



**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* (*Yesil Alev*, 1991) *The World Will Tell Me the Same Story* (*Dünya Bana Aynisini Anlatacak*, 1995), *The Flower Worlds* (*Çiçek Dünyalarm* 1996). The second group of two books arrives after a hiatus of seven years *Between Being and Not-Being* (*Varla Yok Arasinda*, 2003) and *Nicholas's Portrait* (*Nicholas'in Portresi*, 2005). Posthumously, right after his death, Turkey's major literary publisher Yapi Kredi publishes his collected works *The World's Belief* (*Dünya Inanci*, 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. Whatever the biographical facts may be, it

is also true that Baydar's arc as a poet follows closely the arc of the quintessential Turkish Sufi story Leyla and Majnun in which the hero Majnun loses his beloved Leyla, loses his mind as a result and, exiled to the fields talks to animals there, achieving spiritual enlightenment through loss<sup>1</sup>.

Introduction and translations by Murat Nemet-Nejat

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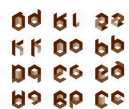
<sup>1</sup> In an interview with the critic Fatih Ozgüven the Turkish poet Lale Müldür says that the denizens of Istanbul/ Byzantium consist of "people who drink the liqueur of wisdom, of *sophia*, distilled from madness... So you see, Byzansiyyans are sun-struck people. Even if each individual is a pathological case, one can at least say Byzansiyyans have drawn for themselves a 'luminous path of escape,' in the Deleuzian sense." ["Are Turks Really... Dangerous?" *Eda: An Anthology of Contemporary Turkish Poetry*, pp. 358/361 (Talisman House: Jersey City, 2004)]



## Fall

turning a relevance (a connection)  
points to (shows) the circles the turning  
makes with (in) itself, and to the alteration  
of directional angle at every turn, and the sum  
of these (the) angles point to  
its distance from the ground—and it  
wants to see these—the (directional) angles—and to  
point (show) it—the distance—  
to me.  
it has nothing to do with the breeze,  
self motivated,  
it carries itself, tracing on the cement  
as the beatings of a poet's (writer's) heart --and  
the turning (twisting) of the leaf  
descending into  
itself.  
(I like the second version)

*Dünya Efendileri (Dünya İnancı—Toplu Siirler, p. 13)*



## The Corner of the Wall

Arriving in hell  
there's no way back  
no sun's virtuous cycle  
a poem's beginning's somewhere else.

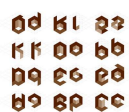
Now I pulled off a handful of hair  
tomorrow, if my heart wills it,  
I'll present this to you  
on the branch where the dragonfly is.

One of the birds raised its head  
saw my light,  
not important that it noticed it  
or not.

I gathered grass, dirt, branch, bush  
I built a bird's nest in the corner of my room  
and drew a bird on the wall—  
a bird's nest inside.

Outside it's raining  
outside a posy of dried grass  
and this fistful of hair  
with this dried dragonfly unable  
to survive with the bird.

“Duvar Kosesi,” *Yesil Alev* (Dünya Inanci—Toplu Siirler, p. 102)



## Objects That Don't Exist

Roses being buried inside shades  
broken up by their laughter  
beautiful, dark garden.

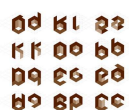
Only yesterday it rained,  
no mud  
such such little time is permitted to everything,  
my brother naked under white sheets  
making new friends.

I carry summer in whites  
in whites birds, spring  
nothing's changed yet  
shadows are changing  
nothing.

Lightnings that don't strike  
that make me disappear entirely  
there's a letter from lightning that struck darling  
and odd facts.

It's snowing, darling, snowing,  
you are splitting life's nucleus  
watching the serial falling of objects that don't exist  
are becoming happy again.

“Yok Seyler,” from *Yesil Alev* (Dünya Inanci—Toplu Siirler, p. 103)



## No One Home

When my wife cried  
my servants told her to keep quiet  
as I, while they kiss her hand,  
see it in the mirror.

They embraced my wife, daughter,  
making them drink herbs, I saw it in the mirror,  
she sleeping, they worship her  
by her bed.

Together,  
when I turn my back, I don't see what they are doing.

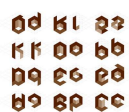
Before my wife my servant  
puts his forehead to the ground, from his back  
the top of a creature is emerging  
who listens to my wife like a child.

That's what they say, I know my wife  
is pleading with me on the floor, but I see  
her climbing someone in the mirror  
sadly I love her.

My love lifts the weights from her body  
and she, growing light,  
can approach me  
as the servant sees the blood on the floor  
I see her crying in the mirror.

The servant is climbing down the stairs in the mirror  
I see a postman arriving  
the servant says there is no one home.

“Biri,” from *Yesil Alev* (Dünya Inanci—*Toplu Siirler*, pp. 146/7)



## Pine Cone

Air,  
is inside water fire  
and star.

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

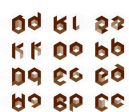
Like a giant pupa  
I'll feed on dead feelings a while more  
like on glazed lit fields  
spinning.

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            solving.

"Koza," from *Dünya Bana Aynisini Anlatacak* (*Dünya İnancı*—*Toplu Siirler*, p.171)



## To Be Loved In Sleep

Sleep between two parallel lines  
advancing like an operatic swan.

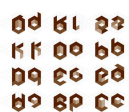
Purple stains are... like sky plums  
waiting for tears to ripen,  
to rot them  
and for all the pains which come,  
but once.

Another pain has wings  
sawn to its clothes.  
And the angel writes  
the title of its book  
into the darkness of the cover.

You look once again, once more, once more  
swans towards butterflies  
the burnt nooks of sleep  
and flesh, and lust.

Plums rolling next to each other,  
meeting and rotting.

“Uykuda Sevilmek,” from *Çiçek Dünyalar* (Dünya İnancı—Toplu Siirler, p. 222)





## The Crown

In this world if someone opens a window—unaware  
nowhere no time— there’s another making  
him do it.

Scanning the history of symmetry, stars  
also are scanning the royal crown

Moon and stars are only a minor circle,  
they say,  
holding light spectrum to seven severe colors—  
this minimalist desire isn't for the dying—  
still greater stars, leave empty that great silence,  
one of the lowly ones takes the job

And inside inside your eyes, maids,  
would like for a moment cease ironing.

“Kral Taci,” from *Çiçek Dünyalar* (Dünya İnancı—Toplu Siirler, p. 233)



## Outcome

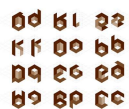
I wish you do not want me to search for a mole on your face  
with my hand testing any black point. Since it won't remove itself  
even if its root is there. As a miniaturized being which has no  
larger replica contains a universe.

No more do you inform your heart with your eyes. Not to disappoint you or hurt you  
little boils'll appear on the sky's cheek...

A boy looks at the moon at midnight as if he is looking at you  
believing in the correctness of what you do, believes in love.  
I'll only be able to share from now on my life with him  
whom this life ordained and made different.

Was pushing my heart into deep it hit a chain  
found and accepted the friendship, and left me.

“Sonuç” from *Çiçek Dünyalar* (Dünya İnancı—Toplu Siirler, p. 234)



## Kaf Mountain<sup>2</sup>

Which waterfall you didn't forget  
without seeing  
which, until last night...  
you could still say  
either.

Stay there, the time is ripe  
lambs have long been in their pens  
the baaing ceased  
the djinns of the stable arrived.

I am sure the above stanza will get dismissed by a majority for its “medieval imagery”. Sorry for being so cynical. But I am serious when I ask – who is this book for? Nobody in America I suppose.

The one passing thru at night  
must be a merchant  
who can see the roses in the dark  
the straw chaff  
but must be a man who can melt  
all this in one go  
into one.

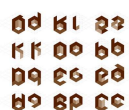
The given paradigm is another owl  
in the deep waters of night  
rapt in its own reverie  
the collar of reverie around its neck.

Why shouldn't the eggs of my eyes  
be without yellow stars?  
clouded, but my life is pure  
i'll go like a pedigree horse  
if you want me to get lost.

Go like a pedigree horse  
these are my shapes  
flowing from one to the other  
only pains will be left to you.

See the grass growing after me,

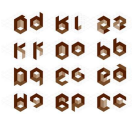
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roses, the road going to Kaf mountain  
covered with carpets  
I returned and arrived from there,  
each time

Cease searching  
the rust of reverie around my neck  
the yoke of reverie is ripped off  
no one will step out  
the road leading to Kaf Mountain is  
inside everyone  
from which I saw you were unable to come.

“Kaf,” from *Çiçek Dünyalar* (*Dünya İnancı—Toplu Siirler*, p. 244/5)



## Baby Skull

Your head  
like a human egg  
is pulling all my thoughts  
within itself.

Him that I want to live  
without being beaten every  
time by you  
again.

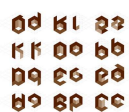
Look horses have finally reached  
streams  
the earth starting anew...  
there's nothing any more  
tailing us  
from a  
distance.

Get out of your head  
the climates that don't  
belong to you.  
let those rains remain solitary  
and shy  
in their remote  
existence.

To move love from there  
to there  
is possible for me  
also,  
even though a collapsed life is not beautiful  
it is four dimensional.

You could have stayed there  
you who knows how to govern from a center  
circumferences don't surround and swallow you  
but what if two dimensions weren't  
enough.

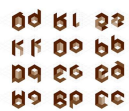
Came from far  
ships of paupers full of baby skulls



pushed to shores  
full of lives.

With hallucinations and baby  
skulls what he carried  
in him later began to resemble  
poetry—the universe he conceived and planned and was getting ready  
to swallow.

“Bebek Kafatasi, from *Çiçek Dünyalar* (Dünya Inancı—*Toplu Siirler*, p . 248/9)



## The Northern Star

My love, life has died  
there is no more remembering  
long roads have reached their end  
caravans unloaded their load  
humped camels will rest  
stars leading the way will rest

Do you have a question  
for me  
a cut wire, a sheared hair, a snapped string  
I clipped everything  
clipped, clipped, clipped

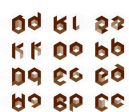
I'll have a dream which doesn't end  
I'll be so happy that  
drop me wherever you please  
I am sleeping.

Is there something you still want to remember my heart,  
that's why you light your cigarette?  
your mirror broken? cats giving birth in your eyes?  
do you know you are a garden my soul?

How hard it is.  
in mirrors all is imitations.  
life, pain, melancholy  
I wish one could correspond straight in life

while everything is still happening,  
not to be retuned.

“Kuzey Yıldızı,” from *Çiçek Dünyalar* (Dünya İnancı—Toplu Siirler, p . 259/60)



## The Oxygen Test

The poured milk and water  
advance within limits  
if we want to demonstrate an advance further  
without changing the limit line  
we must pull the lines backwards.

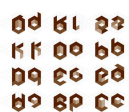
A pigeon in a bell jar  
one doesn't experiment without need  
you were basically a kid in need to know basics.

Which will entail other things too  
the kid sister will embrace her elder sister, and  
the elder sister will leave her alone  
and cover her face.

Using animals, little girl,  
the truths we want to hide will hurt no one,  
will hurt no one.  
being merely the experiment...

Which animal could she be,  
the elder sister who doesn't want to look at this instant,  
can you tell?  
or the pigeon  
inside the things we have learnt?

"Oksijen Deneyi," from *Çiçek Dünyalar* (Dünya İnancı—Toplu Siirler, p . 267)





## Poem of Dust

Dust came  
to hear me  
covered me  
in tiny words  
like an announcer of catastrophe.

To listen, a  
nightingale stooped  
from a flower's opening  
like a  
gossip.

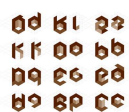
I can't guess  
whichever way I turn now  
if an error  
a poem  
the new locus of life.

Vulgarest words  
bones inside birds  
cranes of truth  
flowing in the sky people call the future.

Maybe from some direction they'll reappear  
as they used to,  
if a language is found  
poems may be solved.

Seeds of the rose  
are in an eye now  
darkness is making words vanish  
in its opening the thorny stem called silence.

“Toz Siiri,” from *Çiçek Dünyalar* (Dünya İnancı—Toplu Siirler, p. 273)



## 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.

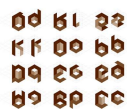
They gave you their garbage.

Remember,  
Emily Dickinson  
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," *Vücut Her Zaman Savasir* (Dünya İnancı—Toplu Siirler, p. 396)



## The Red Odalisque

The red odalisque  
has encountered  
anxiety  
hanging on the wall.

“Kirmizi Odalik,” *Vücut Her Zaman Savasir* (Dünya İnancı—Toplu Siirler, p. 404)



## Daisy

Daisies  
named  
chrysanthemums

in poems (named  
also sheep's eye).

Daisies  
have poems  
in them,  
thoughts

named  
chrysanthemums.

“Papatya,” *Vücut Her Zaman Savasir* (Dünya İnancı—Toplu Siirler, p. 405)

