

**FROM PAST TO PRESENT: THE CONTINUING LEGACY OF DIVAN  
LITERATURE IN TURKISH NARRATIVES**

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***Annotatsiya:*** Ushbu maqola Divan adabiyotining zamonaviy turk adabiyotiga ta'sirini tahlil qiladi. Divan she'riyati asrlar davomida turkiy, arab va fors unsurlarini o'zida mujassam etgan holda, aristokratik va falsafiy boylikni ifodalagan. Maqolada tildagi murakkablikdan soddalashtirilgan zamonaviy turk tiliga o'tish jarayoni, sevgi va tasavvuf kabi mavzularning davomiyligi hamda klassik shakllarning zamonaviy talqinlari ko'rib chiqiladi. "Kombinatsiyalangan va notekis modernizm" tushunchasi orqali turk adabiyotida meros va modernlik o'rtasidagi dinamik aloqalar yoritiladi.

***Kalit so'zlar:*** Divan adabiyoti, Zamonaviy turk adabiyoti, Tasavvuf, Sevgi mavzusi, Tanzimat islohotlari, Lug'aviy soddalashtirish, G'azal, Ruboi, Kombinatsiyalangan va notekis modernizm, Turk she'riyati

***Annotation:*** This article examines the influence of Divan literature on modern Turkish literature. Spanning centuries, Divan poetry integrated Turkish, Arabic, and Persian elements, embodying aristocratic refinement and philosophical depth. The discussion covers the transition from its ornate linguistic style to simplified modern Turkish, the persistence of themes such as love and mysticism, and the adaptation of classical forms into contemporary contexts. The concept of "combined and uneven modernism" highlights the dynamic relationship between heritage and modernity in Turkish literary evolution.

**Keywords:** *Divan literature, Modern Turkish literature, Sufism, Theme of love, Tanzimat reforms, Linguistic simplification, Ghazal, Ruba'i, Combined and uneven modernism, Turkish poetry*

**Аннотация:** В статье рассматривается влияние диванной литературы на современную турецкую литературу. На протяжении веков диванная поэзия объединяла турецкие, арабские и персидские элементы, олицетворяя аристократическую утонченность и философскую глубину. Анализируются переход от сложного языка к упрощенному современному турецкому, сохранение тем любви и мистицизма, а также адаптация классических форм в современном контексте. Понятие «сочетанный и неравномерный модернизм» отражает динамичную связь между наследием и современностью в турецкой литературе.

**Ключевые слова:** *Диванная литература, Современная турецкая литература, Суфизм, Тема любви, Реформы Танзимата, Лингвистическое упрощение, Газель, Рубаи, Сочетанный и неравномерный модернизм, Турецкая поэзия*

### **Introduction**

Divan literature, a rich poetic tradition spanning nearly seven centuries within the Ottoman Empire, stands as a monumental pillar in the heritage of Turkish literary arts. Heavily influenced by the sophisticated literary traditions of Persia and Arabia, it shaped not only the poetic forms and lexicon of its era but also laid foundational groundwork that continues to resonate, subtly or overtly, within contemporary Turkish literature. The transition from this classical, often aristocratic, literary form to the more popularized, modern Turkish literature was not a clean break but rather a complex dialogue, marked by both conscious rejection and enduring embrace of its legacy.

The language of Divan poetry, a sophisticated blend of Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, created a distinct, ornate style that often limited its accessibility to the learned elite. This linguistic characteristic led to a clear divergence from the more vernacular and tradition-rooted Turkish folk literature. Despite this, some

influential figures, like Yunus Emre, served as crucial bridges, composing works that resonated with both the classical Divan style and the more accessible Anatolian Turkish, showcasing an early synthesis of these seemingly disparate literary worlds.

### **The Evolving Language of Turkish Poetic Expression**

#### **From Ornate Eloquence to Accessible Narratives**

One of the most significant shifts between Divan and contemporary Turkish literature lies in the evolution of language. Divan literature, particularly poetry, was characterized by its highly ornate and complex Ottoman Turkish, replete with Persian and Arabic loanwords and intricate grammatical structures. This linguistic richness, while celebrated for its aesthetic beauty, often rendered it inaccessible to the general populace. Modern Turkish literature, emerging particularly with the Tanzimat reforms in the 19th century, saw a conscious movement towards linguistic simplification and purification, aiming for a more accessible language rooted in the vernacular.

However, this linguistic transformation did not entirely erase the influence of the past. While contemporary Turkish authors primarily write in a simplified, modern Turkish, the remnants of classical motifs and stylistic approaches can still be observed. The very act of simplifying the language can be seen as a response to, and an evolution from, the complexities of Divan Turkish. This ongoing linguistic dialogue shapes how contemporary authors engage with themes and aesthetics inherited from the classical period.

### **Enduring Themes and Philosophical Undercurrents**

#### **Love, Mysticism, and Societal Reflection Across Eras**

Despite significant stylistic and linguistic divergences, the thematic landscape of Turkish literature reveals a remarkable continuity from the Divan era to the present day. Themes such as love, often expressed through elaborate metaphorical symbolism, mysticism, and various forms of social critique, remain central to Turkish literary exploration. Divan poetry, with its deep philosophical and spiritual insights, particularly from Sufi traditions, explored the depths of

human emotion and divine connection. These profound explorations continue to inspire contemporary authors, who often reinterpret these classical themes through a modern lens, reflecting on identity, society, and the human condition in new contexts.

Intertextual references to Divan motifs are frequently found in contemporary Turkish novels and short stories, demonstrating a persistent engagement with the historical and cultural layers of Turkish thought. This re-engagement highlights how modern literature, while forging its own path, continually renegotiates its relationship with its rich historical precedents, viewing them not as relics but as living sources of inspiration and critical reflection.

### **Formal and Structural Adaptations: A Modern Reinterpretation**

While contemporary Turkish poetry largely embraces free verse and innovative structures, the echoes of classical Divan poetic forms are not entirely absent. The intricate aesthetics and symbolic depth of Divan poetry continue to resonate, often inspiring modernists to re-evaluate and integrate elements from this tradition into contemporary expression. This is not a mere replication but a creative adaptation where classical forms like the ghazal and rubai might be deconstructed, recontextualized, or subtly referenced to serve new artistic and thematic purposes.

This dialogue between tradition and innovation is crucial for understanding the ongoing evolution of Turkish literature. It underscores how Turkish writers navigate their rich cultural heritage, blending it with modern literary currents to create works that are both deeply rooted in their past and vibrantly relevant to the present.

### **The Concept of a "Combined and Uneven Modernism"**

The enduring influence of Divan literature on contemporary Turkish works can be encapsulated by the concept of "combined and uneven modernism." This refers to how Turkish literature did not simply discard its classical heritage in favor of Western models but rather integrated and adapted elements from both, often in a complex, non-linear fashion. This synthesis is evident in the ongoing critical engagement with Divan aesthetics, philosophical insights, and even its linguistic

nuances, even when ostensibly moving towards a more "modern" and globally informed literary identity.

The tension between retaining cultural roots and embracing global literary trends is a defining characteristic of modern Turkish literature. This dynamic ensures that Divan literature remains a significant, albeit often debated, part of the cultural and literary self-identity formation of Turkey.

### **Divan Literature's Enduring Legacy in Modern and Contemporary Turkish Literature**

Divan poetry—renowned for its rich symbolism and Sufi-infused aesthetics—was embodied in the works of **Fuzûlî**, **Bâkî**, **Nedîm**, and **Nef'î**, who shaped the classical foundation of Ottoman literary tradition. **Fuzûlî**, celebrated as one of the most outstanding figures in classical Turkic literature, composed lyrical masterpieces such as *Leylâ and Majnûn* in Azerbaijani, Persian, and Arabic (The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.; Simple English Wikipedia, n.d.), while **Bâkî** and **Nedîm** exemplified the structural and thematic richness of Divan verse (Diwan [Poetry]—Wikipedia, n.d.).

Moving forward to the period of literary reform, **İbrahim Şinasi** played a pivotal role in transitioning Turkish poetry toward modernity by introducing French poetic models during the Tanzimat era (The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.). In the early 20th century, **Yahya Kemal Beyatlı**, a seminal Turkish neoclassical poet, successfully merged traditional Divan elements—like aruz meter—with modern language, harmonizing heritage with contemporary expression (Yahya Kemal Beyatlı—Wikipedia, 2025; Doğan, 2012). His poetic fusion embodied a lyrical embrace of musicality and cultural identity (Worldly Journals, 2025).

The advent of the Republic ushered in modernist transformations. **Nazım Hikmet** broke decisively from formal classical constraints, championing free verse and politically charged themes that defined modern Turkish poetry (Poetry of Turkey—Wikipedia, n.d.). Similarly, **Orhan Veli Kanık**, a founder of the "Garip"

movement, embraced everyday language and liberated poetic form in direct contrast to Divan's ornamentation (Poetry of Turkey—Wikipedia, n.d.).

Later, the **İkinci Yeni** ("Second New") movement sought to reawaken poetic depth through metaphor and abstraction. Key figures like **Cemal Süreya** and **İlhan Berk** infused their poetry with symbolic resonance, echoing Divan's metaphorical density through a modern lens (Poetry of Turkey—Wikipedia, n.d.).

### **Conclusion**

The intricate relationship between Divan literature and contemporary Turkish literature is a testament to the enduring power of cultural heritage. Far from being merely a historical relic, Divan literature continues to act as a profound wellspring of influence, shaping the linguistic, thematic, and even structural dimensions of modern Turkish literary expression. This dynamic interplay represents a "combined and uneven modernism," where tradition is not abandoned but reinterpreted, critiqued, and integrated into new narratives. Understanding these connections provides deeper insight into the rich tapestry of Turkish literary evolution, revealing a continuous dialogue between the echoes of the past and the innovations of the present.

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