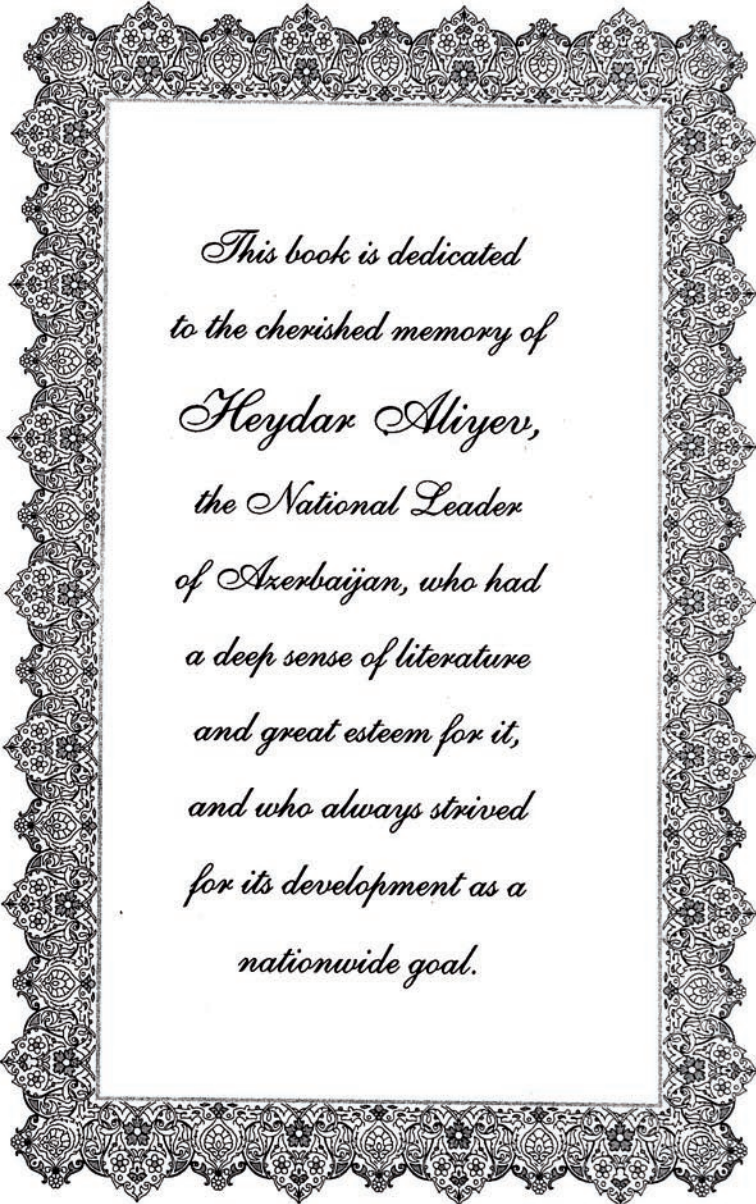


Poetry of
Azerbaijan

A Drop in the Ocean



*This book is dedicated
to the cherished memory of
Heydar Aliyev,
the National Leader
of Azerbaijan, who had
a deep sense of literature
and great esteem for it,
and who always strived
for its development as a
nationwide goal.*

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Poetry of Azerbaijan

A Drop in the Ocean

Compiled & edited by
Dr. Eynulla Madatli

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Leaf Publications-Islamabad

2010

M.F.Axundov adına
Azərbaycan Milli
Kitabxanası

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Trying to present the ages-old Azerbaijani poetry in one book is similar to depicting an ocean as a drop and portraying it is no less difficult than picturing an ocean by the image of a small drop. Just like in any poetry-loving nation of the universe, it was the mothers singing lullabies and cradlesongs for their children who created the first samples of poetry in Azerbaijan as well. Starting with short verses of lullabies and quatrains, the timeless themes of birth, life, love, separation, reunion, death and immortality ran through heroic epics and love epics to become the major subjects of folklore literature during the course of many centuries. These epic poems laid out a strong foundation for emergence of the classic Azerbaijani poetry and carried it over vividly to our millennium.

It is praiseworthy that as a brilliant folklore monument, the epos of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" is a fountainhead of the Azerbaijani and all Turkic poetry with its unique amalgamation of poetry and prose in an exceptional imagery. This heroic epos which describes the events transpiring around the 7th century and lifetime of the holy prophet of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), signifies the ancient roots of the Azerbaijani folklore literature with its mainly pre-Islamic themes, motifs, characters and story lines even though it was penned and versified in written form much later than the time of its appearance. Based on the scenario of Anar, the prolific Azerbaijani writer and the chairman of the Writers Union, a movie named "Dede-Gorgud" was made in our country during the Soviet period and a recent article entitled "The Supremacy of Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" was written by Elchin on the 1300th anniversary of the historic epos. Elchin's valuable article has been included in the book in order to convey a general understanding about the whole spirit of this outstanding epos. It was after this pacesetter





epos that national ashigs¹ travelled across the regions and improvised many eposes alike, hence creating a memorable and unique poetry.

It is a source of deep pleasure for me to note that the Azerbaijani poetry has played an important role in advancement of the Eastern civilization. It has had a significant impact on expansion of the Islamic culture in particular. The contribution of Nizami Ganjevi, the prominent Azerbaijani poet of 12th century who is also well-known globally, is immeasurable in terms of his input into the development of literary, religious and philosophical thought in the world. Opening with exaltation of the God Almighty and His beloved prophets, Nizami's "Khamisa" ("Quinary") is indeed a true acclamation of divine devotion, wisdom and justice, love and heroism in a subtle ethical-philosophical poetic language. The heart-stirring quatrains of insightful Mahsati Ganjevi, a beautiful Azerbaijani poetess and Nizami's contemporary, the eloquent poems of Khagani Shirvani expressive of turbulent historic-political milieu of the time, illuminated the path for ensuing growth of the Azerbaijani classic poetry and further extension of its outreach. Consequently, scores of poetic responses to Nizami's narrative poems emerged and identical eposes with similar names were composed especially in the regions of Central and Southern Asia. World-renowned poets such as Alishir Navai and Abdur Rahman Jami are among the many poets who versified narrative poems with the same names and story lines in response to Nizami's Khamisa.

The medieval poetry of Azerbaijan is closely connected to and intertwined with the Eastern poetic literature in general

¹The art of the ashigs is an ancient bardic tradition that belongs mostly to the Turkic World (Central Asia, Iran, Turkey, Caucasus and North West-China). An ashig is a poet, composer, singer, musical performer and occasionally a dancer who beats on the strings of the saz (stringed musical instrument) and improvises serenades and ballads. The musical and poetic heritage of Azerbaijani ashigs dates back to ancient period and was created, preserved and is still passed on in oral form which demands exceptional musical memory and ear.



as there were no boundaries in the themes poets often resorted to. The cities where the eminent Azerbaijani poets dwelled and thrived, such as Ganja, Darband, Baku, Nakhchivan, Tabriz, Ardabil, Karkuk, Baghdad, Karbala, Samarcand, Lahor, Kashmir, Kashkar, Herat, Kabul, Shiraz, Esfahan, Konya, encompassed vast geographical expanses of Eastern civilization. For instance, the great Azerbaijani philosopher-thinkers such as Shahabeddin Sohrevardi and Omar Sohrevardi or the poets such as Shams Tabrizi, Sahib Tabrizi and Falaki were well-known and revered in Lahor, Multan and Kashmir as well as across the other parts of the sub-continent.

Although Azerbaijani lands were partitioned in 1828 as a result of war between Russia and Iran, the Azerbaijani poetry could not be divided. On the contrary, it developed with the same vigor and vitality. Even during the bloody reactionary years of the communist era, the poetic bridges between Baku and Tabriz could not be demolished. The famous Monument of Poets erected in Tabriz is an embodiment of unity and inseparability of the Azerbaijani poetry.

Only a few examples from among hundreds of legendary Azerbaijani poets have been included in this book that we are privileged to present to the venerated Pakistani readers. This book resembles a drop in the ocean. It is meant to pass on a short glimpse of the rich Azerbaijani classic poetic landscape to the poetry-loving Pakistani readers as we feel the necessity to familiarize our people with the literature and poetry of each other's nations once historically tied closely together through strong spiritual, political as well as business affiliations.

Although some of the prominent poets of Pakistan, especially world-renowned philosopher-thinker Muhammad Iqbal are recognized and loved in our country, there is a need to bring other poets of Pakistan into light and publicize their poems in Azerbaijan. I believe this gap will be filled in near future.

At present, there is more conducive and free





environment in Azerbaijan for comprehensive development of literary activities in all genres. The Writers Union's undertakings and its literary-press projects are being promoted in the country with the full support of top leadership since Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic attaches great significance to the promotion of art and literature. Researching, exploring and disseminating the rich literary-cultural heritage of Azerbaijan is regarded a highly important task as one of the nationwide goals.

Most of the poems introduced in this book were translated into English and published in 1970 in Moscow, at "Progress" publishers. Some others have recently been translated. Unfortunately, due to the limited availability of English translations of Azerbaijani poetry, many of the poems of our much-admired and talented poets could not be incorporated into this selection. I hope that in re-publications of the book, this compilation will be expanded and enriched.

Availing this opportunity, I would like to extend my deep gratitude to Prof. Dr. Isa Habibbayli, the Rector of the Nakhchivan State University, for his valuable academic advice and informative introduction to this book. At the same time, I would also like to express my thanks to Ms. Najma Rafiq, translator of several Azerbaijani literary works to Urdu, and Mr. Ahmad Ishvaq, the secretary of the Embassy of Azerbaijan, for skillfully taking care of the manuscript of the book. Any comments, remarks or views from respectable Pakistani readers, poets and researchers will be welcome (Islamabad@mission.mfa.gov.az). This book will also be accessible at the website of the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Pakistan (www.azembassy.com.pk). I hope that this book humbly serves to strengthen the cultural relations and friendly ties between our brotherly nations.

Dr. Eynulla Madatli
Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan



Azerbaijani Poetry: Tradition and Modernity

Azerbaijani literature has an ancient history and century-old way of development. This great literature is an irreplaceable, valuable national-cultural wealth of the Azerbaijani people. The Azerbaijani literature played an important role in the formation of the country as an independent state and in the social-cultural development of the people. The Azerbaijani literature is the literary-artistic chronicle and mirror of the country, as well as the textbook of patriotism of the Azerbaijani people.

Azerbaijani people gave the world literature great geniuses. The writers such as Nizami Ganjevi, Imamaddin Nasimi, Muhammad Fizuli, Shah Ismayil Khatai, Mirza Fatali Akhundov, Jalil Mammadquluzada, Mirza Alakbar Sabir, Huseyn Javid, Uzeyir Hajibayov, Muhammad Hussein Shahriyar, Samad Vurghun, Rasul Rza, Bakhtiyar Vahabzada and others, who lived and created in different centuries, created such works which became spiritual wealth of other people too.

Azerbaijani folklore has a very ancient history. Creation of some examples of the Azerbaijani folklore dates back to the times BC. The Azerbaijani folklore legends and myths, tales and eposes, bayatis and lullabies, proverbs and sayings is a treasure of wisdom. The Azerbaijani ashig literature has great fundamental traditions. Such talented representatives of this branch of the Azerbaijani folklore as Ashig Gurbani, Ashig Abbas Tufarganli, Sari Ashig, Ashig Alasgar enriched the Azerbaijani literature with valuable works. "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" is accepted as not only the masterpiece of the Azerbaijani folklore, but also as the immortal monument of art of the whole Turkish Muslim world.

For the time being, the first written examples of Azerbaijani literature known to us belong to the IX-XI centuries. But, XII century is the golden age of the Azerbaijani literature. The works by Nizami Ganjevi, Afzaladdin Khagani





and Mahsati Ganjevi who lived and created in XII century spread and became famous not only in Azerbaijan but also in all Eastern countries. Especially Nizami Ganjevi by means of his immortal works raised the Azerbaijani literature to the level of the Eastern and world literature. In the Azerbaijani literature, in all the stages, poetry has gained a superiority. It was, first of all, connected with the fact that in the old and middle periods, the Azerbaijani literature developed with the Eastern inclination and poetry stayed in the front position in general. Besides, in the Azerbaijani folklore, which has a more ancient history, lyrics attracted more attention with their wider opportunities. Even in "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" which appeared in the VII century, the poems are the examples of a perfect poetry. In general, in the nature and character of the Azerbaijani people there exists a specific poetic disposition. Consequently, poetry has always led the Azerbaijani literature and defined its way of development.

Beginning from the old times, the Azerbaijani literature was created and developed in three languages, in Azerbaijani, Persian and Arabic. By means of the fiction written in Persian and Arabic in XI-XV centuries the Azerbaijani classical poetry was spread and recognized in the whole East. However, creation and development of poetry in the native Azerbaijani language beginning from the XIII century is one of the most important literary-cultural events in the history and fate of the Azerbaijani people. Beginning from the XIII century, creation of examples of perfect poetry in Azerbaijani in different genres by Izzaddin Hasanoghlu, Gazi Burhanaddin, Imamaddin Nasimi, Shah Ismayil Khatai and others gave rise to closer connection of poetry with life and fight of the ancient people of Azerbaijan. In this sense, the poetry created in the medieval ages is the stamp and passport of the Azerbaijani people.

The creative work of the great Azerbaijani poet Muhammad Fizuli stands in the summit of our national poetry. The ghazals, odes and poems created by the great poet prove to be rare pearls of Eastern as well as the world literature. He is considered to be one of the greatest creators of love lyrics in Turkish-Muslim poetry. The love epos of "Leyli and Majnun"



is the poet's immortal work which is famous throughout the world. The opera of "Leyli and Majnun" composed by Uzeyir Hajibayov, the eminent Azerbaijani composer in 1908 on the basis of Muhammad Fizuli's epos is the first opera in the East.

Beginning from the XVII XVIII centuries, the Azerbaijani literature became closer and closer to the people's life. Molla Panah Vagif directed the romantic poetry written in Azerbaijani to the realistic course. The life, mode of life, customs, traditions, wishes and desires of the Azerbaijani people were glorified with a simple and natural language in Molla Panah Vagif's poetry of beauty. By the creative activity of such contemporaries of Vagif as Molla Vali Vidadi, Ashig Pari and others, the realistic direction of the Azerbaijani poetry became deeper and deeper.

XIX century is a special period in the history of the Azerbaijani people and literature. In this stage, the realistic inclinations existing before became an independent literary school. Establishment of press and theater in the XIX century. were also great cultural events. Thanks to the creative activities of Abbasguluagha Bakikhanov, Ismayilbay Gutgashinli and Mirza Shafi Vazeh, a realistic educational literature was formed. Mirza Fatali Akhundov developed the national educational realism up to the borders of critical realism. The great writer is also the founder of the Azerbaijani dramaturgy and realistic prose. In XIX century, Seyid Azim Shirvani, Gasimbey Zakir, Khurshidbanu Natavan, Mahammad Taqi Sidqi enriched the Azerbaijani educational realistic poetry with new valuable works. In this historical stage, a satirical poetry was mainly developed by Gasimbey Zakir. In the poetry of Seyid Azim Shirvani and Gasimbey Zakir, there existed not only a satire, but also didactic and admonitions.

Thus, the ancient Azerbaijani literature, the literature of medieval ages and as well as the XIX century literary thought were very valuable and important stages in development of the national culture and literature. In those historical stages, the Azerbaijani literature greatly influenced the formation and development of the Azerbaijani people.





Though the beginning of the XX century covers little period of time, it is a different stage and is of special importance from the point of view of development of the Azerbaijani literature, including the national poetry. In this phase, the educational traditions in poetry beginning in the XIX century continued in accordance with the new situation and stimulated the development of secular schools and educational ideas. Just at the beginning of XX century Azerbaijani satirical poetry conquered its peak. Mirza Alakbar Sabir became the classic of the Azerbaijani satiric poetry. Thanks to the literary activity of the satiric poets like Ali Nazmi, Aligulu Gamkusar, Mirzali Mojuz, Bayramali Abbaszada and others representing "Mullah Nasraddin" literary school, a special satiric poetry school was formed in Azerbaijan. In this period, the Azerbaijani romantic poetry reached the level of a literary trend. In the poetry of such representatives of romantic literary school as Huseyn Javid, Alibay Huseynzada, Mahammad Hadi, Abbas Sahhat, Abdulla Shaig and others, a happy future and ideas of freedom were glorified by means of dreams and thoughts. Huseyn Javid gained fame as a great poet-philosopher, Alibay Huseynzada as a great thinker, Abbas Sahhat as the creator of perfect examples of landscape poetry. In this phase, the national poetic tradition was continued and such genres as sonnet, hymn, march, parody and others occupied a certain place in the Azerbaijani literature.

During the reign of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan which lasted only about two years (1918-1920), national thoughts and feelings of nation were reflected in the poetry. In the works by Ahmad Javad, Almas Ildirim and others, the motifs of national freedom were glorified resolutely.

In the XX century, in connection with the establishment of the Soviet power in Azerbaijan, the ideas of socialism gained priority in literature, including the poetry. Especially, in the first half of the century, social-political lyrics occupied the front position. However, great representatives of the Azerbaijani poetry were able to glorify love for the country, the people's life, and national senses by certain means. That is why some of them were sent into exile to the most torturing and



coldest region of Siberia and some of them were sentenced to death. But it should be noted that in the 30-80-ies of XX century, parallel to the socialist ideology, Azerbaijanism was also reflected in the Azerbaijani literature. The powerful poetry of the people's poet Samad Vurghun sounds as the poetic epos of Azerbaijan. A range of enthusiastic poems about the Southern Azerbaijan written by the people's poet Suleyman Rustam serves as the affirmation of the integrity of the country. In the poems written by Bakhtiyar Vahabzada in the Soviet period, the ideas of freedom found their reflection. In the poems written by people's poets like Nabi Khazri, Huseyn Arif, Gabil, Nariman Hasanzade, Sohrab Tahir and others, the inspiring poetic expression of admiration stands out.

Beginning from the 60-ies of the XX century, in the Azerbaijani poetry, the line of praising the country and people is substituted by the motive of poetic explanation of the morality of an Azerbaijani. The inner world of a man, his spiritual beauty becomes the main theme of the poems and the Azerbaijani poetry becomes closer and closer to a man and his life. Such poets as Mammad Araz, Khalil Rza, Fikrat Goja, Ali Karim, Musa Yagub, Isa Ismayilzada and other, coming to literature after this phase acted as the inspiring poetic dragomen of Azerbaijani spirit.

The Azerbaijani poetry in this phase can be characterized as the period of poetic introduction of the Azerbaijani man. Beginning from the 80-ies of XX century, the motifs of fight for independence, the ideas of national freedom became stronger and stronger in the poetry. This situation resulted in the formation of the generation of writers and poets who acted from the national position and for whom the sense of liberation was a priority. As a result, side by side with Bakhtiyar Vahabzada, Khalil Rza, Mammad Araz who were popular enough as the poets of national liberation, a new generation of young poets appeared that enriched the topic with new ideas and considered poetic means. Today in the poems of Sabir Rustamkhanli, Zalimkhan Yagub, Chingiz Alioghlu, Rustam Behrudi and some others who represent the





new Azerbaijani poetry serving decently for the strengthening of state independence of Azerbaijan has been generalized on the level of a national ideal.

In XX century, a school of a blank verse also developed in Azerbaijan. It is true that still in the "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" which dates to VII century, there were perfect examples of a blank verse. But, in written literature a blank verse began to be written in XX century. The people's poet Rasul Rza has gained fame as the main creator of the blank verse in the Azerbaijani literature. Ali Karim, Fikrat Goca, Isa Ismayilzada, Vagif Samadoghlu, Alakbar Salahzada and others successfully represent the school of blank verse in the Azerbaijani poetry. In general, there have been great schools of poetry in Azerbaijan for centuries. The poetic schools of Nizami Ganjevi, Fizuli, Huseyn Javid, Mirza Alakbar Sabir, Samad Vurghun, Rasul Rza have become special phases in development of the Azerbaijani literature.

At present, in the Azerbaijani poetry the young poets who came to the literature in the years of independence have formed the generation of new poets. This literary generation acts as the new loud voice of the new time in Azerbaijan.

Thus, in the century-old Azerbaijani literature, poetry has always had a superior place. From century to century, the poetry has improved and developed. This mighty poetry is the poetic biography of the Azerbaijani people. The historical traditions, national features, specific moral values of the Azerbaijani people can be learned from this poetry. At the same time, the rhythm of the new age, the notes of progress has also found its artistic reflection in the Azerbaijani poetry. That is why, the poetry created by the Azerbaijani people is an irreplaceable source for knowing and introducing this people. The Azerbaijani poetry is a successful and decent account before the countries of the world and the whole humanity.

Prof. Dr. Isa Habibbayli



The Supremacy of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud"

Since the ancient times, "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud (the book of father Gorgud)) used to tell of life and death, devotion and betrayal, bravery and cowardice, virtue and evil. Generations and epochs have replaced each other, but the words "Dede-Gorgud used to say, let's see, what he used to say, my khan", were uttered, always retaining their usual wisdom and usual freshness.

A sight, which I can never forget, again appears before my eyes: Near the ruins of Karphagen, in the boundless thirsty desert there is a huge olive tree. It ages three thousand years and this three thousand year-old tree is again bearing fresh fruits today.

Sometimes, when at night I look through the pages of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", I become spell-bound and remember the minutes when I looked at the fresh fruits of that three thousand year-old olive tree and feel the strange fragrance of the mixture of that remote antiquity and the birth of new life.....

Though known in the XVIII century, the orientalist discovered the epos only in 1815. It was the year when the German scholar Henrich Fridrich fon Dits found the Dresden copy of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", and then it is about two centuries that the recognized orientalist of the world, Wilhelm Grim, Theodore Hjoldeke, V.V.Bartold, Fuad Koprulu, Hamid Arasli, Muallim Rifat, Orhan Shaig Gokyay, V.M.Zhirmunsky, A.N.Kononov, Louis Bazen, Mammadhusein Tahmasib, A.Y.Yakubovsky, Maharram Ergin, Fahraddin Giziroglu, Ettore Rossi, Ezel Demirchi-zade, Joachim Hein, Farug Sumer, Ahmet Uysal, Ali Sultanli, Adnan Binazar, Jeoffrey Louis, Suat Hizerchi, Achmet Hans Schmiede and many others studied, commented, analyzed, published, compiled, its glossary and translated in to many languages, including to Russian, German, English, French, Turkish, Italian, Arab, Persian, Serb, Georgian,





Turkmen, Kazakh, Latvian, and others.

All this researches, translations, editions, have formed a particular and fundamental branch in the oriental studies of the world, namely, in Turkology, called the Gorgud studies.

If not to take into account the manuscripts of F.Dits and V. Bartold (the later is very often regarded to be the manuscript of T.Hjoldeke), there are three ancient manuscripts of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" in the world libraries.

The Dresden copy of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", which covers twelve chapters of the epos, is distinguished by the originality of its language and completeness of content. An incomplete manuscript in six chapters is kept in the library of Vatican, another incomplete manuscript, obtained by F.Dits in Istanbul, is in the Library in Berlin.

2.

F.Dits translated the chapter titled "How Basat Killed Tepegoz" (Cyclop, monoclar) into German in 1815 and published it in the same year. This edition opened the road for future publications of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud".

In this first edition, F.Dits made a parallel between Tepegoz and the popular Cyclop in Homer's "Odyssey" and compared them. The most interesting is that F.Dits regarded Tepegoz to be the hero of a more ancient literary source.

According to F.Dits, "Odyssey" was not known in the orient when it made its appearance, but the ancient Greeks were already familiar with the oriental legends and literature before "Odyssey" came into existence. Tepegoz was the herald, the beginning of Cyclop, its new expression in another language, in another environment.

Only this fact tells of the ancientness of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", forms a good imagination of its old history and informs on the conditionality of 1300 which we are celebrating as a Jubilee.

The Dede-Gorgud studies have also paid attention to the similarity between the chapter titled "The story of Deli (daredevil) Domrul, son of Old Dukha" in "Kitabi-Dede



Gorgud" and "Alextra" of Euripides. I think that serious studies are waiting the researchers in connection with this interesting fact, in connection with the similarities between "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" and the ancient Greek and Roman literature.

Oriental studies prove that the number of ancient monuments of the Turkic peoples go back to "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud". For example, "Alpamish" of Uzbeks, "Alpamis" of Kazakhs have originated from the chapter "Bamsi Beyrek, son Gambora". The folklorists are aware that the afore-said legends are developed versions of the plot expressed in this chapter. Or another example: Onomastics is a serious science for studying the history of the nation, even for finding the precise dates of the historical events. The Azerbaijani linguistics has proved that the names of Gorgud, Bayandur, Gazan, Beyrek, Garaja Choban (Dark Shepherd), Domrul, Burla, Banichichek and as well as other (the majority of) characters (there are over 70 characters in the epos!) are in consistent with the names of characters found in the Orkhon-Yenisei monuments (See: Tofiq Hajiyev. The historical debut of our literature. Bulletin of the Azerbaijan State University, 1076, N: 4, in Azerbaijan.)

In general, I must say that Orkhon monuments are significant and competent sources in the Dede Gorgud studies and beginning from the psychology of the "Oghuz" till its history they serve the bases for many researches devoted to "Kitabi-Dede Qorqud" (See: Muharrem Ergin. The book of Dede Qorqud, Ankara 1964, in Turkish).

The plots and literary artistic motives, even sometimes the compositions of our love legends "Esli and Kerem", "Ashig Garib", "Shah Ismail", "Tahir and Zohra", particularly of ancient eposes like "Koroghlu", historically rely on "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud".

The impact of this epos on the creative activity of great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjevi, who lived and wrote 800 years ago, is quite natural from the point of view of history.

The date of 1300 perhaps is the date of formation of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", but the history of various eposes tells of very ancient times.





3.

The philological science of Azerbaijan have begun to study "Kitabi Dede-Gorgud" since the first decades of the XX century. In the twenties-thirties of the said century, literary critics like N.Hikmet, A.Musakhanli, A.Abid published their researches on the epos of Dede Gorgud, but the greatest service in the studies of the epos are undoubtedly connected with the name of Academician Hamid Arasli.

Hamid Arasli published "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" completely and in the contemporary Azerbaijani for the first time in 1939 and later till the end of his life, if it is possible to say, "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" became a handbook in his scientific studies.

M.H.Tahmasib, A.Sultanli, M.Rafli, M.Seidov and many other Azerbaijani scholars were the active participants of the effective researches on "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" and the investigations connected with "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" have played an important role not only in the development of the Gorgud studies, but as well as in that of the literary criticism of Azerbaijan in general.

The sixties-eighties of the XIX century were theoretical development period in the literary criticism of Azerbaijan connected with the studies of this epos, some scholars (for instance, Shamil Jamshidov) have devoted all their lives to the study of this epos only.

The Azerbaijani writers have said interesting ideas about "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" (for instance, Anar) from time to time, or published essays particularly on the said epos.

The linguistics of Azerbaijan gained great progress on the theoretical level in the contemporary oriental and Turkological studies of the world through the investigation of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", here it is necessary to note first the merits of prof. Ezel Demirchi-zade and his monograph "The language of the epos of Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" as a principal step in the study of the history of the Azerbaijan language.

Due to richness of the glossary and presence of the



initial forms of words (in the Dresden copy) "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud is" an irreplaceable source for linguistic studies. The Gorgud studies in Azerbaijan say that 2721 words have been used in "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" and only 559 of them are words of the Arab and Persian origin. It is also an evidence of the ancientness of the epos and of the fact that even during the hegemony of the Arab and Persian languages in the literature of the Orient, the epos preserved the originality of its language.

Till the end of fifties of the XIX century, it is impossible to find a scholar engaged in the study of the linguistic studies of Azerbaijan who has avoided "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", here I can not but remind particularly the version published in 1988 by professors Farhad Zeynalov and Samat Ali-zade who have updated its transcription, language and supplied it with commentaries by taking into account the differences in the existing copies.

It is also interesting and remarkable that "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" as an object of philological studies has played an important role in the development of the linguistic science parallel to literary criticism in Azerbaijan.

4.

Yes, it is doubtless that "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" has played a significant role in the development of the literary criticism and linguistic science in Azerbaijan, but the most important role of this monument in the history of the Azerbaijan people in the context of the XX century and in the fate of the people as a factor is not only in the protection of the national self-esteem of the people, but also in the deepening of national self-cognition, in laying a bridge to its national roots, to its ethnogenesis over the most fearful political-administrative environment, in the formation of the national character.

Strange and gladdening events happened even in the darkest critical periods of the Soviet power, too. The clime of the Oghuz peoples, the spirit and bravery of the Oghuz heroes, the courage displayed by them on horseback with their swords





in the battle-fields, the proudness of the Oghuz mothers, the devotion of the Oghuz brides used to overcome the repressions of Lenin and Stalin aimed at separating the people from its national roots, to awaken the youth (pioneers!, young communist league members!) who at schools were obliged to listen to gramoph vie records and learn by heart the songs which glorified Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, the Red Star of the Kremlin, the Red Square of Moscow, the sabre of Red General Budyonny, the accordio of Chapayev, made them turn their glances from the Red Star, the Red Square and look towards their own national roots, made them overcome the slumber and think. "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" cultivated in them new humane emotions and feelings instead of false political-spiritual slogans, which never gave them rest, and in this sense, as it was once declared officially, "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" was the real enemy of the administrative Leninist-Stalinist ideology which formed the foundation of a huge empire.

As if Gazan Khan, his son Uruz bey, Bamsi Beyrek, son of Baybora, Deli Domrtil, son of Old Dukha, Gantural, son of Old Ganli, Shepherd Garaja... all the warriors of the Oghuz described in the epos have risen after many centuries for fight against a strange, powerful and at the same time evil force and waging a life and death struggle.

Tepegoz (Cyclop) ate two men, 500 sheep a day, but young and brave Basat defeated and killed him. As if the ruling ideology, Stalinism, KGB-ism (Committee of the State Security) were also a Tepegoz created by the history and evil, this time it was won spirituality not by brave Basat, but by "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" itself.

The ruling ideology glorified the bravery of Pavlik Morozov, a schoolboy, who had betrayed his father and grandfather for the sake of the construction of the collective farm, but along with the story about the bravery of Pavlik Morozov, the Azerbaijani youngsters used to read about the heroical deeds of their forefathers in the Book of Dede Gorgud: "At this moment the distinguished and bravest of the Oghuz beys reached the battle field, my khan, let us see who



were they: First galloped up Gara Gune, born in the Black Gorge and grown in the cradle covered by the hide of the black bull, who when angered turned black rock into ashes with a blow of his fist, who knotted his moustaches seven times at the back of his neck, the braves! of braves, the brother of Gazan bey. "Wield your sword, brother Qazan, here am I! - he said.

Then let us see who followed:

Then galloped up Deli Dondar, son of Ghiyan Saljik, who once destroyed the iron gate of the Iron Gated Derbend with a surprise onslaught, who stabbed the bravest of men with his sixty-span lance and made them roar with pain: "Wield you sword, Gazan, my Lord, I am here!" - he said...

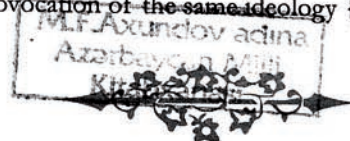
Then galloped up Shamseddin, nicknamed Lion for his bravery, son of Old Gaff, who had defeated the enemies of Bayandir Khan, who had made sixty thousand kaffirs vomit blood, on the mane of whose white-grey horse there was now. "Wield your sword, Gazan, my master, here I am!" - he said...

One can not count all the beys of Oghuz. Everybody reached the battle field. They washed in pure water, touched their honest foreheads upon the earth and twice prayed the God, reminded with blessings the beautiful name of Muhammed. On horseback they attacked the geours, wielded their swords, the drums thundered, the brazen gold-curlcived horns were blown.

The manly warriors showed their mettle on that day. The unmanly spied out roads by which to slink away on that day. There was an incomparable battle on that day; heads were cut off like balls. Falcon-swift horses galloped until they lost their shoes. Long-span lances were stuck and remained immovable. Big, sharp steel swords were wielded until lost their edges. That day it was like a doomsday".

5.

Since 1917, the ruling ideology made efforts to formulate the "Soviet public opinion", which in its turn began to seek for "utopian socialistic ideas" in "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" with the provocation of the same ideology {See: The ideas of



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the Utopian socialism in Dede Gogqud and Nizami, "Veten Ugrunda", 1942, 5, in Azerbaijani), but even the application of the artificial (and miserable) "ideas of utopian socialism" could not help this human monument and there happened an unseen event in the middle of the XX century: "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" was "arrested" in the Union of Soviets, naturally in the Soviet Azerbaijan in the first place!

The XX century and human history in general have witnessed many arrests, terrible executions. Books have been burned in flames together with men, many ancient and rich libraries have been ruined, but the "arrest" of a huge literary monument, of an epos, subjection of its students to persecutions and punishment, are, to my mind, events which lack analogues in the history. "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" was "exposed" as a dangerous, harmful monument (!) and understood as the embodiment of pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic ideas, contradicting the socialist world outlook and morals, because the narrator of the epos, the sagacious Dede Gorgud did not proceed from the class relations when he played his gopuz (a stringed musical instrument) and sang of the heroic deed of the Oghuz, because he reflected the historical-psychological-ethnographic ego of the Turkic world and naturally of the, Azerbaijan people.

There emerged a phantasmagoric, even surrealistic scene: the blunt ideology did not take into regard even the fact that the "pan-Turkic" and "pan-Islamic" ideas have emerged and formed only in the XX century...Really, pan-Islamism is unbounded, it does not recognize any boundary.

In 1951, the leader of the Soviet Azerbaijan Mir Jafar Bagirov put such a 'terrible ideological-administrative braid on "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud": "A hostile book", and what could the Azerbaijan science do up to that time? It was repeatedly, stage by stage shot, exiled to Siberia, persecuted in the twenties, thirties, forties of the XX century.

Naturally, the progress of history, the fate of monuments like "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" do not depend only on men like Bagirov (even Stalin!), and it seems the biography of



"Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", its existence had to undergo the trial of the history...

In 1953, Stalin died, the Stalinist clime of the Soviet Empire softened a little as a result of incomplete reforms of Khrushchev and the Azerbaijan science made an immediate use of the moment.

In the March of 1957, the newspaper "Kommunist", the organ of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, published the articles of Hamid Arasli, Ezel Demirchi-zade, Mammad Arif and Mummadhusein Tahmasib devoted to the epos of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", a little later, the Institute of Literature and Language named after Nizami held a special scientific session which heard the reports of H-Arasli "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" is an Azerbaijan epos", E.Demirchi-zade "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" as a monument of the Azerbaijan language", M.H.Tahmasib "The stories of Dede Gorgud are the ancient examples of the Azerbaijan eposes". In the context of history and political-social events these reports were of great importance in principle, as a result "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" was justified!

6.

"Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" covers the whole geography of Azerbaijan beginning from Derbend to the Lake of Goycha, from Barda, Ganja, Nakhchivan to the River Alinja and the Castle of Alinja.

Adam Oleari, who visited Azerbaijan in the early years of the XVII century, wrote: "Here (in the suburbs of Derbend) we came across two more graves of holy Muslims; one of them - the tomb Mukhtar - was on the flat lands, the other - the tomb of Imam Gorgud - was in the mountain. It was said that Gorgud had been a friend of Muhammad, the prophet, all the time had stood by his feet, learned from him and lived another 300 years after the death of the prophet" (See: Adam Oleari. Travellers about Azerbaijan, volume I, Baku, 1961, p.296, in Russian).

A.Oleari wrote that the grave was in the cave carved in the rock, he described in detail how men, particularly young





ladies and girls visited the tomb and displayed great reverence and faith in it.

There are information, legends and stories telling that not only the grave of Dede Gorgud, but also those of the heroes of the epos, for instance, of Gazan Khan, Burla Khatun, or Shepherd Garachug are also in the territory of Azerbaijan.

Ovliya Chelebi in his "Book of Travels" even shows the exact address of the grave of Dede Gorgud. It is in Derbend. The grave have become a place visited by pilgrims.

V.V. Bartold, a student of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", beginning from higher school till the last days of his life, published "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" in Russian for the first time on the basis of its Dresden copy. His studies of long years made him come to such a conclusion that the epos could be only the product of the Caucasian environment.

In 1988, an International Colloquium of the Gorgud students was held in Baku. The distinguished Turkish orientalist Osman Fikri Sertkaya called Azerbaijan figuratively "the eternal capital of the geography of Gorgud" (newspaper "Kommunist", August 1988, in Azerbaijani).

Yes, "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" is the greatest Azerbaijan epos, at same time it is the greatest epos of the Turkic world.

Yes, as the Dresden copy of "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" proves, it was penned in Azerbaijani, narrated in the Azerbaijani Turkish, but at the same time it is the greatest historical monument of all the Turkic languages.

"Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" is the most ancient history of the Azerbaijan people which was fed by the folklore and found its expression in the folklore. But, at the same time it is not only the history of the Azerbaijani Oghuz, but the history of all the Oghuz peoples and tribes, and in fact, it is the oral folk history of the Turkic nations in general.

If we penetrate into the depth of the philosophy of the epos, into its world of ideas, richness of events and complicated nature, such a truth is revealed: "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" belongs to the mankind, it is the monument of the mankind.



7.

At present we are living the last years of the XX century, and in these years Dilsuz, Azerbaijani poet, has written "The Cradle Song" proceeding from the feelings of the Oghuz peoples expressed in "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud":

My brave son,
My only son,
Sleep, my brave son,
Sleep, my only son!

Let my Father Gorgud
Give you a name,
Let Brave Koroglu
Give you his Ghirat...
Sleep, my little one,
Sleep, my dear one.

I wish you grew like wheat at night
I wish you grew and your horse grew,
I wish you grew and your sword grew,
I wish you grew- and grew your bravery,
I wish you grew and grew your lands,
I wish your lands grew and your fame grew,
I wish your fame grew and grew your supremacy
With the growth of your supremacy you become the song of bards;
Your songs sang and played in gopuz
Your love fly from land to land...
The white faced Oghuz ladies
Pluck roses in the gardens,
Let the Oghuz people be your supporters,
Let your enemies have the worst fate,
Let you banner wave in the East and the West...'





My brown lamb
Will lick the salt;
Sleep, my lamb,
Sleep, my salt...

And I ask myself: how has this beautiful poem emerged? Of course, it has emerged because the poet has been inspired and encouraged by "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" as a native source of inspiration; it has emerged because the feelings expressed here are very close and dear to the poet, they derive from the gene of the nation aging for many centuries, it is irreplaceable by anything; it has emerged, because these feeling are the self-expression of the spirit of the people, of the ancestors which are dear to the poet.

But along with all this, the poem has emerged because "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud", though arrested in the middle of the present century (even in the period of detention!), conveyed the cradle song to the heart of the Azerbaijani youngsters, including Dilsuz, did its work secretly, subtly, otherwise how could a coin it so naturally if his childhood fell to the period of the bitter stalinism, his youth was framed by the frontiers of a country which waged a cold war...

And we could no have felt this poem so deeply today. The word "citizen" is usually referred to man. There is the notion of "citizenship" in literature, too. "Citizen" is the writer, poet, playwright. But here such a concept fully conveys such a truth: "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud" is also a "citizen"!

8.

Opinions differ in the Gorgud studies concerning the personality of Dede Gorgud, his being a real historical figure. Did Dede Gorgud exist, or not? Did he live among the ancient Oghuz peoples as it is said in books dedicated to the Oghuz? Which of the graves referred to him in the present Turkic lands belong to him, etc.

I suppose that all this is not so important, because Dede



Gorgud, has been, the literary character, who sang and played his gopuz for many centuries, is the real Dede Gorgud in fact.

Despite these questions there is a real Dede Gorgud who has been singing his songs since the ancient times. The existence of Dede Gorgud can not be framed by the history, its existence can not be measured by time:

Where are the brave beys of which I sang,
Where are the beys who said that the world was theirs?
Death came, earth hid the man.
For whom did the fleeting world remain?
You, the ever changing, filling and emptying world.
You, the world, inseparable with death!
How long how much you live.

The end is death, the end is departure... says Dede Gorgud, but he is immortal himself. "You, the filling and emptying world, you, who are ever accompanied by death". These words reveal that one can not escape, death, it has no remedy, it foretells of the beginning and the end of life to us, to ordinary men, who are subjected to death, But Dede Gorgud is not an ordinary man, he is the representative of something supreme, higher among us, he is always ancient, always young and fresh...

...As that ancient olive tree and as the fruits of that olive tree which grows every year...

ELCHIN
People's writer of Azerbaijan





Selection from "Kitabi-Dede Gorgud"

Shortly before the time of the Prophet, there appeared in the Bayat tribe a man by the name of Gorgud Ata. He was the wise man of the Oghuz people. He used to prophesy and bring reports from the unknown world beyond, having been divinely inspired. Gorgud Ata was an adviser of the Oghuz people in all vital matters, and nothing was done before he was consulted. Whatever advice he gave was accepted and acted upon. Among his wise sayings were those which follow:

Nothing goes well without mentioning the name of Allah.

No one can prosper without the will of Almighty Allah.

Nothing happens if it was not already written down in the beginning.

No one dies before his appointed hour.

* * *

Snow will melt before summer, no matter how thick it is.

Luch grass shall wither before fall.

Old cotton is of no use for making good cloth.

An old enemy cannot be a friend.

Distances cannot be covered without spurring the horse.

The opponent will not retire in defeat unless the steel sword is drawn.

Fame cannot be gained without generosity.

A girl cannot become a lady unless she has good breeding from her mother.

A son cannot be generous unless he sees generosity in his own father.

A treacherous young man cannot mount a well-bred horse when it is running; it is better that he does not try.

It is better that the mean and the base do not use the sharp sword.



For the brave, a stick is as good as a sword and an arrow.

Dark homes unfrequented by visitors might better fall down. Grass that is no good for the horse might better never grow. Bitter waters that are no good for man might better not spring an unworthy son that does not perpetuate his father's name had better not drop into his mother's womb; if it dropped there, he might better not be born. The son should be a worthy one, carrying on the fame of the father. Those who lie should be thrust out of his world, but may men of truth live forever.

"Oh, Dirse Khan, be not cruel to me.

Be not angry and speak so harshly to me.

But come now and have your red tent set up.

Have some stallions, some rams, and some male camels slaughtered.

Invite then the princes of Inner and Outer Oghuz.

Feed all the hungry, give clothes to the naked, and pay off the debts of the poor.

Heap up meat like a hill.

Make a lakeful of koumiss; and give a magnificent feast.

Then speak your wish. Maybe Allah will give us a healthy son,

An answer to prayers of a worthy man."

* * *

Following his lady's advice, Dirse Khan gave a large feast and then made his wish. He had stallions, young male camels, and rams slaughtered. He invited all the princes of the Inner and the Outer Oghuz to this feast. He fed the hungry, dressed the naked, and paid off the debts of the debtor; he had meat heaped up like a hill, and a lakeful of koumiss made. The princes raised their hands to the heavens and prayed. Consequently, the wish of Dirse Khan was fulfilled, and his lady became pregnant. In due time she bore a male child.

Dirse Khan gave the young man a principality and a throne. Dede Gorgud sang songs on the occasion and composed this legend of the Oghuz. Following this, he sang:

* * *

"Even they passed away from this world.





They stayed for a while and then moved along,
 Just as the caravan does.
 Even they were removed by death
 While this mortal world remained behind,
 The world where men come and go,
 The world which is rounded off by death."

Then he said: "When black Death comes, may Allah keep you safe. May He let you rule in good health. May Almighty Allah whom I praise be your friend and keeper."

This I pray, my khan. May your tail, stately mountains never fall. May your big shade tree never be cut down, and may your clear running waters never run dry. May your wings never be broken. May your gray horse never slip while running. May your big steel sword never be notched and may your spear never be broken in battle. May your white-haired mother's and white bearded father's place be paradise. May Allah keep your household fire burning. May our merciful Allah never abandon you to the guile of the treacherous.

One day the son of Ulash, the young of the feathering bird, the hope of the poor, the lion of Emet Stream, the tiger of the Karachuk Mountains, the owner of the chestnut-brown horse, the father of Khan Uruz, the son-in-law of Bayindir Khan, the pride of the crowded strong Oghuz people, the support of young warriors in distress, Salur Gazan roused himself. He had ninety large tents with golden tops erected on the black earth. He also had red silk carpets laid in ninety places. Big earthenware pots were set in eighty rooms where rows of golden cups and jugs were placed. Nine beautiful infidel girls with black eyes, lovely faces, and braided hair, their hands hennaed up to their wrists, their nails all painted, all wearing dresses with red buttons on the breast, were offering drinks to the strong Oghuz beys.

After a while the strong wine went to Salur Gazan's head.

Kneeling down he said: "Comrades, hear me; listen to my words. Our sides are sore from lying still for so long a time; our backbones are dry from idleness. Comrades, let us bestir



ourselves and go hunting. Let us shoot birds and chase down big deer. Then let us return to resume our revelry, eating and drinking".

* * *

The tall and slim-waisted Burla Khatun fainted and fell, tearing her cheek, red as an autumn apple, and then her long black hair. She cried hysterically, calling, "Son, Son!" Uruz spoke as follows:

"Dear Mother, what wailing is this?
 Why do you cry and lament?
 Why are you burning my breast.
 Making me think of the days that are past?
 Will there not be a colt
 Where Arabian horses dwell?
 Where the red camels live
 Will there not be a camel calf?
 Will there not be a lamb
 Where the white sheep are?
 As long as you and my father live,
 Could you not have another son like me?"

Meanwhile, strong Oghuz beys arrived. My khan, let us see who they were. There was Gara Gone, who was born at the mouth of the Gara River, whose cradle was made of the hide of a black bull, who in a fit of anger could crumble stone into ash, who could wind his mustache seven times around his neck, a hero of heroes, the brother of Gazan Bey. He said, "Here I am, brother Gazan, Strike with your sword".

Let us see who came after him. It was Deli Tundar, the son of Kiyas Seljuk, who had stormed and captured the iron door at the Pass of Demir Gapu, who made men scream at the point of the spear of sixty fist-lengths. He said: "Here I am, my lord, brother Gazan. Strike with your sword".

Many other Oghuz beys came, so many that I cannot finish counting them. They took ablution with clean water, put their honest foreheads to the earth, performed two rekats of the prayer service, and glorified the name of Muhammed. Then they boldly rode upon the enemy and began striking him with





their swords. Rumbling drums were beaten, and bronze trumpets with golden spirals were blown. That day the brave showed themselves, while the cowards sought hiding places. It was a dooms-day-like battle, and the field was strewn with many heads cut off, like so many balls. Fine horses ran, their shoes striking the earth. Glittering spears were thrust, and black steel swords were struck, their blades torn. Three-feathered beechen arrows were shot, their heads raining down. It was like the breaking of doomsday.

The merchants arrived, bowing and saluting. They saw the very young man who had gut off herds of the infidels now sitting on the right side of Bay Bure. They proceeded to him and kissed the young man's hand. This offended Bay Bure, and he shouted at the merchants: "You cuckolds and sons of cuckolds! Do you kiss the son's hand fist, while the father is beside him?"

"My khan, is this young man you son?" asked the merchants.

"Indeed he is," replied the khan.

"My Khan, do not be offended that we kissed his hand first, for if it had not been for him, our goods would have gone to Georgia and all us would have been captives," explained the merchants.

Bay Bure asked, "Did my son kill somebody? Did he spill somebody's blood?"

"He certainly did. He cut off heads; he spilled blood; and he knocked men from their horses," replied the merchants.

"Is this enough, o earn him a name?" asked the prince.

"More than enough, my sultan!" replied the merchants.

Bay Bure Bey invited the strong Oghuz princes as his guests.

Dede Gorgurd came and gave the boy a name. He said:

"Hear my words and listen to me. Bay Bure Bey.

Almighty Allah gave you a son, and may He preserve him.

May he ever be followed by Moslems as he berates white banner.

When he has to cross those snow-covered mountains



lying yonder,

May Allah help him cross them.

When he has to ride through bloody rives,

May Allah grant him safe passage.

When he has fallen among the crowds of infidels,

May Allah give him yet a chance.

You will pamper him and call him still 'My Bamsi',

But let his full name now be Bamsi Beyrek with the Gray House.

I have given him his name. May Allah give to him long life." The strong Oghuz princes lifted their hands in prayer and asked that this name bring him good luck.

During the time of the Oghuz, when a young man was to be married, he would shoot an arrow into the air, and, wherever the arrow fell, there he would have his nuptial tent erected. Beyrek Khan too shot his arrow and had his nuptial tent set up where it landed. A long red gown was sent to him as a gift from betrothed. Beyrek put this on, but his companions did not seem to be plea by this. Beyrek asked them, "Why are you displeased?"

"Why should we not be? You are wearing a red gown while we are wearing white gowns", they replied.

"What a small thing to be offended by! I am wearing it today. Tomorrow let my deputy wear it, and then each of you wear it by turns for forty days. After that, let it be given to a poor dervish", said Beyrek.

Then he and his forty warriors were sitting together and drinking.

Beyrek, the son of Bay Bure, married the Melik's daughter and returned to his happy home, where he began his wedding ceremony. Some of the forty warriors were given girls by Khan Gazan, and some by Bayindir Khan. They had forty tents erected. Thirty-nine girls shot arrows to determine their fortune, and thirty-nine warriors followed these arrows. Their large weddings and banquets lasted for forty days and forty nights. During all this time, Beyrek and his companions dallied with their girls.





My khan, among the Oghuz people there was a man by the name of Deli Dumrul, the son of Dukha Koja. He had a bridge built across a dry river bed. He collected thirty-three akchas from anyone who passed over it, and those who refused to pass over it he beat and charged forty akchas anyway. He did this to challenge anyone who thought, he was braver than Deli Dumrul to fight, with the purpose of making his own bravery, heroism, and gallantry known even in places as far distant as Anatolia and Syria.

One day it happened that a troop of nomads camped along his bridge. A fine, handsome youth in the nomad troop fell sick and died at the command of Allah. Some cried, saying, "Son", some cried, saying, "Brother", and there was great mourning for him.

Deli Dumrul, chancing to come along, asked: "Why are you crying, cuckolds? What is this noise by my bridge? Why are you mourning?"

They said: "My khan, we lost a fine young man. That is why we are cry-ing".

Deli Dumrul asked, "Who killed your bey?"

They said: "Oh, bey, it was by the order of Almighty Allah. The red-winged Azrail took his life".

"What sort of fellow is this Azrail who takes people's lives? For the sake of your unity and existence, Oh Almighty Allah, let me see Azrail. Let me fight and scuffle with him to save the life of such a fine youth, so that he never takes a life again", said Deli Dumrul.

While Deli Dumrul was sitting and drinking with his forty companions, Azrail suddenly arrived. Neither the chamberlains nor the wardens had seen Azrail pass. Deli Dumrul's eyes were blinded, his hands paralyzed. The entire world was darkened to his eyes. He began to speak. Let us see what he said, my khan.

"What a mighty, big old man you are!
The wardens did not see you come;
The chamberlains did not hear.
My eyes, which could see, now cannot;



My hands, which could grip, now cannot.

My soul trembled and was terrified;

My golden cup fell from my hand.

My mouth is cold as ice;

My bones are turned to dust.

Ho! White-bearded old man,

Cold-eyed old man!

What mighty old man are you?

Go away, or I may hurt you".

Azrail was angry at these remarks. He said:

"Oh, madman,

Do you dislike the cold expression in my eyes?"

I have taken the lives of many lovely eyed girls and brides.

Why is it you dislike my white beard?

I have taken the lives of both white-bearded and black-bearded men.

That is why my own beard is white".

He then continued in this way: "Oh madman you were boasting and saying that you would kill the red-winged Azrail if you caught him, to save the life of the fine young lad. Oh, fool, now I have come to take your life. Wilt you give it, or will you fight with me?"

Deli Dumrul asked, "Are you the red-winged Azrail?"

"Yes, I am", replied Azrail.

"Are you the one who takes the lives of these fine boys?" asked Dumrul.

"That is so", said Azrail.

Deli Dumrul said, "Ho, wardens, shut the doors". He then turned to Azrail and said: "O Azrail, I was expecting to catch you in a wide open place, but I caught you, in a narrow one, did I not? Let me kill you and save the life of that fine young man". He drew his big black sword, held it in his hand, and tried to strike; Azrail with it, but Azrail became a pigeon and flew out of the window.

On the way home, however, Azrail appeared to the eyes of his horse. The horse was frightened and threw Deli Dumrul





off its back to the ground. His poor head grew dizzy, and he became powerless. Azrial came and pressed down upon his white chest. He had been murmuring a short while ago, but now he gasped out through the rattle in his throat:

"O Azrail, have mercy!

There is no doubt about the unity of Allah.

I was uninformed about you.

I did not know you secretly took lives.

We have mountains with large peaks;

We have vineyards on those mountains;

In those vineyards there are vines with bunches of black grapes;

And, when pressed, those grapes make wine, red wine.

A man who drinks that wine grows drunk.

Thus I was drunk, and so I did not hear.

I did not know what I had said.

I have not tired of the role of bey.

I wish to live out more years of my youth.

O Azrail, please spare this life of mine".

Azrail said: "You mad rascal, why do you beg mercy from me? Beg mercy from Almighty Allah. What is in my hands? I am but a servant".

Deli Dumrul said, "Is it, then. Almighty Allah who gives and takes our lives?"

"Of course", said Azrail.

Deli Dumrul then turned to Azrail and said: "You are a cursed fellow. Do not interfere with my business. Let me talk with Almighty Allah myself. Deli Dumrul spoke to Allah. Let us listen, my khan, to what he said:

"You are higher than the highest.

No one knows how high you are,

Allah the Magnificent.

Fools search for you up in the sky and on earth;

You are found in the hearts of the faithful,

Eternal and Almighty Allah.

Immortal, merciful Allah,

If you wish to take my life away,



Then take it by yourself.'

Let not Azrail do it".

Almighty Allah was pleased with the way Deli Dumrul addressed him this time. He shouted to Azrail that, because the mad rascal believed in His oneness, he was giving him his blessing and that his life might be spared if he could find another willing to serve as a substitute for him.

During the time of the Oghuz, there was a very fine man by the name of Ganli Koja. He had a handsome, grown son who was called Gan Turali. One day, Ganli Koja said: "Friends, when my father died, I survived him and inherited his place and his home. Tomorrow I shall die and leave my son behind. Son, come let me have you married while my eyes still see".

"Father, you want to have me married, but can you find a girl who would be my match? Father, I want a girl who must get up before I do. She must be able to mount her horse before I mount my black stallion. She must be able to reach the bloody land of the infidels before I do, and she must bring me an enemy head", said the son. ?

Ganli Koja said: "Son, you do not want a girl. You want a brave warrior, so that you can eat and drink and have a good time at her expense".

"That is true, Father. Now, go and find a pretty Turkoman girl, and I shall fall upon her all of a sudden and destroy her virginity", said the son.

Ganli Koja said, "Son, it is up to you find your own girl, and it is my responsibility to provide you with property and a lively-hood".

Then he continued:

"Son, your destination .

May have crooked ways;

Muddy places, where a horseman may be mired;

Forests tangled so that red snakes cannot pass;

Castles almost to the sky,

where beauties wink to capture hearts;





'Hey! Axe-men who behead before a man can shout out,

Foot troops bearing shields upon their shoulders.
Your; destination is a frightful place. Turn back!
Bring not grief upon you aged parents' heads".

Gan Turali said angrily, "What is it that you say and mean, dear Father?

A warrior is undaunted by such trivial things,
And it is vain to try to frighten heroes.
With Allah willing, I shall pass
The crooked roads by night,
Fill in with sand the slough where horses sink,
Burn down the tangled forest.
Which the red snakes cannot thread.
With Allah willing, I shall raze
The castle reaching toward the skies
And kiss the winking, luring beauties on their necks.
With Allah willing, I shall cut the heads from foot

troops.

Whether I reach the goal or not,
Return or not,
Be crushed beneath the black male camel's breast,
Be caught up by the black bull's horns,
Be shredded by the royal lion's claws
Whether I reach the goal or not,
Return or not

Until we meet again, Bey Father, Lady Mother,
Farewell!"

They saw that he was eager to go at once to save his honor. They said, "Good luck to you, O Son, and may you reach the goal and then return safe and well".

"Avoid such carelessness, and lift your poor head up, young man.

Open up your handsome large brown eyes, young man,
Before your two white hands are tied;
Before your forehead pale is kicked against black earth;



Before your red blood spills out on the ground.
The enemy advances; the enemy is here.
Why lie so still? Arise, young man!
The ground sinks down before ;he big rocks move.
The country empties out before old beys have died.
The enemy has poured down the hills;
The enemy comes pressing down on you.

What ails you? Have you found yourself a home, a place to sleep?"

Gan Turali sprang up and said, "What are you saying, my beautiful?"

She replied: "The enemy is here. It is my duty to warn, but it is yours to fight and show your prowess". Gan Turali opened his eyes and lifted his eyelids. He saw that armor-clad enemy horsemen were coming with their spears in their hands. He kissed the ground, saying, "We believe and affirm that our wish has been accepted by Almighty Allah". After taking ablution with clean water, he pressed his white forehead to the ground and prayed two rekats. He then mounted his horse, repeated his belief in the prophecy of Muhammad - may his name be praised - and rode toward the black-dressed infidels. Prancing her horse, Seljen Khatun overtook Gan Turali, who asked her, "Where are you going, my beautiful?" She replied, "Young prince, if your head stays upon your neck, you can always find a cap to cover it. These infidels who are coming are very numerous. Let us fight together. Whoever is killed, is killed; whoever survives, let him return to the tent".

One day when Yigenek was setting talking with the beys, he was involved in an argument with Budag, the son of Gara Gune, and some harsh words were exchanged between the two. Budag said: "Why do you talk so much? If you think you are someone important, go and rescue father from prison where he has been held for sixteen years".

When Yigenek heard this, his heart jumped and his chest heaved. He got up and went to the presence of Bayindir Khan. Putting his face to the ground, he said,





"You, whose majestic white tent stands alone in the"
dawn,

With its canopy made of blue Atlas;
You, who own stables of powerful horses;
You, at whose call many chamberlains jump;
The Story of Yigenek
Man of abundance, from whom butter falls when he

moves;

Support of young warriors in time of distress;
The hope of the poor;
The main pole of all Turkestan;
The young of the full-feathered bird;
The lion of Emet Stream;
The tiger of Karachuk;
O, Royal Highness, give help!

Give me troops and send me to the caste where my
father is imprisoned".

Bayindir Khan commanded, "Let the twenty-four
banner-beys assemble here!" He then said to Yigenek: "Deli
Tundar, the son of Kiyan Seljuk, who fought at Iron Gate Pass,
making his enemy cry at the point of his spear, who never asks
his enemy 'Who are you' when he reaches him. Deli Evren, the
son of Eylik Goya, who made his horse swim across the River
of Aygir Gozlu and took the locks from fifty-seven castles, let
him also go with you- Ilalmish, the son of Yaghrinchi, whose
beechen arrows always pass through the double bastions-let
him go with you. Let Rostem, the son of Toghsun, who cries
bitterly if he does not see the enemy three times, also go with
you. Let even Deli Evren, who rescues men from the mouths of
monsters, go with you. Let Soghan Sam, who says, 'I can reach
from one end of the earth to the other, also go". From among
the countless Oghuz heroes, Bayindir Khan, ordered twenty-
four brave banner-beys to accompany Yigenek.

Bayindir Khan, the son of Kam Gan, arose from his
place and had his large white tent erected on the surface of the
black earth. His brown canopy colored the sky, and his silk



carpets were spread out in a thousand places. The beys of the
Inner and Outer Oghuz were all invited to his presence.

The tribute of the nine divisions of Georgia was
brought forward. It consisted only of a horse, a sword, and a
club, and Bayindir Khan was very much disappointed with it.
Dede Gorgud came, played the gopuz, and then asked, "My
khan, why are you upset?"

Bayindir Khan replied: "Why should I not be upset?
Every year in the past they sent gold and silver money, which we
distributed among the beys and young men to make them
happy. Now, to whom can I give these things? Whom would I
make happy with them?"

Dede Gorgud suggested, "My Khan, let us give these
three things to a young man, and let him serve as the watchman
of the Oghuz".

Bayindir Khan asked, "To whom shall we give them?"
He looked to his left and his right, but no one would accept
them. There was a man there by the name of Begil. Bayindir
Khan looked at him and said, "What do you say?"

Begil accepted the gifts by standing up and then kissing
the earth. Dede Gorgud politely girded him with the sword,
placed the club on his shoulder, and attached his bow to his
wrist.

"Let me die for your mouth, my brother.
Let me die for your tongue, my brother.
May I ask what your station is?
May I ask what your watchword is
When you lose yourself in darkness?
Who is the khan who possesses your standard?
Who is your hero who rides in the front on the day of
battle?"

Who is your father, young man?
It is shameful to ask for the name of a hero;
But nevertheless, what is your name, young man?
He then continued as follows:
"Are you the herdsman who grazes my camels?
Are you the groom who takes my black stallions to
graze?"





Are you the shepherd who grazes my flocks?
 Are you the vice-regent who whispers advice to my ear?
 Are you the small brother I left in the cradle?
 Tell me this, Oh young man.

Let my luckless head be a sacrifice for you"
 Seghrek then replied to his elder brother as follows:
 "When I lose my way in darkness, my trust is in Allah.

Our ruler is Bayindir Khan.
 If you want to know the name of my father,
 His name is Ushun Kojja.
 If you want to be told my name,
 It is Seghrek.

Supposedly I have a brother
 By the name of Eghrek."

He then added:

"I am the herdsman who grazes your camels.
 I am the groom who grazes your horses.
 I am the brother you left in the cradle,"

His elder brother, Eghrek, replied to him as follows. Let
 us see what he said.

"I could die for your mouth, my brother.
 I could die for your tongue, my brother.
 Have you grown into manhood already, my brother?
 Did you ride so far fast to search for your brother, my
 brother?"

The two brothers embraced and cuffed one another.
 Eghrek kissed his younger brother on the neck. Seghrek kissed
 his elder brother's hand. Dede Gorgud came to play the gopuz
 and tell heroic tales:

"Where now are bey heroes we used to praise,
 The heroes who claimed that the world was theirs?
 Ail have been carried away by death, concealed by earth.
 Who then inherits the mortal world-
 The world with its coming and going,
 The world were death awaits at the end?"



Gatran Tabrizi

Gatran Tabrizi was a poet of whom his contemporaries
 wrote: "All poets are drops in the ocean, and Gatran is the
 ocean". He lived at the end of the 10th and beginning of the 11th
 centuries. Details of his life are not known. All information we
 have is that he was born in Shadiabad near Tabriz, that as a
 young man he went to Ganja, where he earned fame at the
 palace of the Shaddadies, then returned home and died there.

Tabrizi wrote in Persian, although his contemporaries
 insist that there were also works in Azerbaijani Turkish. We have
 inherited his Persian language legacy, the most noteworthy of
 which are his historical poems about the wars fought in the 11th
 century, his poetry describing the earthquake in Tabriz and his
 love and philosophical ghazals.

The Earthquake at Tabriz and an Ode to the Emir Abunasr Mamlan and his Son (fragment)

Gaze on the might of Yezdan. Gaze on the mighty work of his hand.
 Such deeds seem as little or naught to the hand of Yezdan.
 No man can comprehend in its fullness the power of God.
 He makes gardens into barren hills and plains - such is his power.
 He converts barren hills and plains into rich garden in flower.
 If contemplation makes you aware of humility - that is but fitting...
 If you are cast into confusion by his might and his mystery - that, too,
 is fitting.
 You who would reach to the innermost sense of these things,
 Make your way to Tabriz, learn how God's mighty had cast it down,
 Make your way to Tabriz, learn the tale of that most tragic town.
 The city through the centuries raised its head to the sky,
 Through the centuries men raised its walls up on high,
 The town where men stretched out their hands for a star,





The town that raised towers to Saturn on far,
Lost its pride and was crushed in the space of one hour,
Death took a great toll in the span of one hour.
Many women of beauty, like Kashmir's most fair,
Died in gardens of paradise - still they lie there.
The departed, entombed, shall rest evermore
In once lovely homes in the earth's ghastly maw.
Men whose homes were once filled with rich goods of all kinds,
Men whose stores were once filled with good things of all kinds,
Have been felled by misfortune and roll in the dust.
They perforce sold their sons for the sake of a crust.
People starve though the city is bursting with bread.
People thirst though the waters have everywhere spread.
In penury people put value on wealth,
But, death being near, on life and on health.
Those who perished were saved from misfortune and badness,
While the living are plunged in a sea of deep sadness.
All men knew misfortune. For children they keen.
The death of their brothers and sisters they've seen.
In mourning they bloody their cheeks with their nails.
They gnaw at their fingers to stifle their wails.
In the night-time disaster enveloped the town -
You have heard how the towers and walls were cast down.
Helpless children were left by their more helpless mother.
Inconsolable lovers forgot one another.
Till that day no man had to comfort his brother.
Today in disaster men lack clothes and bread,
And every one feels he were better off dead.
Since God in his wisdom created the world,
And the planets that whirl beyond our own world,
Such tremors on earth there never had been,
A calamity such as mankind had not seen.
This misfortune is fruit of our own wicked acts,



For we did not repent for our unworthy acts.
To bring comfort to those who were not taken by death
The Emir, and his son were saved from sure death.
The elders rejoice when they set eyes upon them.
The young men rejoice, for they now gaze upon them.
While Iran's Emir and his dear son still live
No cause for a Moslem to weep shall they give.
The Emir is a sun that shall never burn low,
Like unto a moon forever aglow.
Thanks to him far more lovely this town shall arise
Than the towns of Iraq, to delight people's eyes.
Let there be no more grieving, Tabriz of well-wishers!
Let there be no exulting among our ill-wishers!
Those who love you, Mamlan, have not one heart but hundreds,
Those in love have not one soul but every one hundreds.
Far dearer are you than vast riches of grain
For the country's well-being is the child of your brain.
All the world's Padishahs are the friends of this crown,
Abunasr the victor casts enemies down.
Under victory's banners he routs every foe.
May his honey be venom for those who wish ill,
And may poppies be vipers and evil men kill.
Since for him gold means gifts and not riches to hoard,
And since silver's so common at his festive board,
Silver desires to return to the earth
And gold to its vein, since it feels of no worth.
His hand and his sword in peace and war burn,
But extinguish great fires like water in turn.
The gold from his coffers to pilgrims' hands flows
And his sword paints the fields with the gore of his foes.
No riches by him are detained for one night,
Or hidden in dungeons away from the light.
More dear than his soul to him is a guest,





To treat guests with honour is the Emir's behest.
 High above Khorasan the moon rises bright.
 There the moon does not set, but shines through the night.
 Mamlan and his deeds make the sun's face seem dim,
 And the sphere of men's doom is reduced thanks to him.
 Mamlan bows to none. The world's held in sway.
 He takes orders from none - the world waits to obey.
 Men grieve when a fortune finally ends,
 He grieves for a fortune not given to friends.
 In truth and in courage he stands quite apart.
 He believes in humaneness and greatness of heart.
 He keeps every promise. He never breaks one.
 He will never abandon a task once begun.
 He makes great what was small, on what's hidden casts light.
 He makes poverty riches and sadness delight.
 His name's like the sun that shines forth in all parts.
 And his goodness a great and warm wind for hearts.
 The steppes become seas at one wave of his hand,
 And the sea by his will becomes dry desert land.
 No man in the world is as faithful and true
 In fulfilling what Allah told men they should do.
 At banquets the Emir is noble and grave.
 And in war he surpasses the bravest of brave.
 An anvil for him becomes pliant as wax,
 For his foes wax becomes a stone wall, or an axe.
 While the deep sea holds pearls his crown to adorn,
 While men prefer poppies to thistles and thorn,
 May he live and rejoice in thousands of ways,
 And count in their thousands such fine festive days.

Translated by Tom Botting



Mehseti-Khanum Ganjevi

Mehseti-Khanum Ganjevi was an outstanding 12th-century Azerbaijani poetess, a rare phenomenon in the medieval Muslim East. No details about her life are known except that she was born in Ganja and was highly esteemed at the court of Sultan Sanjar of the Seljuk Dynasty. Her only works that have come down to us are philosophical and love quatrains glorifying the joy of living and the fullness of love.

Rubaiyat

Each columned arch within your house, each brick, that you see here
 Depends on the head of shah or finger of vizier.
 But every inch of earthen sod whereon your cattle plot
 Is as the lovely hair that hides the cheek of your beloved.

* * *

From when we climbed that pinnacle - love's minaret, my dove,
 We both have known no other words but passioned words of love.
 Best no one cross the threshold of this love, our dwelling-place,
 Whose heart is cold as ice, unkindled by love's burning grace.

* * *

Don't ever wait from other any help when you're in need -
 O Heart, they scarcely would proffer a dried and withered reed.
 Stinginess makes each a beast, but thriftiness sustain at least,
 So when your means are rather poor, watch with care expenditure.

* * *

A world there is for those in love with mines of precious stones,
 But bards select a different world as setting for their thrones.
 The bird who eats love's magic grain lives on another plane -
 His nest beyond both worlds, ignoring riches, scorning fame.

* * *

Ah this then is my heart, and this - what true love means!





Like unto others, love but brings me torments unforeseen.
 And my poor heart's the primal source of every sigh and bitter cry.
 Ah this then is my heart, and this - what true love means!

* * *

Though you should be the lord of all, the people's crowned head,
 One day you may be forced to cry from poverty instead.
 For people let your heart be moved, grow close to them and dear;
 And fear the day you'll need their aid - kind is payment made.

* * *

Should Egypt, China, Byzantine, belong to you alone -
 It follows then, you know, you may call all the world your own.
 Still... Make your life a merry one! For your predestined lot
 Is thirty feet of winding-sheet, a nine-foot burial plot.

* * *

Museum of the Brave is Kharabat - the Hall of Fame.
 Here none ignoble, mean or low, a place may ever claim.
 And who but sets his foot within must pay respect esteem:
 Here none through sophistry, deceit, a place may ever claim.

* * *

A man is joined to woman when they tie the marriage knot,
 And this is right in Allah's eyes - his law forbid it not.
 For me, the knot of marriage joins me to my Rubaiyat -
 Is there ONE Faith that would comply to such a marriage tie?

* * *

No force can bind us: pull of moment, arrows flying home,
 Nor any wild nostalgia that seized our hearts whilom.
 Though my soft braids turned chains of steel and anchored in your
 heart,
 Could any chain keep me at home if I should wish to roam?

* * *

As in a daze reposing by the field-canal, you dream,
 O moon-faced Angel, slim as willow bending o'er a stream!



I come down the embankment bathed in sunshine straight to you -
 That I come down for water, Lovely Creature, do not deem.

* * *

The pleasantest aroma is set drifting from your hair,
 The morning breezes catch it up and breathe it everywhere.
 Should some ascetic pilgrim see your charms as we embrace -
 Could he again religious turn, asceticism bear?

* * *

O come, my love, and press your lips, you tender lips to mine:
 Restore me once again to life, so from your love like wine
 In blind intoxication I be clay within your hands,
 And of the world's great weal or woe I'll never even know.

* * *

Thus said the Rose: Before I'd time to open my eyes,
 Before I plucked Joy's berry from life's Earthly Paradise -
 Myself was plucked, for pressing out the essence of my scent.
 O may those hands be plucked off, too, from life in just reprise.

* * *

On grasses green a flower glows in tender ecstasy,
 The nightingale pours out his trilling scales in rhapsody.
 Both in enchantment dwell, forgetting what invoked the spell -
 The role that life is brief, the bird his lonesome grief.

* * *

I came across a man upon the road but yesterday -
 He wielded well the stick he held, and all along the way
 In fury he was beating some poor woman, wifely slave.
 All passers-by drank in the sight with no sign of dismay.

Translated by Gladys Evans





Khagani Shirvani

Khagani (Afzaladdin Ibrahim-ibn Ali Nadjar), (1120-1194) a great Azerbaijani poet and thinker, was born in the family of a carpenter in Melgem, a village near Shamakhy. He was brought up by his uncle Kafietdin Omar ibn-Osman, a Shirvanshah doctor and astronomer. In his youth, Khagani wrote under the pen-name Hakaiki, which means the seeker of truth. After he had been invited to the court of the Shirvanshahs, he assumed the pen-name of Khagani ("regal"). The life of a court poet palled on him, and he "fled from the iron cage where he felt like a bird with a broken wing" and set off a journey about the Middle East. His travels gave him material for his famous poem *Tohvat-ul Iraquein* (A Gift of the Two Iraqs), in which he described his impressions of the Middle East, and also his philosophical gassida, *The Ruins of Madain*. On returning home, Khagani broke off with the court of the Shirvanshahs, and Shah Akhsitan gave order for his imprisonment. It was in prison that Khagani wrote one of his most powerful anti-feudal poems called *Habsiyye* (A Prison Poem). Upon release, he moved with his family to Tabriz where fate dealt with him one tragic blow after another: first his young son died, then his daughter and then wife. Khagani was left all alone, and he too died in Tabriz. He was buried at the Poet's Cemetery in Surkhab, a suburb of Tabriz.

Khagani has left a remarkable Persian-language heritage which includes some magnificent odes-distiches of as many as three hundred lines with the same rhyme, melodious ghazals, dramatic poems protesting against oppression and glorifying reason and toil, and elegies lamenting the death of his children, his wife and his relatives.



The Ruins of Madain

My soul, come, draw lessons from life, look around...
 A mirror to help you in old Madain can be found.
 Beside the Dajla lie the ruins of great Madain.
 The river's long banks with bitterest groaning resound.
 More blood flows than water from Dajla's suffering eyes.
 No tears touch its cheek, dried by flames that from
 Smouldering ruins arise
 See - the Tigris is foaming - foal curls on the lips of each wave...
 How mournful those ruins burying hearts and their sighs!
 The heart of the Tigris is burnt by sorrow and fear.
 Can flames be so intense that the water itself they sear?
 The river great tribute must pay every year to the sea,
 So add your small part with a drop of your blood, not a tear.
 Heave a sigh and the flame from your heart will divide the
 Tigris's great stream -
 Then one river of ice and another of lava will gleam.
 The river enchained had to witness the end of this place,
 It twisted and turned like a chain when it heard the last scream.
 May their hearts draw men here! May the voice of the ruins prevail!
 Let every heart hear at least one whispered word without fail!
 It seems that those jagged-toothed ramparts hold precepts for men,
 That they soon must be granted a tongue and will tell their own tale.
 The owl's endless hoot makes my head ring as if with mad cries.
 To sooth my discomfort the tears will soon start from my eyes.
 All songs here are elegies. Nightingales here are all owls.
 The cry Madain raised to heaven throughout the world flies.
 This place speaks of chambers of justice once ruined by hate.
 The throne fell to tyrants who rose unaware of their fate.
 Was fortune or God's retribution the force that could shatter
 The towers and bring down in ruins a palace so great?





Don't laugh at my tears in this dead place enveloped in palls -
A man would look foolish if he did not weep in such halls.
As mighty as Kufa was great Madain in its prime.
As lofty its towering fortress, as strong were its walls.
Though pity burns hot in your heart, of your judgement is cold,
You will see Madain in its beauty like Kufa of old.
Yes, once long ago Madain in its beauty was a work of great art.
The palace had gateways that blazed with mosaics and gold.
Here Babylon's king fulfilled orders that other men gave.
At Madain's court Turkestan's mighty khan was a slave.
From this spot was launched an attack on the lion of fate,
By that lion whose statue is standing here noble and brave.
Imagine this place that once held a whole land in its sway,
The fort as it was, not the ruins that lie here today.
The walls would say, 'Weep! For you, too, have good reason for
sorrow.
To dust all must crumble and you, man, are just living clay!
Dismount from your horse, for your lips to this earth you should press.
Here an elephant's foot crushed Ne'eman, the great master of chess.
Now elephants' castles by monarchs are no longer won,
For the elephant time marches on and brings kings to distress.
Time was when the shahs could bring elephants under their sway.
Now time checkmates shahs, they're like elephants gone far astray.
Here Nushiravan's blood was drunk by Ormuz from his skull.
The drink was so strong that it made Ormuz stagger and sway.
A moral was carved on the rim of the crown on his head.
In mine are now surging a thousand as yet still unsaid.
For mandarins Kesra was famed, for his splendor was Parvis.
They have long been forgotten and lie with the most humble dead.
For banquets great Parvis had greenery beaten from gold -
A golden-green garden! A wondrous sight to behold!
That ruler has gone and his plants made of gold are no more



Proclaim "Kemtaraku". His fate shall no longer be told!
You ask where such rulers have gone, since today there are none -
The earth has embraced all these kings, every shah and khagan.
Now pregnant with life, she conceived with greatest of ease,
But bearing new life she now finds is not easily done.
The wine pressed from grapes here is blood of Shirin
dripping red.
The peasants make pots from the body of Parvis long dead.
How many a despot and tyrant this earth has embraced!
Yet still she is yearning for more to recline in her bed.
That black-hearted earth with a snowy and mountainous head -
She rouges her cheeks with the blood that her children have shed!
Teach men, Khagani, how fickle is fortune and life
And let the khagans come to you and by wisdom be led.
Though dervishes wait at the gates of the shah for a gift
That shah one fine day like a dervish may have to make shift.
From Mecca come presents, but I sent my gift to Shirvan
From old Madain, may its moral men's spirit uplift.
The beads many count come from Jamra near Kabaa today
But yours should be made from the flesh of Salman turned to clay.
These vast flowing waters hold lessons - so drink while you may
Where two rivers unite as the Shatt - then set off on your way.
From journeys on far one should bring back a fine souvenir -
My friends, let my gift be the verses I offer you here.
Though seeming disordered my words have made mysteries clear,
Thus Isa also taught, half deranged by a single idea.

* * *





A Love Song

As long as my heart is still beating
 the one that I love shall be you.
 As long as I hold something dearer
 than life, it shall always be you.
 Affection within my soul burning
 lent strength to my heart in the past.
 The impulse to keep my heart beating
 forever, my dear, shall be you.
 Whatever the wound I may suffer
 the balm for my pain shall be you.
 Whatever disorder afflicts me
 the cure for my ill shall be you.
 I always shall be at your service
 whatever your heart may desire.
 One sultan in life I acknowledge,
 and that one shall always be you.
 If ever I write about faith
 and ingratitude, now I proclaim
 The title shall start with the letter
 which begins my beloved's first name.
 In matters of state, or of faith and apostasy you can't
 deceive me...
 For you are my Khan, my Belief, my idol - al one and
 the same! -
 Who is Khagani? Oh, my sloe-eyed sweet beauty, approach
 me and claim
 To be Khagani's khagan, be my monarch demanding acclaim.

Translated by Tom Botting



Nizami Ganjevi

Nizami Ganjevi (Ilyas ibn-Yousif) (1141-1209), a great Azerbaijani poet and thinker was born in Ganja, where he lived all his life and where he died. Nizami is the pen name of Ilyas ibn-Yousif, and it means "one who strings syllables". Nizami has left us an enormous legacy which we can only call a heroic accomplishment. His most famous works, which are worthy contribution to the world literature, are the five long poems, of 30,000 distiches, known as Khamsa (Quintuple); the didactic epos of "Treasure of Mysteries" (1173) containing twenty chapters and "talks" with preachings and parables woven into the fabric of the narrative; the lyric eposes that sing glory to purifying, ennobling love-"Khosrau and Shirin" (1181), "Leyli and Mejnun" (1181) and "Seven Beauties" (1197) widely known in the Middle East; and the historical-philosophical poem, "Iskander-Nameh" (The Book of the Alexander the Great)(1203).

Nizami was not a court poet and he criticized those who were in the service of the rich and powerful and extolled their masters' virtues for money. However, Nizami himself was obliged to dedicate poems to rulers and eminent people, driven to it by poverty and the need to find protection. Thus, his Treasure of Mysteries was dedicated to Bahram-Shah, who liked it so much that he sent Nizami a young slave girl as a gift. This girl, whose name was Afag, became Nizami's first and only wife, and the mother of his son Muhammed. She died young, in 1180, and Nizami poured out his love for her and his grief in the epos of Khosrau and Shirin.

Many poems were written in imitation of Nizami, and some of them like the works of Amir Khosrov Dehlevi, Alisher Navai, Abdurrahman Muhammad Jami and Fizuli were completely individual, original writings which can be described as milestones in the history of the literatures of the Middle East.

The 800th anniversary of Nizami's birthday was celebrated in the Soviet Union in 1947. People coming to Azerbaijan for the first time always make a pilgrimage to Nizami's mausoleum near Ganja, to pay a tribute to this great poet.





Ghazal

O radiant-faced beloved, whose cherished bride will you be?
 Whose dignity will you praise, whose honour and pride will you be?
 You are shaded this eve by the awning your master has spread,
 Whose queen with your odorous tresses and grace will you be?
 You are sweeter than honey, no sherbet is sweeter than you
 Whose rill his course with love's wave lets to trace, will you be?
 In the darkness of night you're a lamp with bright light, God guard
 you from evil eye,
 Breath of life - o whose love caress and embrace will you be?
 You are gone, how can poor Nizami live alone with his grief?
 He is down now, whose healer his pain to appease will you be?
 Translated by Olga Moisseyenka

**Fragments from "The Arrival of Iskander to Bardaa and His
 Encounter with the Queen Nushabaa"**
 (From the epos of Iskander-nameh)

Oh, wine-bearer, bring me a cup of your exquisite wine,
 It is for the thirsty a spring giving water divine.
 I feel all aflame and my thirst rouses terrible pain,
 O bring me some wine, let me drink till no remnant remain.
 Bardaa!... what a beautiful country! a wonderful sight:
 In spring and in winter the flowers are flagrant and bright,
 In summer the tulips and poppies with scarlet tints glow,
 In winter the breezes of spring-tide carelessly blow.
 The verdant and soft rustling forests are numerous here,
 Surrounded by springs that are welling, melodious and clear.
 The fields are adorned with thick willows of emerald green,
 The gardens resplendent - fairy-land never yet seen.
 The pheasants have built for their brood in each cypress a nest,
 The ptarmigans coo, and the partridges sing there with zest.
 And flower-beds slumber in silence, perfuming the air,



The lands of this country are free from all worry and care.
 The sweet smelling greens in all seasons here sprout and abound,
 Here flourishing nature is bountiful all the year round.
 The birds to this country flock always to nest and to feed,
 Here all, even pigeon milk, is to be found, if you need.
 The soil of this country is verily nothing but gold -
 As if the saf-flowers were blooming, so fair to behold.
 Wherever you pass through the verdant and prosperous places
 You witness the ease of existence and bright happy faces.
 A garden as lovely as this one is not to be found,
 Nor also a land like Bardaa, where these riches abound.
 An eminent narrator tells us a wonderful lay,
 A lay that in eloquent wording survives to this day:
 The fair Nushabaa reigned here - queen of this land superfine,
 A patron of feasts rich in delicate sweetmeats and wine.
 This female jeyran would have none of the masculine race,
 And rivalled the gorgeous pheasant in beauty and grace.
 An eloquent talker, unyielding, and wise and sincere,
 In figure a goddess, with temper of kindness and cheer.
 A bevy of comely young maidens surrounded the Queen,
 They stood in a round and created a picturesque scene.
 Besides them, the Queen had trick-riders and many a knight,
 Great numbers of warriors presented a marvellous sight.
 Although they were men in attendance, the prop of her reign,
 Yet none of them ever set foot in her private domain.
 The kingdom was governed by women with masterly skill,
 To men she would never in person give word of her will.
 The women were able and clever in action and pan,
 And managed affairs by themselves with the help of no man.
 Men housed in the outskirts, ne'er settled to live near their Queen,
 And chose for their homesteads vast meadows, delightfully green.
 In fear of her wrath none would venture to enter the town,
 They loved Nushabaa for they knew of her wondrous renown.





Whenever she ordered to corvee the men would forsake
 Their homesteads to labour, all ready to die for her sake.
 When King Iskander with his legions appeared in the land,
 The tents of her warcamps were countless, her army well manned.
 He saw here a country of luxury, joyful and free,
 The crops were amazing, the rivers a wonder to see.
 He questioned the people: "Whose country of beauty is this?
 And who is the sovereign who reigns in this country of bliss?"
 They answered: "These riches, these confines you hardly can span,
 Belong to woman, in courage exceeding a man,
 A beautiful woman, in fearlessness resting secure,
 Surpassing in beauty the pearls of the sea, and as pure.
 No person can equal this woman in wisdom and might,
 The support in the masculine armour, her foes she defied,
 She comes of the House of the brave Keyani, that's her pride!
 She wears no Caucasian hat, but the crown of a queen,
 A chieftain is she, though her soldiers she's never once seen.
 Her numerous slaves are undaunted, the best of their race -
 But none of these soldiers caught ever a glimpse of her face.
 The Queen is surrounded by women, full-bosomed and fair,
 With them she is apt to take counsel where men have no share."

* * *

The Shah Iskander was surprised and well pleased with the story,
 And wished to set eyes on this woman of beauty and glory.
 He witnessed the wonders around him that made him aware
 That this was a country unique, of prosperity rare.
 The king Iskander thought it pleasant to stop here and rest,
 They stayed and made merry - the sovereign himself and the rest.
 The Queen was informed that an alien army was here,
 That King Iskander had come down as a friend to her sphere.

* * *

The soul of the Padishah burst into bloom with desire
 To meet this wise woman, to study her country entire,



To learn from the Queen of her secrets that made her great land
 Yield fruits of the choicest, her forests and pastures expand,
 And what were the bounds of this kingdom so vast to the view,
 And whether the stories of all that he learned here were true.
 They brought Shabdizaa, golden-shoed and the best of his breed,
 'Twas morning. The sun of the Universe mounted his steed,
 And all was prepared in advance for his trip to the Queen,
 He went as an envoy the news he so longed for to glean.
 As soon as the fane came to view with its walls tall and wide -
 He stopped and dismounted to rest from his tedious ride.
 The palace with towering arches appeared to his eye
 So tall and so mighty, they seemed to be kissing the sky.
 The maids of the Queen saw the envoy sent here by the Shah,
 And ran to inform of this startling event Nushabaa:
 "The camp of the eminent Shah has emitted a ray -
 He honours our country by sending his envoy today!
 He comes to Your Majesty, worthy and handsome and wise,
 With news of his King that would make him sublime to your eyes.
 Himself oh! so clever, polite and exceedingly fine,
 He looks like a lamp that was hit by our Maker Divine!"
 The Queen gave the order to clear and to deck her domain,
 To clean and straighten the roadways that led to her fane.
 Her ladies in waiting put on their most gorgeous array,
 The palace was smothered with flowers, voluptuous and gay.
 The maidens of honour wore jewels, had musk-scented curls,
 Their gowns were of silk decorated with diamonds and pearls.
 The Queen, like a pheasant tripped lightly, with infinite grace,
 And wondrously bright, as a lamp, was her pure, smiling face.
 She mounted the throne and sat down, like a goddess arrayed,
 And held a fine orange, tradition most strictly obeyed.
 She ordered servants, as custom demands, to invite
 The envoy of note to present himself to her sight.
 Her faithful attendants were ready the Queen to obey,





They hastened her will to the envoy at once convey.
 The "envoy" walked fearlessly in, without any constraint,
 He mounted the throne - this brave lion, devoid of all taint.
 Contrary to custom he kept on his belt and his sword,
 And made no low bows as an envoy, this eminent lord.
 He noticed the wisdom and grandeur, and fathomed their price,
 A picturesque palace, built really to daze and entice!
 He noted the stir and the bustle, the court maidens' grace,
 The perfume of amber and musk, the content on each face.
 The glittering jewels that decked them so dazzlingly bright,
 Reminded the Shah of the stars on a dark moonless night.
 The brilliant reflection of jewels on maiden and dame
 Seemed likely to crown Iskander with a halo of flame!
 It seems that the ocean itself, and each diamond mine
 Had sent their best valuables here in her palace to shine.
 The envoy's unseemly behaviour had outraged the Queen,
 Who became very angry at what she had seen.
 She thought: "He knows nothing of what our customs exact,
 No notion has he how an envoy's expected to act!
 This poor ignoramus should duly be kept in his place,
 His negligent manner toward us is perfect disgrace!"
 But, watching attentively, suddenly doubt stirred her mind,
 She probed him like gold to find out what hidden behind.
 She looked at him, guessed that himself Iskander Shah was there,
 Made place for the King on her throne, glad her honours to share.
 She guessed Iskander had behaved so by way of joke,
 And, wishing his presence beside her, Her Majesty spoke:

* * *

"Be welcome, a chieftain, be welcome, o great Iskander!
 How quaint, you yourself are your envoy, come here from afar.
 My sensitive heart has divined it. I see it this way:
 Your royal demeanour and manners a sovereign betray.
 No envoy are you, but a king, am I right, I demand?"



No envoy are you but a sovereign to rule and command!
 Your proper informant - your sword is the enemy's fear -
 Unsheathe it before me, no other would dare, that is clear!
 But it in my presence you draw it - your rights you exceed,
 It means violating the bounds of convention, indeed.
 Your sword will not help you, speak not of its valorous might,
 Find other excuses to make yourself fine in my sight.
 You come as a guest, but my nets draw around you secure,
 Just think of it, think and reflect - you are not yet mature.
 My luck brought you here, to my throne, to my land and rich and
 gay,
 Long live this fair Luck that smiles down on my people today!"

* * *

Her words were sincere, and her heart beat with joy in her breast,
 Her throne, decorated with crystal, she left for the guest.
 "My throne is your own, famous Shah, on this throne take your seat,
 No place for two rulers to sit thus enthroned, 'this not meet!
 From chess you must know that two kings with each other contest,
 Their conflict is painful, of wit and endurance a test."
 The beautiful Ruler stepped down from her sumptuous throne,
 And honoured the Shah with the offer to make it his own.
 Like somebody's bride, on a plain golden chair she sat down,
 And said: "I am surely your slaving on whom you may frown!"
 The heart of the giant was thrilled by the speech he had heard,
 He flushed and he paled, was excited by gesture and word:
 He thought: "The sly queen, though a woman, has thought out her
 plan,
 She seems to be able, and brilliantly wise, like a man!"

* * *

He mused, and reproached himself now for the fault he had made
 Of putting himself in the power of his royal maid.
 If ever a knight made attacks on her land - 'twas in vain -
 The dragon would capture him duly, and that was quite plain.





If ever a singer sang songs no composer had made.
The gay kamanchah [1] would make fun of his voice thus displayed.
So plunged in a reverie grievous, deploring his fate,
He scolded his nature, his conduct, his error so great.
Deep grief overwhelmed him; with patience this grief would he meet,
He bowed the proud head held so high, and acknowledged defeat.
The Queen gave the word to her maidens to honour the guest
By gracefully decking the tables with all that was best.
The feast should be worthy in food and in wine of the King,
Most savoury dishes the maidens were ordered to bring.
Her servants obeyed her, their bustling about never ceased,
They ran to and fro, and prepared a most wonderful feast.
They brought in great dishes of mutton and lambmeat of choice,
The bread was in loaves, newly baked, for the heart to rejoice.
The tables were laid near the palace and reached to the gate,
The dishes were flavoured with saffron and ambergris.
The pies, richly covered with sesame, buttered and sweet,
And everything seemed as most fine and delectable meat.
And bullocks, well roasted, and all kinds of delicate fish,
A bull with the sphere on his horns, lying low on the dish,
And lambs settled gravely, seeming so glad, beyond words,
As if they grew wings in their strange exultation, like birds.
And jams most delicious and syrups with lemon, made sweet,
The almonds, pistachios, nuts were a pleasure to eat.
Some food smelt of ambergris; the taste of such savoury wealth
Could help a poor sickening man to recover his health!
And almond halvah in great blocks; so much food all around,
That vessels enough to contain it could hardly be found!
The sherbet was flavoured with rose water, flagrantly fine,
You took just one sip and it tasted of ambergris, like the best wine.
Besides this the Queen placed in front of her throne, made of gold,
A panel, exceedingly polished and rich to behold.
Four cups were displayed on the panel before Iskander:



One cup held red rubies, the second gold ore, bar on bar,
The third cup held pearls, in the fourth glittered sapphires rare,
Thus showing her riches, she honoured her guest with her care.
As soon as the people were brought to a sociable mood,
And mouths were planning to swallow the excellent food,
The Queen murmured thus: "Oh, I beg you, most eminent Lord -
Partake of the viands that are spread on this welcoming board!"
He answered: "O beautiful woman, I blush at your word:
For all that you told me just now is so very absurd:
Here, lying before me, are stones of a value most rare,
But can you digest them? Why offer uneatable fare?!
And man with a mind, can he eat of the stones here displayed?
His stomach will never accept them, if even well paid!
But treat me to food that would flatter the stomach at once,
To victuals that, temptingly, offer the hand to advance."
The Queen was amused, and she laughingly said to the Shah:
"If valuable stones cannot nourish a being so far,
Then jewels are useless, and really of very small need,
But why all the efforts to own them, with fever and greed?
If really these glittering jewels as food cannot serve -
Then man, due to them, cannot rise in the world with much verve.
I duly acknowledge the fact that a stone is no food -
But why do we labour to get it? This must be tabooed!
We clear away stones from the road, a good pass to afford,
Then why all the stones that are precious so well do we hoard?
We try to collect them, we dig with avidity great,
But eat them we cannot, they lie in a quite useless state.
If you, mighty Shah, have no love for a rich precious stone -
Reduce what you have, and thereby you will safeguard your throne."
The words of this woman so lovely impressed him with force,
The athlete agreed with her wise explanation, of course.
He said: "Oh, Khanum, your true words contradiction defy,
With words of your judgment no masculine judgment can vie.





Your lips spoke the truth about jewels, for each precious stone
 For lost health and happiness, surely can never atone.
 Be praised, lovely Queen, for your wisdom and cleverness rare,
 Thus showing the way I must go to be honest and fair.
 O clear-sighted maiden, your words have sown wonderful seed:
 No coinage of gold shall I have, no advice shall I heed,
 The gold I shall throw on the ground for it comes from the earth,
 Where mines are its cradle, the primary place of its birth."
 Her ruby-red lips smiled in hearing the Ruler applaud,
 They seemed to illuminate nature, approving the lord.
 She ordered her maidens to serve him with exquisite meats,
 And treat Iskander to the relish of delicate sweets,
 She tasted each dish with a tender, benevolent smile,
 Her guest was amazed at her grace as he watched her the while.
 The Shah was uneasy at his unexpected strange turn,
 When dinner was over, he rose to depart, with concern.
 But when he was leaving the Queen made him vow not to hurt
 Her subjects, her land, and no rights in her realm to assert.
 Then Shah Iskander duly published a royal decree,
 And left the great Queen and her country well governed and free.
 And when Iskander left the city the Queen breathed relief,
 From God she expected great help and from fortune but grief.
 To guard from the wrath of the Shah her dear country she played,
 And thanked her Creator for saving her land from the raid.
 And when the dark night overpowered the sun and the day,
 She kindled a lamp while the candle extinguished its ray,
 And high in the heavenly sphere with coming of night
 The stars lit in legions their galaxies, twinkling and bright.

Translated by Olga Moisseyenko



Shams Tabrizi (12th Century)

Shams Tabrizi was a great Sufi poet of Azerbaijan, who was born in Tabriz in the 12th century. Divani-Shamsi Tabrizi acquaints us with a striking literary phenomenon.

That moon, which the sky ne'er saw even in dreams, has Returned
 And brought a fire no water can quench.
 See the body's house, and see my soul,
 This made drunken and that desolate by the cup of his Love.
 When the host of the tavern became my heart-mate,
 My blood turned to wine and my heart to kabab.
 When the eye is filled with thought of him, a voice

Arrives:

Well done, o flagon, and brave, wine!
 Loves fingers tear up, root and stem,
 Every house where sunbeams fall from love.
 When my heart saw love's sea, of a sudden
 It left me and leaped in, crying, 'Find me.'
 The face of Shamsi Din, Tabriz's glory, is the sun
 In whose track the cloud-like hearts are moving.

* * *

The man of God is drunken without wine,
 The man of God is full without meat.
 The man of God is distraught and bewildered,
 The man of God has no food or sleep.
 The man of God is king' neath darvish - cloak,
 The man of God is a treasure in a ruin.
 The man of God is not of air and earth,
 The man of God is not a fire and water.
 The man of God is a boundless sea,





The man of God rains pearls without a cloud.
 The man of God hath hundred moons and skies,
 The man of God hath hundred suns.
 The man of God is made wise by the Truth,
 The man of God is not learned from book.
 The man of God is beyond infidelity and religion,
 The man of God write and wrong are alike.
 The man of God has ridden away from Not-being,
 The man of God is gloriously attended.
 The man of God is concealed, Shamsi Din ;
 The man of God do thou seek and find!

* * *

O beloved, spiritual beauty is very fair and glorious,
 But thine own beauty and loveliness is another thing.
 O thou who art years describing spirit,
 Show one quality that is equal to his essence.
 Light waxes in the eye at the imagination of him,
 But in presence of his union it is dimmed.
 I stand open-mouthed in veneration of that beauty:
 'God is most great' is on my heart's lips every moment.
 The heart hath gotten an eye constant in desire of thee.
 Oh, how that desire feeds heart and eye!
 "This slaves-caressing thy love has practiced;
 Else, where is the heart that has slept one night in thy air
 Is like radiant day: thereby the air is illumined.
 Every one that is without object is as thy disciple:
 His object is gained without the semblance of object.
 Each reprobate who has burned in this love and fallen in it,
 Fell in to kousar : for thy love is kousar.
 From hope of union my foot comes not to earth:
 While I am severed from thee, my hand is on my head.
 Be not sorrowful, O heart, at this oppression of enemies,



And think on this , that the Sweetheart is judge.
 If the foe is rejoiced at my sallow face,
 This sallow face of mine is from the red rose.
 Since the beauty of my Beloved is beyond description,
 How fat is my grief and how lean my prize!
 Yea, for it is a rule as regards the poor sick wretch,
 That while his pain is more his plaint is less.
 Shamsi Din shone, moon-like, from Tabriz;
 No, what is the very moon? For that is the moon's face Superlative.

* * *

I was on that day when the Names were not,
 Nor any sign of existence endowed with name.
 By me Names and Named were not 'I' and 'we'
 For a sign, the tip of that Beloved's curl became a
 centre of revelation;
 As yet the tip of that fair curl was not.
 Cross and Christians, from end to end,
 I surveyed; He was not on the Cross.
 I went to the Idol-temple, to the ancient pagoda ;
 No trace was visible there.
 I went to the mountains of Heart and Candhar ;
 I looked; He was not in that hill-and-dale.
 With set purpose I fared to the summit of Mount QAF;
 In that place was only the 'Anqa's habitation.
 I bent the reins of search to the Ka'ba;
 He was not in that resort of old and young.
 I questioned Ibn Sina's range.
 I fared towards the scene of 'two bow-lengths' distance' ;
 He was not in that axalted court.
 I gazed into my own heart;
 There I saw Him; He was nowhere else.
 Save pure-souled Shamsi Tabriz
 None ever was drunken and intoxicated and distraught.





Izzeddin Hassan-Oglu

Hassan-Oglu Izzeddin was one of the first Azerbaijani poets to write in his native Azeri-Turkish language. He lived in Asfarain, a town near Korasan, at the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th centuries. Investigations show that his poetry in Azerbaijani and Persian (his verses in Persian were signed as "Pur-Hassan") enjoyed a great popularity. Only two of his ghazals-one in Azerbaijani and the other in Persian-have come down to us.

My mistress is a heartless flirt-
 O, woe is me!
 I think of her with fevered brow-
 O, woe is me!
 All say of me that I eat dirt -
 O, woe is me!
 My burning heart knows no rest now -
 O, woe is me!
 My bright-eyed beauty stays away -
 O, woe is me!
 And all night long I count the stars -
 O, woe is me!
 O, tell me why she keeps afar?
 O, woe is me!
 IS there for love a remedy?
 O, woe is me!
 My love consumed all of me -
 O, woe is me!

Translated by Arthur Shkarovsky



Imadeddin Nasimi

Imadeddin Nasimi (1369-1417), an outstanding poet and pantheist philosopher, was born in Shamakhy. The country was invaded by Tamerlane at the time and Nasimi's work naturally reflects the hardships suffered by the people under his firm rule. One of the forms of protest against the Timurides and Islam was "Hurufism", a sectarian movement headed by Nasimi's teacher, Fazlullah Naimi (1339-1396). Nasimi adopted Hurufizm, the doctrine that man and deity are one ("Allah is myself") and as a sign of solidarity with Naimi, assumed the similarly sounding pen-name "Nasimi", which means "a pleasant breath of air". After the death of Naimi, who was murdered by Timur's son, Nasimi left Azerbaijan and set off a journey about the Middle East to preach Hurufizm. In 1417, in Aleppo, he was seized by fanatics, who on order from the town's ruler, skinned him alive for his "blasphemous" poetry.

Nasimi established Azerbaijani Turkish as a literary language, although he also wrote in Persian and Arabic. His ghazals were philosophical love poems, and the theme of his masnavi and rubaiyat was the purpose of life, love and the beauty of Nature.

Framed by its dusky locks, your face my heart ensnares;

I burn with passion's hopes, its yearnings and despairs.
 Of my eyes that glow like stars I am the helpless prey -
 Torment me, sweet one, not thus cruelly ere you slay.
 But rarely to the end the cup of bliss is drained;
 Yet think what pain is mine who is by you disdained.
 Count not your beads, I beg, hide not in prayer from me;
 A lover is no bird to cage thus mercilessly.
 Your beauty night and day I praise in sheer delight.
 If I desist, o Lord, turn not my day to night!
 You promised I might drink of Eden's gushing spring -





To me not wine - a cup filled with its waters bring.
While you repel my love, there is no peace for me.
Spurn not, o houri mine, your faithful Nasimi!

Need I my throne, need I my crown, my lands and castles, tell me, love,
Need I the heart within my breast if you and I be parted love.
You are the fever that consumes - I waste away beside you, love.
You are the balm that heals my wounds-I live anew beside you, love.
Love is a joy, a priceless gem - no Moslem dares deny it, love.
What need have I of life itself if you and I be parted, love?
I offered vows, I sent up prayers, I knelt before my Maker, love.
But if my dreams go up in smoke, then truly prayers are futile, love.
My love is dead - what use to weep, what use to mourn, Nasimi?
If love is dead, and I can live, then tears are vain, O Nasimi!

The sweetness of reunion will he know and bless
Whose heart was cruelly wrung by parting's bitterness.
He only who did see the moon by arrows rent
Will watch it rise anew in joy and wonderment.
The nectar of your lips he who has tasted not
Is doomed to die of thirst and share a beggar's lot.
To touch that mole of yours, I would give up my sight;
The fool who scorns my choice exists bereft of light.
Beside you precious stones are naught but clods of earth;
He will deprive himself who would deny your worth.
You are a cypress, aye, but not a full-grown tree;
A sapling's grace is yours, its tender modesty.
The sun obscures the moon, so dazzling are its rays;
But you defeat the sun - your beauty dims its blaze.
O doff these silks, I pray - your loveliness they mar:
They fade, and you remain a never-fading star.

Translated by Irina Zheleznova



Shah Ismail Khatai

A prominent statesman and poet of Azerbaijan, Shah-Isma'il Khatai (1485-1524) was the founder of the shah dynasty of the Sefevides (1502-1736). Writing under the pen name of Khatai, he produced a large volume of lyric poetry in Azerbaijani Turkish, and also a number of didactic and philosophical works, among them the eposes of Ten Letters and The Book of Morals. During the reign of Shah-Isma'il Khatai, the Azerbaijani Turkish was promoted to the level of a state language on a par with Persian. Khatai's poetry is graceful and polished and his language closely approaches to folk idiom.

Baharia

Winter's shaken off, and spring arrives!
Rosebuds waken, garden plot revives,
Birds all trill in aching harmony,
Love's a thrilling flame, disturbing me.
Earth is dressed in furry, downy green,
Whispers press the silence once serene,
Water rills lap at the cypress root,
And turtle-doves coo plaintive notes that flute.
Nature's budding smiles on meadow-grass
Flash through dew-drop miles like beads of glass.
Seaward rain clouds ... rare as precious stones,
Wings a carnelian and circles azure zones -
Taloned falcon brings it down to earth.
To silken blossom, apple-trees give birth;
Playful, flees the Moon from clouds in vain,
April showers drench the earth with rain,
Nightingales in trilling song repine,
Tulip petals hoard the dew's sweet wine,
Steppe-quails deep and bookish thoughts pursue,





Turtle-doves keep cooing, loo-a-loo...
Drunk a mite are violets, unaware.
Swans alight like feathered moving air:
Preens with pride each bird has curved breast,
For cygnet-peep is heard from hidden nest.
Earth's a filigree of rainbow flowers,
Trees make jubilee in leaf-green bowers,
Bindweed seeks relief by river-bed,
Cowling shirt in reefs above his head.
Linden boughs display their dancing grace,
Praising spring the rose lifts tender face,
Rivers top their banks: a flood terrene,
Garden trees put on their mantles green.
Moonlight boon is pure on cherry-tree,
Mute the moon, lost in a starry sea.
Over meadow lies a flowered throw,
Veils of snowy bloom on lilacs show,
On flower petals rime of silver down.
Narcissi rise and mime in paper crown,
Argavan is vain of buds that blush,
Doves would fain be near a blooming bush.
When first sighs the early, pre-dawn breeze,
Buds veil eyes in sepal-curl to tease.
Orion spears with light a purple sky,
A cypress rears in giant pride on high.
Saucy flirt, the rose her power knows,
Deeply hurt, the nightingale's love flows
In notes as dour as any mullah knew.
Meadow flowers cherish rime and dew,
Morning finds Narcissus sleepy-eyed,
The tulip, crowned and throned, in solemn pride
Scorns the right of other suzeraine.
Combs its spiritly curls the whet-ear vain,



Distilling ambergris upon the air,
In murmured glee streams circle gardens fair.
To mountain tarn gazelles come from the heights,
Poppies turn their red lamps off at night,
Blinding lovers so they lose their way.
Peacock Ruler of the Garden sways
His trailing swathe, his diadem askew,
Rose petals bathe in cool and crystal dew -
A Mecca spring of water, chastely clean.
Gardens fling on togas red and green,
A snowy turban wears each mountain crest,
The Iris bears a dagger, in protest,
To stab the eye that joylessness denotes.
Whistles rise from flocks of startling throats,
That answers find in bill and coo of doves.
Cool the wind and fragrant as it moves
All undeterred to shake the leaves to foam.
Migrating birds fly far away to home:
Raven, crane, and stork and wild goose clans.
Planes oblique to landing on the lake.
Owls shriek and hollow echoes wake,
Through mountain glade is partridge laughter blown,
Cypress shade at rooted feet lies prone
With leaf-curl rim sun-dappled to a frieze.
Birds sing hymns pitched in a thousand keys,
The open lips of primroses pink stains,
Young foals skip and shake their growing manes,
Their shrilling neigh the whistling Kite-scream feigns.
Lambkins play, it's lambing time again:
Sheep drive to the mountains has begun.
Sun-beams cut ill blood-red streamlets run.
Gaily gambol partridges with zest
Before they settle in the family nest.





Cypress, metal-green, lips folds of sky,
 Left and right it gazes, towering high.
 The rose-child plights its troth, becomes a bride
 And wears a veil of crimson on her head.
 Chamois frail her fawn has fondly fed,
 Bounds away to feed on meadow-grass;
 Gazelle musk perfumed through the steppe-lands pass,
 The sweet musk seeps the black earth through and through.
 Wild herds come down to feed on meadows too.
 Flying cranes lament high in the sky
 Wind sustains for miles their anxious cry.
 The raven's heart one second misses beat
 At plunging dart of falcon's taking feet.
 Birds entice their nestlings to take wing.
 Sun - paradise for every scaly thing.
 Dews hang like pods on meadows, strung in rows.
 The bull's horn prods the earth with vicious blows.
 Each flower bears a thrusting bumblebee.
 Ants with care drag loads in company,
 Their damp eggs bring, to dry them in the sun.
 The rainbow swings its veil of prisms spun,
 Leaves consign their tremors to the air,
 Arrow-shaped, graceful beyond compare
 The Parrot speaks in beaten silver tongue -
 Oration all with sweetened words strung.
 Swallows found again their former nests:
 Birds homeward-bound have reached their native rest.

Translated by Gladys Evans



Muhammad Fizuli

Muhammad Fizuli (1498-1556), the greatest of the 16th century poets of Azerbaijan, was born in Kerbela. He wrote in three languages-Azerbaijani, Arabic and Persian-and used all the genres and artistic forms known in Medieval Oriental literature. He was celebrated as one of the major poets of his day for his ghazals, his romantic love epos-Leili and Mejnun written in Azerbaijani, his Book of Complaints-one of the first prose works in the Azerbaijani literature, his poetry condemning feudal despotism, and for his allegorical poems. Fizuli's philosophical poem, The Rise of Religion gives an analysis of the teachings of ancient Indian, Greek, Arabic and Azerbaijani philosophers. We shall never cease to marvel at the depth of understanding in his love ghazala, at their melodiousness, perfection of form and clarity of thought. Many of them have been set to music. Fizuli lived in a constant need, which we know from his numerous complaints against the times which brought nothing but ruin, chaos and destitution.

The poet died and was buried in Kerbela near the shrine of Imam Hussain.

Quatrains (From Leili and Mejnun)

You whose hands shape the glorious sculptures of love,
 You whose hands build the noble foundations of love,
 You whose hands plait the sweet-scented tresses of love,
 You whose hands bound Mejnun with the fetters of love!

If a pathway to truth I am fated to hew,
 If the tale here unfolded id found to be true,
 If in praising Leili fortune's favour I woo,
 In the words of Mejnun I will say unto you,

Give me hope, give me faith, give me happiness, pray,





Let my future be paved with your charity, pray,
 Let my name of Leili kindle sympathy, pray,
 Let Mejnun's woeful tale haunt the memory, pray.

* * *

My love is a greater love than that which possessed Mejnun;
 Through love did lose my heart, through love did he earn his name.

If only my eyes could gaze without sleep on your lovely face
 What joy would be theirs and mine, how hot would my passion
 flame!

Leili had her poor Mejnun, Shirin had her brave Farhad,
 While you, o my love, have me, whose life you can freely claim.

Compare me not, my blushing rose, to a nightingale, I beg,
 For he utters a thousand moans while in silence I bear my pain.

Only he, who has suffered much, finds relief in the woeful sight
 Of an anguish as fierce as mine, of a spirit by love made tame.

Do not soar, o my winged heart, to the menacing skies of love,
 Lest by arrow with poisoned tips you be wounded and cruelly slain.

Scorn the fleshless, unearthly love that your mentors preach, Fizuli,
 Born of reason, 'this cold and starved, and is not of true love's
 domain.

* * *

With delight in my heart on your dark, curling tresses I gaze,
 Numb of tongue, on your lips that are sweeter than roses I gaze.

When I see you before me the tears cloud my eyes, and I weep;
 When your face haunts my dreams, sorrow gnaws at my heart, and I
 weep.



With a great, secret joy do I think of your beauty and grace,
 Free of shame, full of rapture, I gaze on your beauty and grace.

When they see me in anguish, the heart-broken victim of love,
 Many passionate lovers refuse to pay homage to love.

To be parted from you is to burn in the fires of Hell;
 Tested thus, e'en gjaours would no more scoff at Heaven or Hell.

To a rose-bud his love's tender lips will a lover compare;
 To a ruby your lips e'en a stranger, enthralled, will compare.

If I humbly forbear of the torments I suffer to speak,
 They who see me in pain of my love with compassion will speak.

Like the plaint of a flute sounds the sorrowful voice of my love;
 Flay the skin from my back, yet would I weeping, call for my love.

She whose captive I am spurns my love, and I yield to despair;
 Help me. Fate, kindly fate, lest, forsaken, I yield to despair.

Love's unquenchable flames burn, untamed, in my pain-weary heart,
 And its wounds never heal, leaving permanent scars on my heart.

At the sight of my tears she I worship will suddenly smile,
 And I find wondrous bliss in this fleeting but radiant smile.

E'en if Fortune to keep us apart should revengefully seek,
 Yet for you would I long and for you would I stubbornly seek.

Who is right- he who, offered a cupful, partakes of the wine,
 Or the one who declines it, unwilling to drink of the wine?

Not a dervish is there but despises a tyrants, in truth;
 Fizuli who is meek is regarded with favour, in truth.

For your slender and beauteous form, filled with longing I sigh;





For your lips that to me are like delicate blossoms I sigh.

Like a madman I rave when I think of your musk-scented plaits;
I am driven insane by the sight of my love's raven plaits.

Drink with love, sick with longing am I for the gem that is you;
All the blood of my heart would I give for the gem that is you.

On the day when we met like a candle my spirit was lit;
On the day when we part I will put out the light that was lit.

Like a chain is my love, from its burden my heart I would free;
O, to look at you, love, and my heart would refuse to be free!

Long did pay you court but you carelessly played with my heart;
Though 'twere but for a whim, take my life as you've taken my heart.

At your feet Fizuli bends his knee in obeisance to you;
Praises offered to God are the praises I offer to you!

Translated by Irina Zheleznova



Ashig Gurbani

Ashig Gurbani was a famous 16th-century folk poet. His goshmas-short lyrical poems and other poems carrying a socio-philosophical message-were handed down as gems of oral art from generation to generation, and come to us in the form of folk songs. The famous folk poem entitled "Gurbani" is compiled from the poet's verses.

Violet

O my dearest, my love, my beautiful peri,
Custom bids us pluck violets when spring days begin,
With your tender white hand gather a nosegay,
Pin it under your dainty chin.

Your beauty, a gift of the powers above,
Has driven me almost insane with love.
Were you plucked by an abgel masked as a dove?
O violet, he should pluck more of your kin.

Kurbani's poor heart is your captive for aye.
Why punish me with separation, pray?
You too, my love, are wasting away;
Tell me, when will happier days begin?





Ah, I saw you sway as you walked, Salatin;
 Do not sway or bad men may do harm to you.
 Do not stand by the window in your pink dress,
 Or some evil eye may do harm to you.

Stay a while, let me ask whose daughter are you,
 Or what happy mortal's true sweetheart are you:
 You were born in the shade- shaded snow are you;
 Beware, the warm sun may do harm to you.

Gurbani says, let no one extol my love,
 Button your collar tighter, my love.
 Let your plaits not touch ground; tie them higher, love,
 Or the roadway dust may do harm to you.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg



Govsi Tabrizi

Govsi Tabrizi was a 17th century lyric poet. Scholars voice the suggestion that there were three poets who wrote with the same name-father, son and grandson. Two volumes of Govsi Tabrizi's poems have been preserved, one of them is in the British Museum, and the other in the Georgian State Museum. His masterly poetry, written skillfully, carries a protest against feudalism, against oppression and slavery, and champions freedom of human feelings.

At ev'ry corner lovers stand in woeful plight;
 Light of my eyes, tell me, who is the lucky wight?

And should sorrow slay me, I happiness will feel,
 Should I but learn that for me you some compassion feel.

And will she e'er remember, she, my candle bright,
 That I have singed my wings, attracted to her light.

Then burn ye too- like all who hope upon you place;
 Cries in air are lost, but of you remains a trace.

Heartless beauty, all who see you once or twice,
 Will say a thousand times or more that you have fearsome eyes.

Like a captive moth, you attract me to your flame;
 In triumph down you look, as I cry out my shame.

When you are near her, Gobsi, a thousand times you die;
 Indeed a touch of sorrow, of mis'ry am I.

Translated by Arthur Shkarovsky





Sahib Tabrizi

Sahib Tabrizi (late 17th - early 18th centuries) was one of the most gifted successors of Fizuli's tradition. He wrote practically in all the genres of Oriental poetry, and left us an enormous legacy of ghazals extolling wisdom, the beauty of life, and love. He spoke up against fanaticism and asceticism. In some of his poems there is a feeling of general discontent. "What good is your song when there is no one left to appreciate it?" he asks in one of his bitter ghazals.

Ghazals

My Queen, how much longer must I stay
 Outside your door, when you hold full sway
 O'er my heart. Mis'ry is all I feel;
 I suffer anguish when you're away
 And every night I toss and turn.
 Your heartless wiles will kill me one day.
 This parting is appalling torments;
 To salvation can I see no way.
 Your orbs, like two giaours on Moslem
 Fall and kill with their glitt'ring ray.

* * *



O, give me wine, for faint I feel today.
 My heart is wounded; bleeding, woebegone.
 Bereft of wings, no linger soar can I;
 So quench with wine the flame alight in me
 A consolation pure for weary soul.
 From woe and sadness heal my empty heart,
 Grief has made the blood curdle in my veins,
 So give me wine to fortify my soul.
 When the moon is eclipsed then cymbals clash-
 A tradition this with my folk of old,
 Perchance a drop of wine will courage lend.
 In sea of sorrow flounder I, Sahib,
 And naught but wine will bring back life again.

Translated by Arthur Shkarovsky





Ashig Abbas Divarganly

Ashig Abbas Divarganly is known to have lived in the 17th century during the reign of Shah Abbas I. The romantic love story of Abbas and Gulgez which has passed down to us the ashig's wonderful goshmas is based on his numerous verses.

Oh brothers and sisters, what have we come to:
The jay hates the eagle as never before.
Sons hate their fathers, daughters- their mothers,
And daughters-in-law hate their mothers-in-law.

Some people like vagabonds roam in the mountains,
Some wear clothes of leather- a sin in effect.
Some people know nothing of tact and good manners,
While others pay sultans and khans no respect.

Some people wander all day doing nothing.
Some people do not hold Allah in awe.
Some people do not believe in praying.
Some people refuse to obey the law.

There are people who walk over hill and valley,
There are people to whom a rose won't appeal.
There are people who can't buy cloth for their garments,
There are those who wear silk, but won't wear a veil.

There are some who possess the power to work wonders.
There are some who can never achieve their aims.
There are some who cannot buy bread for their children,
And some who eat butter, but honey disdain.



There are people whom you would present with flowers.
There are people who change their eyebrows' hue.
O Abbas Tufarghan, what have you come to:
Your old woman declares she doesn't like you!

* * *

Peri

You are laughing, laughing, peri, at my grief,
As if my grief were something funny, peri.
Wealthy suitors your house and garden surround,
And you laugh with lips sweet as honey, peri.

Ever since we have walked with you in Turis,
I've been daily wounded anew for my bliss.
I would rather be chained, cast in jail, than bear this.
How much grief you have bought me, my cunning peri!

Poor Abbas is already awaited above
Since his sweetheart tramples upon his love,
For you songs and talent are not enough:
At a moneyless lover you laugh, peri!

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Mollah Panah Vagif

Mollah Panah Vagif, the dean of realistic Azerbaijani poetry, was born in 1717 in Salahly, a village in the Kazakh district of Azerbaijan. He left us many love poems glorifying earthly joys and the beauty of real, flesh-and-blood women, written in an idiomatic language close to a popular speech.

Vagif was a highly educated man for his day. He was a gifted statesman, he was the chief vizier of the Karabakh Khan. In 1797, Aga-Muhammed-Shah Qajar, the ruler of Iran, seized Shusha, the capital of the Khanate. Vagif was put in prison and sentenced to death after the invasion. Qajar was assassinated at the night before Vagif's execution, so poet survived.

For long, how long my love and I were parted!
 We met again. As strangers we departed.
 Although we two did not exchange a word,
 The memories shared had left us heavy hearted.
 Our faces gave no sign. Our glance was cool.
 Each stood and stared like some benighted fool.
 I was no moth that winds a burning spool
 Of love around a lamp... And we departed.
 We stood together less than half an hour.
 We were not singed. The flame had lost its power.
 We felt no warmth. Our love could not reflower.
 She went her way. Unreconciled we parted.
 Once we admitted neither of us cared,
 We suffered much as through this life we fared.



The birds that in our souls once sang were scared
 Like us they fled and wander heavy hearted.
 Vagif once loved, but she deserves disdain.
 Yes, false she was she suffered all in vain.
 We never spoke or thought of love again...
 Without embracing, strangers we departed.

* * *

I went out to talk to a girl with dark eyes.
 She said, "You must go, I cannot let you stay!
 Many people can see us. With signs we can't speak-
 It's no time to bring winking eyes into play!"
 Your coquettish warm languor is my deadly foe.
 The breezes are brushing your curls to and fro.
 It's time we should kiss. I beg you, don't go,
 But come, let us love, there is no more to say!
 Vagif says, be bold! Such a chance never miss.
 Stroke the nape of her neck as you beg for a kiss.
 Wasting time in discourses would be quite amiss. . .
 Now my breath comes in gasps-do not tease me I pray.

* * *

I beg you, look among the wedding guests.
 If one most lovely girl is present by some chance,
 I shall not tell her name, but most of you can guess
 Sweet daughter of our friend, beguile us with a dance!
 Impatiently we wait to see her whirl and swing,





And trust that anguish from our soul's she'll fling.
With bracelets on your wrists and on each hand a ring,
We beg you show your grace. Beguile us with a dance!
Her figure's newly formed, supple, slim, divine.
She holds my heart in thrall. For her true love I pine.
Now to her loving friend, oh, let her give a sign,
And at this marriage feast beguile us with a dance!
Molla Vagif shall call for help with bitter cries.
Not tears, but blood shall spurt from his lamenting eyes
Unless that lovely girl to show her grace will rise.
Although it breaks my heart, beguile us with a dance!

Translated by Tom Botting



Mollah-Veli Vidadi

Mollah-Veli Vidadi (1709-1809) was a contemporary and a friend of Vagif. Vidadi's lyric poetry is often melancholy in its mood: he speaks of homesickness, of disillusion, violence and social injustice. In style, his poems are akin to a folk poetry. For a certain period of his life Vidadi was the court poet of the Georgian Prince, Irakly the Second. His poetic correspondence with Vagif, written in verse, is very popular in Azerbaijan.

The soul cannot bear too long
The absence of the one it desires.
Love survives where lovers stay true.
Without constancy love expires.
Be faithful to those who stay true,
The faithless make haste to eschew.
Your virtues reveal not to view
Where no one virtue admires.
O my friend, again and again
I repeat: where there is no shame,
No honour, there's nothing to gain,
There's nothing your soul to inspire.
God shield the abandoned and lone,
The souls that in solitude groan.
Sad and lone as a rolling stone
Is he who no friendship acquires.
Acknowledge the truth, o my heart,
Or conscience will make you smart.





How can men from the truth depart
 When nothing such baseness requires?
 To you, o my bosom friend,
 This admonition I send.
 But answer me-in the final end,
 Can there be a rose without briars?
 The heart loves as long as it lives,
 Love no rest to the spirit gives.
 How can I live-Allah forgive-
 If gone is the one whom my heart desires?

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg



Ashig Khasta Gasim

Ashig Khasta Gasim was one of the most popular 18th century folk poets in Azerbaijan. Khasta, which he chose for a pen-name, means "one in pain". And indeed his goshmas are full of pain caused by the injustices, deceits and betrayals of the time. Many of his goshmas are didactic, teaching people how to live and begging for honesty, truth, reason and humaneness. Khasta Gasim's goshmas are still performed today by the modern ashigs.

Sanam Come Too

All famous beauties have come to the feast.
 In the best of your dresses, Sanam, come too.
 You're afraid, like a deer that sees the bow.
 With your raven-black tresses, Sanam, come too.

I am not an ashig if I can't sing your charms.
 All the world dreams of bliss in your snowy arms.
 Your speech like sweet balsam comforts and calms.
 With lips sweet as molasses, Sanam, come too.

Says Hastan Qasum: I can see on your face
 Two moles that enhance your beauty and grace.
 No, nothing I see in you is out of pace.
 Made for love and caresses, Sanam, come too.

* * *

Go Away

Go away, beauty, go and be cursed.
 May your life till the last be nothing but woe.
 May your black tresses be turned into snakes
 And not fall in dark waves to the ground below.





May you always weep when all others feel joy.
May you burn on a fire, you're so wayward and coy.
Let faithful beauties your service employ;
May you be their slave, and before them bow low.

I would give all my soul for a woman who's true.
I would worship her beauty all my life through.
But I wish that no children be born of you,
That no flower- just thorns- in your garden should grow.

O you girl, no one knows your real nature but me.
Then be punished at doomsday for treachery.
Let a viper bite you while sleeping you be.
May all ears be deaf when you groan with woe.

But Khasta Gasim is so lonely and sad,
If you come and embrace him, he will be glad.
To all I have said, I have this to add;
Come to me, and I'll wish you good fortune; so!

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg



Gasim Bey Zakir

Gasim Bey Zakir was born at the end of the 18th century into the family of a bey in Shusha. In his satirical poetry and fables, Zakir lashed out at the vices then rampant in society, at the hypocrisy and bigotry of the clergy, venality of the officials, greediness of the merchants, and cruelty of the landowners. Besides satirical poetry he is also the author of some morality stories in verse. He was persecuted by the authorities on the instigation of the mullahs and beys, and was finally deported to Baku and put behind bars. His son and nephew were deported with him. Thanks to the intervention of relatives and friends, among them the prominent Azerbaijani writer Mirza Fatali Akhundov, the poet was released from prison and allowed to return home. Zakir died in 1857.

I remember a fable a book once told
Of a wolf and a jackal, in times of old.

Who were friends with a lion, the King of Beasts,
And they shared meat and drink, for a time at least.

It so happened that all of three days and nights,
Every hunt was in vain- they had not a bite.

Towards dawn they were lucky- in one small glen,
Caught a ram and a lamb and a nice fat hen.

Now the lion's big appetite knew no bounds-
To the wolf he said: "You do the sharing round!

"Let us eat or our dinner will start to cool!"
but the wolf did not catch, like an utter fool.

"O our Sovereign Lors," he rose to the bait,
"Twas decided in Heaven by Allah the Grest-

"It's His hand. For you ram, for me lamb, and then





for the jackal Allah sent the big fat hen."

This is sheer impudence, thought the lion, put out;
Why this insolent wolf needs a good hard clout-

And his powerful paw struck the wolf on the head
So his eyes both fell out and he lay half dead.

But the lion still had the poor jackal in view-
And he said: "The decision now rests with you.

"Go ahead, show how clever you are, be bold!
For at this you're a master, so I've been told!"

Now the jackal had seen how the wolf fell flat;
In the lion's manoeuver, he smelt a rat;

"It has been in our blood since the world was made-
Yet, my Lord, you first turned to a Fool for aid.

"I shall share out the trophies with such skill and art-
That till Judgment day comes, you will say 'How smart!'

"On the ram, Forest King, you will break your fast,
For your supper the lamb will be kept- and last,

"There's the hen: Mighty Lion and in my view
It will make just a nice morning snack for you."

Said the Lion: "I'm speechless you are really smart.
But who taught you to do it, and with such art?"

And the jackal: "IN this art I was not refined-
But I learned quick enough from my brother, now blind?"

If a senior to you say the day is night,
You must say: "Yes, the stars in the sky are bright!"

If he figures the night to be day, just agree;
You may tell him: "The sun is too hot for me!"

Translated by Gladys Evans



Heiran Khanum

Heiran Khanum was a 19th century Azerbaijani poetess whose love and philosophical ghazals and rubaiyat have come down to us.

My soul's bird hovers where your tresses flow,
It seems to hang 'twixt heaven and hell below.
See how confused it is, completely lost
Amongst your charms and knows not where to go!
My grief and sorrow to peak have soared,
I'm like a vessel lost, when tempests blow.
My heart rejoiced in your delightful face,
"Twixt woe and hope I wander to and fro.
Behold the wonder- where a desert was
There now is life and luscious grasses grow!
My love has turned from me, where is the friend,
Who'll help distraught Kherian recover from her woe?

* * *

O rose, can anyone not worship at your shrine,
O angle, who can not adore your grace sublime?
And where that sage who with your beauty is in love
But does not dedicate his life and does not pine?
To see your face, O moon, I can no longer bear,
And so I grieve and suffer torments all the time.
I fear that should I see you, I at once would die,
My life will be hell, if you will not be mine.
There's nought that I can give to you except my soul,
But fear it prove unworthy of a rose so fine.
Kheiran, you hope he will be yours sometime?
You needn't hope for he will not until you die.

Translated by Eugene Felgenhauer





Mirza-Shafi Vazeh

Mirza-Shafi Vazeh, the "sage from Ganja", was one of the best known Azerbaijani poets, translated into nearly all European languages. Vazeh was born at the end of the 18th century in Ganja into the family of a prominent architect, Kerbelai Sadykh. He was educated at a madrasah, where he made brilliant success of his studies of Arabic and Persian, and where also he earned fame for his daring verses against the ignorance and fanaticism. The persecutions he was subjected to compelled him to leave his country and settle in Tbilisi where, with the help of friends, he secured the post of a junior master at the boys' school. It was in Tbilisi that Vazeh met Friedrich Bodenslated, a German poet and traveler, who took down his poetry, translated it into German and published it. The book created a stir; it was re-published again and again, and translated into other European languages. In his poetry, Vazeh glorifies the joys of life, and the wisdom and goodness of a man. He died in Tbilisi in 1852.

My head and my heart work in opposite ways,
But both will succeed in making me perish.
"Keep away from love," so one of them says.
The other is all for the woman I cherish.

Daily and nightly my reason revolts
At my heart's excess of passionate fire.
But what heart can restrain the flame that it holds?
So mine, too, always burns with love and desire.

* * *

If I don't come to you and steal a kiss,
This paltry world will offer me no bliss.
There is no other joy that it can give.



Your love alone can make me glad I live.
Your glances flood the world with light sublime
So that all secrets it contains I may divine.
I owe my noblest feelings to that light,
Imbuing all my life with pure delight.
My loving dreams soar higher than the skies.
My guiding stars are your beloved eyes.

* * *

Ghazal

As numerous as the stars in the moonlit sky
Are the wounds in my breast from the knives of your eyes.
Not a star in the sky, no celestial body are you,
Yet you always attracted my eyes-my love I cannot disguise.
My life has become a burden, one gloomy, eternal night
Such a sweet tormentor's victim, can I refrain from sighs?
I live, but my life has been poisoned by hopeless love for you.
My eyes have become like a fountain that never dries.
This woeful ghazal has been written by lovesick Vazekh.
Behold how, smitten with jealousy, slowly he dies!

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Mirza Fatali Akhundov

Mirza Fatali Akhundov (1812-1878), the great Azerbaijani prose writer, dramatist, philosopher, the founder of the movement of enlightenment and the initiator of realism in the Azerbaijani literature, was one of the best-educated men of his days. His first published work was the *Oriental Poem* (1837) written on the death of Alexander Pushkin. He laid the foundations of realistic prose with his story *Cheated Stars* (1857), and with his five plays- comedies and dramas- written in the early 1850s, established realism as the leading trend in Azerbaijani literature. He gave a powerful impetus to the development of prose and dramaturgy written for and about the people. In his philosophical treatises, publicist writings and literary criticisms, Akhundov openly condemned tyranny and oppression, and championed education of the masses in the spirit of the time's advanced materialistic ideas.

Akhundov launched the realistic dramaturgy in the Middle East, and theoretically substantiated the principle of realism in Oriental literature, particularly in poetry, which he wrote both in Azerbaijani and in Persian. He was born in Sheki, and died in Tbilisi where he had made his home for many years.

On the Death of A.S. Pushkin

(An Oriental Poem)

I spoke at night, my eyes not tasting sleep:
 O heart, you treasure pearls of mysteries deep!
 Why has your nightingale now ceased to sing?
 Why does your voice of eloquence silence keep?
 What bars the flight of your poetic word?
 Why halts your day-dream on the pathway sleep?
 Behold the spring: like maidens' beauteous charm-



We sing the praise of nature's verdant sweep.
 By meadow streams the violets, clustering blow,
 And flaming buds from rose-trees bravely peep;
 The vale is decorated like a bride,
 The flowers on the hills their jewels heap.
 A tree all crowned with blossoms like a king,
 Stands in the garden with majestic air,
 The lili and the lilac drink its health
 In dewy wine from cups of tulip fair.
 Narcissus' eyes from ecstasy grown dim,
 The lilac's brilliant radiance cannot bear.
 The Nightingale extends to passers by
 The petal of a rose, with friendly care.
 The clouds will sprinkle dew on flower-beds,
 A breeze takes back on high a fragrance rare.
 The morning songsters sing their roundelays:
 -O verdure, pierce the pall of bleak decay!
 All have their gift who tread upon the earth,
 And talent has its market-price, I say.
 Some sing their love with captivating charm,
 Others lament it in a mournful way.
 Yet all have bid farewell to grief pain
 Delighting in a life pleasure gay.
 All, all around, yet you alone are mute,
 Not joining in the rapture, you, my Heart!





You relish not the dreams of poesy,
And from the joys of glory you depart.
Aren't you the heart that in a sea of thoughts
As bright as pearl, would try the poet's art-
And with those pearls the brow of speech adorn
That to young maidens beauty do impart?
Now I know not from whence your sorrow comes,
Why you despair, and play a mourner's part?
My heart replied: Friend of my solitude,
Depart, I beg you leave me all alone.
Had I not known that in the wake of spring
The stormy autumn winds ascend their throne-
Then for the glorious fight a sword of words
For Poesy I'd forge, in whirlwind's moan.
But I have learnt the treachery of fate,
My end foredoomed by her, perfidious grown.
The bird that sees the net is surely mad
To seek the grain mid dangers, fully known.
The cries of glory loud now echo faint
'Neath turning sky, in yawning distance thrown.
Speak not of day-dreams, for I know the prize
That fate will give the dreamer for his own.
O have you yet not then, ignorant of the world,
Of Pushkin- greatest of the poets heard?
Of that same Pushkin who was glorified



Throughout the world for wondrous verse and word?
Whose pen in touching paper, a desire
To lose its whiteness in that paper stirred?
Bright as the movements of a peacock fine
His Muse a thousand vivid flowers girt.
Great Lomonosov decked the muses' fane,
But Pushkin's vision made it his domain.
Derzhavin won the literary realm,
But Pushkin was appointed there to reign.
By Karamzin the cup was filled with lore,
Yet Pushkin was the one that cup to drain.
The glory of his genius ruled the West
As kingly power reign o'er land and main.
His wisdom clear shone brightly in the North
As shine the eastern moon, with stars in train.
The seven heavens and the elements four
To bear a son so fine would try in vain.
Now listen with amazement to the way
These parents death their son a deadly blow:
They sped as fatal arrow at the bard,
And cruelly stopped his life's poetic flow.
One hail-stone smashed the fruit on his life's tree,
And this was done by order of his foe.
The cruel wind of death put out his lamp,
And plunged his body in the dark of woe.





With ruthless knife the gardener pruned his shoots
As a tree not destined more to grow.

His head that held the treasure of the mind
Became a nest of thorns with snakes below.

The heart where nightingales his genius sang
Is covered now with naughty but thorny sloe.

His soul has left his body like a bird,
To sorrow binding both the young and old.

The Russian land in grief and sorrow cries,
-Now death has caught its victim stark and cold!

O bard, your talisman could save you not,
The witch's grip has not relaxed its hold.

You leave the earth, but may your Maker's love
Your soul in mercy heavenly enfold!

Bakhchisarai sends you the fragrance sweet
Of your two roses, wondrous to behold.

The age-old Caucasus answers now your songs
With lays of Sabukhee, in anguish told.

Translated by Olga Moisseyenko



Khurshid-Banu Natavan

Khurshid-Banu Natavan (1830-1897) was the Orient's first poetess to have a monument erected to her by her countrymen (in Baku). Natavan was born in Shusha into the family of Garabagh Khan. In 1872, she founded a literary circle in Shusha which united all the progressive poets of the time. Natavan's graceful, subtle verses speak of love and the beauties of nature. But many of her poems are permeated with a tragic sense of loss caused by the death of her young son from tuberculosis.

Lilac

- O flowering lilac, whose was the skilful hand that drew you?
- O Radiant-Featured, was it a loving slave that drew you?

Chancing to penetrate into your palace, garden,
O poppy-cheeked, was it a skilful gardener drew you?

In this flowerbed world there were all too many plain faces;
Was that the reason why the almighty keeper drew you?

The flowers take their colours and fragrance from you,
As a flower the hand of the world's creator drew you.

What a wealth of gentleness shows in your beauty!
With her gift of fancy bestowed by God, perhaps it was Natavan
that drew you?

* * *





Beloved, how could you break the oath to me you swore?
Beloved, am I today not the same as I was before?

You seek new company, love, with other women you meet,
Have you forgotten me, the one that you once called sweet?

Yes, you have found another before whom you bare your soul,
She is receiving the joy which from my life you stole.

My life is now a nightmare of infinite, black despair.
People talk of my madness always and everywhere.

Your heartlessness, o beloved, is driving me insane.
Have pity on me, have mercy, come back to me again.

O Destiny, how cruel, how ruthless you are to me!
Who does he give his love? "Who can the lucky one be?"

Life overflows with anguish, with tears overflow my eyes;
But he, my fickle lover, turns a deaf ear to my sighs.

Why, have you been avoiding me all this time,
Me, the unlucky slave of a lord so truly sublime?

Love, you have driven your slave to the limit of desperation,
Gossips are calling me now the victim of sinful temptation.

Have pity on me, your slave, o my lord, my Padishah!
My lamentations echo throughout the world, near and far.

You and your love make merry, carousing day and night,
And I, your unlucky victim, have forgotten what is delight.

There was a time when you wanted nobody else but me.
Now you have changed, and your old love you even refuse to see.



What was the cause, my monarch, explain to your subject, pray?
What have I done that you leave me like a flower plucked and
thrown away?

What shall I do, distraught and unhappy as I am now?
How could I ever have given my heart to you, oh how?

Make merry, my love, with my rival, feast and have a good time,
While I must weep tears of anguish because you're no longer mine.

Chirp with your newly-found mate like two nightingales on a bough:
And I-remember what I was like, and what have I turned into now?

Kill me, let Allah give strength to your ruthless hand!
What have I done to you that such torture I have to stand?

I sigh and I weep in sorrow, pain is tearing my heart.
Poor Natavan, your lot was unfortunate from the start.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Seid-Azim Shirvani

Seid-Azim Shirvani (1835-1888) was the author of love ghazals, instructive poems and satirical verses. He was born in Shamakhy, but went to school in Syria and Iraq where he received a higher ecclesiastical education. He made a lot of enemies among the fanatics, but undaunted by threats and persecutions, founded a secular school. Shirvani's trenchant satire which hit the oppressors between the eyes and at the same time called for brotherhood and honesty between men, was mainly printed in Ekinchi (Ploughman), a progressive Azerbaijani newspaper in 1875-78.

The Ploughman and the Khan

A ploughman walked cheerfully homeward on day
 And met an illustrious Khan on his way.
 On seeing the Khan he stopped and bowed low
 To which the guard noble responded so:
 "Get out of my way, you hound," he cried,
 "Don't stand like a swine, or I'll rip off your hide!"
 The ploughman, being accosted so
 Came home in a flurry, all-aglow.
 His wife, observing his exultant mood
 Said: "O my master, my radiant moon!
 O Milky Way shinning in my skies,
 O shower of light that guides me through life,
 Explain your exultant state to your wife."
 She begged and implored until her man
 Said: "Know then, today an illustrious khan
 Was haughtily coming along the road
 I stopped and, facing him, humbly bowed
 And the Khan, condescended to speak to me."



I'll never believe such a thing could be.
 Who heard of a khan ever speaking to you?
 Oh tell me about it, husband, do!"
 Beaming with joy, the peasant began:
 "These were the wrds of the glorious khan:
 'Get out of my way, you dog,' he cried,
 "don't stand like a swine, or I'll rip off your hide!"
 Now, wasn't it gracious of the great khan
 To deign to to speak to a humble man?
 Don't you see what a joy it is
 To have lived to witness such heavenly bliss?
 It will be the pride of our family,
 Let it live till we die in our memory,
 To be passed along to our children's sons,
 That I spoke to a khan and met such response."

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Mirza Alekper Sabir (Tahir-Zade)

Mirza Alekper Sabir (Tahir-Zade) (1862-1911) was a major folk poet, the initiator of revolutionary satire in Azerbaijani literature, and an active contributor to the revolutionary-democratic journal of Mollah Nasreddin. Sabir was born in Shamakhy, and he lived there all his life. The Revolution of 1905 in Russia had a powerful effect on Sabir's writing, infusing it with a revolutionary spirit and filling it with a social content. His pen did not miss a single political event, a single problem typical for the Moslem World, and he embodied his ideas in stirring, thought-provoking images. Sabir was an innovator in poetry, he experimented with new style, extending the range of subject matter to reflect the social reality as fully as possible, and polished his verses to perfection, until it rang as clear, resilient and melodious as a taut string.

The centenary of Sabir's birth in 1962 was celebrated as a cultural festival in Moscow and Baku, where a monument to the poet was unveiled.

Thanksgiving

Dear colleagues, thank the stars above for the luck we've had today!
The missionaries are our friends; now aren't we glad today!
By every means we tried to close all schools until this day,
But lacked the power to gain our goal, poor fools, until this day.
Though we ordained that schools be closed, they scorned us till this day.
We lost authority and weight, my friends, day after day,
But now our lucky star again ascends day after day.
Things have improved and our position's not so bad today.
For the missionaries are our friends, so aren't we glad today!
The missionaries have ideas, they're intellectual giants.

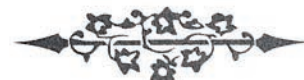


In Petersburg they've signed with us a business-like alliance.
Why have, they say, so many schools to serve our Moslem clients?
Can't they get on just as they are? What use have they for science?
They'll get acquainted with philosophy and history and so on;
Well, well, they say, we can't permit this sort of thing to go on.
So let us see that schools enroll no girl or lad today,
For the missionaries are our friends, and aren't we glad today!
And since the missionaries had performed such noble deeds,
How could we sit with folded hands and not take part, indeed.
In short, we Moslem clergymen, with our business to proceed,
A ban on certain sciences henceforward have decreed..
For children to be taught at school there surely is no need.
Of independent thought and arrogance we must stamp out the seed,
While there is still the slightest chance, let's act, by god, today,
For the missionaries are our friends, so aren't we glad today!
You curbed the Moslems, missionaries, Allah bless your souls!
And bring- you to the true faith, missionaries. Allah bless your souls!
Let Allah put the schools in ruins, missionaries. Bless your souls!
Let Allah's holy will be done, O missionaries! Bless your souls!
Let all of those who ever tried to open up new schools
Cry, rave, go mad, go wild with fury, idiots, poor fools!
Let teachers be thrown out of work throughout the land today,
The missionaries are our friends, and aren't we glad today!

* * *

Ploughman

Don't wail, don't cry, don't pretend you're unhappy, ploughman!
You old, sly fox, you won't catch us napping, ploughman!
Under some pretext or other, daily you stand at my door;
Don't beg, don't ask me, don't stretch out your hand at my door!
I'm sick of seeing the whole of your clan at my door!





Don't get ideas, don't wear out my patience, ploughman!
Be dumb and obey me while I am gracious, ploughman!
If the year brought you peasants no gain, what do I care?
If there was no rain and no crop of grain, what do I care?
If drought spoiled the rice and barley again, what do I care?
If last year your debt with your blanket you paid, what do I care?
Now carry your rug to the market to sell, ploughman!
Be dumb and obey, for assistance don't yell, ploughman!
Don't try to explain that from hunger you're dying, wretch!
You'll never persuade me, so no use trying, wretch!
Pay what you're due don't tell me you can't lying wretch!
Bring me barley and wheat, and rice, ploughman,
Or I'll take off your skin in a trice, ploughman!
Swear as much as you like that you can't I'll have it!
By Allah almighty, I'll get what I'm due I'll have it!
You'll be whipped and flogged black and blue I'll have it!
Don't forg-et yourself, pay your arrears, ploughman,
Don't overreach yourself, don't spill vain tears, ploughman!
Your job is to plough; eat millet yourself; give me wheat, ploughman!
As long as it's softer than stone any stuff you can eat, ploughman.
If you don't have water, their's plenty of snow to heat, ploughman!
You have never seen butter or cream or meat, ploughman,
You're used to a simple life, like a beast, ploughman!
Haven't I always declared that I want good relations?
All an aristocrat wants is leisure and relaxation,
Idling-, gambling, drinking and eating- without cessation.
Such is a gentleman's life by tradition, ploughman;
It was Allah appointed to us such an earthly mission, ploughman!

* * *



Questions and Answers

"My friend, in what state is your glorious city today?"
"God be blessed, it's the same as it was in Noah's day."
"Have you new schools for the young- of your country to learn in?"
"No, we've only Madrassahs, which stand since the year Adam was born in."
"Do the citizens in your land read newspapers every day?"
"Some literate madmen do, but I don't, I must say."
"Now tell me, my friend, are there libraries in your town?"
"Young people opened a few, but we turned them upside-down."
"Are the hungry helped in your country by other men?"
"God sees their sufferings himself why should we help them, then?"
"Do you take care of widows and women that are in need?"
"To the devil with them can't they marry again, indeed?"
"Is the need for unity talked about in your land?"
"Yes, it is, but for eloquence's sake, you must understand."
"Is the nation split into shiites and sunnites still?"
"What do you mean? For such words, young man, you ought to be killed."
"Well, there is nothing else I can say to you, so good-bye."
"Good riddance! I wish you to fall in a pit and die!"
"Just look at him! Look at his face what a loathsome sight!"
"The way he talks! Why, he can't even put his cap on right!"

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Abbas Sahhat (Mehti-Zade)

Abbas Sahhat (Mehti-Zade) (1874-1918) was one of the first Azerbaijani poets to write for children. Abbas was educated at the University, at the Department of Medicine, and had, besides his native Azerbaijani, a perfect knowledge of Arabic, Persian, Russian and French. His home was in Shamakhy, and he lived there all his life. He made a name in literature as a romantic poet, talented and progressive educator who compiled the first textbook in Azerbaijani, as the author of poetry about nature which children gladly memorize, and as a translator of Krylov, Pushkin, Lermontov and Nekrasov into Azerbaijani.

Progress and the Law of Nature

One summer evening I walked for an hour
On the hill of the ancient Virgin's Tower.
I surveyed the old battlements one by one,
The tower and the walls in the setting sun,
And unusual thought arose in my head.
The world is like us, to myself I said.
It is born, it lives, develops, grows old,
Then dies, leaving ruins lifeless and cold
Where owls make their dwellings, inspiring awe;
At the root of all life lies a single law:
All is born, develops and then decays-
It is the principle on which all Nature is based.
Change underlies progress; if there were none
Life would not develop, would not have begun.
This law is of infinite scope and range:
Evolution continues only through change.



Men, too, are born to bear offspring and go.
Nature teaches a lesson that all should know:
Renewal prolongs the life of a nation;
This was true from the earliest days of creation.
All passes on from one state to another.
Where is ancient Greece- art and culture's mother?
Where's the progress of old and old renewals?
How many towers like this lie in ruins,
Replaced by new towers with new sculpture and pictures!
Where are the Assyrians, Romans, Egyptians?
Babylonians, Persians, Parthians, Midians?
Time has destroyed them by millions and millions,
Leaving nothing behind but a meager trace,
And it happened because they were out of pace,
Because they did not improve, but stagnated,
Deterred on their course by beliefs outdated,
They all disappeared as if never begot.
Now tell me, what does not alter, what?
In plants and animals changes are wrought;
Then why should there be no change in our thoughts?
'Tis a fact that History, too, can prove.
Stagnant nations are swept from the face of the earth.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Ashig Alesker

Ashig Alesker (1821-1920) was born in Akkilsa, a village in the Basar-Kechar district of West Azerbaijan. He is known throughout Transcaucasia. His poems are classics of ashig art, written with remarkable skill, elegance and sheer virtuosity. He extolled courage and honesty, and condemned hypocrisy and bigotry. Beside the verses, he himself had composed in the course of his long life. Ashig Alesker is said to have known some sixty tales and poems by heart, performing them at celebrations which, in Azerbaijan, invariably feature the singing of ashigs.

You Must Have

To be a bard and wander far from home
You knowledge and thinking head must have.
How you are to behave, you too must know,
Politeness, erudition you must have.

To quell the devil in you you must seek,
About the truth with people learn to speak,
Be honest, true, obedient and meek.
Respect of all the people you must have.

Be quick to understand a hint, howe'er,
Of strangers you should, as a rule, beware,
And like a clock advance to what is fair.
True heart and word of honour you must have.

So, Alesker, give alms unto the poor,
That angels would a place for you ensure.
Your glance should be both resolute and pure,
A pathway clear before you must have.

* * *



She Is Killing Me

O woe is me, and question not, my friend!
A beauteous doe I know is killing me,
Without a sword, without a firearm,
And no one knows that she is killing me.

I'd like to know why I to have done,
That she my very company should shun.
I'd sacrifice my soul, though I've by one.
I'd like to know why she is killing me?

I, Alesker, have visited the same,
While I'm alive, I hardly can refrain;
And death's bright angel, mother, do not blame:
It is her piercing glance that's killing me.

Translated by Eugene Felgenhauer





Ashig Hussein Bozalganly

Ashig Hussein Bozalganly (1872-1949) was born in Ashagi-Bozalganly, a village in the Tovuz district of Azerbaijan. He had a brilliant knowledge of the great epic poem of Koroglu and other folk sagas, and won many contests, even against the recognized champion of "poetic battles" Ashig Alesker.

I Recall

When I embraced my beloved's slender neck,
Deep in her locks my fingers his I recall.
I wanted to place my hand on her breast,
When coyly a button she undid, I recall.

Languidly she came up I saw her desire;
Laughing, clapping her hands, full of charm and fire!
She hid in my home, an angel in earthly attire,
Her sweet words spiced with love and with, I recall.

Then, by the mirror, an image of girlish grace,
She combed her locks and arranged them around her face.
Then she came to me and we lay in a hot embrace;
Closer and closer to me she clung, I recall.

How her eyelashes fluttered and pierced my breast!
The scent of musk arose from her vest,
Then she went away and left me distressed
She did not care, but pretended she did, I recall.

Oh, how hard I suffered at my sweetheart's hands!
Before me her pitiless image still stands.
Yet I doubt that her cruelty she understands.
But how clearly her fiery caress I recall!

* * *



My Jeyran

O strength of my sinews, light of my eyes,
I'm in love with you, source of my woes, my jeyran!
I would take all your troubles upon myself;
How your hair down your shoulders flows, my jeyran!

Ah, your beauty has turned into a dove.
How I long for you, how you torture me, love!
Tell me what drug is strong enough
To cure me- I suffer, God knows, my jeyran!

I need no riches, no castles, no money;
I'd be satisfied with your lips' sweet honey,
Your wit, your perfection and your smile so sunny,
Your dimpled chin, your face like a rose, my jeyran!

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Ashig Shamshir (1893-1980)

This cannot continue, the day must arrive
When justice will come upon you, oppressor.
You plunder the people of village and town;
Where is your conscience, your honour, oppressor?

What is my fault that you tortured and plague me?
No one attempts to protect and save me,
Yet I don't weep in vain, for time will avenge me;
I suffer, but who'll be your mourner, oppressor?

A pity my words do not touch your heart;
But our woes are recorded ere we depart;
You will suffer bitterly, aye, you will smart
For the merciless slaughter of poor men, oppressor.

This old universe saw off many a lord;
The memory of tyrants is cursed and abhorred;
Hangman, you will die from the avenging sword;
Begone it's too late, stop your plunder, oppressor.

Don't boast of your strength, don't be proud of your power,
Don't think it is off, your fatal hour.
For Shamshir's fortune is yet to flower,
While you have good cause to tremble, oppressor!

* * *



The Beauty and I

Said I: Whence, O beauty, your gait so fine?
Said she: From the swan that swims on the brine.
Said I: Is it henna that makes your hair shine?
Said she: It is Nature- my beauty is mine.
Said I: The sweet sound of your speech turns my head!
I'm sorry for you, poor man, she said.
Said I: Let us walk to that flowerbed.
Said she: Your offer I must decline.

Said I: Your lashes have pierced my breast.
Said she: My victims with bliss are blessed.
Said I: Tell me, where can a lover find rest?
Said she: On your mistress's bosom recline.
Said I: O beauty, a man's sole wealth is love!
Said she: Only beggars think love is enough.
Said I: Your breasts are pomegranates sent from above!
Said she: O man, you are out of your mind!

Said I: Poor Shamshir has been smitten by you.
Said she: In your words there's nothing new.
Said I: Your lips shine with honey-like dew.
Said she: It is medicine for men of your kind.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Mirza Ali Mojuz

Mirza Ali Mojuz (1873-1934) was a revolutionary satirist, prominent in southern, Iranian part of Azerbaijan. He was born in the village of Shabustar (hence his pen-name) into a merchant-class family. He lived for many years in Turkey, returning home just before the first Russian revolution of 1905, where his satirical verses aimed against the rich who exploited and oppressed the people made him subject to ruthless persecution. Mojuz also wrote a large number of poems about the revolutionary awakening of the people. His poetry enjoyed a great popularity, and people learnt it by heart in those days when writing in Azerbaijani was prohibited by law in Iran.

For Sultans Only

Only sultans and generals taste peshmak and nogul,
 Chicken and Sadri rice are for those whose pockets are full,
 When he's got tasty plov, kebab and meat in the larder,
 "Potato soup's good after breakfast," says nobody's fool.
 Sugar is sweet and clean, it needn't be peeled,
 Though imported from Lakhistan, it does fine for a meal,
 Poor man, don't narrow your eyes, don't look with suspicion at sugar,
 For plov, orange-juice and syrups are for the rich man's meal.
 Horse-radish, beetroot, salt peas, bread and cheese are the poor
 man's lot.
 Oranges, tangerines, lemon and cream are only for Khans, by God.
 Those underpants swathing your legs and your belly in blue
 Come to us from the Sudan-Iranian cotton? It's not!
 Bright samovars, teaspoons and tablespoons, glasses and saucers,
 Mirrors and double wick lamps, chandeliers, braziers and wall jugs
 Are German in make- a fact unknown only to horses.
 Are genuine Iranian products, though certainly not of richest.



Telegraph, telephone, motorcar- all these gewgaws are foreign.
 Yet the horse, camel, donkey and mule are truly Iranian creatures.
 Anasha, too, comes from Iran, and opium's Iranian too.
 Drink and smoke! But don't use vodka- it's the devil's own brew!
 These lamps that hang on their posts and illumine our streets at night
 Are made by giaours, unbelievers- who'll venture to say I'm not right?
 Gaji-Rassul mattresses weighing a full three batmans each
 Are fit but for fatnecked bullies with fists of enormous might.
 Ladders, four-legged stools, rolling pins, window-frames, doors,
 Rattles, walking-sticks, logs all have Weigan as their source.
 But- the phonograph costing, you 55 tumans
 Which you daily enjoy, comes from U.S. of course.
 Prostitutes, whores and fast women- all those who cater for Man,
 Traveling brothels and public houses- all come from Khorasan.
 Witchdoctors and fortune-tellers are certainly foreign produce,
 Crows are the national airplanes, sparrows- our air-ballons,
 A brittle category of goods; rough handling gives them wounds.
 A team of seventeen preachers has taken hold of our mosque,
 Yet people think these "commodities" belong to Allah- what fools!
 Dissension, conflicts and sects are alien to Islamic religion.
 They say such things are imported from Loristan and such regions.
 O my people, Mojuz is in a sarcastic mood,
 But the things he chastises really deserve derision!

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Hussain Javid

Hussain Javid (1882-1941) was an outstanding representative of the Azerbaijani romanticism, poet and dramatist, the author of tragedies in verse. His popularity has spread well outside the country. Javid was born in Nakhchivan and educated at the University of Istanbul. He taught Azerbaijani and literature in Nakhchivan, Tbilisi and Ganja, and then, in 1919, settled permanently in Baku. Despondency and disillusionment are characteristic moods for his poetry of the pre-Soviet period: he complains against the injustices of the world, calls for protest, and dreams of better times, of freedom. It was then that he wrote his historical drama, Sheikh Sanan which is still popular with Azerbaijani audiences, telling about the love and humanism over religions bigotry. In 1937, Javid was slandered and arrested on false charges, and exiled to Siberia where he died, but his name has now been cleared and his rich legacy restored to its rightful place in literature.

Hussain Javid's body was transferred from Siberia to Azerbaijan by the efforts of the National Leader of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Heyder Aliyev in 1980s.

Yesterday and Today

Happy the shining eyesbut yesterday:
Here grief and mourning liesbut come today.
Brave words so full of cheerbut yesterday:
Full of despair and tearsbut come today.
Gay heart of yesterdayit aches today.
Dead dreams of yesterdayrevive today.
Old Fortune is a jadewithout a heart:
Always with man has playedand torn apart.
With her it's all in play to smile, betray.
He, sentenced yesterday is judge today.



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He, sentenced yesterday is judge today.
Unlucky, yesterday in luck today.
Those happy yesterday are sad today.
A different world today new laws, in fine;
The cups of yesterday held blood, not wine.
The king of yesterday a slave today.
The slave of yesterday a king today -
The pledge of yesterday washed out today.
The long-time enemy a friend today.
And Nature's not able on land or sea
To stay quite stable, eternally.
Without exception, changes all creation.
The law of life is "perpetual alteration".
What does not change? It's inconceivable.
Could there be such a law inflexible?
Just as firm steel is gnawed away by rust
At ever step the Great turns into Dust.
Today is not concerned with Yesterday.
New knowledge lights each minute of each day.
In every Darkness throbs at least one Gleam.
Each Truth - a womb that bears at least one Dream.

Translated by Gladys Evans





Ahmed Javad

Ahmad Javad (1892-1937), a prominent poet and public figure, was arrested by the Soviet regime in 1937 for alleged crimes against the Azerbaijani people. Like many other talented writers and poets, he was sentenced to death. After Stalin died (1953), Javad was acquitted and his name was cleared. Since Azerbaijan regained its independence in 1991, Javad's name has gradually been restored as one of the Azerbaijan's most important poets. His poems are once again being published.

Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan!*
 You are the country of heroes!
 We will die so that you might be alive!
 We will shed our blood to defend you!
 Long live your three-colored banner!
 Thousands of people sacrificed their lives!
 You're become the field of battles.
 Every soldier fighting for you,
 Has become a hero.
 We pray for your prosperity,
 We make sacrifice our lives to you
 Our sincere love to you,
 Comes from the bottom of our hearts.
 To defend your honor,
 To hoist your banner,
 All the young people are ready.
 Glorious motherland,
 Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan!



*In 1918-1920, when Azerbaijan became an independent state and in 1991 after collapse of the Soviet Union when Azerbaijan regained its independence this poem became a National Anthem of Azerbaijan. Composer of National Anthem was prominent Azeri composer, Uzeyir Hajibeyli.

To the Azerbaijani Flag

Turkistan¹ winds are whispering
 their troubles to you,
 Kissing you on your forehead, my flag!
 Let the Black Sea send your three colors
 As a gift to its friends, my flag!
 I met you on my way to Turan,²
 Your shadow ever falling over my head!
 Let the tears watering my eyes
 Tell everyone of their grief, my flag!
 You got your colors from Gayi khan,³
 Moslem beys⁴ have gotten older like Elkhan.
 You, Elkhan's descendant, stronghold of religion,
 You brought delight into my soul, my flag!
 I stepped forward, fierce winds in my chest,
 I want to kiss the holy place
 where your shadow falls!
 The star of heavens, that beautiful fairy,⁵
 Has taken shelter in the moon in your lap,
 my flag!





This poem is dedicated to our national flag, which I saw fluttering above the parliament house upon my first arrival in Baku after the British had come here on April 10, 1919.

Footnotes:

- 1 Turkistan - referring to all of the Turkic nations.
- 2 Turan - the entire area of Turkic nations, from the Altay Mountains to the Black Sea.
- 3 Gayi khan and Elkhan - the names of legendary Oguz knights.
- 4 Bey - used here to mean the title given to noble men, members of gentry.
- 5 Beautiful fairy - referring to the flag's moon, which he says resembles a fairy.

Translated by Aynur Hajiyeva



Abdulla Shaig
(1881-1959)

Salutation to Our Century (1915)

I don't know whether we should welcome,
Or show disdain and hatred to this bloody century.
The horrors and rages of this terrible century
Made the great nations live in fear.
Pull up the thick, heavy curtains, let it be clear
What days-bright or, again, dark-are lying ahead.
Won't love ever secretly be born in the world
Among those blazing fires?
Is there any hope that happiness will triumph again?
Or will the whirlwind of the world's suffering continue?
Will these waves and gales allow
Our ship to arrive at the port safely?
Look, there are dark clouds in the sky,
The seas in the East swell up, rise and rage,
I don't know whether these dangerous storms
Will bring us to happiness or oblivion.

We're all Rays from the Same Sun (1910)

Hey you, damnable mankind, tyrannizing down through the ages,
Vomiting blood, and only blood!
Did revenge conquer your heart?
Did the hot wind seer your soul?
Are you enraptured with the bloody life you lead?
Humanity has been forgotten, pity!
Take a look back into history!
Burn the mischief, tyranny and discord!





We are all bred from the same nest!
We are all rays from the same Sun.
Languages cannot separate us,
Distance cannot separate us,
Nor can the Bible or Koran.
Borders set by kings cannot separate us,
Nor can oceans or continents,
Vast deserts cannot separate us,
Mighty mountains cannot separate us,
East, South, West, and North cannot separate us,
Enough of perpetrating malice and spite!
Enough of living with outmoded beliefs
Extend the hand of brotherhood to one another.
Band together tightly to destroy the roots of tyranny!
Let love and happiness dwell in our hearts!
Let's give faithful hands to one another!

To the Enemy of the People (1937)

(This poem refers to Stalin, as it was written in the year most closely associated with his repressive policy-1937-which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in the Soviet Union, including many intellectuals. The poet secretly hid this work and others that were critical of the regime. They were only discovered after his death. It was not possible to publish these poems until about 60 years later-after Azerbaijan had gained its independence.)

Stop, stop, you ignorant architect, the building
And the rooms are all askew.
Because your hand, eye, ear, head
And foot are crooked.
You're such an unskillful architect
When it comes to construction



But you're so adroit when it comes to destroying
And tearing down.
There was a test for the presidium,
And this makes you impudent
A chance coincidence brought you to this position.
Otherwise, you had neither
Sufficient knowledge, consciousness, nor skill.
Striving for the highest rank has made you so arrogant.
Seeking this, you took the wrong path,
You destroyed, broke, plundered to the right
And to the left.
The policy you implemented in order
To stay in the presidium
Caused thousands of disasters at every step.
Time will tell what you have done!
One can go deaf hearing so many voices
Mourning in our country.
Ignorant, stubborn people have neither heart,
Nor conscience.
Obviously, the empty drumbeat thunders more loudly.

I've studied all periods of history-
Far distant and modern-
Every bloody state, every tribe.
I couldn't find such a barbaric murderer anywhere,
You've totally annihilated
The nation's most knowledgeable sons
Stop! Enough, ignorant drunk! Tyranny has its limits!
One shouldn't jump over the ravine; it also has a bridge.
Such arrogance has not been observed in any king,
The nation's bloody tears bring such joy to you.
Ignorance and superficiality
Result in haughtiness and stubbornness.





The gray waves come only to the shores,
Hey you, eagle owl, you tried so hard to be a falcon,
You wanted to leave your name in history
With your empty brain.
Your every step, your every move proved this.
Have you ever known anyone to plant thorns in his field, and reap
grain?
This green field, this thrashing-floor,
Have been watered with tears,
With orphans' sighs, this mill was worked,
Not a single day of yours passes without a party,
Ride your stupid donkey up and down every slope,
The wine poured into glasses will mock you,
What does country or nation mean to a drunkard like you?!

Forward (1914)

Forget about the past, my dear,
Don't touch it anymore!
Don't raise those heavy curtains of yesteryear!
The past has always been a well
With a thousand ladders,
A dragon, a snake, sleeping on each one.
Don't open that well, my child.
Never open it.
Don't play the saz* of the past,
Grieving souls any more.
Let them rot on the stalk in that dark cemetery,
Don't allow your young life to be poisoned, my dear!
Go forward, and don't look back;
There is no need!
Think always of the future;
Keep your eyes focused on it!



Don't forget that those bright eyes
Beneath your forehead.
Were given to see what lies in front of you-
To follow the way.
Always set your eyes forward and seek the bright way
And go, go, and don't stop.
Away from that stormy, dreary past!
Go, go with fiery, firm steps. Don't stop, go on!
Believe me, there's a world, like a paradise, ahead,
The sun will rise
And happiness will shine forth tomorrow.

That Was You (1919)

For so long, I dreamed of a statue of a beauty - a nymph.
For so long, I created a lovely image in my dreams,
I would choose colors from the flowers
For her cheeks and lips.
To tell you the truth, that nymph that I was envisioning
Was so close and native to my heart.
I painted her image in the bottom of my heart,
I loved her, and melted like a candle from my love to her.
From time to time when
She would reappear in my dreams,
A vibrant truth would tremble in front of me.
She would wave her hand made of light and say:
"Go and look for this truth, and you will find it."
Like wandering Majnun,* I roamed from place to place,
I revealed my quest to the stones, mountains and lands.
I attended many art exhibitions throughout the world,
But couldn't find that vibrant truth anywhere.
Every time I saw a beautiful girl,
It would remind me of that image in my dreams,
I would count the days and months,





Along with the stars at night,
 Months, years passed, but no nymph was found
 To embody the image of my dreams.
 "Probably God hasn't created her yet," I said.
 But, still, she would shine forth like the Sun in my heart.
 Passionate love, bright hope and powerful faith
 Would tell me: "Don't lose hope, go look for her!"
 And I would look with zealous determination,
 Oh, my angel, at that lucky moment finally
 The truth shone like the Sun that I had been looking for:
 "Hey you, creation of my heart!
 That truth was you,
 Hey, statue of beauty!"

* Majnun refers to a legend of love, based on a story similar to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, though preceding it by centuries. He pines away for Leyli, wandering in the desert and living a hermit-like existence. Neither his parents, nor hers, approve or permit their relationship.



Aliaga Vahid

Aliaga Vahid was born in 1895 into the family of a carpenter in Baku, lived there all his life, and died there in 1965, a few months short of his 70th birthday. His satirical verses and ghazals began to be published in 1914. Later, he mainly wrote ghazals on traditional themes of love, loyalty and the pain of separation, which gained wide popularity and were usually performed to the tune of classical folk melodies.

My heart, beware of maidens fair with tresses black and smart,
 Their wiles will drive you to despair and make your wits depart.
 How can a man so madly love and die not in the flame,
 Just think of what the moths must bear that round a candle dart.
 For you have not been yet ensnared within the net of love.
 Do not be tempted, like Mejnun, by tresses loose, o heart!
 If Rose were faithful, she would not be friendly with the thorn,
 And Nightingale in garden fair would not despair and smart.
 To be a friend of charmers is a woeful thing, indeed.
 There'll come a day, they'll turn away, from you they will depart.
 If new Zuleika were your love, and you a Yusif were,
 Aspersion soon would hasten you into the grave, o heart!
 Among prim beauties did Vahid spend all his adult days,
 Think not this truthful word absurd, I beg of you, o heart!

She has turned her back upon you- very well and good.
 But you pine and languish for her- tell me why you should?
 I have told you not to suffer and your longing quell,
 She, the one you loved so dearly, loves another now,
 You can break your heart with sighing- very well and good.





I have told you: shun black tresses, tell me, was I right?
 Now you've really lost your senses, and I said you would.
 Why did you allow a stranger to approach your love?
 Satan hasn't gone from heaven, though he really should.
 Oh, Vakhid, we've reached a juncture in this world of ours,
 When the people all run equal risks, now is that really good?

* * *

This beauty has poetic, charming eyes,
 Bewitching eyes that daze and paralyze.
 Of all the earthly beauties she is queen-
 There is no other with such charming eyes.
 This lovely beauty that can soothe the soul
 Has rarest eyes that draw and hypnotize.
 Take care, my heart, when you that beauty see-
 Her eyes intoxicate and tantalize.
 A lover that she meets is soon ensnared-
 Her eyes can all attract and paralyze.
 No other beauty has as much been praised,
 For she has tender, charming, crafty eyes.

Translated by Eugene Felgenhauer



Mikayil Mushfig (1908-1939)

Mushfig left his mark on Azerbaijani literature despite his short life. He was one of the gifted intellectuals from Azerbaijan who were killed during Stalin's repression.

One of his most famous poems, entitled "Sing Tar, Sing!" defines the controversy that surrounded music when the Bolsheviks established Moscow's power in Baku. Some people wanted to replace the traditional stringed instrument with the Western orchestral instruments and genres. Mushfig wrote a poem giving tribute to the enormous capacity that this instrument has to make listeners both joyous and mournful. In the end, music giants like Uzeyir Hajibeyov found a brilliant way to synthesize the tar into orchestral pieces, thus integrating both East and West.

The final lines of Mushfig's poem read:

"Sing Tar, sing Tar, sing!
 Who can forget you once they've heard you sing?!
 Life of the people, joy of their hearts,
 Here is their wonderful, fiery art!"

Love of Life

O how to part with this great world around,
 That grows more beautiful as time goes by?
 O how to part with friends, forever bound
 To struggle with the earth and with the sky?

Do not become the dew at break of day,
 Shine like the sun, O heart, on mornings new!
 How from this world to tear myself away





That revels at the hem of skies deep blue?

Look over there-the sky seems growing light,
And friends have met beneath the morning star
O how to part with dawns that shimmer bright
Like nuggets of pure silver, shining far?

How rich is Nature, how mysterious, too,
When you disclose her secrets, engineer!
How to discard the sense, the feeling new
Attached to stones in quarries, rising sheer?

Here hawks soar high where lofty mountains loom,
There pheasants breed, and springs like mirrors gleam
The nightingales, the gardens fair, in bloom,
O how to leave this sight, this lovely dream?

With life that is an endless, lasting fight,
With kindling flames that rage in blood and heart,
With sun and moon, with morning and with night,
And with the sky's vast cupola, how to part?

O stars-the candles of each cherished thought,
O clouds-dream caravans that stir my heart,
Celestial sphere-my feelings' airy port,
With these vast azure heavens, how to part?

My cherished love appears before my eyes,
I feel the flame of my poetic art,
My burning chest must ease itself with sighs:
With her sweet raven tresses, how to part?

The nightingale is sorrowing near the rose,
Though autumn comes-it lingers to depart,
Life, life! This cry of longing ever grows:
With love, with burning passion how to part?



With feelings new, you string your singing lute
My youthful pen, now just about to start!
O friends, give answer to my pain acute:
With this great seething fire flame, how to part?

Heartbeat

My heartbeat said:
"There's luck ahead. . .
Great, glorious days
That brace and daze
Are yet to come!"

There's more ahead. . .
My heartbeat said:
"Noble work, no fret,
Toil's pearly sweat-
Are yet to come!"

My contemporaries define:
"Past times were fine". . .
These words I hate,
My heart says: "Wait!
The sun's hot rays,
Cool springs, bright days
Are yet to come!"

Translated by Olga Moisseyenko





Samad Vurghun

Samad Vurghun (Vekilov) (1906-1956)-a poet, playwright, academician and a writer who truly belonged to the people, marked a new stage in the history of the Azerbaijani poetry. Using a great wealth of expressive means, he depicted the life of his people at the turning points in its history. He sang a hymn to the women of new Azerbaijan, to revolutionaries, to working men and to the heroic ancestors who fought for the independence of Azerbaijan. He expresses the image of Azerbaijan, "whose son I shall forever be". Vurghun's best-known works are his heroic dramas Vagif, Farkhad and Shirin, Khanlar, the poems of Basti, Komsomol, Mugan. He translated Pushkin's Eugene Onegin into Azerbaijani, for which he was awarded the "Big Pushkin Medal". Vurghun's death from lung cancer was mourned by the whole nation. A monument has been erected to him at one of the central squares of Baku.

Azerbaijan

I've walked these mountains again and again,
Passed by the springs bright-eyed as cranes,
And caught the distant plashing strain
Where quiet Araks' waters moved:
Here love and friends I've truly proved.

Men know that you are mine by birth:
My nest, my refuge, and my hearth,
My mother, native land, dear earth!
Sever soul and body?? Death but can.
O Azerbaijan, my Azerbaijan!

As mother to me, as child to you
Such is the bond we ever knew:
I'd come back wherever I flew,



For you are my people, youmy nest,
My native birthplace ever blest.

When I'm away, your face unseen,
When times and forces intervene,
My hair is touched with silver sheen
For months and years press age on me:
My land, don't blame your absentee.

Your mountain crests are topped with snow,
And clouda shawl of fleecy flow,
Your past is greater than we know.
Your age from everyone obscured,
And none may guess what you've endured.

Evil tongues spread defamation
You lived through years of dark privation.
Still, generation to generation
Your fame lives on: a benison
To happy daughter, happy son.

Across your valleys long I stare,
On clear days full of lucent air;
My spirit broods on faces fair,
Thirsting for poetic tongue-
Creating verses makes me young.

Khazar the sea you border on
"Where floats the legendary swan...
My day-dreams sweep me swiftly on
To Mugan Lowland, on to Miell:
A long- life roadhalf-done, I feel.

The mountain ranges, valley sweep,
Gladden the heart till it could weep...





Glimpse of startled fawn and chamois leap
How much beauty on which to gaze!
Pastures cool and steppes ablaze.

Cross the mountains, over steppe-land,
Or through Astar, Lenkoran
From African and Indian strand
Birds fly to visit, with us pause,
Freed from oppressive grasping claws.

It's here the yellow lemons grow,
The heavy branches weighting low.
Up in the mountains, white the snow
And deep from winter's opulence:
Since Creation a true defense.

Lenkoran is a dazzle of flowers,
Refreshed by the springtime showers,
Clustering on beds and bowers,
My motherland's delightful daughter,
Bordered on by Khazar's water.

The golden wheat we grow our bread,
Our cottonwealth of snowy heads;
Squeeze the juice from grapes wine-red
Before you breakfast, drain a cup
And feel your spirit surging up,

In Khazakh mount, and give free rein,
Lean well over the horse's mane,
A sweating gallop then maintain:
On reaching mountain pastures high,
Look down on Goy-Gyol mirrored sky.

A day that's free, a man that's free,



A spring" like this invites a spree!
Seek out the shade of a plane tree
To spread a rug that's rainbow-spun
And hail the country of the Sun!

Through Karabakh my spirit fares,
Wings over mountain here, now there,
From far away down the twilight all-
Drifts the song- of Khan of Shusha
Famed through all Caucasus and Russia-

Beautiful birthland! Your meaning deep,
Cradle of Beauty that never sleeps,
Where songs of bard, inspired, sweep.
The sun's embrace your counterpart,
O land of poetry and art.

Spirit immortal, works immortal,
Nizami, Fisuli are immortal!
On pen and paper, open the portals
Of your soul, record the flow:
The word once writ through time will go.

Look at the sea near our Baku:
Its shore a bright-lit avenue,
The derricks roaring right in view;
They thunder where the steppe-land swales
To light the mountains and the vales.

The cool wind is a merry tease,
We bare our chests to the off-shore breeze.
Our heart, Baku on Caspian seas-
Its light our very strength adorning:
Our Morning Star clear eye of morning.





Beautiful birthland! I was born
Together with freedom's dawn
Which crimson banners did adorn
Life seemed one endless, joyous feast;
Gay songs and laughter never ceased.
Dear countrygate of the Ancient East,

* * *

A Mother's Send-off

The hero donned his uniform, his rifle he slung with zeal,
His heart swelled so there was no room in his chest of muscled steel.
"Oh wait!" they told him, and all came up and kissed him one by one
That morning clear with a mountain breeze that eased the summer sun.
"I'm going, mother, take care of yourself," he said, and kissed farewell.
His mother hugged her son so brave and her tears began to well.
She kissed his cheeks and his eyes, and then she tightly held his hand
Her valiant and manly boy, true son of his native land.
Her words rang clear: "My son, my dearest, apple of my eye!
Just see how gray my hair is, from the ordeals of times gone by.
I know you'll be a hero, and I have raised you not in vain.
Remember my words! We'll get by without you, come shine or rain.
I wish you all the best of luck. May your arm have the strength of
three,
Whenever you raise your sabre high against the enemy.
But in his sight be proud and brave though his fire seems from hell.
Keep your rifle clean, and love your horsebe sure to groom him well.
A jigit keeps his weapon ready, and never puts it by:
News of his latest victory each day to us must fly.
My brave good son! Though I'm the mother that bore you,
understand...
You grew up here and ate our bread and your mother is this land.



Our home lies in a Land of Heroes, Chapayev and Koroglu;
Strong as hundreds each no weapons made could break their spirit
true.
Well, so you're off; a lucky trip... if your way through Moscow lies,
Salute our leaders a mother's heart would bless their enterprise.
With autumn, when the quince in the garden ripens till it's browned,
When peaches, g-old and juicy, weigh the branches down to the
ground,
I'll send a parcel packed with fruit that eye and palate please.
And your strong arm and daring deeds will increase our victories.
Now go! Be proud and brave before the foe, though his fire seems
from hell,
Keep your rifle clean, and love your horsebe sure to groom him well!"
The soldier started on his way the mountains watched him, old and
wise
The sun withdrew its radiant light from the hero's native skies.
The mother watched her vanishing son, threw water for luck on his
trail.
And from the scene, one poet's heart was moved to great travail
"Hail to the hero!" said his heart- "Hail to you, Motherland!"
And the poet's lips bent down to kiss his mother-earth's brown hand.

Translated by Gladys Evans





Almas Ildirim (1907-1952)

In 1920, when the Soviet Russia occupied Azerbaijan and People's Republic of Azerbaijan collapsed, Almas Ildirim migrated to Turkey and lived there till his death. His poems are mostly dedicated to the first republic period of Azerbaijan which lasted from 1918 to 1920.

My Slave Azerbaijan
Where are you,
Who gave me birth among flowers,
Who made my dough with tears,
Who sang, "Lullaby, my baby" in my cradle?
Azerbaijan-my ill-fated mother, ahh
I have been longing for you for years, ahh

If the wind takes my greetings,
Passing it from Agri to Alagoz¹
And delivering my loud voice to the blue Caspian,
I wish the Caspian would storm and break its chain, ahh!
And order this idiocy to be stopped, ahh!

Oh, to receive news from my Mughan and Mil²
From my beloved Baku-my oil-smelling flower,
Who said I've stopped calling your name?
Azerbaijan, my land with no equal, ahh!
The love and grief inside me will never die, ahh!
I made you the only Kaaba³ in my heart,
Why do I need to live in a strange country without you?
Why do I need God or religion without you?
Azerbaijan, you are my crown, you are my throne, ahh!
Won't my blind fate wake up, ahh?!



Footnotes:

- 1 Agri and Alagoz are mountains in Azerbaijan
- 2 Mughan and Mil are plains in Azerbaijan.
- 3 The black sacred shrine at Mecca towards which believers turn while praying.

Translated by Aytan Aliyeva

I Believe in Youth

Shred, break, and chew my heart if you wish,
But I still have an inexhaustible soul for this struggle!
Be Death and circle around my head every moment,
Still will create one more rebellion against you one day!

Did you like when I kept my silence for awhile?
Your order that made me vomit blood
Cannot make me give up!
You, on whose breast I was born and took my first steps,
The blood running through my veins is devoted to you!

My friends, my love is eternal
Who can steal this charming beauty from my heart?
There is no power that can destroy the intent of my heart,
Because I have faith in that day of salvation!

Don't pay attention; I am wounded inside
Let my stormy youth pass
I know that I will not be disgraced,
I have hope and faith in my country's youth.

My Song

I am a lover, if my body burns in icy hell,
These fearful mountains cannot stand my inexhaustible mourning
If the angels present paradise to me





I would tell them:
I don't want paradise,
Give me my Caucasus!

Love for the Caucasus is worth more
Than this world filled with jewels,
If they say,
Forget about your country
and take "The New World"*
I would tell them,
Give me my love,
Give me my rights,
Give me my land,
Let the whole world hear my voice,
Which cannot be stifled.

- Here the term, "New World" implies Communism.

Why Was I Born a Poet?

What else can I write about my country?
Enemies spread poison and friends hide.
I don't know why the poet who loves his country
Is spied upon as a criminal?
I didn't bar anybody's way and I wasn't a robber.
I didn't disturb anybody's quiet life.
I wasn't a bloody flower for my country,
I didn't impose any death sentence on anybody
Why am I a stranger in this foreign country,
It's as if I'm surrounded by a prison and I'm suffocating.
Why was I born to be a poet,
In a cursed time and condemned land?



Ummugulsum Sadigzade (1900-1944)

Poetess, mother of four children, wife of the Azerbaijani writer Seyid Hussein (1887-1938), who was arrested in 1937 and apparently shot shortly afterward. Ummugulsum was also arrested in 1937 and sentenced to a forced labor prison camp in the Central Volga Region, Russia for eight years. She died shortly after returning home, her health totally broken.

Wonderring (1937, Bayil prison)

Starting out the iron-barred window,
Wondering of my plight,
Flaming words come from my mouth,
Will the skies fathom my tragedy?

Appear to me on future,
Appear, for I have no more patience.
Open the curtains, on fate,
What will happen to me? I don't know.

Tell me , who is deciding my destiny,
And my future, let me know,
If any conscience is left,
Or if my life will drown in tears?

Separation (April 1938)

I'm fading away in this strange place.
My word is a tale in many tongues.
I gaze at flowers with deepest desire.
I'm far from the grassland, I can't touch the flowers.





I'm an exile, I'm weak, separated from my Homeland.
I cry my tears dry up,
I ache until I find my way to you.
I write poems more delicate than pearls,
I'm not myself; I'm separated from my body.
I'm an exile; I'm weak, separated from my homeland.
I'm longing for my beautiful children,
For their sweet cheeks and smiling faces,
For their soft hair and gray eyes.
I'm far from the grass land, I can't touch those flowers.
I'm an exile; I'm weak, separated from my homeland.



Osman Saryvelli

Osman Saryvelli (1905-1990) was born into the family of a poor peasant in Shikhli, a village in the Gazakh district of Azerbaijan. He was educated at the Moscow University. In his early poetry, he made wide use of folk forms. The natural, simple flow of his melodious verses has endeared them to the popular masses.

Spring flowers

The spring has come, the earth is wrapped in haze,
And in the woods the birds sing doleful songs,
One way alone I turn my troubled gaze,
And grievous thoughts assail my mind, in throngs.

I long to know: where is my dearest love?
What are her thoughts of me, what is her fate?
And does my star resplendent from above.
Pour down on me its radiance, as of late?
There is a custom- on a festive day
We send our friends a gift, from anywhere,
And I am not stone in any way, I think each minute of my peri fair.

But here machine-guns pound, and heavy tanks,
And shells and missiles whistle without end,
From here where march the valiant soldiers ranks-
Say, my beloved, what present could I send?

Before my trench I see a wondrous sight:
Spring flowers have opened wide their petals frail,
But as the war went on with thundering might
They changed their hues from colorful to pale.

My beautiful one, let my gift offend,





I've nothing more to offer at your shrine,
The flowers that to you from here I send
Smell more of smoke than of their perfume fine.

Although not worthy of your beauty bright,
My life, my sweetheart, this is no affront!
I here enclose them in the note I write,
Receive my humble present from the front!

My native Land is flocked with red today,
Blue lights along the coast-line shine with glee,
Young girls and women, decked in fine array,
Watch as they stroll by the Caspian Sea.

Their hearts are happy, faces smiling gay,
Upon the bright-lit shore where waters heave,
Put on your best, your brightest silk array,
Join others on the shore this festive eve.

Just three short months and there will be no Spring,
And you so far, yet in my thoughts so near,
Look, these fair flowers to life so weakly cling,
They will be faded when they reach you, dear.

But if as heralds they should reach your nest
To say that we shall meet with no delay!
I beg you, dearest, pin them to your breast,
And think of me upon that festive day.

If someone says: "Your flowers are flowers no more!"
Be not confused, but answer him with pride:
"Though faded, they are presents from the war,
My soldier-bridegroom sent then to his bride!"

Translated by Olga Moisseenko



Suleiman Rustam

Suleiman Rustam (1906-1989) was born into the family of a blacksmith in Baku. In the 1920s, he played a prominent part in organizing and guiding the Gizil Galemler (Red Pens) literary society which rallied the young proletarian writers together. Rustam is best known for his clear-cut, fiery poetry glorifying the revolution. He is also a playwright and translator of repute. For his contribution to Azerbaijan poetry, for his dozens of books of verses, Suleiman Rustam was awarded the title of People's Poet of Azerbaijan. He mainly used the old poetic forms, ghazals with great skill and virtuosity, and filled them with a new content. Very popular with readers is Rustam's poetry about the hard lot of their brothers in Southern, Iranian Azerbaijan.

The Earth

How I cherish in my heart my native ground,
Every bit was by my fathers handed down.
The earth is part of me, and all I have on earth
Was bequeathed me by the land that gave me birth.
Millions who once lived and loved, alas, are dead,
Over their love and tenderness, now we tread!
Only history can say what things were done,
Earth and many tender smiles are now as one.
I think oft of those who now beneath us lay,
Knowing well that I shall also lie on day.
I believe the stars we see above today
Are immortal words of great men passed away.
And the stars that wander nightly o'er the skies
Are of those who sleep below the glowing eyes.





Give Your Eyes to Me

My own Party, I your faithful warrior be,
 Give the hills I've crossed and fertile plains to me.
 So I wouldn't stumble on the road of life,
 Give your gait unbending, give your strength to me.
 You, whose breast bears a million burning words,
 Words that penetrate the spirit, give to me.
 So that I could tell our enemies for friends,
 Give your eyes to me

* * *

What is Khazar Like?

If you asked me in the morn: What is Khazar Like?
 I would say it's like the sky, and the sky like it,
 It is like a velvet cloth by a gold light lit.
 Every hill is strewn with grapes, fruit-trees all around,
 And the mighty dashing waves crash against the ground.
 Little children on all fours crawl among the grass,
 They are very much like songs sung by lad and lass.
 I have lost all track of time in the sunny lull,
 Khazar's like a giant book read by a flying gull.
 Every cliff for ages has Khazar's onslaught bore,
 Every cliff is like a guard standing on the shore,
 Like one of bold Babek's men, ominous and black
 Like as furry as the cloak he wore upon his back.

Translated by Eugene Felgenhauer



Muhammad Hussein Shahriyar

Muhammad Hussein Shahriyar (1905-1988) was born in Tabriz. He received his primary and secondary education in Tabriz, and later he entered the school of Medicine at the University in Tehran. He became one of the most outstanding Azerbaijani and Eastern poets of the 20th century. His lyrical poems consist of both Azerbaijani and Persian language verses.

The main hero of Shahriyar's poetry is Azerbaijan. His poems such as Azerbaijan, Greetings to Heydarbaba, Separation are etched into Azeri people's memory living on the both side of Araz river, both in South and North Azerbaijan.

In 1979, when the great thinker of Azerbaijan, Doctor Javad Heyat published the first Azeri language magazine, Varlig in Tehran, Shahriyar wrote the poem of 'The Bird of Freedom' dedicated to this memorable event.

Shahriyar is buried in the cemetery of poets in Tabriz.

Greetings, Heydar Baba!

Heydar Baba, when the thunder resounds across the skies,
 When floods roar down the mountainsides,
 And the girls line up to watch it rushing by,
 Send my greetings to the tribesmen and the village folk
 And remember me and my name once more.

Heydar Baba, when pheasants take flight,
 And the rabbits scurry from flowering bush,
 When your garden burst into full bloom,
 May those who remember us live long
 And may our saddened hearts be gladdened.





When the March wind strikes down the bowers,
Primrose and snowdrops appear from the frozen earth,
When the clouds wing their white shirts,
Let us be remembered once again
Let our sorrows rise up like a mountain.

Heydar Baba, let your back bear the mark of the sun.
Let your streams weep and your face beam with smiles.
Let your children put together a bouquet
And send it to us when the wind blows this way
So that, perhaps, our sleepy fortune be awakened.

Haydar Baba, may your brows be bright.
May you be circled by streams and gardens.
And after us, may you live long.
This world is full of misfortunes and losses.
The world is replete with those bereaved of sons and orphaned.

Heydar Baba, my steps never crossed your pass.
My life was spent, becoming too late to visit you
I know not what became of all those beautiful girls.
I never knew about deadends, about paths of "no return".
I never knew about separation, loss and death.



Mammad Rahim

Mammad Rahim (1907-1977), People's Poet of Azerbaijan, and Merited Art worker, was born in Baku and lived there all his life. He began to write in 1925, and then published dozens of poetic volumes which presents a comprehensive, panoramic chronicle of Azerbaijan's past and life there in those days. Many of his verses have been set to music and have gained nation-wide popularity. Mammad Rahim is also known for his translations of European poets into Azerbaijani.

Bridges

A bridge may be wood, and some of stone are made.
Steel, too, is used to build a bridge, the toughest finest grade.
Long arcs of welded metal make the strongest bridge of all.
A bridge may be monument, majestic, proud and tall.
Some bridges straddle rivers, others cross the waves of blue.
With wishes, too, some folk build bridges, hoping dreams come true.
With all my heart I love those bridges that are dreams' ideal.
Men cross them boldly knowing life new prospects will reveal.
Another bridge you may not notice even when it's near,
And yet that bridge is made for you, so cross it without fear.
That bridge is built on purest love which wells up from the heart.
Through raging storms it stands quiet firm and can't be torn apart.
The harshest trials it will resist, though years of winter frown.
And evil slander hauled against it cannot bring it down.
The bridge of goodness rest upon foundation stones of love.
Of truth its columns down below- respect for man above.
And everyone who crosses over happiness shall know,
New prospects will be opened up while bright new vistas glow.
Such bridge s, bringing closer friendship, all mankind finds dear,





So more such bridges mankind builds with every passing year.
 If love of life can make you raise a structure of that kind
 Be sure among your fellow men your right place you'll find.

* * *

The Power of Beauty

At home I have a statuette- a thing of pure delight-
 A tender nymph of rarest beauty, half-unrobed, is mounted
 Upon a lion, unafraid. It's such a lovely sight!
 Enchanted guests perceive a charm that cannot be recounted.

They sense some mystery, inner meaning, more than meets the eye-
 How can a nymph subdue the lion, a beast untamed and Fearless?
 The king of Beasts could life a paw, and loveliness would die!
 They feel disturbed at beauty riding unconcerned and fearless.

To dissipate that mystery, friends, in verses is my aim.
 The jungle lords became a lamb and could show no resistance.
 Because the power beauty wields the fiercest beast can tame.
 A woman's beauty wields such force- the greatest in existence.

Translated by Tom Botting



Mir Mehti Seidzade

Mir Mehti Seidzade (1907-1996) was born in Ashkhabad into a working-class family. After the death of his father in 1915, the family went to live in Baku where Mehti was educated at the Teachers' College. He is known for poems for children, his magnificent ghazals which have made the text of popular songs, and last but not least for his translations of Omar Khayyam into Azerbaijani Turkish.

Legend of the Stag

In summer once through mountains green
 A youthful stag was seen to pass;
 He roamed the meadowland serene
 Where flowers bloomed among the grass.

He fell within a hunter's sight
 Who trailed him artfully and slow,
 And waited for the moment right
 To speed the arrow from his bow.

Upon a hill let his bowstring twang.
 And when the arrow struck the deer,
 His heart leaped from the sudden pang.

The poor stag into gallop burst
 And ran for life across the plain.
 The day's heat tortured him with thirst,
 His breast-wound burned with growing pain.

O'er and hill his feet took wing,
 Until high pastures he traversed
 And stopped beside a mountain spring,
 Bending his head to quench his thirst.





And while with sobbing breath he drank,
His sad eyes brimmed with many a tear.
A frog hopped out upon the bank
And spoke to him: "O Brother Deer!

"Please tell me why your noble heart
is cramped with sorrow, heavy woe?"
the stag said: "I'll my grief impart,
this morn on meadows far below

"An arrow caught me by surprise.
O hard indeed the hunter's heart!
The sun grew dark before my eyes,
So near my heart..... had struck his dart."

The frog with pride began to swell.
"My God," he cried so boastfully,
"What do these hunters want, do tell,
from you, O Deer, and such as ME?"

On hearing this cheap braggart's cries,
the stag's heart blazed with sudden ire.
The lightning flashed from out his eyes.
Through every noble vein swept fire.

And swinging on the frog, he spoke:
"Your words, I'd have you understand,
A deeper wound in me provoke
Than arrows loosed by a cruel hand."

* * *



Love of Life

Each human born has heart-ties unto earth.
But into life's deep secrets none may peer.
The babe begins by crying, right from birth.
Why not by laughing, what's the secret here?

However, life sweet, none like to go.
They want to live who at brink of death.
No matter how much grief is here below,
Still, life seems good till our very last breath.

Such is the law of life, a thing eternal.
Though death reduces men to grains of dust
Not differing from Nature's end autumnal-
The love of life makes life for us a must.

Translated by Glays Evans





Rasul Rza
(1910-1981)

Rasul Rza's real last name was Mammadkhanli. At the age of five (1915), he lost his father and was raised by an uncle whose first name was Rza. During the Soviet period, his father's name, meaning "khan" or "ruler", was closely associated with the bourgeoisie, which put him in great jeopardy. In "Bones," Rasul Rza complains bitterly about this identity-it had nothing to do with his own making, but plagued him throughout his life. Despite these immense obstacles, he became one of the most prolific and dearly loved writers in Azerbaijan. He was the first Azerbaijani poet to use a free verse in his poetry and was editor-in-chief of the first Azerbaijani Encyclopedia published in Baku.

Bones
(Abridged version) (1934)

In my mind
The shape of my first days
Is as blurry and confusing as that of my last.

One day I remember
My father did not return home.
My mother's wet eyes
Pursed my lips.
From that day onward
The shade of being orphaned
Hung over my joyful soul.

They said: "He will return."
I trusted them.
I waited but he did not come back.
I trusted consolations.
Sometimes in my dreams



I hugged his neck,
Looked into his blue eyes
And asked: "Oh Daddy, you've come again."
He would embrace me.
And run his fingers through my hair,
I would laugh with happiness.

But alas!
As I woke up
There was that bitter reality.
A big lump stuck in my throat.
I would cry at night for reasons I did not know.

Days ran by, days passed.
I forgot my grief, day by day;
I did not keep it within myself forever.

Months passed,
Years came.
Years were long.
Every day on life's path
The soul learned something new-
Bitter, sweet
Sometimes something delightful and beautiful,
Sometimes, bloody and rotten.
I sweated in the heat,
I froze in the cold.
I ran, I fell,
I got up, fell again.
Sometimes thorns made my fingers bleed-
Fingers that were gathering flowers.
Sometimes an inspiring song,
Or a silvery blue morning
Brought me joy.
One would shake my hand





Saying: "You're my friend!"
Another would punch me in the mouth
Saying "Shut up!"
I plunged myself into deep thought
To realize the meaning of what was happening.
Imagine how Reza suffered!

Every step I took
I ran into bones-
The bones entangled,
The bones ensnared,
The bones kept me from going forward.

From early childhood
I had fallen in love with the sweet language of poetry.
Poetry, sweeter than poison;
Poetry, sweeter than a kiss;
Poetry, sweeter than death.

From the first day I loved poetry,
I have not parted with it.
I joined the travelers.
I wanted to run forward,
To surmount the slopes.
I wanted to step among those in iron rows.
I said to myself: "Tomorrow, I will become one of those."
Alas!

Again there came the bones-
The bones entangled,
The bones ensnared,
The bones kept me from going forward.

One day, with trembling hands
I filled out an application to join the Komsomol.
They gathered round to listen.
One by one they asked me



About my family
Starting from my great-grandfather.
Again there came the bones-
The bones entangled,
The bones ensnared,
The bones kept me from going forward.
The bones strangled me
Suffocating me as much as they could.

Months passed and years passed.
I jumped into the embrace of life.
I turned the pages of what is called life.
Whatever door I opened,
Wherever I looked
My wishes were genuine,
And my desires were radiant.
The labor of my hands,
The power of my brain
The passion of my heart
Were all useful to my people and the Motherland.
But I could have done seven times as much
And my grief and sorrow would have been seven times less
If the bones had not entangled,
If the bones had not ensnared,
And if the bones had not stopped me on my way
Like a cruel decision.

Enough! Enough!
Why should I carry on about
Bones that have long disintegrated into soil?!

Aesop
Written in Bursa, Turkey (1968)

I don't know
Whether or not there ever lived





Such a man in this world:
 Slavephilosopher.
 He transferred everything
 that he couldn't say directly
 Into the language of innuendoes,
 Looking for the remedy
 Of his heart's trouble, of his soul's sorrow.
 It makes no difference now
 Whether he lived or not.
 Aesop is gone now,
 But his language remains.
 Thousands of the world's troubles
 have remained.
 Sometimes this language is used
 In fear of something,
 And sometimes used in anger.
 I don't know what you think,
 But I am so grateful for Aesop:
 May he rest in peace.

Fear (1961)

They say old elephants
 Know when their dying day is approaching.
 Some days prior to their death,
 Heads bent low and trunks swaying,
 They seclude themselves in the loneliness of
 the forest,
 And there, lying still, await death.
 The fear that I should become an old elephant
 Has been distressing me lately.

White Elephant

Written in Yangon, Myanmar
 (formerly Rangoon, Burma)(1961)



I saw him for the first time in Rangoon
 In the zoo.
 In a colorful, grilled iron cage.
 A lonely white elephant in an iron cage.
 His eyes were black, as were his nails,
 But he himself snow-white.
 He looked at you in such a way
 As if to speak.
 One can rarely find a white elephant,
 One can rarely find an elephant in captivity.
 He left the forest a year ago,
 And can't stand his heartache in the cage.
 And very often
 He raises his trunk and roars,
 Shedding crocodile tears,
 And calling on his free brothers
 To help him.
 They say that elephants live long lives.
 White elephant, white elephant!
 Do you need a long life
 Imprisoned in a cage for a hundred years?
 White elephant, white elephant!

Far from the Motherland

Written in Cairo, Egypt (1959)

They say,
 Evening brings sorrow.
 They say,
 Dark nights are boring.
 They say...
 They say...
 And what about the daytime?
 And in the daytime,
 We are so impatiently waiting





For the day to draw to a close,
And for the night to come!

A Journey into the Future

Tomorrow's window I opened wide
And there I saw the people stride
In months ahead,
In years ahead.
Bridges of border poles
Were thrown
Across the seas,
Across the rivers
And roads were paved with prison stones
To link the village
And the cities.
I saw the people
Passing by
Were white people,
Black people,
Yellow people too.
I was in their midst
And so were you
Wholly believing in today,
Hopefully waiting for tomorrow.
"Brothers!" a thousand voices cried.
We talked and talked and talked and talked
Without interpreters, at our ease,
Keeping our faith in tomorrow alive.
People I know and do not know,
My sons and daughters, father and mother!
Without faith
Can man survive?

Translated by Peter Tempest



Nigar Rafibeyli
(1913-1981)

A Flower Blooming Amongst the Ruins

A flower blooming amongst the ruins
set me wondering
Why do men say that in such desolation
no flower can grow?
The walls of the little house were broken,
the roof had tumbled in.
It had become the dwelling place
of fierce winds and winter snow.
The untamed winds had laid waste
the dear comforts of this once-loved home
And had pierced the passer-by
with melancholy pity.
The curtains, by gentle women's hands
so lovingly stitched and sewn,
Hung ragged like shell-torn banners
over a desolate city.
Amidst the heaps of stone and rubble
bloomed the beautiful flower,
And that flower filled all my thoughts
with one all-important question.
I asked: what gardener planted and nurtured
you here, frail flower?
Tell me your story, the dastan¹ of your life,
and I shall listen.
Perhaps although this place is no more vibrant
with nightingale's song,
Abandoned by birds, yet you were called
into being by Spring's first breath?





"I am the voice of the Earth,"
the flower answered with human tongue.
"I am that Greater Life
which must forever triumph over Death."

Footnote:

1 Dastan - A Persian word used in the region to mean a narrative or epic tale.

Kitchen Lines

If I were not a woman
I'd have no dealings
With saucepans,
Crockery,
Ladles
I would meet the dawn on the seashore,
Among the rocks,
And inhale the sea air
By the lungful.
I would stay for hours
In the untold bliss of the beach,
Baring my breast
To the wind of the plains,
Leisurely composing
Quiet,
Languorous songs
To the Absheron gardens.
I feel so heartsore
In this kitchen world,
After all,
There is something of a poet in me.

There are poems devoted to sweethearts,
To the flowers of spring,



To the falling leaves of Autumn.
Poems are dedicated to the pain of separation,
To the joy of reunion,
To a woman's sweet face.
Then why are there none devoted
to steam rising from a saucepan,
To a humming samovar?
Why shouldn't there be
Poems about clean dishes
Washed in transparent water?
Some like their food well-salted,
Others don't.
Some like jam,
Others-raw tomatoes.
One cannot tolerate meat,
Another likes his dinner without onions or garlic.
So I must stand there all day,
Wiping, frying, cooking.
Some are destined to occupy high posts,
Others to wash up dishes in the kitchen.
Ah well,
Sometimes an ordinary kitchen
May be cleaner and purer
Than it is in certain high quarters.
If I don't watch out
While onions fry on the gas-stove,
They'll turn into ashes
And dinner will be ruined.
But who's there to see
That the cook burning by the stove
Doesn't turn into cinders?
Who cares for the cook
Whose heart isn't quite tranquil?





Don't grumble, cook,
Watch out,
Don't dare burn the onions
That give taste and flavor to the dinner!

If a flower garden can inspire a poem,
Why can't a kitchen?
Just the same as a flower,
A stove,
And a grimy saucepan, too,
May ascend to the throne of art.
Poetic themes are countless,
As long as you see the world
With the eyes of a poet.

From the tiny window of my kitchen
I watch the four seasons of the year:
Summer, Winter,
Spring, Autumn-
I see their real faces.
In Spring
A tall poplar
Next to my window
Is gradually covered with buds,
Then leaves appear
And it puts on green apparel.
A light breeze blows,
The branches whisper.
In Spring the tree stands swaying
in all its grandeur.
In Autumn the wind buffets its breast
And with grief it turns yellow.
Then Winter comes and the tree strips bare.
No more greenery to inspire me.



Naked the tree,
Alone with its grief,
Baring its breast to the frost and the cold,
Hoping against hope to survive
Till spring.

With a generous heart,
With a mind that sounds the depths of existence,
Your dreams will not die,
Your thoughts will not fade.
If there is a divine light in your soul,
Hold it up as a torch
And from your tiny kitchen
You will be able to see the great world.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg

* Nigar Rafibeyli was a wife of Rasul Rza. A well known writer,
Anar who is the head of the Writers' Union of Azerbaijan is their
son.





Mirvarid Dilbazi

Mirvarid Dilbazi (1912-2001) was a prominent poetess. Her first poem, "Women's Emancipation" was published in 1927. In 1979, she was nominated People's Poet of Azerbaijan. President H.E. Heydar Aliyev (1925-2003) awarded her with the "Istiglal" (Independence) Order in 1998.

The Winter of my Soul (1999)

If you were a light, I would have surrounded you,
You, my ardent dear, I would have burned myself
in your flame.

I would have been on fire all my life,
If you hadn't come to my aid.

Even if you hadn't cooled me like rain,
I would have withstood your heat, your smoke.
I would have become a Phoenix
And would have stood on guard, burning.

You are laughter,
But I am a tear.
Where are you, my bosom friend?
The winter of my soul is too stormy,
And I cannot laugh.
You laugh, my dear!

When the world is in the midst of festivity,
What is this sorrow in my soul?
What can I do, me, so ill-fated,
I cannot comprehend my own sorrow.

Grief has bent my proud head,
I've lost my dear friend,
I can't wipe away my tears



Which are streaming down my face.

I'm a flower grown in the desert,
I'm a year full of dry seasons.
Separated from you, I want to die,
But how is it that I can't do it?

Wherever I look, everything reminds me of you,
But there's no news from you.
Now the only friend that I can talk to
Is our sorrowful memories.

Letter to Nizami from Mahsati (1945)

You, sincere friend of my sorrowful dreams,
The grief of my soul is like an ocean
without a coast...

Separation is grieving me in these strange lands
As I am too far from my loved ones.

You inspire us with your beauty,
You cast light on ignorance and evil.
Your mind resembles the age-old wisdom
of the world,
Yet, in fact, you are as young and fresh
as the new moon.

But the court is like a grave
for both poetry and poet.
Every boat sailing in these waters has gone down,
We have drowned, so you be watchful.
Don't trust the times the times have changed,

What you see in the ocean is not water, but blood.
Be careful not to sink in this golden blood.
When shahs become aware of a master's might,
They entrap him in their palaces.





And whoever doesn't want to be entrapped,
Whoever maintains a distance from shahs,
Whoever forgets about being slave for shahs
Will face either death or exile!

You, the morning sun!
Remember, some day
When your warm rays
Are warming the cold earth, kissing it,
The palace will ensnare you.
But don't forget that impetuous waters
Will soon break the dikes.
You are the sun, don't let clouds cover your face.

Distance yourself from palaces, away from fame.
The world of courts is just ruins,
It contains only eye-cheating luxury.
This is an admonition, take heed.

My dear, Nizami, when repeating your name,
Generations will sense your magnificence.
Fill your basin from the earth's spring.
I'm leaving, good-bye to all of you,

Live, create, love and grow old!
My fate took me away from you,
My hand remained outstretched for my friends,
My hair grew gray because of sorrows.
If I die somewhere far from Ganja,
Please, dig my grave in my Motherland.
And write these words on my gravestone:
"A star fell from the sky, but the sun rose,
So what that Mahsati died, Nizami is still living."



Ali Karim
(1931-1969)

My Father's Memoir

He was tough. When I used to hurry to class,
He never wanted me to see him watching me.
He never did talk about his feelings
And never did show how much he cared about his children.
Sometimes he stared at me secretly and smiled
Sometimes he did nothing but smoke heavily,
For him to sacrifice himself for his children,
Was a thousand times easier than telling us "jan"*.

His heavy, hard working, tough hands,
Would embrace my shoulders as fate.
As a rising sun, some thoughts
Would brighten up his face in a moment.

His love was cold, too - like a thick layer of snow,
Which protects fresh seedlings from the winter frost.
I was studying in Moscow,
He left me forever.

When the time for the Eternal Partition came,
He wished I were there beside him,
Then he changed his mind and
Didn't want me to know about it.
He was ashamed by his death.
Oh, why did he do it, why so much suffering?
Once I had such a father.

- * "Jan" in Azeri is a term of endearment, meaning "soul".





Babak's Arms

Babak, whose arms were severed,
 Babak, whose lands were ravaged by fire,
 Babak, who was taken village by village
 Through the vast ruins of the East,
 In a bloody red cart,
 Cursed,
 Beaten,
 As an example for people.
 Babak, who died and came back to life.
 Babak, who was somewhat consoled
 When he saw that they had severed his arms.
 Babak, whose dreams were in red,
 Babak, who said: "Hey friends,
 Take your troops, attack,
 Join my arms that were left without me
 And are fighting on the battlefield."

* * *

Do Not Reconcile Yourself
 Do not reconcile yourself to grief,
 Or you will become indifferent to everything.
 Do not reconcile yourself to happiness,
 Or you will become drunk.
 Reconcile yourself only with struggle.
 You need research, research.
 Just think about it,
 There's Shakespeare
 Shakespeare!

* * *



Stone

Half-naked,
 Primitive man
 Cast a stone at his foe,
 Shed blood.
 But the stone
 Didn't fall to the ground,
 It kept flying,
 From horizon to horizon.
 Don't say that the stone disappeared.
 That stone transformed into an arrow,
 And then a sword,
 A bullet,
 A missile.
 It did not stop as we thought.
 It transformed into an atom.
 Piercing the summit
 And wishes
 And the ocean,
 It sped away...
 Nor has that very stone
 Stopped even now,
 It still shoots through the air, but where?
 It becomes neutron,
 Electron-
 A lot of this, a lot of that.
 Transforming into fire.
 Death.
 Poison.
 You, my contemporary,
 You, brother of Truth,
 Tell me, can't that stone be stopped,





That the half-naked,
Half-savage,
Primitive man
Cast so long ago?

Two Loves

Beautiful lady, you are pure water,
You are the dream of two hearts.
I love you,
As desperately dry lips, burned from thirst
Love a drop of water.
But he loves you,
As one who says:
"A glass of water wouldn't be bad after kabab."
Beautiful lady, you are light,
You are the beauty of my country.

I love you as an eye,
Desperately longing for a glimmer of light in darkness,
But he loves you,
As an attraction,
Which is created with light at gatherings, weddings.
Speak up, let your voice rise,
Never let your voice fade away.
Because I love you as an echo,
As sound,
As strength,
Which comes from Baku, from Dashkasan*
Why to hide from you
That he loves you
As a sorrowful silence in some dark corner of a room.
This is me, this is you, that's him,
Tell us what you think!
But pay close attention to these two loves,



I have no more words to say,
Period, period and period.

* * *

Locking The Door

Locking the door from inside
Writing poems
The door is often knocked upon
Interrupting my stream of thought.
Again, it was my sons, nobody else.
They ignored all the other open doors,
But they wanted to come in here.
It was as if they were spying on me.
Suddenly, the thought comes to my mind
Thank God, they're not willing
To go through open doors.
My sons-Orkhan! Pasha! Azar!
If you see that I haven't open the door,
Go ahead and break down the closed door.

Translated by Aynura Huseinova and Ulviyya Mammadova.





Ahmed Jamil
(1913-1977)

Come, Morning, Rise!

Snow, falling snow, and darkness all around.....
Ahead of us- the foe, and just behind- the sea.

Guns spitting fire, a cold and lonely trench
Where, leaning on my rifle, silently
Dawn's slow and painful coming I await.
The sky, unlit by stars, is without light,
A moonless canopy

At break of day
We are to go into attack and fight,
Our bayonets in deadly combat crossed.
Come, morning, come,
Come, morning, to your post!
The flares of rockets pierce the dark

A brief exchange of fire..... The blizzard takes command,
And widely flings the snow about.....

My dreams drawn near to me and firmly clasp my hand
And lead me far away...
And like a child,
I break into a run, afraid that they
Might plunge ahead and leave me.....
I am wrong,
For they are not mere empty dreams.....
Some day
Time will pronounce its verdict, and the world



Will put an end to suffering at last.
No longer will the skies be overcast
And dark..... And like a sea, the fields of wheat
Will golden, spread across the giant plain.
The children of those days will, jubilant.
Recall our deeds and triumphs, and our fame
Sing joyfully..... And in my trench coat, I
Will with them be
And with them celebrate
The victory my generation won.....
Surrounded by the young, if so wills fate,
I see myself, my hair to silver turned
And leaning on a crutch, replying to
Their eager questions, and with secret pride
The story of the days of war, a true,
Grim and heroic tale unfolding, with
The blood-red, sacred banner of my land
Clutched tightly in my one remaining hand
No! That is not a dream. Come, morning, rise,
And let our bayonets pierce through the fronts,
And let our armies go into attack,
And let no more my country sorrow know,
Let victory's bright flags above it glow!

Translated by Irina Zheleznova





Zeinal Khalil

Zeinal Khalil (1914-1973) was the author of both short lyrical miniatures about love and the beauties of nature, and large poetic canvases (Tatyana and Stars), as well as some dramas in verses. Zeinal Khalil was born in Ganja, and was educated at the Baku Teachers' College, at the Department of Literature. In his poems, Khalil inclines to philosophical interpretation of life's phenomena. His poems can be depicted as genuine reflections about time and people.

○ Give Me Not

Your nightingale

In a golden cage- ○ give me not!

White roses in

A flower pot- ○ give me not!

Your city doves,

Your circus lions

That cannot rage- ○ give me not!

Your fishes in aquarium,

On movie screen- your rains

And hurricanes- ○ give me not!

Friends who behind my back are foes,

Who change their guise each day-

○ give me not!

Associates who are unloyal,

Respect, which seeks but to betray-

○ give me not!

The praise sung by servile knave

And doomed before their time to fade-

○ give me not!



All that which earth and heaven hate,
Which neither heart nor mind can take,

○ give me not!

That gain which is my neighbour's loss,
And riches won dishonestly-

○ give me not!

○ give me not!

○ give me not!

Translated by Louis Zellikoff

One man said, "You're tired and weak!

You should walk along the beach

To see the moon and star-lit sky,

Where the noisy crowd can't reach-

Sea and heavens sooth the eye....."

One man said, "You're tired and weak!

Once again the spring is here,

Ride your horse and climb the hills.

Life in town, I greatly fear,

Makes men suffer many ills....."

One man said, "You're tired and weak!

You study hard and want to know

What passed one hundred years ago,

And what will be-you rack your brain-

When just as many pass again?

Such loads! You bear them all,

The heavy and light!

At every battle-call

Why dash off to the flight?"

One man said, "You're tired and weak....."





"just a minute there," I said,
"Don't you feel that such words reek
of falsehood and things long dead?
If I did not dream at night,
If I did not think all day,
If no news of our great light
Came from places far away
If I did not add my word
When the workers' shout is heard,
If in pulsing city streets
There were not my own heart-beats,
If my strength I did not lend
To great Africa our friend,
If my help I never gave
To bring freedom to the slave,
If I did not stand and fight
For what we believe is right,
If I did not feel the heat
Of my words and deep belief,
And ignored the bitter-sweet
Of a joy that's shared with grief,
If I let my footsteps lag
On the march with our great flag,
Then my verses none would read,
My native land would not pay heed!
If I must die then let it be
When Mankind's battles rage round me.....
Then let me see the eyes of Man,
Let my hand grasp the hand of Man!

Translated by Tom Booting



Darling, I am weary,
Very weary, dear,
I want no doctor near me,
Dear, when you are near.

Darling, draw your chair up closer- talk to me-
I want to hear your voice
And see your face once more.

Bend your slender waist, my darling, over me
And with your fingers cool
My health restore.

Darling, I am weary,
Very weary, dear,
I want no doctor near me,
Dear, when you are near.

The warmth of your dear hand,
Your human love-
For me are quite enough.

Translated by Louis Zellikoff





Enver Alibeili

Enver Alibeili (1916-1968) was a famous writer of songs, and the author of a large number of verses, mainly, about Baku, friendship and true love. Enver Alibeili fought all through the war, and often sent back poetry to Baku which was printed in the newspapers there. He worked as the chairman of Azerbaijan's Radio and Television Committee, doing a great deal to promote the development of mass media in the country.

Wishes

I'd like to be the moon in the sky,
 But not to wane,
 I'd be a mountain path and run up high,
 But never down again.
 I'd be a flash of lightning far away,
 But not to fade.
 I'd like to turn into the light of day,
 But not night's shade.
 I'd like to pull the nose
 Of death itself,
 And die- when my eyes close-
 A deathless death.

* * *

Never Alone

A man who is needed by fellow-men
 Will never remain alone.
 I hope I will never have to spend
 Even a day alone.
 I want to live



Not as long as decreed me,
 But as long and as much
 As people need me.

* * *

Waves (Song)

Waves, o waves, are you birds on the wing?
 Where do you fly from, what do you sing,
 Waves, o waves?

You look at me with your eyes of blue,
 Bright and clear, a heavenly hue,
 Waves, o waves?

You shine in my heart long after we part;
 You yourself are a beating heart,
 Waves, o waves?

All day long as you roll along
 You compose new tunes to your own sweet song,
 Waves, o waves?

You boil and break into shining spray-
 What do you whisper, what do you say,
 Waves, o waves?

Each wave resounds like a zither string,
 May be it is of love you sing,
 Waves, o waves?

Waves, o waves!

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Talet Eyyubov

Talet Eyyubov (1916-1977), a poet, librettist and translator was born in the town of Gazakh, and educated at the Teachers' College, Department of Literature. His principal heroes are oil workers. He is the author of the libretto for the popular opera *Sevil* based on the drama of the same title by J. Jabbarli, a classic of the Azerbaijani literature. Talet Eyyubov has translated several of Shakespeare's tragedies, and also the poetry of Pushkin, Nekrasov, Simonov, Antokolsky, and other classic and modern Russian poets into the Azerbaijani language.

Tell Me How Did You Know?

The scalding tea you served me spilled upon your hand,
And instantly the world went dark before my eyes;
I thought till then you did not understand
You did not look at me and to my great surprise
Said softly: "I know," and to me turning:
"Some burn their hands, and others' hearts are burning."

When I heard you speaking about my desire,
Round and round all the world began to go,
How did you know that my heart was on fire,
Tell me, lovely one, tell me, how did you know?

You never suspected until that day
That my soul pursues you wherever you go,
For I wouldn't tell you on that spring day
Of the winter burying my heart in snow.
Now I stood before you as if in a trance.
How, lovely one, did you disclose my desire?
From what chance movement, from what secret glance
Did you know that my heart was indeed on fire?



As soon as I see you or hear your steps
Flocks of birds take wing in my lovesick breast.
I am no Medjnun to go out in the steppes,
That birds should forever be retold and recounted,
That I should make my home in the desert bare.
I am not Farhat to go splitting the mountains,
The sound of my pick being heard everywhere,
As the lips of Shirin stood in my eyes,
As Mount Bisutun trembled before me.
Nor am I Romeo to wait till the moon should rise
And do wonders, walls and balconies storming,
Or take up my faithful sword in my hand
And challenge my rival to a bloody fight,
Or under your window like him to stand
And sing serenades to you all through the night.
It would be ridiculous- like a bad jest,
In this age of the atom I leave it to others.
Then tell me, how did you know that my breast
Held all the love that tortured those lovers?
Tell me, lovely one, tell me, how did you know
That my heart had been burning since long ago?
Tell me, lovely one, tell me, how did you know
That my soul pursues you wherever you go?

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Ibrahim Kebirli

Ibrahim Kebirli (1918), was born into a peasant family in the village of Kebirli. Upon graduation from the agricultural technical school in Aghdam, he worked as an agronomist at the machine-and-tractor station. He fought in the war (1941-45) and was decorated with several orders and medals. It was at the front that he first began writing poetry. He published a number of poems depicting life in Azerbaijan in those days, and short philosophical and lyrical verses on lofty moral themes.

A Good Friend

When scandal's bared and poisoned dart
Is hurled against your inner soul,
And when you find a cutting word
Is deeply thrust to wound the heart
A trusted voice can sooth like balm
And kindly words you need to hear-
Oh, then to have a good friend near!

Though eyes and lashes be jet black
And flash with fire, they seek the light.
If you are strong, then bitter words
Will shatter on your breast and back,
But if you have no strong defense
To meet those words, or make them veer-
Oh, then to have a good friend near!



A good friend's eyes their light won't hide,
But share it when the world seems dark.
A good friend's words a man can trust.
New hope they broadcast far and wide.
The road through life is hard and harsh,
When evil forces domineer-
Oh, then to have a good friend near!

Let no man yearn for praise unearned-
Each has one heart and lives but once.
A man is strong, but often weak.
And sometimes lets his head be turned.
When trouble seem to block your way
And evil counsel seeks your ear-
Oh, then to have a good friend near!

A man who's trusty, good and wise
Renews the senses, give new strength.
And not to recognize that man
Would be a sin for any eyes.
When evil hands have gripped your heart
And darkened days when life seemed clear-
Oh, then to have a good friend near!

Seek out a friend. Do not be weak
And do not let your spirit flag.
If you are poor, among good men,
You should not be ashamed or meek.
A man foresworn and gone astray,
Be he the richest profiteer,





Will weep to have a good friend near.

Go seek a friend throughout the world,
 Although the search be long and hard.
 Though hatred's nets your feet enmesh
 And highest hopes are downward hurled,
 Thrust hates aside and clear your road,
 March on because your goal is near
 You soon shall meet that friend most dear.

So tread your won path till the end-
 If you forget where true friends live
 And their good name with mud besmear,
 Do not lament that none is near

Translated by Tom Botting



Zeinal Jabbarzade
 (1920-1977)

If

Ah, if the skies above
 Were always clear and cloudless,
 So would our hearts be too!
 Then our dreams,
 Our dreams would be beautiful, many-hued flowers;

Our faces and souls
 Would be as pure as the snow
 Falling in blossom-like flakes.

The spring song of birds
 Would be the melody
 Heard all over the world.
 Honey just taken out of the combs

Would be the bitterest word.
 What use then would doctors and medicines be?
 We would live to a thousands years!

* * *

This World

This world of ours,
 Is like a fine lad,
 A fine young girl;
 Don't spoil it!
 It's like

 An enormous melon





Always

ever so round
ever so cool,
ever so sweet.

Everyone with a raper's hand
Sticks a knife into its side;
And look what they've done!

"I'll tell you a few things with rifle and cannon, they say,

"Eat you whole in a single day," they say.

There were many who died of greed

Among those

Who divide it by force.

But nobody has eaten it

And never will!

The earth rotates,

Spins on

Cheerfully.

All knives will be taken out of its sides!

Translated by Dorin Rottenberg



Balash Azeroglu

Balash Azeroglu was born in 1921 in Baku. His father was a worker. He spent his youth in Southern, Iranian Azerbaijan, then he returned to Baku for good. In 1952, he graduated from the Department of Philology of the Azerbaijan University. Azeroglu's poetry is civic in content. His principal theme is the life of his brother Azerbaijanis beyond the river Araz which makes the boundary line between North and South Azerbaijan. His trenchantly publicist, emotional poem, "The Motherland Demands Just Such a Son" is particularly popular.

The Motherland Demands Just Such a Son

The night was deep, the midnight hour had passed,
And still we talked, disputing without end,
I sat with the philosopher my friend
Both smoking packets, that till dawn would hardly last,
And drinking tea, a samovar at least.

We talked.

Our voices rose and fell and never ceased.

Our words with fiery pathos would ascend,

But, like the Chinese Wall, there was no end

To words, opinions, running in one trend.

No matter whether long or short

This autumn night,-

But like a conquered warrior in his flight,

It cast its wasted weapons

One by one.

Before the advent of the rising sun.

The night, the stars, were melting in the sky,

And like a sword be sheathed, the moon did wane;

My friend breathed on his glasses,

Wiped them dry,

Methodically, put them on again,





Then looked at me above their rim
And said:
"Although you are a poet, you've a head
that can extract the root of the unknown.
And in society it is the same:
Society has laws and customs of its own,
You must be regardless of its claims,
Or else no freedom can you give your folks,
And you'll not find the root of the unknown...."
I listened.
Of the laws alone he spoke,
And patience has a limit of its own,
And, candidly, I felt a little bad.
I longed to say a word to damp the fad
Of his life formula,
And yet, controlling myself, heard him teach,
And cursed him, mutely, for his speech!
"My brother, stop your lecture, if you please!
You'll treat to this your student, at your ease.
Now listen well to what I have to say:
When banishment became Faruk's sad lot,
And when Feysal- the enemy, was shot,
The tyrant was dethroned and sent his way,-
Just tell me- was the formula transgressed,
Or was it not? Or did it pass the test?
The twentieth century- a grey, old man
Of sixty, undertook
Its twenty-five campaigns
In Africa; according to this plan
How many people triumphed for their pains?
How many lands got independent rights?
I'd like to know- the root of the unknown
Was found, or not? Or it remained unknown?"



And in Algiers how long went on the fights
With French authorities
Called civilized,
The wailings of the people for their rights,
And trampled down for what they yearned and prized.
And I should like to know
With whose just law
Does all this tally? Tell me this, and more:
Iran- a land with endless counselors, just see?
You first take counsel with them, then you speak.....
That's how things are!
The Land of Firdousi
Must counsel take with strangers-
What a freak!
The times are such-
No barrier can withstand,
And vote for the colonial downfall, too.
Awake to freedom new.
But here Azerbaijan
Has kept its feudal state;
You think.....
Your thoughts are red-hot, of a power great,
They burn your brain;
They burn your very hands.
You try to word them-
Breath and tongue
Are brands!
Since the 20th century marched across the land:
Three times Iran has grappled with its King,
Three times a progressive government was formed,
By the people who arose in mortal struggle.
But never once retreating in the fight.
Each, in the name of freedom, did his best,





Yet finally were crushed by the lords' might,
The nobles triumphed, fattened like a pest;
No school to teach the language of Azerbaijan,
No alphabet to learn the ABC,
This is the vengeance of great Tehran,
'We are a mighty nation,' says Iran.
Encouraging, they pat our shoulder blade,
Yet use of our own language they forbade.....
Who will repay for this atrocious
Crime!
While the Orientals rise in force sublime,
While the oppressed their rulers overthrow,
Our tongue's forbidden!! This is mean and low,
So cheeky are the despots, as you know!
The tongue in which the Shahs wrote out their laws-
Prohibited! And one man is the cause.
You watch:
His human speech is full of flaws!
And then
Not worth a button
Is his hide.....
Today they call our language purely local,
Upon which subject they're extremely vocal.
The folk whose Nizami
Is vaster than the world's great wide,
Is crammed into this same 'locality'!
Here is the tyrant's cheek:
And this is what

The grandson of the great Sardar has got
Whose forebear gave Iran its freedom code!
This is
The greatest tragedy bestowed
On us by our 20th century. My friend,



My friend philosopher,
Please tell me now,
What law
Condemns us to such suffering without end?
O no, my friend,
O no!
There's no such law,-
It's just a legend old
That very soon should wholly cease to be:
The power of brandished swords.
And volleys free-
That is the Truth....
My friend philosopher,
Our land today
Calls for a son, a hero in the fray,
Who would
With words of flame attack the foe.
Who Mount Savalan would then ascend,
And of an ailing nation's heart wrung send.
Let ancient Orient hear
The voice of those
Whose tongues are tied,
From shackled hands and deeply wounded breast,
So that the masters know and all the rest-
Those, playing with Azerbaijan's sad fate:
The ashes smolder,
Flames, though low, yet burn!
Who plays with fire
Risks hand
Or beard to burn.
The Motherland for such a son would crave
Who'd have the heart of Sattarkhan the brave,
The breath of Khyabani,





The ideals of Movjuz,
That from his flaming sword,
His fierce abuse,
And from his strong-spelled word of poet of renown,
The foe should take to flight, abandoning town by town.
My friend philosopher,
The Homeland wants today
A son who, in the tongue of the poetic lay
Of Fisuli,
Would deal a fatal blow
And with the mighty sword of Hatai
Would break the heavy cannons of the foe,
Who, with ten heroes
In a little band,
Could thousands of the enemy withstand,
The sorrow of the 'small ones'
Are unending great.
Each man who has the force,
Whose word has weight-
Must be aggressive and protest,
If not-
He may be bullied easily, and shot.
There was a time
The ruler of the seas,
The 'Master' of the Negroes,
Forced his way
Into the east and said that 'these
Were not yet ripe', and then, without delay,
Proclaimed himself the 'guardian'
Of many a land.
Then shoved the laws into a safe of steel
Alongside people' independent weal.
As if they wa bank-note to conceal.



The ones who dared to speak
Were ordered to shut up:
'Your independence is in danger,' they were told.
'And if you speak- the devils will eat you up.'
Dear friend philosopher!
We have a proverb old:
'If you reply upon neighbour's hand or head,
without your supper you will go to bed.'
If of your own complaints you take no care,
And do not see to forging your own rights-
No man will be concerned with your affairs,
You are the one who for his own luck fights....
Who hears the wailing of the ocean fish
When sharks in hunger make of them a dish?
The hour has struck when for the people's lives
To fight, a son is summoned by our Land,
A son who with his teeth would break the gyves,
And, facting bayonets, would bravely stand
With fearless breast, and strong, undaunted air,
Whose breath would melt the heavy-armoured tanks,
And, further than a shot his voice would fare-
Shouting of justice to the people's ranks,
That Isfahan he'd reach with one strong hand,
And with the other Mahabad,
So to unite
Beneath one banner hearts of many a land.
A nation that would march for Freedom's cause to fight.
So let Iran then mount again its steed
Of revolution, and in one whole unite
The sword, the word, the pen's poetic might.
Let people march, let thirst for freedom-lead!
Who can refuse to die in trenches deep?
Is it not worse in wretched life to weep?!





My friend philosopher!
 Who can refuse?
 If one point of the law we violate-
 Believe me,
 There's no reason for abuse,
 Our planet will not change, at any rate,
 Believe me,
 Neither will the 'unknown' suffer pain,
 Then will the people's right and power reign.
 I know that then
 You'll also find the way
 How the root from the 'unknown' to extract.
 The people's power must make
 Existence bright and gay,
 And use its sacred rights
 With honesty and tact.
 To make the law a noose-
 That makes it hell;
 Though a philosopher,
 You ought to know this well:
 The masses' greatest law is freedom,
 That is so,
 The other laws are wrong,
 They bring us woe!
 My friend philosopher!
 It seems that you agree?
 There is no other way
 To make all mankind free.
 The nation may be weak,
 Yet she must have her say,
 The radical from her
 You cannot take away!"

Translated by Oglá Moisseyenko



Hamid Nutki Aytan

Hamid Nutki Aytan (1920-1999), a doctor and poet from South-Iranian Azerbaijan was born in Tabriz. After the Islamic revolution in 1979, Hamid Nutki and prominent Azeri scientist-surgeon, great thinker and philosopher Dr. Javad Heyet jointly started to publish a magazine of Varlig which is very popular up to now in both sides of historical Azerbaijan.

Most poetry of Hamid Nutki is in free verse. This was considered as a significant departure from the stereotyped classical and neo-classical poetry of earlier poets of Iran and Azerbaijan. One of his famous book "Melodious Reveries" translated from Azeri Turkish to English by Colonel (Retired) Masud Akhtar Shaikh was published in Islamabad, in 2004.

From Every Hue

Do not say
 Do no tsay
 All roses
 Are alike.

For the scent obtained
 From every colour in not the same.

Every puff of cold breeze
 That blows
 From all directions of one's desires
 Speaks a different language.

In the densely shaded forests
 Spring
 Keeps waiting
 For lovers
 To come.

The stars feel jealous





Of eyes to which
Some extra stupor
Is added by love.
Nights shall come and days go by
While row after row of cranes
Shall continue flying past.

With us shall stay
As the season's
Memento
Our shared
Dream.

Come
Let's gather
Lapfuls
Of dreams of every hue!

Every hue
And every song
Has an aroma
Peculiar to itself.

Baku

Her head cover was open
Her tresses
Disheveled by wind.

Her fiery eyes fixed on distant horizon
About to be filled with tears
Waiting for someone to come.

On her rosy lips
A pallid smile
A withered flower of restlessness
Descended



From the nightmare of pitch-dark night
By dawn, her heart had played
Countless epics of romance.

The memory of crimson evenings
Flickered in her head like flames.

By the time the sunny morning arrived
Clouds had gathered on her brow.

The winter of separation
Stood behind her
In front of her lay mountains,
Lonely, impenetrable,
With steep descents
And hard ascents

We met at the crossroads of privacy
Where eras, past and present, meet.

To each other we were introduced
In a park
In a town
Whose name I don't remember now.

Typhoons
Changing direction every now and then
Were hitting her love-stricken head.

Her sobbing voice full of drowned revolts
Revolts that her breast couldn't suppress
Her head enwrapped in mist.

I knew here ere she gave me her name
In front of mw was standing
My first ever love.

Down my heart flowed a flood of feelings
From her crimson, quivering lips.





She offered my years old wine of love
That scorched my heart as fire would do.

I'd found
My visage in her visage
My words on her tongue
My person in her person

I'd come to this world a second time.
It seemed as if I'd seen my mama once again
It seemed as if I was back again
In my own homeland,
In my own clan,
In my hearth and home.
We took the road from a public square
That said to past oppression,
To the merciless motion of time,
And to eras that had lasted for centuries,
"Stop now, you've had enough of it!"

Caught by the charm
Of a looming dawn we stayed on there.
Awakened by the flutter of a bird in flight
We filled our cups with the wine of dawn.

We passed on all our worries and woes
To hope that was budding in the heart of our hearts.

With the pitch dark night on its last breath
We dissolved our woes
In looks that were deep and full of dreams.

(Written after the poet's first and last visit to Baku in 1992.)



Dirge: Resul Rza

Resul Rza!
I discovered you fairly late
And on top of that
I lost you pretty soon.

One day by chance
You appeared before me
Along with your poems.

With your words
You flowed down
From my eyes into my heart.

To the magic of your vocabulary
I gave the whole of my heart
I said

This spring
Will continue gushing
Right up to the end of time.....

But take it that the gloomy Fate
Considered all this to be too much for me
The garden in which I had put my steps
Turned all of a sudden into ruins

Some buds and blooming roses that I plucked
Withered away while still in my hands.

Alas! Alas!
I discovered you fairly late

You do know that
The backdoor
Had been slammed since long.
The horizons had been closed
I could not notice that over my head
Gleamed the light of stars like you





How could the eyes that had been forcibly shut
Discern the light of the day?

I didn't have permission
Nor possibility
To shake
Your beauty-crafting hand
Even if it be for a moment
To take the road and have a look
At the garden of your poems
To rush from this side
And have a look at the other side.

Now with the arrival of
This heartrending news
The people you loved are all in grief
Our eyes are wet.
Following you
With wreaths
To the side of your grave
In the fog and smoke of mourning
Are standing in rows with due reverence
Along with our living minstrels
Fuzulis, Nesimis, and Vakifs
They're here to mourn the death of their son.

With tragic news
Received by us
Our people are in mourning
Our hearts are full of grief and our eyes are wet.

Shaikh Muhammad

I had met you
In a library
From tears we recognized each other



And we both
Fell in love with a beauty
As you closed your eyes
I opened mine;
Smoke, fog, and grief prevailed everywhere
The ashes left by fire were still hot
From my town
All bluebirds had flown away
With shame
Eynali Mounrain was absolutely red
Tarlan's water were standing mum.
Every place was empty
Everything worthless,
Everything hollow
In the grave atmosphere
Of the world
That you had left as orphan
In endless grief
I grew and gained in height.
My days were ruled by nights
All the seasons
Started and ended
With the same autumnal melancholy
But it was you who filled my dreams
With thoughts about yourself
It was you who had become
The divine light of my eyes
The strength of my knees
And the pride of my heart
But why was it
That your promised clock





Did not click?
And why was it
That the tree you had planted took no roots?
And the wounds failed to heal

Amy bleeding wound cannot heal
While mountaintops are still in fog
With all my songs still cramped in my chest.

O mighty shade, may I have your counsel?
What should I do to the wind
That causes the roses to wither
And what should I tell the masses
Who have lost their power to speech?

Shaikh Muhammad: (Khyabani, 1879/80-1920): A magnificent political figure of southern Azerbaijan. He set up an independent government of Azadistan in Tabriz in 1920. The Shah regime liquidated his government, hanging him in the process.



Islam Safarli

Islam Safarli (1923-1974), a poet and dramatist, was born in Shekerabad, a village near Nakhchivan. His contemporaries, their joys, sorrows, loves and thoughts, constitute the content of his poetry. Islam Safarli's plays are noted for the sharpness of the issues he raised in them, and the lofty moral qualities of his heroes.

One Glance

One glance- a look of withering fire
That burns away your heart entire.

One glance such measured cold employs,
No spark of life disturbs its poise.

One languid glance takes witching toll-
Beguiles away your very soul.

Breaks into radiant rays,
Turns arctic nights to tropic days.

One arid glance your love denies-
Compels such grief the spirit dies.

One glance, one look, all hearts subdued-
In love with it is all Baku.

This winning look such charm proclaims,
My heart is startled into flames.
You- a world beyond surmise-
O glance! Glancing eyes!





Silent Moments

Hooded Kalagai a nimbus white
 On moon-head sailing through a sea of cloud.
 Should my love not meet me as she vowed,
 Then what misery will drown the night....

... Feathered touch of hand upon my shoulder;
 Turn and see, dark eyes with amber glaze.
 Eyes that shine with such a lucid gaze-
 Are they from the very moonlight spun?

Hushed and still the sea-cloud moves no more,
 Hardly heard, the sea laps on the shore.

She is silent, mute and silent I
 Swift our sail moves towards the line of sky.

By Allah, they are worth the whole world wide!
 Priceless silent moments, side by side.

Translated by Gladys Evans



Gasim Gasimzade

Gasim Gasimzade (1923-1974), a poet and scholar, was born in the family of a forester. His native village is Khodjamsakhli in the Kubatly district of Azerbaijan, a land of snow-capped mountains, alpine meadows, brilliant sunshine and impetuous rivers. And all his life, Gasim Gasimzade was striving to express in his poetry the wonder and beauty of his native landscape. He has many poems about the forest and its mysterious world. He is very keen-sighted for the colours and details of the surrounding world. His verses are imbued with affection for the workers of the soil-wine-growers, cotton-growers and ploughmen. Lately, Gasim Gasimzade has devoted much time to literary studies.

The Shore Lay Still

The shore lay still. The people went their way.
 Impassioned waves adorned the cliff with spray.
 You frowned and shook your head,
 "We can't, we can't!" you said.

The midnight moon hung, lighting troubled seas.
 Your dress was thin and fluttered in the breeze.
 "oh come "I said, "draw closer lest you freeze."
 "I can't, I can't!" you said.

Now scarlet dawns aurora starts to grow,
 While gleaming dew-drops set the grass aglow,
 I say, "We two our separate ways must go."
 You hold my hand, your glance grows fey,
 "We can't, we can't!" you said.

Translated by Tom Botting





Blessed

This morning going down the stairs I mumble,
 "such muggy weather,
 anyone would grumble!

A silly winter-

There's no ice or snow."

For years it's been that way. I even know
 Some kiddies who are five but have not seen
 The snowflakes whirling when the wind is keen.
 How fine to walk when snow lies all about,
 To raise one's voice and with the snow-storm shout!
 My neighbour's daughter hurries up the stair.
 Although it's winter spring is in her hair,
 For she is wearing flowers white and gay.
 A bride she seems, with orange-blossom wreath
 As fragrant as that charming face beneath.
 I stop and take her hand and then I know.
 Her hair is white with freshly fallen snow.
 But also let it be as first I guessed-
 Let snow and orange blossoms both be blessed.

Translated by Tom Botting



Nabi Khazri

Nabi Khazri (1924-2007) was born in Khurdalan, a village near Baku, into a poor peasant family. He studied at the Gorky Literary Institute in Moscow, from which he graduated in 1952. His works have been translated in Moscow by such well-known Russian poets as Vladimir Soloukhin and others. Translations of his poetry in other languages also have been published.

The evening cloud has formed above the deep ravine.
 In silence stand the woods below the mountains peak.
 Ah, how I long to know what tranquil moments mean!
 For silence has a tongue tranquility can speak.....

Oh, listen to the spring where forest waters well,
 Or near a mossy pool where moisture slowly drips.
 Those waters sing the tales the mountain rages tell,
 Forever through the ages grand sagas pass those lips.

The wind can sing a song. Perhaps its words would
 It really is the breath of mountain woods on far.
 Perhaps the crystal dew on which the moonbeams play
 Would claim deep in the night to be another star.

The Voice of Nature

Let nature's sound go sweeping over hill and dale
 And see how mountain torrents foaming water hurl.
 So when you quench your thirst the water without fail
 Will tell how through the eons rivers leap and swirl.

Let rivers thrust on down and press upon the sea,
 While this old world exists the sea will hardly change.

The water fall shall leap, forever breaking free,





It is the dearest child of this great mountain range.

May poplars' skillful singing fall upon your ear
Their songs are hymns when trees are bursting in to leaf.

But later if you listen yellow leaves you'll hear
Intoning with the twigs a dismal dirge of grief.

If nature's heady speech throughout your soul can rise
With in your heart you'll will know the greatest joy of all.
Perhaps there's fixed upon you, like a deer's dark eyes,
The wonders of all nature, since you heed their call.

O learn to sleep and rest-in fragrant meadows lie,
Where scarlet poppies blow and little insects hum.
If you keep still all Nature moves before your eye
And with her breathless beauty will seem to strike you dumb.

Oh, see the branches wave to that lass on the shore.
Beside the mountain lake the countryside is wild.
The woods and peaks have beauty, yet the girl has more.
Without us Mother Nature is like an orphan child.

Let night time thunder roll and let the lightning blaze,
At dawn the face of Nature soon will shine anew.
Let Mother Nature lave your soul with soothing rays
And like a cleansing flood let light go sweeping through.

The countryside you'll find has springs on every hand,
To hear the earth and sky your travels you should start,
And inch by inch explore your lovely nature land,
Its throbbing heart you'll sense deep down in your own heart.

Translated by Tom Botting



Hussein Arif

Hussein Arif (1924-1992), a popular writer of lyrics, was born in the village of Yeni-Gyun, which means "a new day", in Akstafa district. He comes from a peasant family. Hussein Arif studied at the Department of Oriental Studies, at the Azerbaijan University. His style is terse, in the tradition of folk poetry, and aphoristic. His language is melodious, songful and clear cut. Arif knew many quatrains of nameless authors by heart. His perception of the world was cheerful and optimistic. Besides songs, Hussein Arif is also famous for his long poems about Samad Vurghun entitled as "On the Road".

Curtains

There are curtains hiding evil,
Hiding lies of seasons gone.
There are curtains like a barrier,
So you know not what goes on.

There are curtains hide the heavens,
That the stars to shine forbid.
There are curtains hiding secrets
That for months and years are hid.

There are curtains of all colours,
Made of silk and made of lace,
Made of clouds and made of fire,
Even of a smiling face.

Let us live without these curtains,
Leaving only me, although,
That's the curtain of politeness
We to older people owe.

* * *





My Saz Speaks

I am thinking in my room,
 As I listen to my saz,
 To its listening to my saz,
 And my saz, it speaks to me,
 Calmly, softly,
 And I list
 To the strains of "Keremi".
 And I listen as it sings
 Of the ages and gone by,
 Of the lovely maid Asli,
 Of the lover poor Kerem!
 Strings of saz, they say to me
 In a language all men know
 That if human life doth end,
 Human love will still go on,
 Human dreams and human deeds
 Will live on are not in vain.
 Thus my saz, it speaks to me
 In the quiet of my room:
 Though Kerem will pass away,
 "Keremi" will still remain.

* * *



O My Songs

O my songs,
 If after I am gone,
 To someone you bring joy,
 To someone prove a balm,
 From sickness someone cure,
 Then well you may live on.
 If not, depart with me,
 When I have traveled on.
 And do not waste the space
 Of progeny to come.
 For there are many such,
 Who to this world hang on,
 Who for the other folk
 A load are and a yoke.

Translated by Eugene Felgenhauer





Ashig Hussein Javan

Ashig Hussein Javan (1916-1985) is one of the more outstanding modern folk poets of Southern, Iranian Azerbaijan. Javan means "young" and his poetry is indeed full of youthful enthusiasm, optimism and cheer.

Sattarkhan

O courageous son of Azerbaijan,
You fell a martyr to the freedom of man.
You pledged faith to your country, bold Sattarkhan,
And were loyal to her since your manhood began.

You fought with the foes of your country so dear;
Wherever on horseback you would spear
The enemies' faces went yellow with fear,
And to rescue their treacherous hides, they ran.

You fought for the coming of happy times
And look- the sun into heaven climbs.
In Tabriz the rises blossom, sublime;
You were their gardener, fearless man.

You became a bright beacon for sightless eyes.
You give strength to the strong, wisdom to the wise,
In our laughing eyes as a sun you arise.
Hope of the pure in heart, peerless man!

* * *



I Fell Into Sorrowful Meditation

As I viewed my misery-stricken nation
I fell into sorrowful meditation.
My people's weeping and loud lamentation
Set my spirit on fire- so sad was I.

My land's in the hands of hangmen cold-hearted;
Even mothers with little children are parted.
When I heard my people weeping I started
To roam with bowed head, so sad was I.

I will smile when my people escape from their chains,
When no more misery or sorrow remains;
When Tabriz is free from the tyrant that reigns
In one will say that with grief mad am I.

The murderous foe may wait till he die:
We free men as slaves at his feet will not lie.
When the South housts the crimson banner on high
The Hussein will at last say, "How glad am I!"

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Ahmad Jafarzade
(1929-2000)

Unlike millions of others who were arrested and sent into exile during Stalin's era, the government did have ample excuse to arrest Ahmad Jafarzade because of his outspokenness and protest. Arrested in 1953, he was exiled for a seven years term to Kolyma, however due to Stalin's death, he was released earlier. Some of these poems were found in the KGB files and obviously are some of the reason why they arrested him.

Hey Yusif.....

This poem is address to Yusif (Joseph Stalin)
Our Azeri lands have become empty and hungry
Since you came, hey yusif.
The people's backs are bent from working
People have become strangers to each other, hey yusif.

You've taken away our crops,
Like lightening, you've struck down our heads,
You've locked us in prison before we even said anything.
Our oil is the crown on your head, hey yusif.

First you gave us wings and we flew to the heavens,
Then you severed our tongues.
You stole our girls and women.
Where is so much tax ever levied, hey yusif.
" You've thrown a rock at our heads."
You've made us shed tears.
You've taken away our meat and pilaf.
All we eat is "umaj", hey yusif.
Now you can do whatever you want.
You can set forth a decree to kill Ahmad.
But time will pass, and the day will come



When your throne will be plundered , hey yusif.

Umaj, A poor man's simple meal: flour mixed with water, Published September 2002 in "Bizim Asr" (Our Century) newspaper.

I Don't Know

The nights are long and cold,
I can't sleep well , thinking about the future.
The doors are locked , the guards are on duty,
My enemy is strong, I can not overcome him.

There is no comfort for anyone here,
I'm sick with grief and sorrow,
Happiness has turned into gazelle,
Which I keep pursuing, but can never grasp.
You've taken away Ahmad's belief and religion
For no reason.

You've shed Ahmad's blood in vain,
But believe me, even if you take away Ahmad's life
He 'll never give up his quest for freedom.

I'm In A Daze

I'm in a daze.
When I look around
It seems to me that I'm in a daze.
When these times trouble and burn me inside out
It seems to me that I'm in daze.

When foreign oppressors beat poor us,
When the poor nation eats black bread,
When the naïve speaker says, " we have freedom!"
It seems to me that I'm in daze.
There is no such cruelty in India and Aden
The one who separates Hadi" from us sins greatly.





The one who separates Hadi¹ from us sins greatly.
When Nabati,² and Mashati,³ leave us,
It seems to me that I'm in daze.

They deceive and rob the people and the nation,
Every hour brings thousands of deaths.
They make soldiers work as servants,
It seems to me that I'm in daze.

We mourn inwardly and celebrate outwardly,
Ahmad is shocked
When they say, "The national press is free,"
It seems to me that I'm in daze.

This poem was first published in Azeri in "Bizim Asr" newspaper,
September 2002.

Footnotes

1 Mahammad Hadi was a poet of the early 20th century who wrote poems in classical style. Basically, his poems deal with the idea of independence for Azerbaijan. He died in Ganja in 1918. His works were banned because he advocated independence.

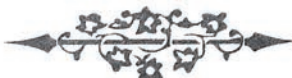
2 Nabti was an Azerbaijani poet from 19th century.

3 Mashati Ganjavi was a poetess of the 12th century

From Ganja in Azerbaijan. The author laments the fact that classical literature is no longer esteemed. New literature forms have replaced the old genres and the wisdom of the past.

Evil Rules Instead Of Truth

We've been in trouble for so many years.
No health, no strength, no life remains.
We despair from stress and grief,
No wealth, no fame, no glory remains,
No desire, no wish, no will.
They have wounded the heart with distress,
Mothers only wear black now.



Even though troubles have multiplied,
There is no solution.
No medicine, no remedy, no cure remains,
No solution, no health, no doctor.

Many have been forced to leave the Motherland,
Evil rules instead of Truth.
Loyalty and love had turned in to gold,
No sage, no Justice, no humanity remains,
No scientist, no Mufti, no wisdom.

Neither gardens, nor flowers blossom.
It's been so long since the lovely nightingales sang.
Miserable hearts always suffer,
No fight, no fighting ground remains,
No organization, no rebel.
Most people rot in Siberia now.
There lives pass in cruelty and suffering,
Maybe we'll find comfort in the grave if we die
No freedom, no order remains,
No comfort, no judge, no king.

Stalin has crushed our hearts,
His tyranny and oppression increases each day,
The light of hope has been extinguished.
No Talmud, no Bible, no Kuran remains
No believer, no Muslim.

All wealth is gone; nothing remains
Longing and anxiety swell in our hearts,
Our rights, the will that once used to be, no longer exist,
No fame remains, no Afghan (Ahmad's pen name).
No person is left to feel and think.
Nothing remains. (June 7, 1949)

Translated by Gulnar Aydamirova





Ali Tude

Ali Tude (1924-1996) was born in Baku, and for a time lived in southern, Iranian Azerbaijan. Then he came back to Baku and studied at the University there, in the department of philology. His principal theme was the life and struggle of the people of South Azerbaijan for democracy and freedom and their protest against oppression and destitution. Ali Tude has written many verses about Baku, about Azerbaijani workers-engine-drivers, carpet weavers and builders.

Girl of the Mountains

The Shusha Mountains... Vibrant-cool the air.....

O you creators, gaze on this creation.

And Nature glorify, who made this fair

And awesome sight, that strikes the imagination!

It's sundown... in the sky hang cumulus-

Piled clouds, like burnished copper shot with wine.

Such happy crowds at Dijdir Track, such bliss

For those at Isa Spring so crystalline.

I see that even yet upon the grass

Relax the guests who dropped at random in.....

Lightly from mountain, gorge, the echoes pass

Back sounds of tympan, viol, mandolin.

Down sheep and shepherds wind their homeward way,

The wind whips on the lilt of piping flute.

To hear the Karabakh melodious lay,

The birds within their nests lie still and mute.

Then like a fine white shawl the mountain mist,

Drifts many layers deep into each gorge-vent.

Above the Yalchin summits, amethyst,



The sky is setting up its spangled tent.

Come evening ... lovely falls the Shusha night!

The moon beyond the mountains climb uphill-

At every step, the sky another taper lights,

In field and mountain voice raptly still.

Comes evening ... lights in every home flash on,

Each window beams its brilliance at my feet.

And in my heart new interest starts to dawn

As I go roaming familiar streets.

And now a girl with such a lovely voice

Starts singing, singing, singing, somewhere near,

So all my heart can not help but rejoice

Such loving kindness in her voice I hear...

"The rose is shaken by her fears,

my patience at an end, I plead:

o dark eyes, dark eyes, dry your tears

and cry no more, there is no need."

As if my feet took root... so very long

I stand and listen: O my motherland!

A hundred times I listened to that song

Back in Tauriz from streets on every hand-

Their voices ringing out like muted chimes,

The girls at sunset through the park-gates would flock in

Within my heart, recalling other times,

Breaks wailing the Kemancha violin.

Sing on, dear sister, though it brings me pain,

Sing on, your brother hears, his heart console.

I dearly love that song, that sweet refrain,

As if it were my homeland's tender soul.





Sing on, dear sister! Happiness is yours.
Sing on, may heartbreak never venture near.
This moment, how I wish your voice would soar
So all my folk, my nature land, could hear.

Such homesick love within my heart is borne ...
Could you but slit my heart and look within! You might
See my love's eyes, clear as early morn,
My love's hair gleaming through as black as night.

A treasured souvenir, her pictured face
I've hung for safety deep within my heart.
This girl that once I held in my embrace,
One moment sift before we had to part.

And so I left my love, Taurizian fair.
Death trailed me shadow-like, an exiled waif.
But still my sweetheart's love has helped me bear
The ache of parting, my love kept safe....

She was a one to sing, the same as you,
O mountain girl, back in her native land-
That old sweet song, she often sang it too;
And with her melting voice my heart unmanned.

Where is she now? Look there, how like a snake
Twines the Ara in coils and hooded twist!
While farther from these waters mute, opaque,
The forests thicken dark as midnight mist.

O Karadag! My homeland ever dear!
Land of my fathers, land of Sattarkhan.
And, pondering his lot, to me appeared
In vision a new world for all my clan:



"Attention! Listen! This is free Tauriz!
Welcome, Azerbaijan, where freedom reigns!"
Reaching to all horizons, from Tauriz
In wave the call sweeps continent and main.

Then celebration ... day of triumph, gay
The hall with flower garlands finely dressed.
O girl from Karabakh! You are today
Among our new-arriving welcome guests.

On stage a crimson banner spreads its wings,
The target of all eyes, where hopes compile.
And there's our Teacher's statue- living thing-
That looks upon us all with a smile...

Lenin! I've known him from my earliest year.
Victorious whatever battle dawned!
Now see that picture! They, too, watch us here-
Erani, Pischevari, Sattarkhan....

The meeting opens ... all with deep concern
Attend the speakers' warm, sincere orations.
O girl from Karabakh! Now it's your turn
To take the floor with glad congratulations.

And while you make your speech, O mountain Rose,
My heart is washed of grief. At meeting's end
No trace of it remained, and I arose
And went to meet you like an old, old friend.

But when you saw the person by my side
You asked me, "who is this, my Poet-brother?"
Eyes on your dark ones, shyly I replied,
"Oh, meet my girl. I hope you like each other."

Translated by Gladys Evans





Bakhtiyar Vahabzade

Bakhtiyar Vahabzade (1925-2009) national poet of Azerbaijan, a well-known dramatics and scholar, was born in the ancient city of Sheki.

He was a professor-doctor, member of National Meclis of Azerbaijan. As freedom poet and fighter, he is holding special place in the hearts of Azeri people. His lyric and philosophical poems are alive with the pulse beat of this complex and contradictory age. In his big and small works Vahabzade tries to find an answer to questions of life and death, heroism and immorality. He is eager to discover beauty in the commonplace, to record every moment of happiness, and his poetry is addressed to all those who have a warm, sensitive heart.

Mother Tongue

If, in your mother tongue, you cannot say
"I am free, I am independent."
Who can believe that you really are?

Older than My Father

My granddad died
When he was 80,
My dad - when he was 60.
But I am older
In my forties
Than both my father
And my grandfather.

Telephones
Telegraphs
Radio
Newspapers
They load the days and load the months



And every hour and every minute...
Condense the world, whose day is to the right,
And to the left-the night- Into one tiny room,
With Spring at your head, and Winter - at your feet...
Continents, poles Are united by my speed.

In the heat and the flame
Of this speed,
Of this audacity,
My love And my very nature Have changed...
The greater the speed,
The shorter the distance.
Yesterday borrows minutes from today

And today -
From tomorrow.
The days are all mixed up,
And so are the months,
We have lost months, economizing years.

In a single month I live as much
As my granddad did in a single year.
I'm a river flowing down a mountain,
Skirting the mountain peak,
A stream muddy in the mountains
And a clear river in the valley -
A river with hundreds of different moods.

I'm older than my father.
I'm older than my grandfather.

Translated by Louis Zellikoff

Subjugation - Freedom

Our nation was burned in the fires of slavery,
We were wounded and scorched for the sake of freedom.





But having reached freedom in this temple,
We made our thanksgiving prayer without the Qiblah. *

Now we are free, but free from the honor we had
That once protected us from evil.
Now that we are free from the fury and anger of the enemy,
Our nation has become the target of its own hatred.

Having freed ourselves from others' subjugation,
We have succumbed to our own slavery.
We are free from benevolence and mercy,
We must reject the nation's right.
We became the brutal plunderers
Of our own Motherland.

No other nation can replace us in deception,
This one blames that one, and that one accuses this one.
While we plunder and pillage our Motherland,
We are free from the fear of Allah.

My freedom is my enemy,
Fate itself cannot make heads or tails of this secret game.
The rope that pulled me out of the deep, dry well
Is now wrapped around my neck like a noose.

* Muslims face Mecca when they pray.

Life is as Short as an Inch (2003)

Life is as short as an inch, they say
Sometimes Death brings tragedy to 100 families.
By God, in a blink of an eye,
Death is there waiting for you.

What was it like to live?
I never knew.

What is your measurement to assess life?
I've witnessed those who have lived for a century, 150 years,



And still left the world with empty heart and brain.
Do not measure life by its length,
Measure it by its depth.

There are those who confuse their right with their left,
Being respected by both,
Seeking superficial feelings.

To live a life full of meaning.
Isn't Honor what you should build your life upon?
No matter what it takes,
Or else one is really dead while being alive.

If we could live
Each day to its fullest,
We should be thankful for our fate,
And shouldn't complain about the passing of time.

I've witnessed those who lived a century, 150 years,
And still left the world with empty heart and brain
Don't measure life by its length,
Measure it by its depth.

Knock the Fences Down

Everyone puts up a fence around his own field
Saying, "On this side of the fence, this is mine."
Come, tear the fences down, demolish the ramparts
So that our eyes can gaze at distant parts.
How can rooms contain the heart that must live free:
It should leap over hill and vale, on and on.
For so long as my eyes can see,
I shall keep scanning the widening horizon.
Never hinder the growth of flowers, of the roses,
Never wound their hearts to die.
Nature is free:





Never hold
 It inside the fortresses, in captivity.
 We must refuse to play a game of backgammon,
 Confined to squares inlaid with gold.
 Our hearts should keep growing and soaring, on and on
 Like the ever-widening, endless horizon.
 Come, tear the fences down,
 demolish the ramparts
 So that our eyes can gaze
 at all the distant parts.

* * *

Two Fears (1988)

(Dedicated to the memory of our deceased composer Gambar Huseinli)

He was a friend of mine, Composer Gambar,¹
 Whose songs ever smelled of the native land.
 The sweet songs we two had once composed
 Were passed from mouth to mouth.

He had never mentioned it, but I knew that
 He had been arrested some years before.
 But I did not know what his fault was.
 I never asked him, nor did he tell.

Once Gambar was complaining to me about his life,
 I felt heaviness of heart...
 I asked him:
 But why did they arrest you?

Suddenly he exploded like a bomb:
 Don't you know why?
 Because I had cursed the world.
 I had called "The Father of the Nations," an enemy.

Then he became frightened of what he had said,



And suddenly stopped, not breathing a word.
 Evidently, he was afraid of me,
 Thinking I might be a spy.

"Sorry, I got excited," he said suddenly,
 "Sometimes I don't know what I'm doing."
 I felt the humility in Gambar's voice,
 But in a way he was right to be suspicious.

I supported everything that he said
 In order to dispel his doubts...
 After arriving home from Gambar's place
 I started thinking,
 Fear and agitation gave me no peace.

I remembered our talk...
 I said to myself, you fool,
 Why did you get yourself into trouble?
 Why did you confirm his words after all?
 How do you know that Gambar was not saying
 Those words against that despot deliberately?

When thousands of innocent people have been executed,
 And thousands exiled,
 Will they set someone free
 Who has called the government leader "enemy"?
 Where was the logic in this, after all?

I couldn't believe his curses were honest.
 What if he were complaining deliberately
 about his life, about the times,
 What if he were trying to get my opinion.
 And what did I do? Me, fool that I am,
 Told him what I thought.

That night I couldn't sleep,
 With thoughts I fought...





What thoughts did I have:
When they come to imprison me,
They will search my archives,
And then my writings, dear me.
I thought what I had, white or black!
Like a stranger I looked inside myself,
Then got out of bed at midnight,
And began scrutinizing my poems.
Like an inspector, I looked at the poems
Still unpublished
And a shudder came over me.
"If they find these," I said to myself,
"That despot will kill me,"
Maybe to burn them? What else could I do?
After all, who is indifferent to the life he leads?
Such trouble to burn the poems
That demand truth and justice from this world!
I have to sacrifice my thoughts and feelings
Just to live out the rest of my life!
My body became cold, my heart trembled
With the fire and flame of the burning poems.
But I spared some of them
Saying, "It is enough,"
Saying, "That'll do."
I spared some of my poems that day,
Crumpled papers still remain.
I hid them for the future,
I hid them in my mother's artificial leg.
I turned over my thoughts and judgments page by page:
"As soon as the dawn breaks
I'll go to him.
I'll ask him not to betray me,



I'll tell him I was lying yesterday,
'Let's keep it between ourselves.
I was agreeing just to support what you had said.
In fact, I love that genius leader very much.
He has bestowed these happy days upon us.
He is our only support in this world,
He is our thinking brain, our seeing eye.
"What a mistake I've made,"
Thinking so till morning, I blamed myself.
As soon as the dawn broke, I got up and dressed.
At the same time, someone began knocking at the door...
Who might it be so early in the morning?
I stood before the mirror
My body trembling.
I had no strength even to open the door.
"He must have already betrayed me last night.
They're coming to arrest me, where shall I flee?"
And knocks continued-
Knock, knock and knock.
The knocking wouldn't cease
Without achieving its aim...
"Who's there?"
"It's me, brother."
It was Gambar's voice.
That was enough for me.
Perhaps he had come as a witness,
Or come to make me be silent.
I opened the door with trembling hands,
He fell on my neck and embraced me,
And began crying bitterly.
He cast a sorrowful glance
To the left, then to the right.





Began hastily interpreting
The talk we had had a day before.

"I was just joking yesterday;
In truth, I love that genius leader.
He is our only support in this world.
He is our thinking brain, our seeing eye."
I understood him,
But kept silent... Realizing the falsehood
Of all those interpretations.

Time had made hypocrites of us all,
Making us deny all we had said a day after our talk,
It turned out he also had not slept that night.

Footnotes:

1 Gambar Huseinli is perhaps most fondly remembered for his children's song, "Jujalarim" - My Little Chicks [See AI 5.4, Winter 1997]. Sound Sample: Search at Azer.com

2 The father of the nations - meaning Stalin.

Two Blind Men

There's a blind man I know: His eyes are sightless,
But he is not blind.
Though he sometimes gets scorched
in the fire of sorrows,
He does not turn a cold shoulder to his passion
And his mind.
He reads and writes day and night,
In his mind's eye he sees, feels, knows.

But there is someone else
Although he is not blind,
Nonetheless, he cannot see,
His bosom friend may die



In front of his eyes-
"I saw nothing," he says.
Whatever is good he claims as his;
He fails to see the bad.
He looks at the clock,
But can't tell what time it is.
Nothing noble
Visits his thoughts and feelings;
Often he denies he saw something,
Though he really has.

A sightless man need not be blind;
Blind is he who does not want to see.
To such an ignorant fool,
Life itself is a grave,
If you ask me.

My Mother (1967)

She is illiterate.
She cannot write her name-my mother.

But she taught me how to count.
She taught me the names of the months and years,
And most importantly,
She taught me language-my mother.

I tasted joy
And unhappiness
With this language.
And I created every poem
Of mine
And every melody
With this language.

Without it
I am nobody;





I am a lie.
 The creator of my work,
 In all its volumes and volumes,
 Is my mother!

* * *

Fairy Tale Life (1964)

Though you are my own mother,
 I am so upset with you, mom...
 You taught me to feel and to think,
 But I wish I had been deprived of feeling and thinking.
 You taught your baby to see, to speak,
 But I wish I had been born deaf-mute to this world.

Taking me by the hand you taught me to walk,
 I went round mountains, round lowlands.
 Instead of teaching your baby to walk and to run,
 You should have taught him how not to fall...
 Thoughts flow over me layer by layer,
 Answers too venturesome, questions forbidden.

Life is strange to those who know it,
 But so familiar to those who don't know.
 Where are you? My only mom, where are you?
 Come! I want to put my head upon your lap again.

Tell me tales again, let the time stop,
 Let me see how heroes in those tales
 Conquer double-headed ogres,
 And how they escape from wizards.

Tell me, where is peace?
 Why won't it come to our lands?
 Don't tell me anything, don't, mom, keep silent.
 I can't understand the legends you tell.



I've seen such real giants in the world
 Ogres from those tales are like chicks in comparison.
 I've seen such ignorant and stupid persons
 Who call hills, slopes and slopes, hills,
 just to please others.

I've seen such foxes that call
 The steel chains on their arms, bracelets.
 I've seen bandits relaxing
 After ransacking their own countries.

I've seen merchants who have sold
 Their Motherland not for jewels
 But for simple applause, "Good for you's."

I've seen old women, atheist, godless,
 Who call roses, thorns and thorns, roses.

I've seen leaders, brutal, merciless,
 Cursing their fathers, bowing down to others.
 Since the time I have felt this world and known it,
 Life has fallen into disgrace for me.
 The horrible things that appear in fairy-tales,
 I have seen in real life in this world, mom.

Fear

In my left hand there's an old wound -
 A legacy from my childhood,
 Unaware that wood burns,
 I seared my hand on a piece of charcoal.
 A warning hissed at me,
 The sound of flesh singeing,
 But I wasn't afraid,
 I felt fear only when I burned my hand.

The real experience of life began with that fire.





Colorful flames from the embers
caressed my childish eyes.
I don't know why everything
I've touched since birth has burned me.
I wasn't afraid until I was burned;
I didn't know fear until I left my childish ways.
Since being burned, I'm careful when playing with fire,
And so life begins, and continues as a habit.

* * *

I Must Be Myself (1996)

Perceive and understand yourself,
Stop bowing first to this one, then to that one.
By flattering others so much
You're your own worst enemy.

We lost ourselves completely,
Where's the vigor, where's the pride?
The old East that once ruled the world
Is now acting upon the orders of the West.

By God, we got sick and tired of bowing to strangers,
But we didn't get bored of imitating others.
We lost ourselves, we become unrecognizable
Because of mixing our pure blood with others.
This world doesn't want to recognize us,
We let ourselves get drowned in imitations.

I want to be known by my own voice,
Enough that I lived like a convict,
I want the eyes of the world to see me
The way I am: with my good and my evil.
I am the way I am, whether black or white,
Why should I imitate others?
I have to be myself, only myself,



If I am not myself, then I am nothing.

I Love (1979)

Overcast weather I love;
It shall give birth to the sun,
The sun for sure!

Harsh winter I love;
It shall give birth to hot summer,
Hot summer for sure!

Hatred's climax I love;
It shall give birth to love,
Love for sure!

Tyranny's pain I love;
It shall give birth to justice,
Justice for sure!

Onion

The onion looked at its skin and thought,
And then turned its head to me: "The winter will be severe."
"How do you know?" I asked.
"From the skin," it replied. "It's thick,
That means the winter will be harsh."

Nature has been wise from its very creation,
And is a harmony of rules.
Before creating a mountain,
It chooses a route for it.

To equip the onion for cold winter,
It makes its cloak warm and thick.
Bravo! What mercy!
What generosity,
But, alas! I haven't received it.





Am I not your child, just like the onion, Mother Nature?
I am also cold.
Where was your mercy when you created me?
I'm shivering with cold in the snowstorm of grief and sorrow.
You took care of the onion.

Am I less precious than an onion?
What are these thoughts? What are these sufferings?
You gave me but one heart, but thousands of torments.
Why do you torture me
More than I can bear?

Speed

Time was, we would sit
in the compartment of a train
Three days and three nights
Counting the miles
Baku-Moscow
For lack of anything else to do.

Then, eight hours by plane,
Baku-Moscow,
And now just three hours,
Still sorry,
Bored stiff.

We want to fly
With the speed of light,
But even the speed of light
Is too slow to catch
The flight of our thoughts.

I am the son of modern times.
Give me now
The speed of my mind
The speed of my thoughts,



Not to worry me,
Not to bore me to death.
Just now,
Match the swiftness of my mind,
Move now!

Complaining of Age

When I was 15 and 20,
I was thinking 40 is an old age.
I am reaching 50 now.
Still I have my childhood wishes
Whirling in my brain.

As if it were yesterday
When I was going to school
Munching on sunflower seeds
And carrying my rucksack on my back.

As if it were yesterday
When I was riding my horse made of reeds.
I cannot feel my age - what can I do?

The heart is the same heart,
The wishes are the same wishes.
My heart flies now to highlands, now to lowlands -

What are these feelings in my heart?
I feel sometimes as if I am yesterday's kid,
I laugh at these strivings...

But I don't blame myself,
Time was so short,
Time has been flying...
As soon as we lose our youth
We grasp life with four hands.

Like trees, our roots go deeper





As we grow older.
 Look! There is a rumpus in the courtyard.
 The kids are running and climbing the fence.
 I would give anything now to be able to play
 Hand in hand with them
 And escape into my childhood...

I want to play hide-and-peek,
 Along these meadows, across these fields.
 I want to hide so that
 Old age cannot find me ever...

But age manifests itself sometimes,
 There are so many hidden beats in the heart,
 When I am short of breath in the street,
 I blame the stones or the ascents on my way.

When I lag behind my children,
 I cannot blame the stones or the ascents, I know
 But when I admire beauty,
 I feel the same age as my son.

The Earth's Boundaries

From the beginning we daubed colors on the map
 To divide the world into many countries.
 The earth is one color everywhere-and yet
 Why did we break it into a hundred pieces?
 Every kind declared: "The world belongs to me."
 Over and over again, we split the land;
 But the earth was never girdled;
 It never shrank nor did it ever expand.



Adil Babayev

Adil Babayev (1925-1977) is the author of many books of verses on different themes, mainly the life of the Caspian oil workers, and the long poem about Sabir, an Azerbaijani classic. Many of his verses have been set to music. Adil Babayev was born in Nakhchivan and was educated in Tblisi and Baku. He was 15 years old when his first poetry appeared in print.

Song of Immortality

To Mekhti Hussein Zade, Hero of the Soviet Union,
 In Memoriam

I think it altogether wrong to measure life in years,
 For there are days whose every instant like an age appears,
 And lives each hour of which, indeed, is like a life entire.
 Such lives with pride we call heroic, valiant, immortal.

And verily, this life of ours is full of wonder!
 Some crawl like ugly reptiles on the ground
 Yet live, like ravens, to thrice hundred,
 While others leave this world not reaching thirty,
 Not having loved, not having tasted life's full virtue.
 You, too, departed with a thousand wishes unfulfilled.
 You, too, before you breathed your last, when you were killed
 Had visions of Baku's oil-derricks, smelled the smell of flowers;
 Khazar's wild waves were in your heart at the last hour,
 The beauty of Gyok-Gyol, Kyapaz, and Spring in Karabakh.
 You dreamed of roaming through the mountains and the valleys
 To borrow colours from the heavens for your palette.
 You knew too well you had to put on soldier's boots,





To take a gun instead of brushes and to shot.
Life did not go the way you planned. The fates ordained
The mountains were to be your canvas, cannon fire your paint.
And while you fought you thought about your mother-country's fate.
You had to leave her far behind for her own sake.
A distant land becomes your last abode, remote and cold,
And your young life become a legend, still unsung untold.
You did not live to see Baku on Victory Day,
That cool and happy evening on the 9th of May.
You could not talk with friends about your future or your past.
You could not tell us all you went through at the last.
Yet those ill-omened years did not enshrine you in their tomb.
You were preserved for us in memory by people whom
You helped to win their freedom, whom you loved like brothers dear,
Whom in the fiercest battle you defended without fear.
The Adriatic waters told about you to your people,
The old Carpathian Mountains, and the men of Naples,
The children of Trieste. Your courage rang as a refrain
In battle songs. you were restored to us by the same life
For which you fought. The last words that you spoke in deadly strife,
Say those who saw you die, were "Mother" "Native land".
In Italy, you were the first man to pronounce "Azerbaijan".
Although you died alone, embraced by rocks, beneath the stars,
Your name lives on in songs upon the lips of boys and girls,
Those whom you saved from slavery, in their embraces.
Your immortality became embodied in their curls,
Their eyes and faces You returned to this proud land,
This country from which gloom and poverty have been forever
banned.



I think it altogether wrong to measure life in years.
Some days there are whose every instant like an age appears,
And lives each hour of which is like a life entire.
Each day of your life was a victory, inspired
With courage, sacred wrath, a never-dying fire.
You wanted to become an artist but sis not.
And yet with pride I name you with the artists of our day.
For Italy's crimson dawn owes its magnificence to you,
Your country's glory is the work of your hands too.
Let no one think your dreams were unfulfilled.
They did come true and your heroism were fulfilled.
Your passionate, immortal dreams still inspire men.
Lend ardour to the painter's brush and poet's pen.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Hokima Billuri

Hokima Billuri (1926-2000), a poetess and scholar, was born in Baku into the family of a railway worker. For many years she lived in Southern, Iranian Azerbaijan. She received education at the University of Baku, and later obtained the degree of Candidate of Science in Moscow for her research in the field of Azerbaijani poetry. The life of workers and peasants, their hardships and joys, fortitude and staunchness, make the subject of many of her poems. She also has many poems about love and separation. Sometimes this "separation" acquires a social meaning, even a political colour, implying separation from her native land and her comrades-in-arms.

Come to me

It was gloomy- you came and dispelled the gloom.
 Come again when into the sky comes the moon,
 When the dew in the mountains their reign resume.
 Come, my love, when the girls pin flowers to their breasts,
 When the violet smiles with its head inclined,
 When the stars are scattered all over the skies,
 When the sky is transparent and blue and wide,
 When the streams rush like waterfalls- come to me!
 Come, so I'll feel very young and gay,
 I'll sing like a blithe, and carefree nightingale.
 And you'll be delighted with all I say,
 When my dreams strike flames from my soul, come to me.
 Come at midday when rivers and lakes are warm,
 When the sunshine scorches the stones and the sward.
 Sing a song with your heart in every word;
 Come to me when I'm longing for you.



The purpose of words is to burn like fire.
 Let our hearts not conceal our pure desire.
 The thought of our meeting, like a poet's lyre
 Thrills me with expectation.

Come in autumn and summer, winter and spring,
 Come to me when thick snows to the hillsides cling!
 Come, and early spring may your coming bring;
 Come to me when the moon looks down from the sky!

I Wish

I wish I could live all my life on this planet so
 That my warmth like a sun should remain long after I die.
 I wish I could live all my life on this planet so
 That my love, when I die, should shine like a star on high,
 That my trace should remain on this earth just as rainbows remain
 In the cloudless sky after thunder, tempests and rain.
 I wish I could live all my life on this planet so
 As to breathe in the fragrance of every earthly flower,
 So that Mother Nature should keep her smile when I go,
 That men should never be hurt by deeds or words.
 I wish I could live all my life on this planet so
 That my breath should survive in the songs of birds,
 That my wishes be blossoms unfolding at break of day,
 Thriving and blooming in the torrid breath of the sun
 I wish I could live on this planet in such a way
 As to be remembered by all in sorrow and joy,
 That lovers should quote me when love holds sway,





That in children's dreams, I, too, should survive and live.
I wish I could live all my life on this planet so
That fragrance and freshness to flowers my spirit would give,
That they'd whisper to me when in spring they bloom,
That I'd come alive when the swallow's first melody starts,
That my dreams should blossom in dreams nursed by other hearts.
I wish I could live all my life on this planet so
That my spirit in moonlight should pour down on earth every night,
That my wishes, my dreams and my thoughts should continue their life
Flashing like lightning that flares from a thundercloud.
That brides should remember me on their wedding day,
That girls, when the play the saz, should recite my songs aloud,
That from soul to soul as a dream I should make my way,
That I'd live on the see the joy of a future day,
To relive my life in our dreams coming to birth
In hearts that feels all the beauty and joy of this earth.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg



Medina Gulgun

Medina Gulgun (1926-1999) was a poetess from Southern, Iranian Azerbaijan. She writes about the brotherhood of people, expressing her faith in the power of reason and justice and the ultimate defeat of obscurantism and the triumph of peace on earth. She recites her fiery, incisively publicist poems at a high pitch of emotionality like a veritable tribune.

I'm the Same the Same As I Was

I'm
As formerly
True to you.
Nor ever wandered from your love
I'm the same the same as I was
My heart retains its inner world:
Of concern for you,
Gentle esteem,
Of love,
And constancy.

I'm the same the same as I was
My laughter runs all through the room,
Lines too
Of a loving song,
And dreams
More bold than those I told you of.
Endured, unknown to you,
The heartache of parting, grief....
I'm the same the same as I was
Unchanged
In tenderness
Unchanged my love of verse,





Esteem for the poet.
Poesy-my treasure on earth,
My dowry to you.
I am wholly unchanged:
I'm the same the same as I was
And even were I born again
All the same
I'd live as yesterday I did and do today.
Dearest in life,
You know yourself what way I've changed-
Wrinkles more and more appearing,
Calmness leaving my sleep at night,
Heartbeat tempo,
Shade of hair.
What's changed,
And gone from me
Is the world of youth.

* * *

For a Moment Only.....

If I were an eagle in flight over mountain crest,
I should leave my peaks, fly to you as my only nest.
If I were to have a rendezvous full of happiness-
My head on your knee alone would I wish to rest.

If should I become a Parting, with keening thrust
I'd swoop around you, as a whirlwind must.
And should I fall to earth like a shooting star,
For you I'd start to blaze ... till I burnt to dust.

Should a hunter's arrows strike me and fatally wound,
I'd trace your name in blood out on the ground,
And I would endure with all of my stubborn will
The bitter fury unleashed by a storm unbound.



If Spring should give me her colourful brush to use,
Your portrait alone to paint I'd choose;
And when sweet Nature would gaze on my work of art,
Her wilding ecstasy would the world confuse.

If I became a song that held not a word
Of grief ... on your lips, I'd swing like a bird,
And the sadness and grief that tortured your heart-
They'd be held on a curb-rein, never spurred.

If I could raise a storm as the deep seas do,
I'd dedicate all my polyphony to you.
If I became a garden of rioting colour,
I'd say you gave me each shade and tint and hue.

Could I be the lightning once, or yet the wind,
I'd drive all the shadows away that hang on your mind.
Whenever, whenever, you need me, if at all-
Be sure I will seek you out and search till I find.

Without you, my songs are stilled and as mute as ice;
Without you, all earth and life ... lost paradise.
So live and shine on earth's bosom like a star,
From age to age in undying splendour rise.

Translated by Gladys Evans





Gabil

Gabil (1926-2007) was born in Baku into the family of a railway worker, and was educated at the Azerbaijani Teachers' College, at the Department of Literature. In his poetry, he sings about the beauty of his native land, its pomegranate orchards and mountains. Another favorite theme of his poetry is love and fidelity. One of his most highly acclaimed works is "Nasimi", a poem about the Azerbaijani classic poet.

However.....

Torch infinite,
 Monument-granite,
 Are not so bad!
 The sepulcher
 Of marble slab,
 A headstone, sir,
 With epitaph-
 Are not so bad!
 Obituaries,
 Graveside orations,
 Consolations,
 Infinitum ad....
 Are still not bad!
 The service Burial,
 And Plaque Memorial,
 The sympathy ad-
 Are not so bad!
 And SHOULD be had!
 Not every deceased
 Has had as much,
 Some will at least
 Get overmuch.



However
 "twould be better
 To honour the living
 A bit of praise giving
 wWhile ther's still time-
 Much warmer, more fit
 Than torch infinite,
 And far more sublime
 Than monument-granite.

Translated by Glays Evans

Comparisons

I compare you to a flower-
 Though the flower's life
 Be only a day
 Or only a year.

The likeness lies in
 Neither the flower's span
 Of life, or that of man.
 I compare you to a flower-
 In delicacy
 And tenderness.

I compare you to a lion-
 What likeness here?
 The one, a beast of prey-
 The other, man.
 If you should catch his
 Eye, in the heat of rage
 He'd tear you all to bits.





I compare you to a lion
In valour,
Courage
And pluck.

I designate you elephant
For strength, for power,
For work that knows
No beginning or end,
For honest merit.

I compare you to a horse-
Yes, even now with
Horses out of date.
Where then
The likeness?
He tolerates saddle,
Harness, flicking whip,
Long roads,
Whereas
Who dares to
Lay a finger
Upon you?
For you're a man,
And he- mere beast.

I compare you to a horse-
For fortitude
When the way ahead is hard
And troubled.



Sohrab Tahir

Sohrab Tahir was born in 1926, in the town of Astara, the Iranian side of the border. After graduating from the University in Baku, Sohrab Tahir took a two-year course at the Gorky Literary Institute in Moscow. He wrote about life in Southern Azerbaijan. In his other poems, he reflected on man's place in society and destinies of the people in the world.

The Child and the Doll

In a land of dauntless heroes
Near a forest dark and wild,
Far off from its native village,
Dead, with a doll in its arms, lay a child.

Form a bullet it had perished,
But its doll escaped all harm
For it was securely shielded
By the child's embracing arm.

The foe had dared not touch the doll.
Though of the child's life they look toll.
Stand aside, o ruined city!
Look, humanity, with pity
At a child's adult maturity.





At those adults' childish cruelty
Look, humanity, appalled!
Mourn, mankind! The child has perished.
But, secure in loving arms,
The doll laugh. Its face inherits
All the child's maternal charm.

It laughs at the bullets grimly,
At the flames that caper, dimly
Mirrored in its glassy eyes,
At those who laugh when a child dies,
At those who come to die for lies.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg



Aliagha Kurchaily

Aliagha Kurchaily (1928-1980) was born in the village of Kyurgaragashly, on the bank of the river Kur-Kur chay, hence his pen-name. He was educated at the University in Baku. Aliagha Kurchaily published many books in Baku, also in Moscow in Russian translation. His poems often appeared in magazines and newspapers. His work is notable for its variety of themes, intonations and forms. His style may be true to the traditional folk poetry, or else free and modern. His output includes patriotic, love, publicist, satirical and trenchantly social poems.

Be you wanderer, pilgrim, tourist or guest,
If you hear a song that sinks deep in your breast,
If you hear a tune coming straight from the soul,
If you meet hospitality in one and all,
If you meet open faces and honest hearts,
It means, my friend, you have come to our parts,
To Shirvan, Mugan, Baku or Mili,
Near the river Kura or the Caspian Sea;
In word, you have come to Azerbaijan
And, believe me, you are a most fortunate man.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg

Beloved, Take Me by the Hand

Beloved, take me by the hand
And let us walk into the wind
I seek no calm or sheltered strand!
Come, let us walk into the wind.





What care we thought our cheeks be flailed
Or though our eyes with tears be blind,
Our knees be bent, our footsteps fail:
Our course is set- into the wind.

Though mist and dark about us whirl
And the rough road with ruts is lined
And winds and snow around us whirl...
Let us go on- into the wind.

A thousand nights, a thousand dawns
We'll meet, and greet, and leave behind,
And day and night, and on and on
We will walk on-into the wind.

Translated by Avril Pyman



Nariman Hassanzade

Nariman Hassanzade was born in 1931 in Poylu, in Akstafa district of Azerbaijan. He was educated at the Gorky Literary Institute in Moscow. He wrote on a great variety of themes, and his poetry reflects a great variety of feelings: happiness, love, anger, meditation and humour. In his large lyric-epic poem "Nariman", he painted a true-to-life and charming portrait of Nariman Narimanov, the prominent Azerbaijani statesman and thinker of early 20th century.

You Will Remember Me

Once you had told me,
You would forget me.
Forget me,
Forget me somehow.
Do, if you can, forget me.

With every meeting
I called you a flower.
Whenever a flower you see,
In garden or market,
You will remember me.

Cars may be racing,
Stars swiftly falling,
Your friends beside you may be.
En route from the meeting,
You will remember me.

Your hair you'll be combing,
Your fingers will tremble,
Once I had combed them for thee.
Your hair will remind you,
You will remember me.





If in the evening
 You stroll down the pathway,
 Who for you waiting will be,
 Who'll see you homeward?
 You will remember me.

If at a funeral,
 All in black garments,
 Someone will ask: who was he?
 The you'll remember,
 You cannot but remember,
 The you'll remember me

Once you had told me,
 You would forget me.
 Forget me,
 Forget me somehow.
 Do, if you can, forget me.

* * *

The Two of Us

The bus takes you,
 My dreams take me.
 Dreams- will they come true?

The seat is soft,
 As soft can be,
 And all about
 Straight streets you see;
 The road is smooth,
 The highway free.
 But rough the pathway
 Facing me.



We both drive on:
 You're driving home,
 And I,
 Into my dream alone.

On foot proceeds
 The one of us,
 The other's riding
 In a bus.

Your destination-
 It is near,
 And everything
 For you is clear.

But I have very far to go,
 And what I'll find,
 I don not know.
 Within an hour
 You'll be home,
 My thoughts 'mid death
 And woe will roam.

The driver's sitting at the wheel,
 And you are calm, you need not fear.
 I'm driver, passenger and all,
 You hurry home,
 I to my dream.

You'll be at home,
 For sure today.
 But as for me,
 No one can say.

Translated by Eugene Felgenhauer





Fikret Sadikh

Fikret Sadikh was born in 1931 in Kurdamir and was a scholar orientalist by education. His poems were well received by readers. Fikret Sadikh is a poet who believes in taking his time before committing his thoughts to the written page. He works painstakingly to give a perfect finish to his verses, which may be called poetic meditations. Each word of his is a weighty and clear-cut as a precious stone.

Light

Songs and poems are brimful of brilliant light.
Full of light are the fairytales I have heard.
Man's road is the road to light, shining bright,
Full of light, as well, is a wise man's word.

Man himself is a splinter chipped off from the sun.
How can you speak of a life without light?
Bread, flowers, hills and rocks their life began
When light came and ended the reign of night.

* * *

I am enamoured of fire since childhood.
Every evening I search for the light with my eyes.
When my mother was late in lighting the lamp,
"Jizza-jizza!" I whimpered with sobs and cries.

Until now I remember the fires I'd make
In the forest, when we prepared to sup,
And how once the glittering eyes of a snake
I mistook for a firefly and picked it up.

* * *



I lit up our village's streets with my hands.
Man-made sunshine flooded the out-going roads.
I worked as a gardener: my flowers were lamps
And I tended them just as you tend a rose.

And if somewhere somebody's lamp would expire
I felt that the light of my soul had gone.
How often my hands would serve as a wire:
I myself burned, and the light went on.

* * * *

This new poem of mine also calls for light.
Every line shines forth like a chandelier bright.
No wonder-place where I came to life
Is Azerbaijan the birthplace of light.

I grew up and at first believed that I ought
To become an engineer, but changed my decision.
"An engineer only draws blueprints," I thought
and went to work as an electrician.

A star now burns under every roof
And shines instead of the sun at night.
So, the fieriest time of my life- my youth
I burned up, converting it into light.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg





Jabir Novruz
(1933-2002)

Value People While They're Alive

I have a wish, hey people, let me tell you.
Value the people while they're alive,
Call the good people, "good" while they're alive,
Call those who are bad, "bad" while they're alive,
And only while they're alive.

Everybody knows the real value of themselves
If I'm wrong, reproach me,
I beg you a million times
Value the poets while they are alive.

Erect monuments for immortals while they're alive.
Don't rely entirely on the future.
Don't save your words for the future.
I hate the "futures",
I hate untimely actions,
I hate gossipers and babblers,
I hate when the drums are played after the party is over.

Make happy the honest people while they are alive,
Live with this aim in life.
Unmask the dishonest ones while they are alive.
Call traitors by their names,
Call the cunning ones, "foxes",
Call the brave ones, "lions",
Value the people while they're alive.

Let everybody know their place while they're alive.
This will shorten the life of the bad,
And lengthen the life of the good.



Why are our hearts filled with love and respect
Only after a person is dead?
Why do the good become good only after they're dead
As do the bad.
Even dishonest ones become honest.
Even strangers become dear to us.

We remember them.
We write tributes,
We call them all "good" and see them off to the afterlife.
What's this belated blessing for?
Will the grave become larger?
Or the dead one revive?

I don't like these outdated traditions.
I don't like this love for tombs,
I don't like this kind of respect,
I don't like it
I don't want this untimely honor,
I'd never change one moment of my life
For thousands of golden deaths.
I'd never change one ounce of respect while alive
For thousands of tombs when I'm dead.

If I'm wrong, please forgive me,
I address both old and young alike.
Value people while they're alive.
Call the good, "good" while they're alive,
Call the bad, "bad" while they're alive.





Isa Ismayilzade
(1941-1998)

The Year - 1941

The year of my birth
Is forever bound
With the name of the Unknown Soldier.
That dark, stern year
Born in trenches,
In smoke,
And fire,
The year of my birth.

The year of my birth
Scarred the breast of the earth
Like a jagged bayonet wound.
On the breast of the earth.
Soldiers' iron-shod boots
Stamped
The year of my birth.
Across the dark sky
Fire-breathing cannons
Spat out the date.
In clouds on high
Wild scorching rockets
That could melt distant stars
Etched that cursed year.
And bereaved mothers' eyes
Engraved that black year



In the pillows they soaked
With many a salty tear

I never wish to celebrate
The year of my birth,
For fear lest I wake,
By the clinking of glasses and noisy mirth,
All those who sleep in memory's vaults.

I wish never to celebrate
The year of my birth.
For sorrow will never cool
Like food long grown cold
On my older dead brother's plate.
My sense of loss and guiltless shame
Are keenest of all
When I look up and see
His portrait on the wall
In its simple black frame.





Mammad Araz (1933-2004)

Mammad Araz is the pen name of Mammad Ibrahim. Araz refers to the river that separates Northern Azerbaijan (now the independent Republic of Azerbaijan) from Southern Azerbaijan (part of Iran). For many years, until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijanis on opposite sides of the border were not able to visit each other or even to telephone one other. As this obviously separated close friends and relatives, Azerbaijanis were very pained and frustrated. In the 1970s, when issues relating to the borderline were heating up, the author adopted the pen name Mammad Araz.

Guests During One's Lifetime (1966)

Someone is knocking at my door.

"Hey, who's knocking?"

"I'm Memory.

I've brought a letter from your first love."

(An angry woman appears in the kitchen.

The person knocking disappears with the letter.)

Again, a knock at the door.

"Hey, who's knocking?"

"I'm Praise!"

"Welcome!"

"Do you have anything to drink?"

"No, I don't!"

"Then go on writing!"

(Praise leaves).

Knock, knock.

"Who are you?"

"It's me - Need!



Open the door!"

"What news?

I haven't seen you for a long time."

"It seems the less you see of me, the more you miss me."

"Your neighbor gets a wage equivalent to five salaries

Another man buys a car."

"By God, let me write!"

Again knock, knock.

"Who's that?"

"Your friend, Latest News!"

This damned world hasn't collapsed:

Our century is the century of diplomacy, hey brother!

They speak about peace, carrying bombs in their pockets.

Two more of your poems were rejected

Because of your friends there."*

"Give me some peace! Let me breathe!"

Again a knock at the door.

"Who do you want?"

"I'm Fame!"

"Welcome, who are you looking for?"

"Mammad Araz"

"Brother, you're late.

He doesn't live here any more."

"Where does he live now?"

"It's near this place -

There's a grave over which a woman is crying,

That's where you'll find him now."

* "They speak of peace, carrying bombs in their pockets" meaning that his friends are double-faced and superficial and, in reality, don't support him.





Come on, Rise Up, Azerbaijan (1992)

Why are you still sleeping, you old volcano,¹
I am with you!
Come on, rise up now, Azerbaijan, I am with you!
We can divide everything, except you.
We will all pass away, except you.
This is Shahriyar's wail,²
Come on, rise up, Azerbaijan!
This is what time is telling us,
This is what your ancestor from his grave is
telling us:
You, my brave spirit, I am with you!
I am with you, you with the gun,³
You with the pick ax; you with the pitchfork
You, man of virtue, with fire,
I am with you!
I am with you-you, father of girls,
Where is your roar, where is your bellow?
Where is your sworn oath?
Or have you become one of those
Still sleeping, still flattering,
Perhaps, one of those without self-esteem?
Wipe your tears, son of this land,
Rise up now!
Look carefully at the horizon that is now your own,
Look carefully at the border that is now your own,
Look carefully at the perimeter of the border
that is your own!
Come on, throttle the fear inside yourself,
Choose either to be or not to be.



Come on, drive the hare out of yourself,
Come on, make a gray wolf⁴ of yourself!
You, my only one, I am with you!
You, the delight of my eyes, I am with you,
You, my sweet dream, I am with you,
Knock me down off my word-horse,
Throw me under the tanks,⁵
Crush me, smash me.
If my word-sword pierces no more,
Slash me, gash me.
Cast me under the tanks
Just to save a child in diapers,
Just to save thousands of you,
Thousands of me.
I am with you, miserable leader!
Your worker father, my worker father
Were not just speaking, but fighting in 1918!⁶
Wake us up, you, Great God, I am with you!
Either let us sleep forever
Or fashion us into a new creation!
You, Great God, I am with you!
I am with you, you, sleeping volcano,
I am with you!
Come on, rise up now, Azerbaijan,
I am with you!

Footnotes:

1 Though Azerbaijan has no volcanoes that spew out lava, mud volcanoes are believed to be more extensive and more concentrated in Azerbaijan than in any other country. They are associated with





underground reservoirs of oil and gas located both on land and in the Caspian Sea. The poet uses the imagery of a volcano to evoke a situation that is silent for a long period, but then suddenly and unexpectedly erupts.

2 Mohammad Hussein Shahriyar (1905-1988) was one of the most beloved Azerbaijani poets living in Iran. He revitalized Azeri as a literary language and is especially remembered for his poem, "Heydar Babaya Salam" (Greetings to Heydar Baba), which refers to a mountain near Tabriz close to where he grew up. Shahriyar mourned the tragic split of Azerbaijan into two parts-Northern Azerbaijan (now an independent republic) and Southern Azerbaijan (now a part of Iran), which took place when Iran and Russia signed a treaty together in 1828.

3 The gun, pick ax and pitchfork symbolize the working class.

4 The gray wolf symbolizes Turkism. Legend says that Oghuz (the father of the Turkic peoples) was rescued and raised by a wolf. The gray wolf has come to be associated with bravery, fearlessness and courage.

5 A reference to January 19-20, 1990 (known as Black January) when Soviet tanks entered Baku and tried to crush the independence movement. Hundreds of innocent victims were killed-no one knows exactly how many.

6 The year 1918 marks the founding of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan (May 28). This fledgling government survived for 23 months until April 28, 1920. Bolshevik military forces clashed in the streets of Baku in early 1918, killing an estimated 10,000 people in two weeks' time.



If There Were No War

If there were no war,
We could construct a bridge between Earth and Mars
Melting weapons in an open-hearth furnace.

If there were no war,
The harvest of a thousand years could grow in one day.
Scientists could bring the moon and stars to Earth.

The eyes of the general also says:
"I would be chairman in a small village
If there were no war!"

If there were no war,
We could avoid untimely deaths
Our hair would gray very late.

If there were no war,
We would face
Neither grief, nor parting.

If there were no war,
The bullet of mankind would be his word,
And the word of mankind would be love.

How Can I Forget You...

NECƏ unvohem sorij

Look, the house seems so empty,
My everything is gone with you.
Not only my heart and soul,
But the sense of comfort and sleep have also left me.

The only way to rest for a second,
Is to get you out of my mind.
But why, just like grass and water -
Why are you everywhere I look?

When I venture as a traveler,
You turn into endless grassland,





When I try to forget you at night -
 You turn into night itself,
 During the day - you become light itself.

When I climb the mountains,
 The thunder reminds me of you,
 As does the wind, blowing my hair.
 Maybe we are two different saz*, with the same strings,
 You, blood; me, heart - so inseparable.

Brighten my heart for a moment,
 Don't be so cruel to me!
 There is no way for me to forget you,
 I would have to forget myself forever!
 To give up on to you,
 I would have to give up on myself - forever!

*Saz is a traditional stringed instrument upon which minstrels
 improvise folk songs and legends.

Let's Find a Way (1967)

Let's find a way to live, my dear,
 So that we don't pass away untimely,
 So that we don't bump into an unexpected death.
 Let's find a way to pass over the bridges of separation.
 Let's find a way so that we don't get carried away by jealousy.
 Let's find a way to live, my dear,
 So that we don't become reliant on anyone else.
 Let's build a safe haven for ourselves
 Where true love can find refuge,
 And heal unnecessary anger.
 Let's find a way to live, my dear,
 So that when the web of betrayal tries to capture us,
 Our sincerity will tear it down.
 Can we do it?



- Yes, we can!
 There's only one condition,
 We have to remove the borders
 Between "mine" and "yours" and "theirs".

Consolation (1965)

Comfort me in my difficult days,
 I can do without food and water.
 If you visit me as I draw my last breath,
 Bring some hope in your eyes.

When you feel the last alarm,
 You don't feel hunger for food or water,
 Yes, at the last minute, at the last breath,
 You long for consolation.

The Flower which Appeared in the Wrong Season (1964)

I would not restrain myself,
 If there were no rules, no traditions.
 I would not hold back,
 If children who call me "Father" had not pulled me back.

You have the right to get angry with me,
 What to do?
 Life has no second spring.
 The mansion of love is not accessible to everyone.

Now you resemble a flower,
 Growing unseasonably under the snow.
 If I don't pick you, the storm will slay you,
 If I do, you will fade away in my hands, dear one.

The World Belongs to You

The world belongs to you,
 The world belongs to me





We are a pair of dice joined together in the game of fate,
We never get along although we've rolled together for years.

Millions of people share this tiny light,
The world belongs to you,
The world belongs to me,
The world belongs to nobody.

If your stronghold goes off track,
Grab onto some hope and move along with it.
You hear the whispers of everyone: losers and winners,
The world belongs to you,
The world belongs to me,
The world belongs to nobody.

The world is a camel in this bazaar of comers and goers,
The world is the framework of life's destiny,
The infinite world laughs at Infinity itself,
The world belongs to you,
The world belongs to me,
The world belongs to nobody.

Hold on, glance around quickly,
Thousands of years, this is the same Araz, the same Hakari,
The wheels of days and nights are the same,
The world belongs to you,
The world belongs to me,
The world belongs to nobody.

I laughed at this name, which sounds so amusing to me,
I laughed at this horse, which has been ridden by everybody,
I laughed at this chess game that I played with myself,
The world belongs to you,
The world belongs to me,
The world belongs to nobody.



Tofig Bayram

Tofig Bayram (1934-1991) was born in Baku. His father was an oil worker. He was educated at the Azerbaijani Teacher's College, at the Department of History and Philology. He wrote on various themes, but mainly about his own generation, about the fighters for world peace, about patriotism and friendship.

A Word to the Stars

For hundreds and thousands of years your light
Was scattered over our waterways.
The sea, overcast by the gloom of night,
Depended for guidance upon your rays.

When you shone, the ships could somehow sail on,
But hit rocks and sank when your light went off.
And the seamen would sigh: "What a blessing is dawn!"
"What good is the night?" the seamen would scoff.

The Khazar took toll of men's hopes and dreams:
Mournful voices each night on its shores would sound.
And the ancient towns swallowed up by the sea,
Were they not night's victims, in darkness drowned?

For ages the rocks would shudder with fright
At the shrieks of people swallowed up by the sea.
Even you, your stars, were powerless to light
Those gloomy waters to let the people see.

The Khazar is no longer gloomy now.
Earthly suns shed their light both near and far.
Every drop of sweat from the toiling man's brow
Has become a star lighting up old Khazar.

Moving in caravans, the milky ways
Come flocking to gaze at the lamp lit Khazar.





For towering derricks nowadays
The age-old darkness with floodlights scar.

Tall buildings stand nowadays in the sea.
Broad streets run nowadays in the sea.
There are libraries nowadays in the sea
Where people read books at night- they can see!

The Khazar had found happiness nowadays.
Its songs have circled the world around.
On all of the Earth's great waterways
The Khazar's gay songs and melodies sound.

One's heart gets so much attached to these parts;
This, you think, is the place where your home should be.
And only when, sometimes, a tempest starts
You remember that this is not land, but sea.

Lights and lights, wherever you turn your eye,
Each wave like a glittering golden star.
People forget to look up at the sky
For it seems that both sky and earth are Khazar.

Stars, your time is past, you have lost your worth.
The Khazar no longer has need of you.
With jealousy you look down on the Earth;
New stars shine there- you have nothing to do.

But stars, I assure you, you needn't be hurt
That the lights of Khazar are brighter than yours.
There are still many gloomier seas in the world:
You can shine upon them- if you like, of course.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg



Fikrat Goja
(born 1935)

An Ordinary Man

I am not a gulp of water to be drunk:
I am not a road to be walked upon without ceasing.
It's true, I'm just an ordinary man,
I'm not as great as you to become smaller.
It is greatness itself to just be an ordinary man, my brother!
It is a heavy burden to carry this name
For an entire lifetime.
I have my own family,
My own children,
My own bread, my own life,
My own generation,
My own house,
My own name.
I have a good neighbor
And I have a bad one, too.
I have both friends and enemies!
(Whether it is right or wrong)
I have my own self!
I am an ordinary man
Neither great, nor small.
It's a heavy burden itself just to be an ordinary man.
I have both an open door,
And an open heart for my friends,
I always have bread and salt* on my table.
I am ready to meet death as a real man.
I am ready to struggle and fight for it.
But I can't meet death grain-by-grain, drop-by-drop.
I can't greet my enemy with a smile.





I am not a diplomat;
I'm just an ordinary man
I should be given credit if
I can hold onto this name until the end.
* "Bread and salt" means that he is always ready to extend hospitality
to his friends.

Where Did you Learn It?

You make us love you,
Hey, World, you're cheating us.
You withhold your final word.
A dark night concludes
Every shining bright day.
You have buried the faces of many beauties
Under the cold earth.
I don't know who taught you this cunning trick.
Did humanity teach you this?
Or did humanity learn it from you?
The Sun is your eye,
It burns us each day in a different way.
The Storm is your breath,
It hits us, knocks us down.
I've lost a number of beauties
My eyes still focused on their lips.
Both you - the world and humanity
Love to leave us, ever waiting.
By God, I'm just wondering
Where did you learn it from?
Did humanity teach you this?
Or did humanity learn it from you?



Help

Tell me, would there be a bonfire,
If there were no flame?
Would the forge be lit,
If there were no bellows?
They say a precious stone doesn't lose its value,
Even if it falls on the ground.
But if no one picks it up,
It will be trampled under foot.
Wouldn't the dagger become rusty
Without its sheath?
Has it ever snowed or stormed without clouds?
Perhaps God became invisible,
Because someone made Him thus.
Look at the water, the trees, people,
Would life exist without the Sun?
Isn't a walking stick helpful to an old man
Who cannot walk because of age.
Let no one shirk from responsibility,
All of us need each other.
Better not to call a person a man,
Who doesn't help others in need.
Fortunately, There is a Future

Sometime

Sometime we'll pass each other in one of the streets,
Your face wrinkled, my hair gray.
Nobody will ask us why we suddenly stopped.
People will pass us by or they'll stand waiting for someone.
We'll get confused by our unexpected meeting.
But our legs will do what they have to do.
Just like time, they will carry you in one direction And me, another,
Your face wrinkled, my hair gray.





Chess

Of all the kings in this world
There are only two kings left
One is white; the other, black.
Only the worst two good-for-nothings
Are left on the chessboard
Both of them are in bad condition.
Their names are king,
But they are mere toys.
Two kids wearing clothes like kings.
They will do what you tell them.
Both of them have
Their knights, castles and troops beside them.
Both of them have forgotten
About their farmers, builders and songwriters.
Even the dead soldiers don't know
Which of their kings is guilty.
But it doesn't even cross their minds that
The head of their kings
Is between two fingers of a player.

No Address

I'm living without an address
Like the sun and the heavens.
I'm living without an address
From day until night.
My address is green fields and forests,
The violets are waiting for me, bending their heads.
I write my address on the rocks and mountains
With my footprints.
I sing a song



Whispering it in the endless green fields,
With the waves in the lakes
And with the springs in valleys.
Just a street,
Just a room.
No, I don't need such an address.
Clouds are my companions,
The wind is my address.
Wherever there's a flower is my address.
In a word, I've chosen this world as my address.
I'm living without an address
Like the sun and heavens.
From day until night.
The Caucasus mountains are a pillow under my head
At night,
And the gray clouds are my blankets.
I love this way of living so much!

Fortunately, There is a Future

Fortunately, people pass away,
Fortunately, people are born,
If the world belonged only to one generation,
Then the roads of the world would be much shorter.
From the beginning, winter is winter
And spring is spring.
Time moves in cycles.
The fish have always lived
Beneath the feet of human beings,
And the birds above them.
The air on the earth's surface
And the water under the soil
Restore the land and give it back to the people.





You don't know
 Whether a human being turns into soil,
 Or the soil turns into a human being.
 There's no use of your knowing this,
 Life takes back everything it gives.
 What is left in the soil
 Is what is left from people,
 If they themselves don't destroy what is left.
 The past always consoles itself with the past,
 Time circles, ways become longer.
 The future has always been bright.
 Fortunately, the world has a future.

An Unfinished Work

An unfinished work is
 An engaged son or daughter
 Without a wedding.
 An unfinished work is
 An autumn without harvest.
 An unfinished work is
 A road without a bridge,
 A land without a road,
 A tongue without a word.
 An unfinished work is
 A work done without a goal,
 A curse without meaning,
 A kiss without love.
 An unfinished work is
 A roof with a ceiling
 That leaks,
 Brother, in short,
 An unfinished work is
 A person who is good for nothing.



Khalil Rza (1932-1994)

The Poet's Voice¹ (1960)

I don't want freedom gram by gram, grain by grain.
 I have to break this steel chain with my teeth!
 I don't want freedom as a drug, as a medicine,
 I want it as the sun, as the earth, as the heavens!
 Step, step aside, you invader!
 I am the loud voice of this land!
 I don't need a puny spring,
 I am thirsting for oceans!

Footnote:

1 This poem has also been published with the title "The Voice of Africa." During the Soviet period, many Azeri poets used other geographical locations in their poems to disguise their feelings about their own country and their own situation so that the Soviet censors would not suspect the true meaning and ban their works.

Handprints

(Lefortovo Prison, March 1990)

Today again the ones
 investigating the crime gathered.
 They have already prepared the camera with its red shoulder straps
 To take my photo-head and profile.

The photographer peered beneath the black cloth
 and wiped his eyes,
 Focusing all his attention on me.

He pushed the button and said,
 "Your photo is ready."





"And now we have to take your handprints," they said.

I replied in my heart: "Here you are.

I'm ready, you scoundrel."

And I rolled up the sleeves of my shirt.

He spread black ink on my white hands and ordered:

"Press your hands against this white paper!"

He took them like a skilled photographer,

My handprints.

The lines on my palm

Spread out and cross like railroad tracks.

Probably trains pass by on my palm,

Probably an airport is located on it.

"Here's the soap and hot water

Wash your hands, wash them clean!"

The soap is rose water

The water is hot,

And my palms, the spring sky

I washed the ink off my hands.

"Hands behind your back,"

ordered the guard accompanying me.

I went and laid down on my bed my hands behind my back.

Khalil Reza, you're a criminal!

You can't run any more!

Lanky bald fellow is always strict and quick,

He copied everything from my little finger to my thumb.

I look at my hands anxiously while lying on my bed

In whom can I confide about the trouble of my hands?

My hands are a planet

One is the right hemisphere,

The other, the left.



I look at my hands,

They aren't precious gems,

Nor are they gold.

These hands just write,

They hew stones and labor hard.

They are as powerful as the cosmic might

Circling around the moon and Mars

On their way to Jupiter.

These hands have never killed a single creature,

Never stolen anything, nor complained.

But they've cut sharp cliffs both in water and in earth.

They've produced thunder from clouds, treasures from stone.

You blind invader, now you open your hands,

And tell what you've done.

You've sent armies to occupy my land,

You've entered forcefully to a sacred country.

In the name of Liberation, you've brought slavery.

Lowering my flag, you've raised yours,

Fabricated from blood and poison.

You've turned my sap and honey into poison

You've exiled and condemned to death my fearless grandfathers.

Open your hand and let's see

Who the criminal is.

And who are the innocent ones in this world?

Is that a hand or a claw?

You've brought immense troubles to a little country.

You've destroyed this country,

home by home, village by village.

You've even taken the wool

from my blankets at home.

You've changed my alphabet





to change my direction.
The faces of our beautiful girls have turned pale,
Working all day for you in the fields.
You've sucked my oceans of oil, drop by drop through my lips.
You've caused my broad-shouldered heroes to die in war.
You've fed me with oilcakes
While carrying off the oranges, apples and lemons from my gardens.
The cotton you've stolen from me
Could cover the Milky Way.
The silk threads you've stolen
Could encircle the Equator.

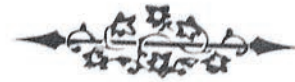
You've robbed Ardabil, you've destroyed Tabriz.
You've ransacked their treasures
Open your palm and let us see.
Who is righteous person and who is the thief?
Hey, you criminal of the planet
Who has invaded the lands
From Astara to Tallin , From Chukotka to Elba ,
Come closer if you're not paralyzed!
Let us see whose hands have created and built
And whose are soaked in blood up to the elbows!

My Freedom

(October 30, 1988)

Each man is an independent party,
Each man is an independent government.
I will never permit my freedom - my territory
To be occupied! Know this, merciless enemy!

I did not allow my spirit to be enslaved
For chances to travel, to be well off.
To waste my life on feast, wine and paradise.
I wasn't lured by mansions in paradise



Or by the presidium, full of idiots.
Nor was I lured by wealth,
By false medals, by useless garlands,
But only for the freedom of my heart!
I entered the battlefield with only this love.
Just the freedom of my heart!
Even in the iron-barred prison,
In the prison where bloody "Gulustan" and "Turkmanchay"* were
signed.

Probably you can hold back the rivers.
But I am as free as the seas,
Give no mercy to those
Who surrender to the oppressor.

As thunder, as torrential rain and storms
I am as free as gales and cyclones.

I am Earth, circling with anger.
My freedom is my power,
My freedom is for exposing and ripping off
The masks of these inferior people.

My freedom is beckoning the cowards,
To come out of their caves:
See the vast sky above
And breathe the fresh air that they crave.

Could the ones who compete constantly in the milky lake,
Who are dark inside, but appear happy,
Who shrink with fear when subject to the slightest challenge
Who hold back the wheel of the vast train of history,
Who struggle for position at every possible chance,
Could these living slaves understand this happiness?
Understand the immeasurable power





That is housed in my heart, as big as my fist?

If they want, I'll give my child,
I'll give everything I have,
I'll give "the taste of my mouth", "the light of my eyes",
But I will never relinquish my unfettered Freedom!

My father, my brother is my Motherland.
I became absorbed into the air of my land,
My unbending head has bowed only
In the presence of a simple bird's nest.

My Freedom belongs only to that.
Even if I die, I will rise up again.
I wish I could be the Water of Life
For Azerbaijan, whose lips are thirsty.

* "Gulustan" and "Turkmanchay" are the place names where two treaties were signed between Czarist Russia and Iran in 1813 and 1828 after the Russo-Persian War. These treaties resulted in the separation of the territory of Azerbaijan into two parts - the southern part to be ruled by Iran and the northern part by Russia. Since late 1991, the northern part enjoys independence as the Republic of Azerbaijan.

A Political Prisoner's Walk

(Lefortovo Prison, Moscow, March 17, 1990)

One in front, the other behind, both with rank insignia on their shoulders,
They are taking you in chains,
Even though you're not chained at all.
Put your hands behind you and consider yourself chained.

I'm wearing a shirt, reddened from the fire in my heart,
I often forget that I'm a prisoner.
At this moment, those wearing the shoulder insignia lose their



patience.

"Put your hands behind your back!" they shout angrily.
It's as if I were dreaming and my drowsy mind awakens.
Here all the windows, doors and gates are locked.
Not a single bird can fly through them.

And here the ones
Who were brave before are no longer brave.
Here the sun itself is shaped like a square.
The daylight peers through the prison bars here,
In this K-shaped, four-storied prison of Katya.
This building wants to reduce everybody to nothing,
But here the guard and prisoner share the same fate:
Your hands are chained, but his mind is chained.
They are the ones whose souls are tied with chains,
while their hands are free.

Will this country with its population of 300 million
Be able to break these shackles?

Or to remove the curtain from its eyes?

Or to stop living with empty dreams?

One can tolerate living with fettered hands,
But what about those whose minds are in chains?

Though they travel the entire world, they remain in the same place.

Though they talk all day long; in fact, they are dumb,
Their marshals and admirals don't equal a corporal,
Lame ones are teaching others to march in demonstrations.

Hey Artist! Paint a picture.

Of this very strange scene:

A free prisoner is walking in front of his enslaved guard.





Ramiz Rovshan
(born 1946)

The Sky Cannot Hold a Stone

Hey guy, throwing stones up in the sky
The sky cannot hold a stone!
My son, what happened to your head?
Who cut your hair?
Who gave you this funny look?

Hey guy, throwing stones up in the sky
Your pants and jacket are bigger than you,
The sky is wider than your eyes.

Feeling pity for you,
The sky will hold the stones for awhile.
Keeping the stones in its hand,
The sky will test you for years.
The sky will keep those stones,
Until hair grows back on your head,
Until your clear eyes become blurry.

You will eat what you have,
You will wear what you have,
You will grow up, my son.
Your eyes will become larger as you grow,
The tears will grow in your eyes.
Your hands will grow bigger, as you grow
The stones will grow bigger,
Which you have thrown up in the sky.

If fate smiles at you,
If your death is a little late.
If you could build up a fence or a house,



From those stones on Earth.

If your life lasts as a rainbow,
You will get a bit of each color.
When your grave is dug on Earth,
Maybe the gravestone will come down from the sky.

Hey guy, throwing stones up in the sky
The sky doesn't hold a stone.

Baby Snake

The small baby snake is growing,
Crawling here and there.
Enjoying the air that it breathes,
The water, the sand, and the stone.
And the pleasure of this joy is filling its soul,
Taking away its sleep at nights.
The scent of flowers,
The scent of grass
The breath of wind
Fills its body.
Quietly, calmly
Unconsciously,
Everything turns to poison
Within its body.

One day this baby snake
Will be aware of the poison hidden within.
Maybe it will damn its fate,
Or will choke with sorrow.
Don't cry, don't cry, baby snake,
Don't damn your fate, baby snake!
You should bear it,
It's your life, this was your destiny;
A loving heart In your chestu





A poison sack under your fangs.
Whoever sees you, screams:
Snake, snake!
They keep banishing you,
They block your way
On every side.
You have only one way in this world,
The way from your head to your tail,
From your poisonous tooth to your tail.
There's only one way left:
You are your own way, baby snake.
You are the only one dear to yourself
In this world,
You are your own child, baby snake.

Where will you run,
To be out of sight?
What will you do
With this ruthless world?
You will shed your skin a dozen times,
You won't be able to be separated from yourself
Get used to yourself,
Slowly, slowly.
Get used to all aspects of life.
Reconcile yourself to your poison and sorrow inside,
Don't be squeamish about yourself, baby snake.
Maybe in life, baby snake,
You're the most bitter truth.
You're the way of truth,
Maybe God chose this life for you.
Or maybe life, which has hundreds of faces,
Purifies itself through you.



With What Fury This Bird Sings (1999)

With what fury this bird sings.
It sounds more like a curse than a song,
It almost seems to bark,
It's half bird, half dog.

There is no bird on earth,
That understands the language of this bird.
The dogs bark back
At the voice of this barking bird.

What rage, what fury, this bird conveys,
It bears malice towards the wolf.
Why to blame it for barking,
Maybe its life is as miserable as that of a dog's.

Bark, even though you're a bird,
Fly, even though you're a dog,
Who cares in this country
Where dogs survive by licking boots,
And birds bark like dogs.





Vagif Samadoglu

(born 1939)

From the Book "God, I Am Here"

Dear God - when the crazy winter rains are pouring down,
And washing the houses of this city which is bored with something,
When the desperate loneliness of the rusty gutters
Are flowing into the street and crying,
Remember me.

Remember the place where you left me
And find me, find me, my precious Goodness!

And be aware, be aware that
I am standing beside the window and watching.
I am looking at the rain and at the fate of humanity
Which has remained bareheaded and barefooted
Under these torrents.

And the owner of this fate
Believes, believes, believes in You
Even in this godless world.

* * *

Oh, my God,
What if this were the only street on the earth!
What if there were no other window in the world
Except for this one.

What if no other dog could bark in the world
Except for our neighbour's.

What if the light of this lamp were the only light
And the smoke of this cigarette, the only smoke
on the earth.

Oh, my God,



What if tonight there were no other poet in the world
Except for me.

Oh, my God,
What if there were neither victory nor defeat in this world.
* * *

How can I forget the village
Where I was not born,
And where I haven't stayed even for a night?

How can I forget the shy stance of the deer
Which I didn't see in the mist?

How can I forget my crying mother's voice
When she was bearing me?

And how can I help but hear the people
Who are crying over my grave?

* * *

To Aygun

If there is but one woman in the world,
Then there is love on the earth.

If there is but one child in the world,
Then there is childhood on the earth.

If there is but one tree in the world,
Then there is shade on the earth.

If there is but one piece of land in the world,
Then there is Motherland on the earth.

* * *

Mist has rolled in over Baku
Don't tell anyone.

It seems so much of it has come
Don't tell anyone.





One lamp was lit tonight,
It was lit and went out tonight
Don't tell anyone.

I lost my way in this mist
As I went out my door,
I've written poems again
Don't tell anyone.

What will this mist do to me
Among the stone houses?

My love, I am still alive
Don't tell anyone...

* * *

Look,
We'll finish reading this book as well.
We'll know who the killer is.

Then we'll fall asleep
Putting our heads on the same pillow. We'll lead our life this way,
Sharing the same house and the same children,
And our heads on the same pillow.

So close, yet so unconscious of each other.

* * *

Look,
We'll finish reading this book as well.
We'll know who the killer is.

Then we'll fall asleep
Putting our heads on the same pillow.

We'll lead our life this way,
Sharing the same house and the same children,
And our heads on the same pillow.



So close, yet so unconscious of each other.

* * *

If I had known that
Someone would pass over me,
I would have made a bridge of myself
Between here
And the world...

* * *

An old man is sitting there,
Sitting in front of ashen gray sea
Which is as gray as he is.
His vision blurs in the distance
Which is without horizon.
No, he says, youth has disappeared from earth!

A child is playing there,
Playing among the flowers and grass
Which are as colorful as he is.
He looks at the sun without even squinting his eyes,
And, no, he says, old age has disappeared from the earth.

* * *

One day this phone will ring,
And I will hear a familiar voice
Which will be as close as death.
There will be heard a void in the sounds of life,
And all other sounds of earth
Will be of no value to me.
And that moment I will need
neither the rustle of twinkling stars
nor a child's laughter.
Then I will hear a familiar voice
Which will be as close as death.

* * *





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And I will hear a familiar voice
Which will be as close as death.
There will be heard a void in the sounds of life,
And all other sounds of earth
Will be of no value to me.
And that moment I will need
neither the rustle of twinkling stars
nor a child's laughter.
Then I will hear a familiar voice
Which will be as close as death.

* * *

I passed by a beautiful woman,
But didn't stop. I was singing a lovely melody,
Non-stop.

I was living in a wonderful world,
But didn't stay there.

* * *

What spring are you going to appear in
After you leave this one?
Where will you be seen?
Will you be heard?
Will you laugh if you are heard?
How will your voice resound from your chest?
Will you speak or will you cry?
Or will you keep silent
As in this parting?
Where should I wait for you, tell me, where?
At home,
In the yard,
Or in the grave?

* * *



There's a street in my city,
A quiet and narrow street.
Seventy steps down,
And 70 steps back.
A cigarette down,
And a cigarette back.

* * *

There's a street in my city,
A quiet and narrow street.
Seventy steps down,
And 70 steps back.
A cigarette down,
And a cigarette back.

* * *

It is not us
But God who doesn't believe us...
He doesn't believe us
When we shed blood,
When one man throws a stone at another.

But when the sky
Looks like a child's smiling face,
And when man says, "The world is beautiful"
Facing the sea.

It is not us,
But God who believes us.

* * *

How suffocatingly hot...
And the book I am reading,
And the woman I am longing for
Are in this stuffiness.





I seat the killer in the book
In the coolest place,
And send the woman I am thinking about
To the seacoast.

And there again we remain
Sitting shoulder to shoulder
In this wearisome, stuffy heat.
Me and freedom...

* * *

How do birds sing
In the Garden of Eden?
Do they sing loudly
Or in hushed, quiet tones?

How do the poets cry
In Hell?
Do they scream
Or weep like us?

* * *

Show some heart for the one who is laughing
And who is glad,
Give him some sorrow.

Show some heart for the one who
Has lost his way in the darkness,
Give him some light.

Show some heart for me,
And give me some poison,
If I can't do it myself.

And the moment I close my eyes,
Let God know about it

* * *



Don't say so. It can't be so.
I can't believe it.

Even if you swear,
And even if you call upon
God as your witness,
I can't believe it.

I can't believe that
The cherry-plum trees
Have blossomed
On the curb of the road.
But how?
But why?

* * *

I was born in 1939,
In 1937 I got arrested.*

My granny died in '48,
I cried for someone who died
For the first time in my life.

I had some fish in an aquarium.
My window was left open
One winter night
And the fish froze.

Now it is a January night in 1965
And it seems I want to live.

* * *

It is raining in the world.
The raindrops are drawing
Strange continents
On the map of the window.

The countries become smaller, then larger.





Now they disappear,
Now become again visible.

But the rain is pouring
All day long and throughout the night...

* * *

I reached out for joy,
But I realized that
Sorrow blocked my way.
I called upon my father for help,
But I realized that
His grave blocked my way.
I was appealing to Allah,
But I saw that
Life blocked my way.

* * *

Evening is lost in darkness,
And day is shrouded in mist.
If life is just five days long,
Then why is it so slow?

The sky is like a tattered cloth,
Clouds are its patches.
By God, it's difficult to live
Leaning against this stone wall!

It's been so hard,
To divide this life
Into hundred of pieces every day,
To stand on the sea coast
And to die, longing for the sea.

* * *

Don't go, my brother,
Stop my sister!



Stop just for a moment
At that corner.
Then turn around
And look at me.
I am greeting you
From the window,
I am wishing you long life
From the window.

* * *

We met.
We drank.
We ate some of what was on the table
And some of what was in our memories.

Sometimes we stretched out
Our hands to the future.
Bread was old,
Memories bitter,
And the future turned out to be false.
We woke up.
We parted from each other.

* * *

Not for the world can a man be
As strong as that rock.

Nor can he be lost
Nor seen in time,
Like the shade of that old oak tree.

A man cannot be separated into five parts
And live in five places,
Like that cloud in the sky.

Nor can he ever be born and live





In the place where he was expected and wished for,
Like that willow growing in the yard of the insane asylum.

* * *

Sometimes the places that you have once seen,
And the woman whom you once loved
Are lost in your memories,
And sometimes they are even forgotten.

Sometimes there are days
When you even forget your own child.
And sometimes you have such a day
When you completely forget
Death and God himself.

But there are three things
Which are not forgotten even for a moment.
They are today, the Earth and You.

* * *

Goodness,
In what language shall I appeal to You?
Is one prayer enough for You?
Or shall I beg Your favor over and over?
I am laughing neither at You, nor at the world.
I am laughing at myself.
Because I know only two
of the thousands of languages that You have created.
And one of those two languages that I know
is known neither in heaven nor on earth.
That's why I am praying to You in the only other language that I
know:
Goodness, help me, Goodness.

* * *



I am caught
In the spider's web of poetry.

I can't set myself free
And live...

But, perhaps, I would rather write poems
than live...

* * *

I don't want people to dream of me,
When I am no longer in their hearts.

I would rather they forget me
Before offence became hatred.

I have lied,
But have never deceived anyone.

Twice I wanted to commit suicide,
But a thousand times I changed my mind.

* * *

The shadow of my two hands
Has fallen onto the paper.
The wolf-like howl of my loneliness
Has risen to its highest pitch again.

I have lost all sense of time,
I don't know what time it is now.
There is a half moon, the stars have disappeared,
This is a night that I just want to die.

I have neither fortune, nor mats nor blankets
To wrap up my life's belongings.
My God, kill one half of me,
And keep my other half to cry.

* * *





When every day
I open my door just a little bit wider,
All the dogs in the world start barking
As if the world is some stranger's garden,
And I am there meeting the dawn of day.

* * *

When it's winter,
My door is knocked upon by the souls
Of those I know who have died.

When it's spring,
I'm busy with stagnancy.

When summer comes,
Poverty stands over my head
As does the sun.

But when it's autumn,
I want to know
Who'll say what
When I die.

* * *

When it's winter,
My door is knocked upon by the souls
Of those I know who have died.

When it's spring,
I'm busy with stagnancy.

When summer comes,
Poverty stands over my head
As does the sun.

But when it's autumn,
I want to know
Who'll say what



When I die.

* * *

The wind roaring in my ears,
The dust of the ground in my eyes.
The blind ditch on my right,
The squeaking of the rusty gate on my left.
The cottage behind me,
The wall in front of me.
My right hand in my pocket,
My left hand on the wall.
I am here, God, I am here!

* * *

Don't be afraid,
I'm appearing in your dream.
Wait now! You can look at the flowers after I go.
Don't be afraid, my dear
I won't be drunk when I appear.
I'm never drunk in my dreams or in my poems.

* * *

Oh, my God!
They're killing a man
In the forest,
In the presence of so many trees!

* * *

Once I was a horizon,
Mist floated in over the sea
And I was seen no more.

Once I was a path,
No one passed over me,
Grass covered me
And I was seen no more.





Once I was a smile,
I don't know what happened,
But I was seen no more.

* * *

There will be a wind blowing
In the street,
The day I die.
And it will be unfurling
Some garment of a child which will have been hung out to dry.
And that cloth will be fluttering
Like a flag of mourning,
The day when I die.

* * *

I need just a little bit of rain,
Just a little bit of cognac,
And just a few teardrops.
And today I need them so desperately,
This room, this light, this pen and these papers.
And I need a grave
The key of which is in my pocket.
I need all these things just for writing poems in peace,
Sitting in this room,
Behind this door.

* * *

Teach me how to write poems,
Teach me, Paw Prints of the Wolf.
Teach me so that others would know
Where my words come from and where they go.
Teach me so that my poems will have the right
To live and to remain on the ground like you do,
Teach me, Paw Prints of the Wolf...

* * *



Give me a woman
To love and then to leave.
My heart is grieving for parting,
And this parting for a poem.

Show me a way
To leave this place forever.
There is a way passing through my heart,
And a poem passing through that way.

Give me a strange land
To live in.
My heart is grieving for a native land,
And this native land for a poem.

* * *

Don't erect a monument upon my grave,
Nor raise a marble stone.
Just leave a pair of shoes there
For someone barefoot to wear.

* * *

How should I run?
Why should I run?
Where should I run?
The world is small,
It is as small as a prison yard!

* * *

No guests, no white dress, no veil...
In the crowded station of a strange city
or in a passenger car
which is rocking with tired people
and which is now empty and now full,
you might meet a woman.





She might appear like an earthquake,
She might appear unexpectedly
at the station or in a passenger car.
And that day you might either collapse
or get surprised,
or forever you might keep in mind
that there is a God
and that the world was not as large
until you met that woman.
And you might understand that God
Had not let you live a meaningless life.

* * *

The clouds between us are swaying
Like the big bronze cross on my chest.

The drone of the plane
Is the distance between us.

The Black Sea without you
Is like a church whose candles have gone out.

* * *

What hasn't man created
for woman?

Nations.
Languages.
Tribes.
Countries.

Man set boundaries,
And made war stand sentinel over her.
But what we have gained in this war
waged for woman
is only poetry and music...

* * *



Something has disappeared,
I've lost something.
The string of something
Has broken somewhere.
My life starts talking
Only when the wind blows,
Like a forest which is unaware of birds.
The days, joys and sorrows of this life
Have escaped from something,
They have fled from somebody.
And now they are alone somewhere,
They have become useless
Like a prophet in an atheistic world.

* * *

Seems so to me as though 15,
perhaps 20, years ago
In Moscow streets,
I woke up after a dream
which was as long as death.
And I became startled upon awakening.
And the word "Motherland"
fell out of my hands and shattered into pieces
in Moscow streets.

* * *

You are my
Own mother Freedom,
I am your
Own child who has been reared by strangers!
You are the white flag that
My last hope has raised, Freedom,
I am the wind
Unfurling you!

* * *





I told you that I love you,
You broke my heart.
But again I told you that I love you!
I asked you to forgive me,
You cut me short.
But again I asked you to forgive me!
I asked you not to forget me,
You broke our memories.
But again I asked you not to forget me!
I gave you my life,
But you broke it.
Now, how can I give you another life?

* * *

The empty sleeve of the armless man's jacket
Is full of darkness.
The darkness of our inner selves
Is the only place for our hearts to reside.
The humane voice comes from darkness.
Springs flow from the earth's darkness.
An old woman milks a cow,
And the milk flows from darkness.
A child is born out of the darkness of its mother's womb.
Perhaps, we are living just
To pass from one darkness to another
And to be late for the end of our lives.

* * *

Chopin...
These voices and these chords
Are always with me
Like a faithful woman.



No matter how far they are from me,
They are always close to me
Like a faithful woman.
No matter how often I hear
These voices and these chords,
They are always new to me
Like a faithful woman.
These voices and these chords
Are always fresh in all seasons of the year,
They are like South on the earth everywhere,
Like a faithful woman...

* * *

Telephone numbers are not all alike.
Though there are human voices at the end of all of them.
Human voices are not all alike,
One expresses joy, another, grief.
Griefs are not all alike,
One is hopeful, another, desperate.
Hopes are not all alike,
One is dependent upon God, another, upon man's hands.
Men's hands are not all alike,
One ploughs the ground under, another, perpetrates life.
Human lives are not all alike,
One thrives, another, barely survives.
Human wills are not all alike,
One becomes determined, another shatters into pieces.
Pieces are not all alike,
One is as big as a century, another as small as a day.
Days are not all alike,





One is good, another bad.
Bad days are not all alike,
Sometimes it is you who remains silent,
Sometimes, the telephone.

* * *

If you change your phone number - whenever,
Please, write down your new number
On a sheet of paper,
And bury it in my grave.
Do you hear?

* * *

What did the earth tell you?
After the rain,
It told me of the scent of grass,
The smell of flowers.

What else?
It told me that there is drought,
That there is the burning of crops when they are green,
That there is the forest which is sighing from the sound Of axes,
And so many other things.

What else?
It told me about steaming roofs when it's snowing,
About the train's whistle which is heard from afar,
And about unnamed graves.

What else?
And again it told me about the way
Which is as long as a man's life,
And which stretches in front of every one who is born...

* * *



This lonely park
Which has been innudated with rain
Is like my childhood
Which I lived once.

The wet bench is cold,
The path is shivering.
But the rain continues pouring and pouring,
Drenching the night.

Please, clothe me warm
When I die.

* * *

Sails are always in need of wind,
as women are in need of love.

It is necessary that one should believe in God
and yet be aware of his non-existence.

Revolution needs revolution, my friend,
but not freedom...

* * *

Let parting and death
Always be your companions along your way.
Rely upon their faith.
Rely upon them,
And follow your way with ease.

* * *

Step aside, make way,
A raindrop is streaking down
The window.
A raindrop is streaking down,
It's streaking down upon no one's request.





It has addressed itself
Neither to God,
Nor to the world,
Nor to man!
It's just streaking down the window
Washing the dust of so many months.
It's streaking down, just down...

* * *

Paths are long,
Paths are short.
Does it make any difference
In what country,
Or on what path you lose your way?

Thousands of countries,
Thousands of languages.
Does it make any difference
In what country,
Or in what language
You keep your silence?

Note:

Vagif Samadoglu is the son of prominent Azerbaijani poet Samed Vurgun.



Sabir Rustamkhanli
(1946)

This Land Seems Familiar to Me

With its saddled horse ried to the post,
With its night and morning,
With its ringing voices
Of its bright-eyed- children
This land seems familiar to me.
The yurts² like white mushrooms
Are heart-shaped here, round there.
And when the gopuz³ is played
I remember my own music there.
The white dome over my head
And the white cover my tent,
The fringes of the carpet
Remind me of my mother in my land.....
This land seems familiar to me.

My elbows leave indentations on the pillow,
My feet, prints on the ground.
The sea of secrets creates
Thousands of miracles on the carpets.
And one heavenly whisper
Is taking me to the past.
The life horse on which I have been riding
Was tied to my life free
A thousand years ago.
This land seems familiar to me.





To die here silently
 While the gopuz is playing?
 Is impossible.
 Whether I have lived here or not
 Is too difficult to determine;
 Somehow, though, this land seems familiar to me.

Footnotes:

1 Frunze was the name of the capital city of Kyrgyzstan during the Soviet period since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the city has reverted to its earlier name, Bishkek, Mikhail Vasilyevich Frunze (1885-1925), a military theorist and the father of a Red Army officer, was born there in 1885.

2 yurt a circular domed portable tent used by nomads.

3 Gopuz- a stringed musical instrument similar to the Azeri saz played throughout the region.

Translated by Aynur Hajiyeva



Hamlet Isakhanly
 (Born 1949)

Beautiful

As spring runs to cascading river
 deep in the forest, what lovers whisper?
 Everywhere miracles, my daydream bewilders
 Beautiful valleys, beautiful mountains.

Far from the dirt, far from the dust,
 Far from the words that hurt the heart,
 Far from these eyes, walking arm in arm,
 The gardens are green, so too the fields.

Beauty's color changes, wears with time
 Becomes yellow with grief, blushes from blame.
 From birth some are moon-white, others night-dark
 The dark, the light both so lovely.

For when the heart quickens, when eyes call out,
 We breathe as one, voices stilled,
 Lips long for each other, faces catch fire
 The left cheek so soft, and the right.

Translated by Alison Mandaville

Contrasts

Life has its wind, sparkling sunrise, gloomy sunset,
 And everyone has dreams and wishes not to be upset.
 The palaces always need applause and silence,
 Great ceremonies wise speech confesses.
 Grief is said together in the sonnet line,
 Happy souls burst into bloom with desire.
 The bad has poison contrasted with kindness,





The justice glorifies love and happiness.
The violence is seemed to hold a truncheon,
The defenCe is wearing a shirt made of bullet hole.
A cruel heart is designed of rock and ice,
A kind heart, a sweet remedy for us.
The dead are wrapped up by a special gown,
The new-borns have a flaming future and dawn.
In one hand holding a flower, in the other a knife,
A man is a contrast reality in this fragile life.

I want to be alone

Tired of all things,
Of noise and city mess,
Of people, of my everyday duty,
I need loneliness.
Exhausted from everything,
From odd patience,
From the tolerance
to the world rotations,
I need to be far away from me.
So many parties, so many meetings,
I hate nonsense and idle speeches,
Instead,
I go to my own world
Yet, nearby, a yesman says his word
Full of praise and praise and praise,
Sincere words are less and less,
No more pride in so many faces,
Then, hatred permeates my bones,
I say to myself "God damn it!"
Take it easy,
You need to be alone.
When with everyday care,



The world 's unfair, overfills my heart,
I'm depressed by merriment and wedding.
I want to run away from the poor and wealth,
From endless ceremonies.
Just, simply to take the flute,
And play the song of loneliness.
When I'm desperate I close my eyes
And strive for loneliness at any chance.
Solitude
The summit of my wits' ends.
Solitude
The reality of my dreams.

Do You Remember?

Do you remember there was a boy,
Who lived in dreams all his life,
And his untamed heart
Excited by a pleasant sight?
Do you remember there was a boy,
Launching paper ships
far from his wondering sight
Down by the muddy riverside?
Do you remember there was a boy,
Sailing in a big steamer
Once approached the blue bank
Where all his dreams sank?
Do you remember there was a boy,
Singing as a sweet nightingale
for his flower like beauty
Standing on the bay?
Do you remember there was a boy,
Standing aboard
disappeared from the sight





And there were tears in the beauty's eyes?
Do you remember there was a boy,
Sitting by the waterless river side
Making paper planes
Flying high in the blue skies?
Do you remember there was a boy,
Though happiness seemed in his eyes,
His sobbing heart burst in vain dreams
And there were planes in the blue skies?...

This is a life as well

Flower fragrance
seemed forgotten feelings in my mind
Awakened sweet memory at once
This scent touched my heart
And this is a life...
The sunrise
piercing the curtain of darkness
spread its burning rays to the earth
Beheld the desire of my heart
And this is a life...
A fellow that wore his honors out
tortured my soul and let me down
Ignorant of all his deeds
My thought suffered indeed
It broke my fragile heart
And this is a life as well...
Love and the feeling of grief
taught me to live
The night is just the same as the dawn
White seemed black like twins born
Cherish of hope and bitter cry
flashed my groaning heart



And this is a life as well...
A midnight's love dream
gave me the moment never left before
Flower petals touched my soul
embraced and prolonged my joy
Fear to part with love's burning grace
My dreams kept me alive
And this is a life as well

The life would be so easy!..

If we could only tell the truth,
That all the things were fairly smooth,
And creating our future we're busy,
The life would be so easy!...
If the false didn't surround us,
Traitors and robbers weren't around us,
Yesman was away from our true path,
The life would be so easy!...
If motherland was our destination,
Brave hearts belonged to the nation,
Goodwill gave creation,
The life would be so easy!...
If we preferred beauty to bad,
And the fate didn't lead us to mad,
Loving heart didn't feel so lonely, sad,
The life would be so easy!...
If lovers' vows seemed strong day by day,
Feelings flashed lightning far away,
Sweet kisses from lips to hearts made a way,
The life would be so easy!...
If her beauty took our minds,
We lost our wit tender passion in fire,
Long live love! And if we admired,
The life would be so easy!





Vagif Bayatly

Vagif Bayatly is an Azerbaijani poet. He was born in October 1948 in Jabrayil, a district in Karabakh now militarily occupied by Armenia. Vagif's major books of poetry include: *Under a Lonely Star*, *All Love Stories Will Be Forgotten*, and *The Funniest Dead Man*. His poetry has been translated into more than 30 languages, including a major book of poetry published in Moscow (translated into Russian).

His prizes include the Mayakovski Prize for Poetry and the Jalil Mammadguluzadeh Prize founded by the Press Foundation in Azerbaijan. Vagif has translated numerous works into Azerbaijani, including some of the most famous Austrian, English, Scottish, Italian, Norwegian, Turkish, and Russian poets, such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Thomas Eliot, Robert Burns, Boris Pasternak, Anna Akhmatova, Nikolay Gumilyov and Osip Mandelstam.

More than Anyone Else

I can neither be the strongest man in the world,
Nor do I want to be.
I don't want anyone to be afraid of me. I can neither be the
wealthiest man in the world,
Nor do I want to be.
For me the greatest wealth in the world,
is a tiny tent with a smiling face and eyes, with an open door and
windows! I can neither love you more than anyone else in the world,
Nor do I want to love you so.
Because only those who love insincerely
Love more than anyone else. I want to love you quietly and gently,
I want to love you as destined by God,
Like a small bird that has nestled against the tiny corner of its nest.

Translated by Tamam Bayatly



Vagif Mammadov

Vagif Mammadov was born in 1948 in the village of Sadarak, in Sharur district of Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan. Many of his poems are dedicated to the resilient people who suffered from the Armenian occupation of the Azerbaijani lands.

Khojali*

My heart is broken into many a part,
My tears have turned on it into salt.
Khojali is such ice in my people's heart
That even in summer it doesn't melt.

Khojali is cinder grieving eternally,
It is a life which only one night lasted.
Khojali is a hill, a plain, a valley
Whose trees bear not fruit, but corpse, dead.

We do not have a hand which is
Like the hangman's, we can never have, no!
We have no face to look at the faces
Of the girls, brides with Khojali sorrow.

The girls', brides' chastity is in a plain, a valley,
Khojali is a dawn flushed with shame.
The hangman made such a fire really
That in winter Khojali got into the flame.





This sorrow is the darkest cloud in the sky,
The wound of this grief will never recover,
Such groan, moan in my heart have I
That is eternal, will never, never be over.

Translated by Shirmammad Qudratoqlu

*Khojali is the town of Garabagh region of Azerbaijan. It was completely destroyed by the Armenian Forces in February 25, 1992, and most of it's population were massacred by the Armenian forces.



Lamiya Safarova

Don't Call Me Refugee *

My life, my destiny
Has been so painful, so don't call me refugee.
My heart aches, my eyes cry,
I beg of you, please don't call me "refugee".

It feels like I don't even exist in the world,
As if I'm a migrant bird far away from my land
Turning back to look at my village.
I beg of you, please don't call me "refugee".

Oh, the things I've seen during these painful years,
The most beautiful days I've seen in my land,
I've dreamed only about our house.
I beg of you, please don't call me "refugee".

The reason why I write these sad things
Is that living a meaningless life is like hell.
What I really want to say is:
I beg of you, please don't call me "refugee"

* As a result of the Armenian aggression in 1991-93, around one million Azeris became refugees.

Mother

Dear Mother, I owe you so much,
You gave me this beautiful world.
I owe you my life, Mother.
Dear Mother, I owe you so much.





If I grow up to be a poet,
I'll dedicate my poems and stories to you.
I'll sacrifice myself for you.
Dear Mother, I owe you so much.

Mother, you gave me notebooks and pens
That I love more than myself.
"Just sit, don't get up."
"Just study," you said.
Dear Mother, I owe you so much.

If a Person Doesn't Love His Country

If a person doesn't love his country,
What's the meaning of telling him "Love it!"?
If a person doesn't know the value of his country,
What's the meaning of telling him "Know it!"?

If your happy days are left far behind,
What's the meaning of calling them back?
If you don't have any land to live on,
What's the meaning of living then?

If your land has been turned over to a traitor,
What's the meaning of saying, "Go back!"?
If a person doesn't know how to keep a secret,
Then what's the meaning of telling him yours?

What's the meaning of calling
Someone else's garden your own?
What's the meaning of calling
Someone else's city or village "Motherland"?

Don't call everyone who writes, a "poet".
What's the meaning of my poem?



I am Lamiya, full of sadness,
But what's the use of telling you about it?
Land, I Don't Know Where I Lost You
I can't suffer the pain that you have in your chest,
I can't make your dream come true,
I can't come to see you for many years, Land.
I don't know where I lost you, Land.

Once again there is fog on your mountain peaks.
Of course, one day your flower will open,
Then grief and sadness will fly away
from my heart.
I don't know where I lost you, Land.

Today we need to get our land back.
God, please let us see our land this spring,
Let us wipe its tears away soon.
I don't know where I lost you, Land.

If you only knew how much I love you,
I am coming to see you again.
My Land, I am dying without you,
I don't know where I lost you, Land.

Uncle Reza

(Dedicated to Reza, the world-famous Azeri photographer from Iran and Lamiya's good friend.)

Uncle Reza,
How dear you are.
You're from the other side¹ and I, from this,
Our language is the same, Azerbaijani.
I am a poet and you, an intellectual.
You're from the other side and I, from this.





Both well-mannered and sincere,
Uncle Reza, how dear you are to me:

Don't be so tender-hearted and sensitive,
This tender heart of yours will make you
grow old sooner.

Your steadiness is a model for me.

Lamiya will never forget you.

Both well-mannered and sincere,

Uncle Reza, how dear you are to me.

Footnote:

1 "Other side" means Southern Azerbaijan which is in Iran. The country was divided into North and South in 1813 and 1828. The northern part where Lamiya lives is called the Republic of Azerbaijan; the southern part where Reza comes from is in Iran. Reza met Lamiya when he was taking photos for National Geographic Magazine.



Bayati

Bayati is a form of folk poetry, a quatrain in Azerbaijan . It is sung to the tune of folk songs. It is mainly written in lines with a definite rhyming pattern and the main idea stated in the last two lines, of the known forms there are love Bayaties, lamentations, lullabies, shepherd songs, philosophical Bayati, and puns with homonymic rhymes. A Bayati is a finished work of poetry with a clear cut pattern and composition.

My friend, what grievous troubles wake
While people sleep, what troubles wake---
The poor endure more misery
Than ranging seas bring in their wake.

* * *

Friend, no one knows much happiness,
Not one but lives a life of stress :
You 'll see injustice, wound and wrong
From shahs, but never their largesse.

* * *

Poor bard, I groan eternally;
Long doomed to fight adversity
Since I became a hopeless slave
They sell and buy and barter me.

* * *

You bury a foreigner should he die,
But through back-streets he's carried by;
You hardly mark his death at all
But do his mother notify!

* * *





My friend, if beggared, alms demand;
Beg door-to-door, beg on every hand:
Better at home a pauper be
Than wealthy khan in a foreign land.

* * *

I've only a sheepskin hat left to wear,
My heart is aching with despair:
Our eyes met, and I fell in love-----
Am I to blame she was so fair?

* * *

A beaten servant's piercing screams,
Disturbed some people's nightly dream.
But that day tumbled, brick by brick-----
His life's castle, all his dream.

* * *

Churn and churn so butter comes,
Drink with a wil to work that hums:
Here's to our collective farm!
Here's to our chairman and working churms!

* * *

Oh, rue is holy, rue is blest,
Of healing properties possessed-----
Where this herb in plenty grows,
By disease are none distressed.

* * *

I picked red roses, filled a tray,
Till morn beside me let them stay-----
When you come to see your love,
She'll rise to meet you, fragrant, gay.

* * *



My love, come where the melons grow
In the garden row on row-----
One smile from you, and I'll my heart
Upon your burning altar throw.

* * *

A hawk in to our garden flew,
His prey intending to pursue.
Even though I lay here dead,
I'd come alive at a kiss from you.

* * *

Let's seek our garden, so discrete
Our lips may passionately meet:
We'll be like nightingales and sing,
Nor feel the earth beneath our feet.

* * *

Come, love, in to our mountain bower,
Our garden where the melons flower-----
Over the wall and come to me
For one happy, joyous hour.

* * *

The moon is sliding down to rest,
By sleeplessness I am possessed-----
My lonely hands are languishing
To touch my loved one's tender breast.

* * *

The moon is setting, sad and frail,
To find relief in sleep I fail:
Where melons grow, the rose is cool
Before the love-sick nightingale.

* * *





I plucked a rose so red and deep,
Until tomorrow I will keep:
My love invites me then to call----
Before me dainties she will heap.

* * *

In the heart of Ganji town
A wedding candle's burning down----
Oh, in the arms of this fair youth,
May God your life with blessings crown.

* * *

O love, the hive is for the bee;
Bees swarm, and hives there have to be:
When lovers true are joined as one,
Then angels hold a jubilee.

* * *

My rival gave a heavy sigh;
And cup in hand, sat blank of eye;
Of course, his thoughts are all on her---
He caught a better glimpse than I.

* * *

My stockings are of patterned threads,
The pattern is with roses spread-----
If you love me truly, meet
Me near my neighbour's flowerbeds

* * *

I'd go, if only some one showed
The way, and joined me on the road.
A letter for my love----- won't some one
Take it to her far abode?

* * *



My baby's gone to bye-lo,
So that he may grow.
I won't let them wake him up:
Sweet is morning sleep, you know.

* * *

Grown birds may fly both east and west,
But nestlings keep with in their nest.
I pray and pray and pray for you:
My fears give me no rest.

* * *

My lullaby is sweet as sweet,
My baby's sleep is light and fleet----
One thing alone I ask of God:
One day your wedding guests to meet.

* * *

The mullah calls, the morn is here,
So rise and dress, my little dear----
I want to look and look at you,
To feast my eyes on yours so clear.

* * *

Bye-lo, bye-lo, my little one,
You're my bread and salt alone---
I wait to see what help you'll be
To Mother, when you're grown.

* * *

What happen to my babykin?
Sonny, you're so pale and thin,
Time to open up your eyes---
I've lots of milk for babykin.

* * *





Hushabye, lullabye, don't you cry,
 Don't bring me heart-ache by and by:
 When you grow , be brave and strong-----
 On me, you'll never need rely.

* * *

Bye-lo, Obye-lo, little babykins,
 To break your Mummy's heart a sin;
 Sleep in bye-lo-land so deep-----
 You'll not steal sleep from Mummykins.

* * *

Before the flags of dawn unfurl,
 Let's walk in wales with dew empearled;
 Lowland vales will bless our love-----
 We'll have a boy, and not a girl.

* * *

With apple gold, with apple white,
 I 'll strew your pathway for delight----
 Wed not beauty, but noble heart;
 Nor wed an ignoble though pretty sprite.

* * *

Mother-in-law, cook pilaf and rice,
 Put wood on the fire, we'll wed in a trice!
 You've lost a son, and now he's mine-----
 Lie down, and on your brow put ice!

* * *

She piles wood on the roof to dry!
 Hayfork, spade they simply fly----
 When her married son comes home,
 Mother-in-law is smart and spry!

* * *



On poppy and on mountain fall
 No sun, nor any light at all-----
 Sisters must live for brothers' children,
 No life have they their own to call.

* * *

Poor chil-see that the fire won't dim,
 Put on the wood and the hearth keep trim----
 May a poor orphan girl ignore
 Her stepfather's selfish whim?

* * *

The tribe packs up to move away,
 The birds fly north and can not stay:
 Nothing's lasting, hard the lesson----
 Yet ignore it no one may.

* * *

A jolly place is Khanabad,
 My friend went off to Khanabad--
 Say one word to a tyrant and----
 They'll ship you off to khanabad.

* * *

My friend, upon the mountain here,
 The nightingale sings loud and clear:
 A buzzard circled, came to rest-----
 Now all the mountain shakes with fear.

* * *

Motionless, the gentle doe-----
 Seeking shelter from her foe,
 Hunter, withered be your hand
 The moment arrow's loosed from bow!

* * *





The garden with roses I set out,
 Where we with laughter used to shout;
 You'd start laughing, I'd laugh too-----
 Now what have I to laugh about?

* * *

My friend, I'm thinking of a sea,
 About a ship becalmed at sea;
 Because I shed so many tears-----
 A sea is now surrounding me.

* * *

A bitter foe came to my door,
 It was back from a foreign land,
 My strength returned to me once more.

* * *

At a stronger people look askance,
 The strange land led him a sorry dance:
 The moment the exile came back home ----
 Happiness was his inheritance.

* * *

O see the snow on the mountain crag,
 And the hawk with wings like a floating flag----
 Should all the world turn paradise,
 My joy would still be Garabag!

* * *

I believed: their words were sweet---
 Naked, I trod through the desert's heat,
 I sought my own, my tribal kin,
 My countrymen I longed to meet.

* * *



As minstrel, I love my Garabakh,
 My own Sheki, Shirwan, Garbag-----
 If Teheran turned in to heaven-----
 I'd never forget dear Garabakh.

* * *

Fog! Throughout the mountains rise,
 Drive the sheep where fresh pasture lies.
 I 'll follow the sheep till I find my love----
 And deafen the mountains with my cries!

* * *

The falling leaves pile up waist high,
 The garden burns in the sun's bright eye:
 The nightingale looks for his rose,
 From bush to bush, he flutters by.

* * *

Above Tabriz- Mount Marag's crest,
 Her thick locks the comb arrest-----
 Of my dear love, no news at all,
 I ask all round---- a useless quest.

* * *

I go and stand upon the road,
 My words come tumbled, speech is slowed:
 I thirst and ache to meet my love-----
 My eyes are fixed upon the road.

* * *

When stars are flashing in the skies,
 When hearts are fused with loving ties,
 It's hard to part, surrender up
 All that's familiar to the eyes.

* * *





Nightingales fly to and fro,
 Younder where the roses grow.
 But where are you, where can you be?
 Searching the road, my glances go-----

* * *

These fortresses my heart appal,
 Such mounds of stone with buttressed wall
 I fear to die in a foreign land,
 My sweetheart's bitter tears will fall.

* * *

I took the road to Khalkhal town:
 But all the way my heart was down;
 If I go and stay there, I'm afraid-----
 Another will my darling own.

* * *

Let's go on to the upper spring,
 Such water, your very blood will sing!
 But you'll say this, I'll say that-----
 Our tears will mingle with the spring.

* * *

O bard, the days and months will run !
 I pace the days, count one by one:
 I'll build a wall around your grave
 And stay by you in the blazing sun.

* * *

O noble father, I've come hence
 To your dear grave, to seek defence:
 You may be dead, but in this world
 Your name still calls forth deference.

* * *



Misfortune in its train,
 My dear, brings lasting pain-----
 Isn't it like this world to take
 The good ones first, while the bad remain?

* * *

The melons, rotting, scent the air;
 No pomegranate left, no pear.
 Confusion rages if you die,
 Your sweetheart's harvest is despair.

* * *

Can gardens to licorice be reconciled?
 Or would the rose-bush feel defiled?
 Has anybody sympathy
 For her who can not bear a child?

* * *

Rises the moon, and sets away----
 But does it reach the milky way?
 How can a mother, without her child,
 With rest or sleep her fears allay?

* * *

You, O master, I entreat
 Don't humble me in your conceit:
 A friend looks always in your eyes,
 An enemy only at your feet.

* * *

This road takes you to Ordubad,
 From Salmas through to Ordubad----
 Our troops will meet no ambush if
 Our chief with wisdom's ironclad.

* * *





Pick a pretty sash to wear,
Tie a ribbon in your hair,
But don't believe the artful one,
Nor to a stranger secrets bare.

* * *

I'll keep my sheaf of arrows nigh,
I must go and don't you cry-----
Perhaps I won't come back, who knows?
But don't you trust the traitor-spy!

* * *

The Shah sits on his throne in state,
At times he too complains of fate:
The cock crows just to hear himself,
But morning comes at its own gait.

* * *

Each slope of Mount Kyapez, its crest,
To many a secret might attest-----
While you're so busy winning friends,
An enemy's perched within your nest.

* * *

Let them tell the questing stranger:
My sleeping soul shall wake to danger-----
Reveal no secrets to a traitor:
He'll give them away to any stranger.

* * *

Huge slabs of ice our roadway bar-----
Who 'll use an axe that can hardly scar?
He's stupid as the sated dog
Who howls by night at moon and star.

* * *



Bring in some wood, and let it bide,
Fill your hookah-----put aside.
If they won't hear what you've to say-----
Ignore them, in your heart all hide.

* * *

Behold the pomegranate tree!
Pomegranates I love to see.
But peer deep in to his secret heart-----
Who to your face says: Friend I be.

* * *

Bard am I for all of ye
Who approve and value me-----
No gunfire can smash our friendship's ties
If we maintain our unity.

* * *

The cranes fly on it filed array,
Harsh voices streaming far away-----
If we separate or lag,
The enemy will have his way.

* * *

As bard, I see the fogs that creep
Through lowland, up the mountain steep-----
Shut your ears to enemy wiles,
Or a fool's harvest you will reap.

* * *

I love our bright and happy days,
This radiant life the past outweighs.
While Lenin's teaching leads us on
To a happy life by freedom ways.

Translated by Gladys Evans



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