

FIVE SYLLABIC POETS: ARCHITECTS OF A NEW COUNTRY

Olga Virnyk

Ph.D., Assistant at the Department of Turkology,
Educational and Scientific Institute of Philology of Taras Shevchenko
National University of Kyiv, Ukraine
e-mail: olgavirnyk@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0002-7676-6497

Summary

The study is devoted to the Five Syllabic Poets who were active in the early twentieth century, during the transformation of the Ottoman Empire into the Turkish Republic. This period was marked not only by important political and social changes, but also by dramatic transformations in the cultural sphere, including literature. The Five Syllabic Poets, also known as the “Five Silabists”, aimed to create a new, authentic Turkish poetry that reflected the spirit and needs of modern Turkish society. They made a significant contribution to Turkish literature, noting their approach to poetry and their desire to make it accessible to a wide audience.

The Five Syllabic Poets sometimes made use of the materials of folk literature, which were used in a decorative style. The beauties of the country, the realities of Anatolia with its people and landscapes, their personal feelings, especially the national and historical. The fact that all five poets express a number of folk literature motifs in the treatment of these subjects shows their sensitivity to this issue.

The poetry of these poets also reflects the impact of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s reforms on the literary process, indicating important changes in the consciousness of Turkish society during the period of transformation.

The analysis of the works of the Five Syllabic Poets allows us to better understand and evaluate the historical context and cultural transformations in Turkey at the turn of the century.

Key words: The Five Syllabic Poets, Hece-poets, Five Syllabists, Beş Hececiler, Hececiler, Turkish Republic, Turkish literature, Anatolia, the people of Anatolia, “true Turks”, “great Turan”, aruz, hece, Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, Enis Behic Koryurek, Halit Fahri Ozansoy, Yusuf Ziya Ortach, Orhan Seifi Orhon.

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1. Introduction

The Five Syllabic Poets (Hedge poets) (Turkish: *Beş Hececiler*; *Hecenin Beş Şairi*, *Hececiler*, *Hecenin Beş Ozanı*) began their literary activity in the early twentieth century during an unprecedented and important period in terms of laying down the vectors of the country’s further development – the beginning of the restructuring of the Ottoman Empire into the Turkish Republic. The representatives of literature faced the same responsible and difficult task: to rebuild Ottoman literature into a qualitatively new Turkish

literature, full of the authentic identity of the Turkish people.

The objective is to examine the achievements of the Five Syllabic Poets. The research **object** is the influence of the works of the Five Syllabic Poets on the cultural life and society of Turkey during the period of transformation from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. The research **subject** is the Literary works of the Five Syllabic Poets. Analysis, observation, induction, deduction, and generalization **methods** were used while writing the article.

2. Architects of a new country

The Five Syllabic Poets began their activities during the First World War and, having existed until 1923, brought their worldview to poetry and left characteristic monuments in it, including specific vocabulary, which today allows us to study the activities, moods, and peculiarities of the worldview of the representatives of this community. The fundamental aspiration of the poets was to turn poetry into an art form that was understandable and accessible to as many people as possible.

The period of change in the country was accompanied by the famous reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, which was reflected in the reforms in literature. It is the analysis of the literature of that time that allows us to trace and analyze the changes that took place in human consciousness at the turn of the epoch, at the crossroads of the country's past and future, during the period of fateful changes, and to plunge into the history of Turkey itself.

The poetic association the Five Syllabic Poets is represented by such figures as: *Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel*, *Enis Behich Koryurek*, *Halit Fahri Ozansoy*, *Yusuf Ziya Ortach*, and *Orhan Seyfi Orhon*. An interesting fact is that all the surnames of the representatives of this group are demonstrably Turkic, which can also be interpreted as the embodiment of the ideas of creating a new Turkic society, a large and unified Turkic state (*Virnyk, 2022*).

The Five Syllabic Poets referred to the legendary past of the Turkic tribes, tried to crystallize the idea of “*true Turks*”, “*great Turan*”, and the nation's own self-identification as a great Turkic people (*Virnyk, 2022*).

Fairy, monster-dragon, Indian-Chinese and nursery rhymes are the main fairy tale motifs used in poetry of all the Five Syllabic Poets. Yusuf Ziya and Orhan Seyfi, who were inspired by the *Oghuz Khan Epic* and the *Ergenekon Epic*, which come to mind first among the known Turkish epics, use *Oghuz Khan* and *Ergenekon* as motifs in their poems. The motifs of the Turkish epic are almost never found in other syllabic poets' poems, except for these poets (*Çapa Cebi, 2001*).

In general terms, they use the syllabic meter, quatrains and verse forms of folk literature; the epic, folk tale, fairy tale elements, idioms, ancestral sayings, prayers, curses and religious elements of folk literature motifs in their poems by giving them the necessary importance and they are successful.

All of this contributes to the rise of the national spirit, popularization of Turkic history, culture, and worldview, and directing the vectors of society's attention to the Turkic past in order to shape its future.

3. Ottoman empire and aruz vs Turkish Republic and “hece”

The Five Syllabic Poets have written their poems in National Literature's point of view and reflection. They have been effective to show emotion, reflection, and cultural value from one generation to another in their poems. They have been active about interpretation of the world and events and building up the possibility of Turkish language (*Çapa Cebi, 2001*).

The Five Syllabic Poets aimed at writing their poems using syllabic rhythm (Turkish – “hece”) belonging to the Turkish Literature rather than aruz which had been widely applied for almost six hundred years in the Turkish Literature (*Ürkmez, 2009*).

The Five Syllabic Poets have written their poems in syllabic meter, which is a system based on the principle that the number of syllables in a line is equal to each other. According

to syllabic meter, the number of syllables in the first line can only be equal to the number of syllables in the other lines. The syllabic meter is almost a national meter for Turkish folk poetry.

The first examples sung in this meter date back to the Pre-Islamic Turkish Literature Period. Turkish folk poetry has developed this poetic upbringing it received from the pre-Islamic period and reached until today. Today, the syllabic meter still exists alongside free verse (Turkish “*serbest şiir*”) (Çapa Cebi, 2001).

Syllabic meter is the most appropriate meter system for the structure of the Turkish language.

The poems in Kashgarlı Mahmut’s “*Dîvan-ı Lügati’t Türk*” are written in syllabic meter. Such great figures as Ahmet Yesevî (12th century) and Yunus Emre (13th century) used syllabic meter. Later on, although the aruz meter was widely used, the syllabic meter continued to exist. From the early 14th century onwards, divan poets used aruz meter in all their poems, while *tekke* poets such as *Hacı Bayram Veli*, *Pir Sultan Abdal*, *Kaygusuz Abdal* and folk poets such as *Âşık Ömer*, *Gevherî*, *Emrah* wrote poems in both aruz and syllabic meter. *Saz* poets such as *Karacaoğlan* and *Dadaloğlu* write only in syllabic meter. Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul), who was the first intellectual to use syllabic meter, uses it in nine poems published under the title Turkish Poems (1899) after his poem “*Cenge Giderken*” (1897).

The syllabic meter, which gained a great superiority over aruz in time, became a movement between 1914 and 1921. Especially after 1917, young poets started to give the most beautiful examples of Turkish language in this meter in their poems and the poets called the Five Syllabic Poets played a great role in its success in a very short time (Çapa Cebi, 2001).

These poets successfully apply Ziya Gökalp’s principle that spoken language should be the language of literature by accepting that being simple and unpretentious in poetry is the best way. The Five Syllabists also use syllable in their theater works.

In their poems, the Five Syllabists widely used the syllable of 11, which is suitable for Turkish national taste. The poets who use these patterns of syllable the most in their poems are Orhan Seyfi and Yusuf Ziya (Çapa Cebi, 2001).

These five poets started their poetry in aruz and wrote successful poems in this rhythm. Despite their advocacy of syllabic rhythm, Halit Fahri Ozansoy and Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel occasionally return to aruz in later periods of their literary lives. Halit Fahri experiences ebbs and flows between the aruz and “hece”. Yusuf Ziya is the one with the sharpest line in defense of syllabic meter and hasn’t changed his line. There were fierce debates between him and Halit Fahri on this issue (Ürkmez, 2009).

The Five Syllabists remain unforgettable in terms of the vitality they brought to the syllabic meter in Turkish literature, their important contribution to the transition of Turkish poetry from aruz to free meter, and the new values they brought to the syllabic meter.

But despite all the creative pursuits of these poets another interesting fact is that at the end of their literature lives, almost all of the Five Syllabic Poets returned to aruz.

4. Analysis of ethno-cultural lexemes in the works of poets

Based on the analysis of the lexemes, we have found out that at the beginning of the 20th century ethno-cultural lexemes played the dominant role, they reflected the territorial integrity of Turkey, its boundaries, as well as indicated an important place of Anatolia in the minds of the Turks. *Anatolia* embodies the Turkic lands, the territory where the Turkic tribes moved in many centuries ago, which became for them a real homeland. The Turks feel nostalgic

about their homeland (*Anatolia*) being in a foreign country. In *Anatolia* there is a real Turkic spirit, dear to every citizen of Turkey.

Among the lexemes appearing in the poetry of the Five Syllabic Poets, there are also those that denote the concepts and phenomena of the Ottoman Empire (*Tugra, Sofa, Firman, Khaki Pai, Caravan, Sultan, Vizier, Aha, Efendi, Beylerbey, Pasha, Nashi Calfa*, etc.). Anthroponyms deserve a special attention. At the beginning of the twentieth century they were largely represented by the names of the characters of classical literary works (*Leyla, Majnun, Asli, Kerem, Shirin, Farhad*), the names of the Turkic rulers (*Oguz khan, Fatih, Abdulmejid*), the names of the Byzantine rulers (*Constantine, Justinian*), the names of the prominent generals of the Ottoman Empire, the names of the famous personalities (*Atatürk, Nedim, Fusuli, Nefi, Sinan*), the names related to the religion (*Yunus, Ali, Abel and Cain, Hidr, Ilyas, Jesus, Mohammed, Moses*, etc.), as well as symbolic proper names and ethnonyms.

Many phytonyms, with special connotations, have been identified symbolizing a certain location, people and their personality traits. During the Ottoman Empire there was a specific language of flowers. Presenting or mentioning a certain flower had a certain meaning that could be decoded knowing the symbolism of this flower (a *rose* – a woman, love, a *tulip* – man, sultan, Allah, a *carnation* – devotion, self-sacrifice, a *granate flower* – a symbol of wealth, a large and strong family, etc.) (*Pyshnokha, 2017; Pyshnokha, 2020; Virnyk, 2020*).

Using ethnocultural lexems in their works, Turkish poets enrich semantics and intertextuality of their works. The ethnocultural lexems as cultural symbols link various historical epochs, toposes and various, significant Turkish texts; they preserve and spread cultural information, predetermine the comprehension or misunderstanding of the corresponding text fragments by the reader. Knowing the symbolism, historical sources, the current attitude to ethnocultural lexems one can grasp the value of the background, ethno-cultural information that is encoded in them, and also get closer to understanding the value of the priorities of the Turkish ethnic group, the current trends, thoughts, moods of the modern Turkish society, the preconditions of its formation (*Pyshnokha, 2020*).

5. Conclusions

The creative activity of the Five Syllabic Poets significantly influenced the formation of aesthetic tastes and the conceptual platform of the figures of Turkish-language poetic discourse during the twentieth century, and the impulse they passed on to their descendants structurally and thematically modeled the creative patterns of representatives of Turkish literature, enriched the stream of creativity and aesthetics from which Turkish poets from Nazim Hikmet to the contemporary stars of the poetic beau monde of the Republic of Turkey drew inspiration.

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