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TEENAGE SPRING IN GALLIPOLI

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Spring flowers in riot
in Rumelia's Chunk Bhair
showing how sublime life can be
even under shellfire.

Murat of Travnik
son of Murat
Murat Muratovic
in his seventeen
holding the line
in a trench of Lone Pine.

This is Gallipoli
in the year of nineteen fifteen
lines full of soldiers
riotous flowers in between.

Youngsters daydream
on both sides of the divide
the earth is their shield
like their mothers
her scent so sweet
firing their desire
to go soon
away from here.

Dreams tumble
like a wounded horseman
from his horseback
when Mehmet the Pomak
carries the news
it is time to attack
while the sun is out
catching the eyes
of the Anzac.

Murat's best mate
Artin
hugs him tight
begging forgiveness
from the bottom of his heart
for errors on his part
if any.

Ladders stand erect
bayonets fixed
all ready to take
the final step.

Ottoman officer Abbas
the eagle of Kafkas
in his spotless uniform
topped with shining stars
blows the whistle
to take his boys
heavens above.

Fears submerge
nothing matters any more
fighters surge
in a deafening roar;

Allah, Allah, Allah, Allah,
Allah, Allah, Allah,
Allah, Allah,
Allah,
All, A.
Suddenly
the breeze eased
wild flowers stopped swinging
the Lone Pine in tears
begging them not to hop
over the top.

Murat sensed
he had a few minutes life left
in his slight frame
he knew
he'll never see his mother
and more than that
he won't ever taste
the excitement of kissing
his Leyla
for the first time.

Trench came alive
no time to waste
soldiers in their haste
hugging their friends
saying goodbye
a few jokes in the air
to ease the awesome fear.

Murat was the last to fall
in Lone Pine's shadow
as he was parting
cought the eyes of the Anzac
who pumped five into him
a teenager born in Connemara
Michael O'Hara
his eyes just as blue
but watery
for the last two bullets
were unnecessary.

Pearl drops in Irish eyes
Murat's last consolation
knowing for sure
at least he cared.

Hundred and four springs past
since Lone Pine cried
hills in their Sunday best
waiting to welcome
visitors from far
for Michael and Murat
who were left behind.

As I compose this report Greece's Parliament has recently voted narrowly to ratify agreement to a change of name to one of the country's northern neighbours. But the newly agreed name 'Republic of Northern Macedonia' may not finally put to bed a dispute that has lasted nearly three decades, given that many Greeks are fiercely opposed to their neighbour's use of the name 'Macedonia'. It's all a question, we are