



Sami Baydar

1962-2012

A Turkish poet, author and painter. His first poems were published in 1980 in Beyaz (White) magazine, and his poetry often focused on elements of Sufism.

Selected Poems

Introduced and Translated By
Murat Nemet-Nejat

Introduction

Sami Baydar was born in the Anatolian town Merzifon near the Black Sea. His formal education was in the arts, particularly in drawing and painting. He graduated from the Department of Painting of Mimar Sinan University in Istanbul in 1987. He had the first one-man exhibition of paintings in Istanbul in 1989. Baydar's poetry is infused with the sensibility of a painter. His poems are often organized in spatial terms. The result is an idiosyncratic, startling body of work. Chronologically, Baydar's poetry can be divided into two groups. The first consists of four books published between 1987 and 1996: *The Gentlemen of the World* (*Dünya Efendileri*, 1987), *The Green Flame* (*Yeşil Alev*, 1991), *The World Will Tell Me the Same Story* (*Dünya Bana Aynısını Anlatacak*, 1995), *The Flower Worlds* (*Çiçek Dünyalar*, 1996). The second group of two books arrives after a hiatus of seven years *Between Being and Not-Being* (*Varla Yok Arasında*, 2003) and *Nicholas's Portrait* (*Nicholas'ın Portresi*, 2005). Posthumously, right after his death, Turkey's major literary publisher Yapi Kredi published his collected works *The World's Belief* (*Dünya İnancı*, 2012) which also includes the poems he wrote after 2005.

There is a striking surface difference between the poems of the two groups. The complexity of the earlier poems is replaced by a minimalist style which seems very simple. The simplicity is more apparent than real. The later poems are full of gaps, narrative jumps which connect them with the earlier work. The hiatus in Baydar's output corresponds to his moving away from Istanbul and the poetry community there to his family home in Merzifon where he remained more or less incommunicado to the outside world until his death of a heart attack. There are hints in his earlier poetry that the departure was caused by his heartbreak being abandoned by his male lover (this poetry is full of the anguish of a loss), as there are hints that Baydar suffered a total mental breakdown ("a dissolution of the ego") during that time.

A Sea Bird.

Towards the apex of the wave created on the
surface of the ocean, the bird
draws an arc, first is on the right side of this wave
its breast grazes the water
lifting, then the wave slides right
the bird reaches above the apex
and in the space relinquished by the wave
weaves to the highest point reached by the
crested wave
hitting it on a tangent returns
belly first the bird is now entering the vault of the arc
scaling down in the left side of the wave
the wave progressing and passing this arc
draws a circle completed
by the bird's belly on the surface of the water
or adding the waveless emptiness of the moment between two waves joining

to the arching vault
there is always a crest left back
by a slightly sliding wave
the surface of the sea
is full of these circles of witchery

as a sea bird lingers on the wave
until the wave completes its circumferal motion
between two waves adds to itself
the emptying circle
of the previous wave.

(Sami Baydar, "Bir Deniz Kusu," from *Çiçek Dünyalar*, p. 217)

In the Tree's Hollow

The snow is rising to your eyes
are you ready for winter sleep.

the squirrels have gathered their acorns from under the oak trees.
I wish you knew
how to collect also.

one can chip in only
what one has
with my mere two acorns,
one can add only a chipping error.

(Don't leave me in this house alone,
pleeese,
i'm scared.)

(scared
alone,
of the crowing of the rooster
of the howling of the dogs,
one day, of seeing myself.)

(Let me look always at white sheets of paper
let their white spaces obliterate the fear of other things,
filling them.)

(Don't don'tleave me alone in this house,
pleeese
i'm scared.)

"Ağaç Kovuğu," from *Çiçek Dünyalar*, p. 229

Emily Dickinson

She was a
book worm,
gifting them
to friends.

You remember,
Emily Dickinson
had gifted me
her acrylic paints.

Everyone was gifting paints.

Why,
Emily Dickinson,

you'd asked my paint
back from me
to give it...

I was told this all the way to England.

They gave you their garbage.

Remember,
Emily Dickison
you'd given me
two poems
for Christmas.
Miracle of miracles,
my door was ringing.
I was 18.

Emily Dickinson's friend
used to laugh
at my eyeglasses.

I didn't mean
you're my lover Emily,
don't you believe a word they say.

“Emily Dickinson,” from *Vücut Her Zaman Savasir*, p. 396

Pine Cone

Air,
is inside water fire
and star.

I'll rip off my back
a left-handed weakness
like
dragonfly wings.

Like a giant pupa
I'll feed on dead feelings a while more
like on glazed lit fields
spinning.

In a net—a dead weight—
scaring the fisherman.
maybe he did not, could not
haul that catch,
letting the net loose
in the water.

A shadow
that doesn't drop a hint of swelling froth
merely moving scary dark water,

Maybe what makes water deeper
is my being in it
in my clothing
the eluding bewitchment's weakness re-
woven
beyond my knowing

March, 1988

"Koza," from *Dünya Bana Aynisini Anlatacak*, p.171

Bir Deniz Kuşu

Deniz yüzeyinde oluşan dalğanın
tepe noktasına doğru bir kavis çıkar
kuş önce bu dalğanın sağ yarısındadır
karnı suyu yalar yukarı kalkarak
sonra dalga daha sağa kayar
kuş tepe noktası üzerine gelir
dalğanın terkettiği alanda kavis
dalğanın en çok yükseldiği uca kadar çıkar
onu teğet geçerek döner
kuş karın aşağı şimdi kavsın çemberine girmekte
dalğanın sol yarısını inmektedir
dalga ilerleyip geçtiğinde kuşun
deniz yüzeyindeki karın çizgisiyle
tamamlanan — ya da iki dalga arasında
şimdi dalgasız boş yüzeyi de çember çizgiye katan
bir daireyi çizer bu kavis
biraz ilerlemiş bir dalğanın geriye bıraktığı
bir çember vardır hep
deniz yüzeyi havaya çizilmiş
bu büyü daireleriyle doludur
bir deniz kuşu dalğanın üzerinde
nasıl dalğanın dairesel seyrini
tamamlamasına kadar kalırsa
iki dalga arasında kendine katar
önceki dalğanın boş dairesi.

Ađaç Kovuđu

kar yükseliyor gözkapaklarına
kış uykusuna hazır mısın.

sincaplar topladı meşepalamutlarını
sen de toplama bilseydin.

elde olan
eklenir
iki meşepalamutuyla
yanlış toplama.

(Bırakma beni yalnız başıma bu evde
n'olur
korkuyorum.)

(Yalnız korkuyorum
horozların ötüşlerinden
köpeklerin havlamalarından
bir gün görmekten kendimi.)

(Hep beyaz kâğıtlara bakayım
başka şeylerin korkusunu yoketsin
onları doldurmak.)

(Bırakma beni yalnız başıma bu evde
n'olur
korkuyorum.)

Emily Dickinson

Kitap
kurduydu.
Hediye ederdi
kitapları.

Hani Emily Dickinson
bana akrilik boyalarını
vermişti
herkes boya hediye etti.

Nedeni mi
Emily Dickinson
çünkü benim boyamı
hani sen geri istemiştin
vermek için
o da anlatıyordu İngiltere'ye kadar.

Çöplerini
verdiler.

Hani sen Emily Dickinson
bana Noelde iki şiir vermiştin.
Mucize üstüne mucize
çalıyordu kapımı
18 yaşındaydım.

Emily Dickinson'un
arkadaşı gözküklerime gülerdi.

Seninle
aşk yaşadığımı
söylemiyordum inanma bunlara
Emily Dickinson.

Koza

Hava
suyun ve ateşin içinde
ve yıldızda.

Sırtımda fırlatıp atacağım
belli belirsiz bir zayıflık
yusufçuk kanatları gibi

Mineli ve ışıklı kırlar gibi
ölmüş duygularla besleneceğim bir süre daha
koca ören bir krizalit gibi.

Bir ağın içindeki ölü ağırlık
balıkçıyı ürküten.
Belki çekmedi, çekemedi o avı
bıraktı ağını denize.

Bir belirti
bir hava kabarcığı olsun vermeyen
giderek ürküten karanlık su.

Suyu derinleştiren benim içinde oluşum
belki de
giysiler içinde
çözemeyeceğim kadar sihirli bir sur.

Mart, 1988

Poet, translator from Turkish poetry, essayist and editor of *Eda: An Anthology of Contemporary Turkish Poetry* (Talisman, 2004; <http://jacketmagazine.com/34/eda-poems.shtml>), Murat Nemet-Nejat's works, among others, include the poems *The Bridge* (Martin Brian & O'Keeffe, London, 1977), *The Spiritual Life of Replicants* (Talisman, 2011), *Animals of Dawn* (Talisman, 2016), *Io's Song* (Chax, 2019), *Turkish Voices* (Punctum Books, 2022), the translations of the Turkish poet Orhan Veli's *I, Orhan Veli* (Hanging Loose Press, 1989), Seyhan Erozcelik's *Rosestrikes and Coffee Grinds* (Talisman, 2010), Ece Ayhan's *A Blind C at Black and Orthodoxies* (Green Integer, 2016), Birhan Keskin's *Y'ol* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2019), and the essays "Questions of Accent" (*Exquisite Corpse*, 1993; <https://jacket2.org/commentary/jerome-rothenberg>; or: http://www.cs.rpi.edu/~sibel/poetry/murat_nemet_nejat.html), (*The Peripheral Space of Photography* (Green Integer, 2004), "Istanbul Noir" (Talisman, 2011), "Expansive Consciousness, Contra Transcendence: A Dialogue with Umapada Kar's *Sugarfree Mailbox*" (flying turtle, Kolkata 2022).

Murat Nemet-Nejat is presently working on the poem *Camels and Weasels* and the translations of the Turkish poet Sami Baydar.

Issue 51 of *Talisman: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*, that came out in 2022, features Murat Nemet-Nejat and includes twenty writers contributing essays on different aspects of his work. Due to a technical glitch, Issue 51 can only be accessed through Issue 52 on line: <https://www.talisman46.com> (one has to click on issue 51 on the home page of Issue 52).