Augustan Latin Poetry in Turkish Translation:
A Source of Cultural and Political Inspiration During the Early Turkish Republic

The reception of Classics in Türkiye is, to date, an underexplored area and Turkish translations of Latin Literature are no exception (Öyken & Dürüşken 2018, Öyken 2022). The first complete Turkish translations from the Roman authors appeared during the foundational period of the Turkish Republic around the 1930s. These were Vergil's *Bucolics* (probably one of the first modern Turkish books in Latin letters) and a selection from Horace, both via intermediary French translations. The respective translators Eşref (1892-1959) and Kadri (1889-1974) were mostly self-enlightened intellectuals and versatile writers, also fervent supporters of the Western-oriented modernization project led by Atatürk (1881-1938) that encompassed a vast nation-building program, including the alphabet and language reform, secular education, and the founding of new cultural institutions.

In addition to historical documents, translations, paratexts and reviews, some recently discovered handwritten notes by Kadri and by the respected classicist and epigraphist William Moir Calder, suggest that Eşref, Kadri and Atatürk were exchanging views on the significance of the planned Turkish translations of the ancient Greek and Latin texts, on the importance of humanistic disciplines, and classical philology in particular. In this light, I claim that these two writer-translators along with Atatürk, a phenomenal figure of the twentieth century, who was not only the mastermind of the Turkish War of Independence and the founder of the Republic but also a translator and author of the *res gestae* titled *Nutuk*, took part in a deliberate communal fashioning (Piera 2015) process that pictures Eşref as "*Vergilius Ancyranus*" (after the new capital Ankara), Kadri as a Turkish Horace, and Atatürk as a nation saviour, pacifist and reformist Augustus. The proposed paper will discuss these translations and their paratexts in order to reveal how this indirect though influential contact with the Augustan Latin poetry led to a fusion of horizons that involves much more than literary pursuits.