place of tranquillity
Heart and soul, drunkard and blame-seeker—we are a pair
of crazy pairs
At the festival of sorrow, with Vâmik and Ferhâd
who died from love
We drink from love's cup, and rejoice
in what may come
We have been enslaved by the wine-makers
for so many a year
Yet we are the sultans of the world, we stand guard
at the gate of good luck

I have abandoned my home and sacrificed my whole life
for your sake
I've shown everyone my tears, I've revealed all
that I am
I won't turn away from you, even if all the world
oppose me
For union with you, the living spirit gives up all
that it owns
Oh *hoja*, we are keeping watch, spending the treasure
of our life on union
We are the Hüsrev of the age, kings of the tears
of blood
With our weeping, we have given Mount Bâsûrûn
to the flood
Seen with the hard-hearted one, we appear to be
the mountain-cutter
With the memory of the sweet lip of Shîrîn,
we suffer like Ferhâd
For how long, oh Nisâyî, have we waited
at this gate of afflictions?

35. Bâkî

If only the bud would open
like the beloved's ruby lips
It would scatter turquoise and the plain
become a field of green

If I were to obey the advice
of the holy man of the town.
Then what of spring, the beloved,
and the pleasant wine?

I have drunk blood at every moment,
served by the saki of fate
If only I could open like the wild poppy,
and reveal love's burn within

What if the hearts cry because
of that ruthless hard-hearted one?
And what if that love-thief
were coquettish and alluring?

Oh Bâkî, let the cup pass around again,
see the rose within
Let the beloved be always near,
in revelry along the bank of the stream

36. Bâkî

Sparks from my heart rise
to the heavens turning
While my tears pour, spinning,
to the earth

In the fire of your love, the heart
of the disappointed lover burns
Turning, turning, like a magic lantern

Night after night on the bed of grief
I see no sleep

Restless, turning, I lament until the dawn

Oh idol, from the grief of loving you,
my weeping eye is drowned
My sad eye, a small boat, capsized
by a whirlpool of tears

At the *bayram*, let us hear
the ferris-wheel weeping
Spinning, let it display
that silver-breasted one

In a whirlwind, the dust of her threshold
rises to the skies

Spinning, it anoints the eyes of the stars
Circling the candle of your cheek,
the heart becomes bewildered
Like a moth burns wing and feather
in the flame

The jeweler's wheel pierces the pearl
as fate pierces the soul, spinning
These pearls, these jewels, are Bâkî's tears

58. Nedîm

d. 1730

At the gathering of desire you made me a wine-cup
 with your sugar smile
 Oh saki, give me only half a cup of wine,
 you've made me drunk enough
 You crushed me under the hoof of a wild horse
 that runs like fire
 In those places flames rise up from my ashes
 like cypress trees
 Ah, east wind, you came to me with the scent
 of my lover's hair
 You made me love-bewildered like the hyacinth's
 curl
 With your beauteous grace my hair has been standing
 like a jinn
 With love you've made me mirror-colored from head
 to foot
 Don't make your crying Nedîm drunk and devastated
 like that
 Saki, give me only half a cup of wine, you've made
 me drunk enough

59. Nedîm

When the east wind leaves that curl,
 it carries the scent of musk
 And when it opens the knot of your gown,
 it carries the scent of rose
 On that rose-petal lip, I would find the taste
 of sugar
 On that rosebud mouth, I would discover
 the scent of wine
 At what party did you stay up all night
 in conversation?
 Your drunken narcissus-eye is still perfumed
 with sleep
 Alas, we were unable to see her without her veil
 A shame that my rival should smell that silver
 neck unveiled
 My tormented flesh became ash in the searing
 heat of love
 The grass that grows there smells of burning
 until the Judgment Day
 The rose-charm of coquettishness brought rosewater
 to your brow
 Oh rose, the small apple of your chin smelled sweet!
 Oh Nedîm, are you again cutting open and revealing
 meaning?
 The point of the sword of the pen smells of the blood
 of difficult choice