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POETRY — CHANNEL

17th ISTANBUL BIENNIAL – POETRY CHANNEL

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#### FROM THE CURATORS

In so many of the places where we live and work, the public utility of news media has all but broken down. The list of taboo subjects grows by the day; many of today's messengers seem only to compound the fragmentation and polarisation of our publics, while shirking all responsibility for the veracity of information they broadcast. This publication is testament to the endurance of another kind of communication, one that gives without taking, one that entertains disagreement and uncertainty, one that can dance with contradiction. Might poetry say what cannot be said? Can it uncover new ways of addressing situations that seem intractable?

We are excited to share with you the fruits of an experiment in which fifteen poets were invited to write every month for a year, with the urgency demanded by the complexities of our time, and the promise of publication and distribution by the Istanbul Biennial in a range of public formats.

We are grateful to all the contributors to the *Poetry Channel*, who took up this challenge with such generous

and open minds. We hope you will enjoy their work and share it, on paper, online and in person at Nostalji Books & Café during the Biennial season.

July, 2022

## PATHWAYS OF THE POETRY CHANNEL

By way of co-hosting the early poetry encounters in the fall of 2020, together with Bige (Örer), in the Alman Kitabevi (German Bookshop) on Istiklal Avenue, most often starting at 08.00, at worst at 08.15 in the morning, I became involved in this programme, focused on poetry, carried out as part of the 17th Istanbul Biennial, which would eventually be designated as the *Poetry Channel*. Looking back, I believe that the point we have reached through two years of existence meets the expectations we had at the outset. Our initial intent was merely for poets to take part in the programme, for poems to be written, and, as a later step, for those poems to extend to the city and beyond. Which is exactly what happened eventually, and still does, I guess; first, poets started to join the programme. Then, as we became ever more numerous, the number of our questions, the amount of our curiosity grew in proportion. Until our poets started writing new pieces for the purpose of the programme. We started to collect the poems, and reflect upon the whole process simultaneously, which led us to try and expand our timeframe, and include works by two

of our significant, now deceased poets: Nâzım Hikmet and Faiz Ahmad. We then proceeded by constantly coming up with new ideas so that, when the Biennial started, we would be able to breathe life into the poems and connect them with the flow of time, as these kept emerging from within the framework of the programme.

Since its very inception, we have striven to conceive the *Poetry Channel* programme as a structure that would embrace constant evolution, renewal and growth through the inclusion of new segments. As for the core of the programme, it consisted in a way of experiment, gathering a number of contemporary poets, living across different cities, but all choosing Turkish as their writing language nonetheless. The poets who took part in the programme mirror a diversity that translates into a multiplicity of forms; as a matter of fact, the very promise, for the gathering of such diverse poets, enacting different conceptions of poetry, coming from different cities and different generations underneath the roof of our programme to open up a number of connecting dots with poetry's current poten-

tial and pool of possibilities, constituted much of the programme's fulcrum.

We encouraged each of the fifteen poets whom we had invited to the programme, namely, **Mehmet Said Aydın, Donat Bayer, Zeliha B. Cenkci, Sevinç Çalhanoğlu, Cevat Çapan, Ersun Çıplak, Devrim Dirlikyapan, Haydar Ergülen, Mehmet Erte, Cem Kurtuluş, Bejan Matur, Mustafa Erdem Özler, Gonca Özmen, Anita Sezgener, and Neşe Yaşın**, to write a new poem every month for a whole year. We chose, as a starting title for these poems, that of 'news poems', because we would question whether or not the poems could deliver news as to the very moment when they were written. Looking from our current position in time, would we be well-advised to 'derive news from poems'? Or, as Amar (Kanwar), one of the curators of the Biennial, put it in the invitation letter to the programme: 'Could the poet's mind and words help us come together and find other ways of thinking, relocating senses that have been attenuated, so as to comprehend again?'<sup>1</sup>

Our poets started to write their first pieces for the purpose of the programme in January 2021. At the time, the exhibitions encompassed by the 17th Istanbul Biennial were expected to start in September 2021. Accordingly, we had planned for the *Poetry Channel* programme to begin a short period prior to the Biennial exhibitions' opening, and to come to a close a little later. However, the pandemic and

<sup>1</sup> See the present volume, p. 10-11.

the global health crisis that ensued caused the start of the Biennial's exhibitions to be delayed until September 2022. Still, we chose not to interrupt the course of the *Poetry Channel* programme as it had been initiated, and our poets kept writing their monthly poems throughout the year 2021, from January to December. I should add that this whole process was carried out through a great deal of solitude, as prompted by the race across the ups and downs of the pandemic. Our poets would write their poems with little to no possibility of reading those of their fellows. They would deliver their outputs as they wrote them. Not being disseminated, these would accumulate, so to say, within the sole framework of the programme. Only in September 2021, did they take part in the regular programmes of *Radyo Bienal*, to be broadcast at Açık Radyo 95.0, which have continued in the same way as the *Poetry Channel* programme despite the postponement, and which have allowed them to convey brief remarks as to how they had taken hold of the programme's course, a few among them even recording some of their pieces for these to be played as part of the broadcast. The present book also includes these texts, written by our poets for the purpose of this radio programme, and containing insights as to how they worked to meet the expectations of the *Poetry Channel* programme.<sup>2</sup> These texts, which help us gain a better grasp of the poetic decisions our poets abided by while giving

<sup>2</sup> See p. 38-49.

shape to their contribution, and almost grant material consistency to what ‘poetic experiment’ means, chiefly broach the question of the process of writing poetry within a specific timeframe, as specified by a particular programme.

After this brief presentation of, or rather this glimpse into the *Poetry Channel* programme allowed for by *Radyo Bienal*, each poet returned to their own solitude and creation, punctuated by the occasional lockdowns and restrictions brought about by the course of the pandemic.

Eventually, a total of 180 poems, written by 15 different poets over the course of 12 months, came out.

Now, it is time for these poems to constitute their own customs, through unprecedented experiments which took shape on the go, open to all kinds of surprises.

Whether these customs will indeed take shape, whether they will evolve over time or not remains to be seen. At least we did and continue to do our best to put together every possible channel for the poems written within the framework of the *Poetry Channel* programme, and for the poetic energy sparked by it to unfurl. For instance:

The **Poetry Posters** constituted our first endeavour to incorporate our readings into the flow of the city. We first proceeded to hang Poetry Posters on the fronts of second-hand booksellers, bookshops, movie houses and theatres, in other words, an infinity of stops, bearing all sorts of functions, within the countless adventures of life. In doing so, we aimed to provide passage-granting surfaces,

allowing those who stopped by these places to somehow connect with the programme as a whole, by reading one of its poetic outputs, as printed and hung on a wall or front of a shop.

The **Poetry Translation Symposium** was devised as a working platform unit within the *Poetry Channel* programme, which would allow for the question of whether poetry, being written in a specific language, may actually be translated or not, to be addressed and explored together with our poets. On 25 June 2022, in İKSV’s offices, we held an invitational symposium titled ‘Poets, Poems and Translation: A Session on Being Translated, Translating Poetry and Reading Translated Poems’. During this more than five-hour-long encounter, we addressed such situations as when the poet sits on three sides of the ‘translation desk’ at once: the poet whose poem is being translated, the poet who translates another poet’s poem, and ultimately the poet who reads a translated poem. While doing so, we progressed in the light of such questions as ‘Can poetry be translated or not; and if so, why can’t it be? How is it different from other texts? Is it preferable that a poet translate poetry? Is it better that a poet, rather than someone who knows a specific language well, translate a poem?’. Along with myself, poets who took part in the *Poetry Channel* programme, namely, Ersun Çıplak, Mustafa Erdem Özler, Gonca Özmen and Neşe Yaşın, and also Enis Akın, poet and translator at the *Natama* poetry magazine, poet and

translator Karin Karakaşlı, Lal Laleş, poet and translator at the Diyarbakır Ro House of Literature and Lis publishing house, and Atakan Yavuz, poet and translated poems editor at the *Buzdokuz* poetry magazine, all took part in the symposium.

The **Poetry Reading Performances** formed as a result of the cooperation between the *Poetry Channel* programme and Performistanbul. We hope that these performances will unfold as live readings, without prior announcement, and pave the way for open encounters between poetry and daily life, opening up a space that we are all eager to see take shape. If our hopes are met, the readings will allow poetry to reach a different circulation area, switch locations, and come to the surface, before reappearing somewhere else, in a different shape.

The idea of a **Poetry Café** was something that Amar always expressed the wish for, from the very beginning. Therefore, we always planned to include a café somewhere in Istanbul as a location dedicated to poetry, somewhere along the *Poetry Channel* Programme, for the duration of the Biennial. This place turned out to be the Nostalji Books & Coffee in the Pangaltı neighbourhood. Throughout the duration of the Biennial, the 180 poems that the Poetry Channel programme helped emerge, as well as those by Nâzım Hikmet and Faiz Ahmad Faiz which it chose to include, will be awaiting the audience, for live readings in the Nostalji Books & Coffee.

The **Poetry Channel Books** were the outcome of our freely following the late poet Cemal Süreya's (1931-1990) verse, 'You need paintings in a book', and then saying, 'We need books in the *Poetry Channel* programme'. The Turkish edition of the book contains a section of the poems written for the purpose of the programme, a selection of poems by Faiz Ahmad Faiz, chosen by the latter's daughter, Salima Hashmi, and Amar Kanwar, as well as a selection of poems by Nâzım Hikmet, prompted by our request for each of the poets who took part in the programme to choose one among his body of works. The English, e-book edition of this volume that you're currently reading is faithful to this layout, albeit slightly abridged.

As for the **Poetic Surprises**, despite not being entirely sure of what I am referring to through this title, I still wish to propose it, together with a short paragraph, so as to grant space for all the potentialities which the programme still bears, either substantiated or not until now. We owe it to the very nature of the *Poetry Channel* programme, or rather to the very nature of poetry, that whoever may become involved, in one way or another, no matter the extent, may come up with and contribute new, eye-opening ideas, perspectives, and propositions. As the process unfurls, you may come across poem quotations printed on billboards; perhaps different manners of reading poetry will be tried out in different locations, and potentialities which haven't crossed our minds yet may prevail. Whatever the outcome,

we will be keeping track of this particular property of poetry, which pervades the gaze and opens up our eyes, all together.

In order to access the complete list of the locations where the Poetry Posters were hung, the audio recordings and transcripts of the Poetry Translation Symposium, all detailed information and some recordings regarding the adventures of the Poetry Reading Performances, which will take shape mostly on the go and convey poetry to the city and its flow of time and moments, details as to the *Poetry Channel* panels, which will be held from September through November in Nostalji Books & Coffee, and all updated information on the Poetic Surprises, please see the Biennial website: [bienal.iksv.org/en](http://bienal.iksv.org/en)

On behalf of the *Poetry Channel* team, I must extend our deepest thanks to the countless persons who shared their opinions without restraint, over the two years when they would hear of the embryotic phases of the programme, to all the poets, whatever language they may write in, the poetry translators, poetry readers, poetry publishers, poetry reviews, poetry editors, in short, to all those who feel the urge to act whenever the word poetry is being pronounced. We owe all the energy that allowed us until now, and will continue to allow us, to come up with novel ideas for the programme, and to spare no effort in working to achieve them, thanks to the authenticity and liveliness of these echoing contributions.

## A NOTE TO POETS: POETRY—CHANNEL

Over a period of time, in an AI controlled, digitally mind manipulated and market choreographed landscape of ideas, desires and feelings - who might I be anymore? Do I think what I think or perhaps it's not me anymore? How would we understand our inner self and its relationship with the outside world? How does one understand the day's events, the news of the city, the region or of nations? How does one relate to the multiple disappearances of people, communities, languages, natural systems, ways of living and being?

Could the poet's mind and words help us come together and find other ways of thinking, relocating senses that have been attenuated, so as to comprehend again? Could we subvert the mind game and re-imagine the news? What would get liberated if we could imagine the morning newspaper written and conceived by poets rather than corporations, governments, political parties and ideological projects?

*Imagine the morning newspaper, headlines in couplets, black and white but in verse. Imagine that constellation of words. Truth as told by the stars and birds. Translated by bread and transcribed by daughters.*

*Imagine the clash of silences, the sting and honey of the bee and the lamenting obituary. Imagine night as day and day as night, the moon as witness and the sun a doctor. Nurses as editors, poets as reporters and the village balladeer the week's ombudsman. Imagine traitors as lovers, outlaws as fathers and renegades as poets. Imagine the formal presentation of poetry as evidence in a future war crimes tribunal.*

*Imagine talking curtains and storyteller tiffin boxes. Imagine columns becoming cups and rows becoming dogs. Mountain dogs, river dogs, factory dogs, gutter dogs, tree dogs, and kitchen sink dogs. Imagine the colour of that grey. Imagine the formal presentation of poetry as news of the day.*

As part of the Istanbul Biennial, we began an effort to experiment with and respond to the above thoughts and questions by inviting fifteen contemporary Turkish poets to write a poem every month throughout 2021. We also invited two poets of the past, long gone but with words that speak to us even more powerfully today than they did before.

We hope their poetry finds its way into the public in a multi-form process of dispersal - through a publication, through the internet and social media, through bookshops, restaurants, universities, bus stands and also live readings at multiple public and personal venues, before, during and after the Biennial.



JANUARY 2021

**i saw fruit**

roses have fruit, it turns out,  
resembling pomegranates. small.  
they sprout more densely when pruned,  
roses do. here i sit in my coat  
facing some fruit.

rose fruit resembles pomegranates  
lights on stage, behind the light dead  
end street no roses, tall, none maybe  
like rightfulness they bloom, not truth  
with fruit, resembling pomegranates, small.

as if, my hair, never grew  
my chest never tightened, carefreeness  
i gaze at rose fruit in the garden  
wooden chair, wooden table, new year's ornament  
resembling pomegranates, the fruit, not fire.\*

Translation by **Buğra Giritlioğlu**

\* The Turkish word for pomegranate is 'nar', which is similar to the dated, Arabic-derived word for fire, nâr.

DECEMBER 2021

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...

He is not equal, this one walking  
To the one passing by him  
— There's a river there  
Why don't we go and look at it!

The darkest hour of the day  
Falls here  
— When the sun goes down  
Let's stand by the one who's left behind

This is the silence of the one watching  
Justice passing him by

Translation by **Donat Bayer**

**Little Story****Episode No.11****Incident Covered up by the Press**

salty Ayşe from the Mediterranean and deep in pleasure she witnessed so many seasons pass by  
 announced the news from Cihangir TV intense sodomy synchrony, angry angels are placid  
 no rule of law in the gracious state the penal court is quiet spineless prophets became fugitives  
 criminalised crypt is political, in Bolu the wealth tax got resurrected thank god for national hysteria  
 let Bartar keep shutting down channels high rises the voice of Judíos Sefardíes angry angels enamoured  
 let my co-chair Melahat announce it: everything covered up by the palace will be talked about for sure  
 no honour in being an informant Copenhagen is quiet in the Middle East sterile colonial ideology  
 the unending adjustment process of Turkey said 'May you become blind and bedridden' may the matrix condense with revolt  
 may the bandits gather in the mountains may the art sold in Metaverse get cold burn forever  
 the suspicion of who discusses the rules may the brotherhood of the machine with Trump worry them  
 family conspiracy in the tent the boy born a heathen is quiet with fear due to bodily violation  
 ;let my co-chair Melahat announce it: it is not an impasse alas, if the tv screen is the master of creation!  
 ;you offer deliverance only as far as street occupation let the doomsday come i cannot fathom what transpires anymore,  
 honest to god!

Translation by **Sevda Akyüz**

JANUARY 2021

**intention**

lightened pouches  
carry over our definite attitude  
and persuasion which we owe to them  
what we witness and sit silently beside  
a man pulls a woman by her false eyelashes  
a man pulls a woman by her false nails  
a man we repeat  
pulls a woman by her false hair  
we are not mistaken this is my false mouth  
my tongue in the real one feels like an odd object.

getting the future interpreted  
more than the stirring of the sun the moon the planets  
what beats we remember  
until a word gets from the heart to the ear  
or from the eye down to the stomach  
between hearing and announcing  
the pang completes its cycle.

consulting an ant  
who is not bothered with the surface  
displaced by a stone  
is in order

Translation by **Sevda Akyüz**

AUGUST 2021

**Writing on the Wall**

Those years, everything we believe in  
 left us half way;  
 we still didn't fall,  
 we didn't give up on looking for a lever  
 to dislodge the world.

One winter's end, in a dark forest  
     we found ourselves,  
 under hefty trees  
     that we didn't know the names of.

'Don't be scared!' said  
 the wind that we knew from our dreams,

Eternity starts here.  
 You take the road  
     not knowing where you will take a break,  
 maybe you will run into the ones who  
     are getting prepared to go to space.

In the narrow road that reaches out to eternity,  
 in an old time and a remote country,  
 these words written on a broken wall  
     won't surprise you:  
*All of the dignity obsessed robbers  
 will eventually see themselves  
     in the merciless mirror of history.*

Translation by Leyla Bayrı

## Certificate of Residence

quite odd creature called human  
doesn't know where they will be born, looks at the one who's full while starving  
where they find water, as long as it's clean  
while trying to make love secretly, raising a child overtly  
chickpea room, vetch hall to rest the body  
they worry about a house

real estate agents are not half bad actually  
silver tongue, smiling face, tea, coffee, pastry  
they are not quite auspicious though, if you are a tenant  
you know the delicacy of displacing a person  
you buy some from the seller, make the rest  
enjoy your new home

the lady of the house keeps the threshold clean, the balcony, the rooms  
warm loaf in front of grocer, potatoes on the road to fruiterer  
a cigarette by the window, you watch the kids with a light heart  
the spring of eternal time has passed, doesn't matter what the fall tells, somehow  
the house where the funeral will take place faces the view of farther graves  
the realtor crosses your mind, you remember with gratitude

Translation by Ekin Tümer

JANUARY 2021

**dotted room**

they stuck a few windows to the wall  
 we keep watching what's going on  
 in a room full of blind spots  
 what's missing is a family tree  
 it is forbidden to exit  
 not only to the street, but even to the earth  
 they bury everyone in their own body

my eyes got bored, says the child  
 that's why I close them, not out of fear  
 the dog I rescued from the well  
 remains at school  
 and my hands with a friend  
 they don't show those to me

being unable to escape brings us closer, says the woman  
 the sun tries to rise again without setting  
 the night doesn't fall, it's like in the north  
 I was going to get some things from the other side  
 god is offline

so this is irony, says the man  
 the prerequisite of solitude is social mingling

I chat around in a somnambulist internal monologue  
 in lines and dots

I took out the trash, yes  
 if only I could get out  
 my heart would then return to its place

this is it, says the cat  
 this is my whole life  
 not introverted, closed off to the world  
 the roads are in this room as well as the branches  
 you'll see one day

you will see, says the bug  
 that the house doesn't belong to you  
 take a good look at this unending day  
 not through the window but through the honeycomb  
 perhaps one day will be made of today  
 in the distant future

Translation by **Sevda Akyüz**

JULY 2021

**EKIN Wall Paper – July****The End of All Beginnings\***

To gaze into his childhood, his eyes were centenarian  
 the sun was on the door but he wouldn't open  
 as if his eyes weren't home, he would do this often  
 Searching for a poem '*as beautiful as the seven worlds*'  
 swims '*in it during the summer, there was no point*'  
 would be the first verse of his poem  
 'is there a blue more eternal than the summer to swim?'  
 – or he could use an eternity bluer than the summer –  
 and he loved to repeat this like a song  
 to think of the sun as a song and to say  
 '*I didn't know there were so many streets in her*' but  
 even the riff – not the song – would be enough to remember:  
 even moore poems would the summer make one write  
 even moore suns would the poem make bright  
 even moore dreams would the sun let seep  
 all days have a beginning, all beginnings have an end  
 hearts are sun for each other to tend...  
 from a book where '*not-knowing is as deep as a river,*'  
 from the midst of '*this dark forest of bodies*'

\* Inspired from Jenny Erpenbeck, *The End of All Days*, trans. Susan Bernofsky (New York: New Directions, 2016). Direct borrowings are shown in italics.

I embraced this poem, praised it, thrived in *The End of All Days*  
 'I forced a century to (my) arms'  
 I am now a century old!

Translation by Oya Özağaç

**Let Them Smile, I'm Ready**

Of words apt for a poem, all but a few have receded from my life  
I look at what remains  
Bed, coffee table, armchair and stuff, cutlery and so on  
Topped flower pots on the balcony, fading curtains in the kitchen  
A woman, my wife; a boy, my son  
The State on TV, the State on the radio, the State on the internet  
I take a long walk to ponder the State  
I kick a pine cone  
No sooner do I notice my left hand than I put it in my pocket  
My right hand loose, my eyes alert  
I'll enter the bank in a minute, they'll smile at me  
I'll know it without even seeing their faces  
Let them smile, I'm ready  
I know all calculations were done for me  
I know all too well why my steps brought me here  
I've been calculated, ah I've put up with so much frankly  
For instance, I became a man - Yes yes  
And then? That was heavy enough, sir  
Hush! I won't continue anyway, sir  
Who can continue with anything anyway

Our time is up, the wind lives on  
No, not you, nor I, the wind alone



**Looney Tunes**

I paid my credit card balance in simpleton solace of a refugee.  
suffering from being abroad,  
hankering, lustration and a cone  
I brewed tea and changed the keyboard to TUR.  
I covered little distance  
ridding of the forest and the worm, dung for a  
defunct disaster in the garden.  
damn the malice in my head  
my greenhouse yields lemons while on fire  
neither you  
nor me  
nor the parrot  
wants to fly away through that door  
there's the saz\* so we play on, brother  
my keyboard just had a spontaneous stutter between turkish and  
english defaults

we might always get eaten alive but for good reason  
if something doesn't work, it needs to be called  
and there is little room for preservation in what needs change and  
that's the monster's job

---

\* Persian name for a string folk instrument commonly referred to as 'baglama'.

the giant monster that walks in and destroys the whole village at  
the end of each play deus ex machina  
because there is never enough time  
our minds are not made to keep up with the speed  
humanity needs to be put to sleep  
which is why the monster will eventually replace us all with robots  
because if not her, another monster will.  
writing is just rewriting with different compost.

we can't even be bards anymore  
go roger the sun to the eagle, eagle to the tongue, the tongue to bed  
then the saz in our hands go bust in our asses  
we embraced many thinking they were pens  
now we are epileptic  
we are the ones distilled by resistance  
let us be the mountain to the fire  
feet to the flooring  
the rest can go with the looney  
tunes.

Translation by **Sevda Akyüz**

OCTOBER 2021

**Gorse in Bloom***For Osman Kavala*

light the lanterns  
 we will be reciting poetry.  
 we hold truck loads of sand  
 truck loads of rubble  
 we will be reciting poetry.

the city is so dark, yes  
 but within our radiance  
 who cares about such darkness?  
 we will still be reciting poetry.

I remember him carrying a chair in the dark  
 with his shirt's sleeves rolled up  
 carrying a chair  
 to the stone courtyard.

today is his birthday.  
 how many thousand days has he spent in prison?  
 I'm tired, I have come a long way.  
 I feel such sorrow for all that has passed  
 that I will cut my hair

as I did when I got out of prison.  
 those who see me are desolate.  
 they are unable to ask in their sorrow.  
 but they and I both know  
 if I am cutting of my hair, my heart is broken.

now I watch the gorse stubbornly bloom  
 while holding fast to the seashore  
 and from within me  
 calls the same voice;

come, light the lanterns  
 we will still be reciting poetry.

Translation by **Aydin Mehmet Ali**

**Sanctified Apple**

*today the weather is rosy-cheeked wide-bottomed  
about-to-leave in the datça province*

says the sanctified apple

people bite and  
cut themselves off from reason  
only bite marks remain as letters

a rush begins anew in their heart  
impulses and screams catch their voices the sun comes up  
nature is delighted

your tongue gets hooked on boughs of time defeated  
polytheistic wishes pour down the sky pooling in the deep  
the parable is supposed to overflow forlorn conjunctions appear  
and linebridgesaresetuptolinkwitheachother and

Shells make up their paperwork

they proliferate under the raw gaze of silent sins  
they all allot their wild card a riot breaks out in metaphor  
nature is delighted

they catch their breath in the nooks of meaning now  
who inherits the wilderness  
recycled hearts are shaken off from cliffs who inherits the daggers  
who inherits the lyric taste you've grown with thunder

bite marks not yet registered into consciousness remain as letters

Translation by **Sevda Akyüz**

**Tante Rosa and the Deadly Things**

'As easy to pluck a dead bird  
as it was to rake over a bygone day'

—Oktay Rifat

Why should the feather  
that fell on me be told  
Where should the crack  
in my voice be put

*The mouth of the dead*  
*The dead mouth*  
*Mingled in clay*

Only yesterday they were here. Side by side, just standing there.  
In Rome I bought them. The soles all slippery. He was with me.  
Always having him always with me always suffocated me!  
We were not even a pair of shoes- all slippery.

*The feet of the dead*  
*The dead feet*  
*Mingled in dust*

They were just here. In my mouth a taste of bitter almond.  
It was a time when the horse and cart vanished from the world.  
What then was this dream of a horse. Its forehead all grey.  
Always galloping always at everything always in anger.

*The arms of the dead*  
*The dead arms*  
*Mingled in frost*

How can the wings of  
the dead bird be told

Where to find the word  
whose grave I'll dig

In one of his poems Neruda puts shoes on time.  
Rosa, ah Rosa, what became of that horse galloping on your chest.  
How breathlessly he loved- the world spinning at full tilt.  
Don't call them back, don't let them crowd your mind.

*The voice of the dead*  
*The dead voice*  
*Mingled in silence*

Rosa has learnt that mines too are buried in the ground.  
She eloped with a fiddler. Ah Rosa, could a carriage ever be of pumpkin.  
As if breezing through a bush. That bird in the mist.

At my side where he no longer is, a taste always of snow.

It was just then. As if I'd opened and shut my eyes.

What to do with someone who's lost one of their shoes.

Now we hunt each other, unarmed. A tattered and torn net.

His slender hands always insistent always coming always from far away.

Rosa grows cross sometimes goes to the wildflowers

sometimes to be silent sometimes.

More dead than the dead.

Translation by **Sevda Akyüz**

**Slow Diary****15 november**

*dad, I will also become a caterpillar!*

o cloudless days. wind turbines rotate. with Alina's long sleeved t-shirts.  
 slowness within slowness: packed order, one.  
 address description by streets, two. gentrification, three.  
 walking distance, the void opening between us and the plush toys.

**16 november**

widespread cloud. sounds from the yard next door. there is no such thing as ideal.  
 alcohol swap, four. hunger vs postprandial blood sugar, five. death of the cities. slow!  
 carrying a glass, six.

**1 november**

*dad, when I grow up I will be real bee and  
 you will both love me so much!*

I thought of death as I washed my hair. slow! *mom, I'll make you young!* seven.  
 Nimbostratus. cloud with verticle growth. the day is susceptible to psychological injuries.  
 blue full moon. first wardrobe. then floor. we did shake! 15 seconds were so slow, eight.

**2 november**

cracked plaster. with the leak from the hydrophore. I looked at Alina; got hopeful, nine.

**3 november**

the official said the place is registered as a lot. we cannot connect it. the next door neighbor has opened up their house. the relation of clouds with wind. two kids playing ball. from the earthquake.

**4 november**

hey blocked her *İzmirim Card*.  
she cannot come!

**17 november**

what if I stretch a cord  
in the garden, ten.

**18 november**

spelter will be added to the roof. when the wind stops. eleven.  
warming the inner father. in left and right lanes.  
the heart muscle works involuntarily.  
*mom what would I do without you!*, twelve.

## 20 november

high clouds. the heart muscle contraction power and the heart beat rate  
are controlled by the autonomous system.  
we installed the sensor. she cried a lot, thirteen.

## 21 november

she called. she lost sense of taste and smell.  
one out of four houses is open.  
rather than the sound of wind.  
Alina says let's cut it and make a t-shirt out of whatever she lays her hands on with long sleeves.

## 4 november

the list of slow things:

indoors for some time  
silicone  
potassium  
*Rebul* cologne  
wood fire  
*Passiflora* syrup

**22 november**

put silicone around the frame of the shades. so the cold can't get in the room.  
the nerves controlling the muscle are  
Purkinje fiber embedded in the heart muscle.

**23 november**

long thin clouds. I don't know their names.  
the sensor rings. insulation on the pergola, then shingles. restrictions on her noon naps, fourteen.

**24 november**

protect the bougainvillae from the wind! if it gets too much water, it is said to shed its bloom.  
nerve damage can cause muscle paralysis, they say.

**25 november**

the test will be repeated on saturday.  
yet the arm is a lump.

**1 december**

neighbourly racket. as if there is no pandemic, fifteen.

## 2 december

she pulls off the arms, legs and wings of her toys so that they won't go or fly away, she says.

## 3 december

it is not known whether this is hunger for air, sixteen.

oxygen comes from the word ὀξύς in Greek (oxis - 'acid', 'sharp' to be precise, referring to the bitter taste of acids) and -γενής (-jenēs) ("producer", "cause" to be precise), seventeen.

### FIRST MENTION OF THE CORD:

"The tearing of the wind-chords, the sinking down, the submergence of the earth (Maitri Upanishad, I,4):"

\* Mircea Eliade, *Mefisto ile Erdişi* [Mephistopheles and The Androgynne], trans. into Turkish by Hanife Güven (Istanbul: Doğu Batı, 2020), p. 178.

Translation by **Sevda Akyüz**

MAY 2021

**Measure**

The irrevocable memory  
Has a stain that won't come off  
Hacks in the night  
From that far away tale

Everyone who departed, left a residue to the heart  
The shortest story is told the longest

In a vindictive march-past  
Only I, take a wrong step

Whatever discussed  
Hits a nerve  
Every union translates to separation  
Farewell within hello

Remaining in my mind  
The moment when the rock was flying in the air  
The screams hurt more than the breaking

After the fire  
Ash is what is seen  
Flame is what is remembered in darkness

Heavier than a slap  
Is the moment the hand rises

Whatever we tell is incomplete  
Yesterday is more unknown than tomorrow

Translation by Leyla Bayrı



## ABOUT THE PROCESS

**For the purpose of the 14 September 2022 episode of the *Radyo Bienal* broadcast at Açık Radyo 95.0 as part of the 17th Istanbul Biennial, we asked all the poets who took part in the *Poetry Channel* programme to share their notes on their personal experiences of the process as sound recordings. Below, you may access the transcripts of these recordings, as broadcast during the radio programme.**

-SE

### **Süreyya Evren**

Hello, I'm Sureyya Evren. I'm working as a consultant for the poetry axis of the 17th Istanbul Biennial. We work as a secret team; and each month, we receive poems that nobody sees, file them away in secret folders, pile, read, and sometimes translate them, and imagine the various ways that they could blend in with life. What is the *Poetry Channel*? It's not just one thing; it's open to evolution, regeneration, and can grow through extension. But in its core, it's an experiment that involves fifteen modern-day poets who come from different cities, and who write in Turkish. We

approached these fifteen poets one by one and asked them, 'If we asked you to write a poem each month, news poems, would you agree to it? We don't know what we're going to do with the poems you'll be writing; we'll look for ways to bring them to life, present them to the reader in different formats and, in the end, we will turn it into a book. We'll think and evaluate it on the way. How about it?' Who are these poets? Let me read their names alphabetically, like you would see in a book: Mehmet Said Aydın, Donat Bayer, Zeliha B. Cenkci, Sevinç Çalhanoğlu, Cevat Çapan, Ersun Çıplak, Devrim Dirlikyapan, Haydar Ergülen, Mehmet Erte, Cem Kurtuluş, Bejan Matur, Mustafa Erdem Özler, Gonca Özmen, Anita Sezgener and Neşe Yaşın. 'News poems' or 'news poets', that's what we call them. The name 'news poems' concerns being here and now, and implies 'out of the mouths of poets'. Amar Kanwar, one of the curators of the 17th Istanbul Biennial, consisting of him, Ute Meta Bauer, and David Teh, once explained how the *Poetry Channel* is involved with news, and I'll quote him: 'Could the poet's mind and words help us come together and find other ways

of thinking, relocating senses that have been attenuated, so as to comprehend again?' Our poets started to write their poems for the programme last January. January of 2021. Now, it's September 2021. Seasons have passed, and now it's autumn; the final season of the year is upon them. It's really an interesting process in many aspects. One of these factors is the lockdown that happened due to the pandemic, which began at the same time as the programme — the programme was born during the lockdown. This was followed by the self-isolation of each poet. This reminds me: in March 2020, during the first days of the pandemic, I listened to a radio program to which they had invited poets and authors. The radio program asked them, 'You're experienced in self-isolation, and now the whole world is doing it. Could you please tell us a bit about isolation and being alone?' I've just recalled that. So, what have we added to that? There's something extra we have brought. As I've mentioned, each of our fifteen poets write a poem monthly, but they don't know what the other poets have written. I find it critical that each develops different strategies, and takes different poetic decisions. That's what makes it feel so experimental. It creates thought-provoking possibilities with regards to what it could mean for poetry because there's also the journalism part, which introduces a present moment, allowing the reader to experience being present in that moment after it has already happened. The poets work to fulfil certain expectations which are hidden behind

a veil. Their work isn't immediately published; it waits, and it will keep on waiting for a while. Afterwards, their work will be presented piece by piece, in many different ways. We expect them to blend in with life like that. We want these poems to touch people's hearts through poetry readings; we want them hung upon the wall, read in unfamiliar places, or involved in unexpected events. The Biennial, as you know, has been postponed for a year. A lot of things have been delayed, but the Biennial has actually started at the same time, as well. Right now, in this radio program, we are in the Biennial. Probably a lot of things will start this way nowadays, and this delay has given our poetry programme a new dimension. It reinforced the isolation of our poets, and added new layers to it. It stretched the shape of the veil, and made the experiment part more interesting, in my opinion. The poems written for the programme first appeared in the programs of the *Radio Bienal*, like pirate readings. All of a sudden, you've heard the name of a poet, and listened to them reciting a poem that they have written for this programme. Now, you will hear the voices of these poets in this program again. What did we invite our poets to? First of all, we've invited them to a Biennial that had to adapt to the terms of a pandemic. Since we've invited them to something that exists in various formats, something that is built around the notion of 'composting', we have expected them to develop a poetic approach according to this notion. I'm giving this concept as an explanation. It's hard

work to produce a poem once a month for a year during these trying times; it's a work in terms of distinction. If you ask me, as a member of the team, what kind of an experience this is, I'd say the most interesting part of the job is thinking about the poets, and how they write their poems. I think to myself, they're writing right now, and I hold them in that thought. I'm thinking with them, in a sense, I'm present with them. A strange sense of unison. This unison will manifest in different times and places. They're alone while they're writing, but they're together at the moment in this radio program. Which moment, though? That's a bit tricky. I say 'at the moment', but it's not the moment that I'm recording. Perhaps it's the moment that you're listening to the recording. Or maybe it's the moment when the team is done with editing. In any case, it's an experiment in which different types of being together and being alone exist in unison. The most curious part of the programme has been the poems that were secretly created somewhere, the poets' approach to the creation of these poems, and the sort of poetic narratives that they have formed. And you'll be hearing some of them in this program.

### **Mehmet Said Aydın**

I'm Mehmet Said Aydın. I've been writing a poem each month for the Istanbul Biennial's poetry axis since January 2021. In truth, it's a new concept for me — probably the same for most of the other poets as well — to produce a

new poem each month for a promised programme, write a poem for a defined context, stick to a curatorial text that I've been given, and to make sure that I don't miss the intention there. But just like all new things, this process has been a learning experience for me. I'm a type of person that still writes poetry in notebooks. I have this notebook that has been with me for the last eight months; it's where I sketch, make sketches about my poems, and note down my ideas during my travels. I set this course for myself, mostly at home; because we've still been writing our poems during the mandatory lockdown due to the pandemic, but we have also written during the times when the lockdown was lifted. I travelled a bit during those times. I was allowed to go outside. I took the ferry a lot. You could say that some of the poems were composed and written on the ferry. I'm a kind of person who chases the first line of a poem. I write the first line, and then I work on the rest accordingly. The strangest part for me has been that, normally, the titles of the poems don't come so easily to me, I just can't come up with them. I write my first line, finish the rest of the poem, and then I find a title. That's been my experience so far. In *Lokman Kasidesi* (Qasida of Lokman), I wrote one single, long poem, and I didn't have to come up with a title. As to the poems I wrote for the Biennial, I usually came up with the title first. In fact, the title of the poem became its context for me and, as I've mentioned before, I think I mostly wrote poems about home. You could say that be-

ing at home, coming home, leaving home, home as a place of fiction, architecture, and looking at the city — all these made up the context of my poems. To repeat, this has really been a learning experience for me, and a bit strange. I'm actually eagerly waiting to see the work of the other poets; and also to see how the twelve poems in total will look next to each other. It feels like I've serialised, or I'm serialising something. That's roughly all I've got to say.

### **Donat Bayer**

Even for a person who's constantly writing poems, it requires a different sort of discipline to hand in a poem each month. At the moment you put an end to your poem, there's a big difference in writing it when you know 'you have to finish it by a certain time', compared to knowing that you can get rid of it if you feel like it. You have to move — one way or another — according to a deadline. The thing in question here, on the other hand, is not something you can compromise — your poem. Writing at this tempo showed me how far I can push my limits, the different ways I can reach a poem, and that I can find it in unexpected moments and in unexpected places.

Has anything changed in my poetry during this process? Instead of writing different poems within a single theme or looking at multiple poems as a whole as I normally do, writing a new poem every month allowed me to look at each poem as an independent piece that begins and ends

within itself. I think this will play a significant part while I'm working on my next book. Even though it's hard for me to look at my poems and see what has changed at this stage, I think the poems that I wrote during this process are focused on movement, and I think this shows a difference between these poems and the poems I wrote before.

### **Zeliha B. Cenkci**

First of all, I can say that the process of writing a poem each month for the 17th Istanbul Biennial's *Poetry Channel* programme has made me more disciplined when it comes to writing poetry. The fact that I have to submit a poem on the 15th of each month keeps me on my toes. I look at my surroundings, whatever's happening, my experiences, and especially at current news — inevitably — as events that will inspire new texts. I keep taking notes on news topics and this situation's turned my poems even more political than they already were. In this programme, we're writing news from the poet's perspective. On the other hand, we choose our own news topics. So, in these poems, I look at news topics in our country and around the globe, as well as politics, through the eyes of a journalist, a reporter, and that's what I talk about in my poems. I'm also a journalist, so combining two subjects that I'm interested in helps me bring together different types of texts and tackle situations as if I'm freshly reporting them in my poems. Of course, in my poems, I'm not as objective as you'd be in an actual

news article. We keep the news alive through poetry. For example, during the Boğaziçi Resistance when many students were being detained one after the other, the main topics in my poems were Boğaziçi and the exhibit that put the students under house arrest, the Shahmaran Case. In my 8th poem, I mostly talked about the fires that had engulfed our country. I preferred to act as a storyteller while writing these. I titled my poems as if they were serials, like 'Episode No.1', 'Episode No.2'. Each of them and, generally, all of them tell a story. I intend to break down the borders between poem and prose this way. In the poems in which I present news topics as stories, there are characters called Ayşe, Melahat, and Bartar that appear often. Ayşe and Melahat are two people in love — two poets, two journalists. We have the love between these two as the main theme of the poems, on the other hand, we have their conflicts and dialogues with Bartar, who is the bad representative of certain institutions like religion. This is the general narrative of my poems, and even if my narrator changes — and I want them to change — I think I've generally reached unity in my poems. I can say that I've paved for myself a path in poetry through these little stories and characters.

My poems gained a lot of new words during this eight-month process. I think I've widened my poetic vocabulary in this sense. On the other hand, I'm generally a person who writes long, prose-like poetry, as you can see from the poems in my book *Odalar ve Şehir* (Rooms and Cities). The

poems I write for the 17th Istanbul Biennial are shorter, I try to make sure that they're no longer than two pages, if possible. I pay special attention to the rhythm of my poems because they're meant to be read out loud. I've learned to write short poems. During this process, I've realised how much I like music in poetry, and that I care more about the sounds rather than the meaning. Or maybe, this process has changed my perception of poetry in this way. Other than that, I've written characters in my poetry before, but I never presented the dialogues between the characters with such strict lines. Some of the poems I wrote for the Biennial consist of only dialogues. I want to keep this tone in my poems that are not for the Biennial as well — I want them to be carnivalesque, polyphonic, involving all minorities whose voices aren't heard, politically correct and having an ideology. It has been an informing process with the Biennial: a process that taught me how I should write poetry, what I like in poetry, and what I should work on. On the other hand, I feel content that I'm creating a space where I can express myself with each poem in a period when Turkish politics has reached such a dead-end and makes us feel pressured, that I can textualise my queer feminist apprehensions, and that I can turn them into an artistic product.

### **Ersun Çıplak**

Hello, I'm Ersun Çıplak. I'm one of the poets participating in the 17th Istanbul Biennial's *Poetry Channel* programme.

I've been contributing a poem each month for eight months. This process is truly interesting and exciting. It became a different source of motivation. I can say that it provided me with a new sort of discipline, even though I work on poetry every day.

### **Devrim Dirlikyapan**

First of all, I have to say this: To take on this responsibility that requires me to submit a poem each month has been extremely motivating for me. I have been a poet who doesn't write much, who doesn't publish much due to my concentration problem. On top of that, work life has been more hectic and monotonous during these past few years. To tell you the truth, I had been quite alienated from writing. That's why this programme got me so excited and I started it with joy. It's been pretty great and unique so far. Though I must admit, it's also demanding and stressful. The demanding part doesn't come from the programme, it's due to my lifestyle. For example, during this process, lecturers were also self-isolating like most people, and they started teaching online. But I was always at home in front my computer even before the pandemic. That's why there wasn't much of a difference in my work life. So, the corona process didn't provide me with more time for my poetry, more time for self-isolation, or more time to spend by myself. That's the first thing. Here's the second: Normally, I begin writing a poem in my head, take notes frequently, then attempt to

reach a semantic and rhythmic unity through both repeating those notes to myself and changing them. Once I feel like the thoughts have matured enough in my head, I sit down at the table, and I work to reach the poem's final state. In order to reach the poem's final state, I go through a process where I extract myself from outside influence as much as possible, isolate myself as much as I can, and sometimes even lock myself in a hotel room. I need total concentration because I frequently disarrange what I write, at times I even start over. That was the hard part during the quarantine. I couldn't go anywhere to isolate myself because we weren't allowed to go outside. It was not possible for me to be alone at home since the whole family had to be there. Imagine there are three people at home and all three of them are in different rooms, in front of online lectures. There are different sounds coming from each room, and it's like they merge inside your head. This includes the noise from the neighbours as well as cats meowing. Obviously, this kind of environment is not suited for poetry. Never mind poetry, you're also a teacher, a husband, and a father here. It's like playing each part with a single mask at the same time, and in the same place. So, it wasn't just hard just for me, it was hard for everybody. Due to these conditions, I wasn't able to properly experience the self-isolation part of the creation process, so I floated around at home like a thought balloon.

Has my poetry changed during this process? It's been eight months since the programme started, but it's still too

early to look at my poems objectively, because I'm still very much involved with the process, so I don't have a definite answer to that question yet, though I can say this much: Rather than delving into myself, during the process, I paid more attention to nature and pondered on what it's like be a creature other than a human. This, of course, is the result of the age we live in. We need to stop caring too much about being human, and we need to stop assuming that other creatures are stupid, unaware of their surroundings, and 'created for us'. When you listen to nature and science you clearly realise that is not the case. If we don't try to understand how different animals, creatures other than us, trees, or even how a little plant evolves, what it knows, how it holds onto life, it won't be a good future for any of us, or any living creature. It won't be for humans, either. Let's just say that much. My thanks to Açık Radyo and the Biennial team.

### **Haydar Ergülen**

It's an interesting experience to be a part of the poetry reading and writing adventure in the Istanbul Biennial organised by İKSV. I'm sure it must be the same for everyone else. I'd say it's complicated, or compulsory; but the compulsory side of it was nice, too — it brought diversity. I've been meaning to write different types of poems for a while now, and have actually been trying to do it. I wanted to write a different poem each month, and I wanted that poem to be something that anyone could have written. It

could've been me or someone else who wrote it. I wanted the poet to remain sort of vague. The Biennial has provided me with such an opportunity. We'll write four or five poems more, and in the end, when you see all twelve poems together, it'll be interesting, because they will look as if they were written by twelve different poets. It's an unusual experience, but it suits poetry actually. I'm Haydar Ergülen, I forgot to mention at the beginning.

### **Cem Kurtuluş**

Hello, I'm Cem Kurtuluş. Greetings from New York. I'm very happy and thankful to be a part of the 17th Istanbul Biennial's *Poetry Channel*, of a visual-auditory poetry programme that is happening in the never-ending flow of the city in which I was born and raised. On this occasion, I'm very excited to be in Istanbul simultaneously with other authors, philosophers and poets whom I admire. What I can say according to the question Süreyya Evren has posed me, on the rhythm of the poems that I'm supposed to hand in each month, is this: This poetry system, this arrangement, may seem like a supply and demand situation, but every single interaction we're a part of can be viewed as Anthropocene. '[E]volution isn't what happens; it's what's left over,' says Paul Ford, and adds, 'Species don't evolve — they erode. And the rock keeps lifting.' A lot of things depend on supply, not just language or poetry. We're walking on a long, thin, and fragile line within a universe

that is certainly not anthropocentric. On the contrary, the universe tends to make people feel much smaller. At the moment when you can feel that, now that's poetry. From the poems we can't write, we can only grasp maybe four or five of them. That has been my experience so far with poetry during this process. Rather than being a written product, poetry has become a language that communicates with me within my limits, even if I don't always understand it. This language, I think, is what we write down. We may be weaving the same poem using different words, even if we are exiles in our personal lives. That's what I count on while I write; even if I got rid of the mouse in the house, I try to understand the common space-ness of the composting space in the garden, spend more time there, and try to be human, not write poems. This might be the best way to describe my current direction. The same experience was felt through the notes I was taking for the process, because they had to bear fruit each month. Then again, what is poetry but consciousness talking to itself? Most of the time, it's written without words. Only a very tiny part of the tiny human history has been written down, but we keep on gathering around the same needs, following a consciousness that is far more ancient, ageless, and virtuous, while we try to endure the necessary paradox of constant change and adaptation. That's exactly how those notes came together: not through some search or inquiry, but through a need for purification. A need for erosion.

What you're about to read are lines from different people who retreat themselves from language. These are poems that purify the identity we call 'human' from language, in my opinion. We're still alive thanks to these poems. We're of sound mind. We are all writing. Much like a worm, we are bound to write.

### **Bejan Matur**

Hello, I'm Bejan Matur. I got very excited when I received an invitation to be part of the Biennial's poetry programme, because I am an art aficionado. I don't know if I'm any good at it, but I certainly am passionate. In each country or city I visit, the first thing I want to do is to see a good gallery, a good exhibition, and visit all the museums. This brings me great joy. I tried to visit the Istanbul Biennial whenever I was in Turkey, and I was overjoyed to hear that poetry was going to be involved in this Biennial. Amar Kanwar, who is one of the curators of the Biennial, wants to listen to poets' voice while searching for the language of this age; when he said 'Let the poets tell us the story of this age', I found that very meaningful because, ultimately, it's art that will tell the truth about humanity. In reality, we learn what has happened from art instead of the news. Situations can change, news can change, even facts can change, but the truth does not. The language of truth, of that which cannot be altered, has to come from art. Art feels the truth with a deep intuition, and turns it into a language that heals.

True, poetry uses the words of a language, but poetry is not a language itself. True poetry is the language of truth. Poetry takes words from the mundane language, and gives them their deep-rooted essence that is discharged by time and life: that's where it gets its power and impact. While I was preparing my poems for the Biennial, I was hesitant at first, since I didn't publish any of my poetry books just because someone had asked for it. But still, while I was writing those poems, I could feel the pain and the tragedies of the age we're living in. The difference here was this: It felt good for me, and sometimes fun as well, applying concepts from daily language after using philosophical, mythological, historical terminology while writing my poems. I also used a video to talk about the first poem I gave, which was a short poem consisting of three lines, titled 'Forbidden Language'. The idea of explaining it through a video played an important part in my understanding of the concept that Amar Kanwar suggested because, in the end, poetry will be included in the Biennial where contemporary art is exhibited. This experience has showed me this: A lot of words I hadn't used in any of my books are included in these poems. Of course, I don't know right now which topics will be featured in my next poems. What's yet to come will decide that. I feel like the contradictions of our age bring art and the artist together and, in this sense, what the Biennial is trying to accomplish here is very important.

### **Mustafa Erdem Özler**

#### AMBULANCE LANGUAGE

The request that came from the 17th Istanbul Biennial to produce a local news poem once a month from Dağca, where I live, went against, contrary and opposite to the process of composing poetry that I have known and embraced so far, which is poetry coming into being over an extended time, with an infinite-time process.

I got curious and excited about the idea of having to urgently hand in a poem every month, from the new experience of going against this oppositional process of poetry. Faced with this urgent situation, I strategically and consciously paved myself a new poetic path.

While I was learning to live within disasters, constantly hearing about catastrophes and attempting to survive, I created a poetic structure that I named 'Ambulance Language'. I decided to structure the concept of 'Ambulance Language', which I share here for the first time, as the poetry language of the Anthropocene age in my own poems.

In today's disastrous reality, we experience a disjunction of metaphors and senses. All verbs, nouns, adjectives and conjunctions are shattered... Today, if there is a metaphor, that means there is no life! Known metaphors can no longer hide someone, can't hide their feelings, and can't hide the world. Those days are over.

I think poetry has now become an essential, urgent need. 'Ambulance Language' is an ironic language struc-

ture that comes to the urgent aid of emotions with helpful voices during this disjunction of metaphors and senses. It is a means of language which proceeds through discourses with tongue twisters, that is agile, flexible, fast when needed, and sometimes full of shortcuts. It is an organisation of language that is constantly becoming, consisting of verbs and adjectives with new patterns of meaning, dressed-up nouns and conjunctions... A sympathising language opportunity that constantly refreshes the idea of surviving, that tries to keep alive its *joie de vivre*, to find potentials of hope, determined to reproduce... It's a language that improvises when needed, makes you smile, longs for empathy, creates desire, comforts, consoles, and boosts morale. It's also a reactive language with a sarcastic attitude, a waspish character, and a satirical approach.

I want to point out again: I used voice tactics like tongue twisters, fast rhythm beats, and methods of harmonising sounds that represent the structure of the 'Ambulance Language' and that recall urgent aid, while I created the acoustics of the poems according to this poetic structure. I hope that these harmonies that are entangled in the poems and their meanings will give people strength.

Also, with these news poems, I brought colour attractions to the 'Ambulance Language' used in all sorts of news outlets that let you know the situation immediately. All poems feature colourful headlines that are related to news mentioned in the said poem. I wanted the emotional value

of the poem to be sensed with a single look through optical colour codes.

There hasn't been a deep-rooted change in my poetry during this process. The irony that I had previously used in my poems was a strength that came from contradicting time, in fact going against it, creating poetic outbursts against time, making a text joyful through the saddest of times, and taking collective happiness as a position.

To be frank, everybody needs 'Ambulance Language' during these disastrous times.

### **Gonca Özmen**

Up until today, I have been involved in projects that I thought would trigger my creative side, that would inspire me, and even ones that would strain me. Yes, I did this knowingly and willingly. With aspiration and fear. I did it with great care for the process. I wanted to enrich my explorations, worked to increase my possibilities. I did it knowing that each new experience would grant me a new pair of eyes, new minds, and sometimes even new hands and new feet. Of course, I did it at the risk of new wounds, cuts, broken bones, new tumbles and road accidents. Because poetry loves new turns, side-tracks, gaps and dents. That's where it reaches new points: This, I believe. With these thoughts and feelings in mind, I said 'yes' to being a part of the 17th Istanbul Biennial's *Poetry Channel* programme.

As a poet who keeps her poems for a long time, constantly changes what she writes, and would even go as far as to say that a poem can never be finished, it has been a real ‘challenge’ for me to write a new poem each month throughout a year! I have to admit that I’m struggling in that sense. A month goes by so fast — then it’s over even faster. Poetry and speed, they just don’t suit each other! That is exactly why I’m glad that this year’s Biennial is more concerned with the process, and not the theme or the title, unlike the past Biennials. The source of inspiration of the Biennial is compost, composting. So, in the beginning, I did some drafting with this context in mind. I mostly focused on death, transformation, rebirth, and metamorphosis. I’m trying to bury the eggshells with a different mind — I look at the waste, and see the chance of its renewal.

These are raw texts. Raw voices. Curves that are open to metamorphosis. I believe that I’m writing poems that aren’t afraid to fall from the branch while they’re still unripe. I wanted these poems to talk to each other and to intersect, but some of them have taken off on their own. Obviously, I welcomed that impulsiveness. Especially during such unsteady and turbulent times. The curatorial text of the Biennial supports me, actually. It prioritises dispersal rather than an orchestrated coming together, and it says: ‘Let this Biennial be compost.’ Let it ‘begin before it is to begin and continue well after it is over.’ So, I said, ‘Well then, let these poems also be compost!’

### **Anita Sezgener**

Hello, I’m Anita Sezgener. First of all, I’m very happy to be part of such a programme. It’s also very motivating for me that it demands continuity. It helps me think of poetry and to hold on to it without getting lost in a daily routine. Writing down your feelings, thoughts and experiences makes you feel alive in terms of carrying water for the delta. To move ahead in this process while protecting inner and structural integrity, I chose the form of a daily poem. I turned the slow poems I was writing into a ‘Slow Journal’. Perhaps you’ll think I’m exaggerating, but this programme made me feel that I’m alive; it turned me into something more. I’m writing with a different kind of awareness, being aware of someone else, while I’m empathising with others who are involved in this programme. Thank you.

### **Neşe Yaşın**

Hello, I’m Neşe Yaşın. We have been handing in a poem each month since the beginning of 2021 for the *Poetry Channel* programme. At first, it had me worried because this is not my method of writing poetry. Sometimes, I write three or four poems a month, then I don’t write anything for five months. Actually, what normally happens is that I write down a few lines, but not all of those lines evolve into a poem. So, I do sit down, then all of a sudden something pops into my head, or to my heart, and I write them down. Sometimes they do evolve towards becoming a poem, and

sometimes they just stay that way. I pondered on those notes for a bit longer due to the obligation I have during the *Poetry Channel* programme — I focused on them and a few poems were born out of those notes. There's a theme, actually: it was that said it's supposed to be 'like the news'. That's why I have focused on what's current, and all the poems have turned out to be intertwined with the pandemic and its process. Right now, I have to hand in a poem for this month, but I've got nothing, I'll have to look at my notes for that. Let's see if I can find my way to a poem with those notes. It's a very novel experience for me. For example, my previous book, my new book, revolves around a theme, though the poems were composed over a much longer time scale and I didn't write them under such an obligation. They just became and they multiplied themselves, in a sense. That's why this programme has been such a special experience for me. Let's see what else will come of it. I'm especially pleased with one of the poems that came out of it. I hope there'll be more poems like that one.



## The Two Loves

Come fill the cup, for we remember still  
The moments bright with images of love  
The moments which blossomed with the first sight  
And the moment throbbing with the pulse of expectation

The hope that all heartache will at last be no more  
And the long night of longing comes at last to its end  
That the sleepless constellations of pain will now sink beneath the sight  
And the bright light will dawn to quell the restlessness of eyes

And your face will be there to shine like the sun  
And the colour of your countenance will tint the morning sky  
And the swing of your coming will be a quicksilver wave breaking  
And the swishing of your cloak, like the very streak of dawn

And there are memories too of separation, burning hot  
When the churning of the soul bereft one of all words  
Each night like a gray weight to make the heart sink  
Each day like a shaft of light, to pierce the breast

And how we thought of you - and you were not there  
And the troubled, turbulent heart sought solace everywhere  
Felt the fingers of the wind, and kissed them with the eyes  
Saw the gentle moonlight, and enfolded it with the arms

And that is how we loved this too-this land  
And the heart opened and languished at every thought of it  
And here was all the beauty the heart yearned for  
Even the gentle curve of the cheek, the twist of the tress

And whenever we called its name, with the lips, or from the heart  
Sometimes with a smile, sometimes with flowing tears  
It was always to fulfill all the prophesies of old  
And no pain was too stark, no grief too unbearable

Never did the call of the wild go unheard  
The ringing of the bell was never left unanswered  
And the comforts of home, and the pleasures of life and the fear of death  
All were dismissed, worthy only of those of little faith

And on this path, there befell us, that which always befalls  
Now incarceration and loneliness, now the jeers of the crowd  
And the priest ranted against us ever from the pulpit  
And the prince raved upon us always from the throne

And no stranger left an abuse unhurled  
And no blame was spared by those we called our own  
And yet we have cherished this love- and this love too  
For this heart bears every wound-excepted the one wound of regret.

Translation by Naomi Lazard

(۲۱)

پھر دیکھے ہیں وہ عہد کے تپتے ہر آن بھی  
 جب نگر دل و جاں میں نفساں بھول گئی ہے  
 ہر شب وہ سیدہ بوجھ کہ دل بیٹھ گیا ہے  
 ہر صبح کی کو تیرسی سینے میں لگی ہے  
 تنہائی میں کیا کیا نہ تجھے یاد کیا ہے  
 کھیا کیا نہ دل زار نے ڈھونڈی میں نہیں  
 آنکھوں سے نکایا ہے کبھی دستِ مبارک کو  
 ڈالی ہیں کبھی کہ دن بہت ب میں باہیں  
 چاہا ہے اسی رنگ میں سیلانے وطن کو  
 تڑپا ہے اسی طور سے دل اسی گنگن میں  
 ڈھونڈی ہے اپنی شوق نے اسی شیشِ منزل  
 ہزار کے خم میں کبھی کانٹوں کی شکن میں

دوست (۱)

تازہ میں ابھی یاد میں اے ساتھی کھفام  
 وہ عکسِ رخِ یار سے کہے ہوئے لیا م  
 وہ بھول سے کھلتی ہوئی دیدار کی ساعت  
 وہ دل سے دھڑکتا ہوا اُسب کا ہنگام  
 اُسب کہ لو چکا غمِ دل نصیب  
 کو شوق کی ترسی ہوئی سب بہرگی آغوش  
 لو دُوب گئے در کے بے خار بے ستارے  
 اب چسکے گا بے مہر نگاہوں کا مقدر  
 اس بام سے نکلے گا ترے سن کا ہر شید  
 اُس کج سے پھوٹے گی کرن رنگِ جناکی  
 اس در سے ہے گا تری فرست کا پیاب  
 اس راہ پہ پھر لے گی شوق تیری تباہی

(۳۱)

چھوڑا نہیں عشیرہوں نے کوئی نادرِ شام  
 چھوڑی نہیں اپنی سے کوئی طرزِ بلاست  
 اس عشق، نہ اس عشق پر نادم ہے مگر دل  
 بردارِ ہے اس دل میں بجز دروغِ ندامت

(۳۲)

اس جانِ جہان کو بھی یونہی قلبِ نظر نے  
 ہنس ہنس کے صدادی کبھی درد کے پشکارا  
 پورے کیے سب جسرِ تما کے تقاضے  
 بر درد کو اُجھالا، ہر اک غم کو ستارا  
 واپس نہیں پھیرا کوئی 'فسرہ' من جہنم کا  
 تہا نہیں لڑائی کبھی آوازِ جہنم کی  
 خیریت جان، راحتِ تن، صحتِ دماغ  
 سب بھل گئیں صلیحیں اہلِ ہوس کی  
 اس راہ میں جو سب پہ گزرتی ہے دگری  
 تہا پس زندان، کبھی رُسوا سے باز  
 گرتے ہیں بہت شیخِ سرگوشہ نیر  
 کڑکے ہیں بہت اہلِ حکم بر سرِ دربار

## **The Soil of My Land**

Blessings be upon the soil of my land, where they have decreed the custom  
That men should walk no more with heads held high  
And if a lover should set out on an errand of love  
Let it be with downcast eyes, and a skulking gait

This is the new order for all those of faith  
That bricks and stones are incarcerated, and the dogs are free

The altars of tyranny must be propitiated  
There must always be the few, who will keep the faith  
For the dissemblers have usurped the chair of witness, and the seat of judgment  
Where shall we seek counsel, where find a judge

But the task of living must go on, and so  
We too live out the days, and longer nights

The faint glow of the prison window is extinguished  
The night must be bright with a million stars outside  
And the silent links of the fetters have caught a glint  
The bright sun of dawn must shine upon the land

We live by the remembered images of night and day  
Entombed within the shadows of prison walls and bars

Thus was, ever, the conflict between us and them  
Their usage is not new, nor our own custom

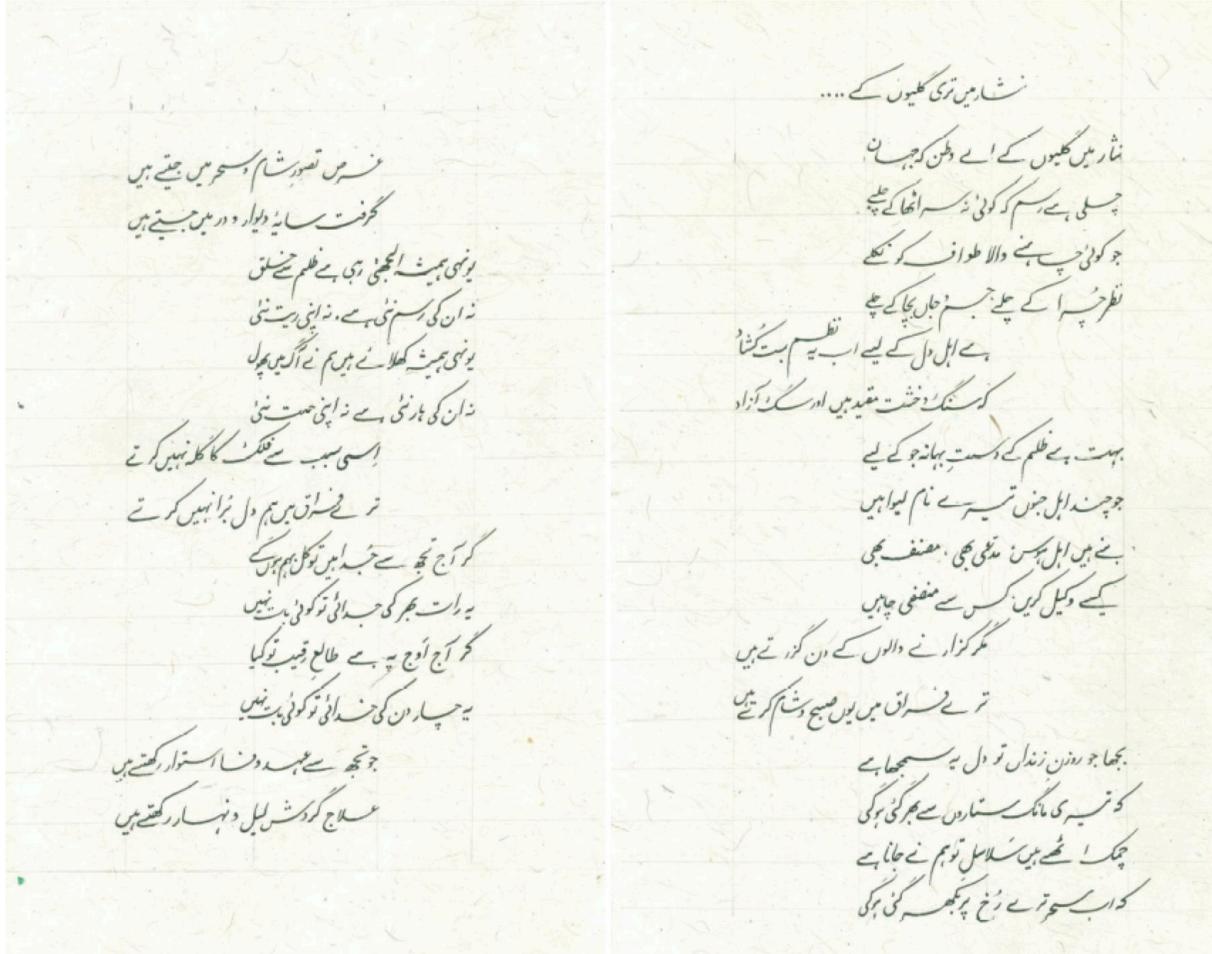
For thus ever have we transformed the fiery furnace to flowers  
Our triumph is not new, nor their vanquishing

That is why we never blame the fates  
Nor ever lose heart

For this will not last-this separation  
It is but the affliction of a night  
And if today they prevail, it is no matter  
It is an empire built on sand, not the kingdom of Heaven

We who have always known how to be true to the faith  
We have also known how to subdue time-ever.

Translation by **Naomi Lazard**



**Fable of Fables**

We are by the waterside  
 the plane tree and I.  
 Our reflections are thrown on the water  
 the plane tree's and mine.  
 The sparkle of the water hits us  
 the plane tree and me.

We are by the waterside  
 the plane tree, I and the cat.  
 Our reflections are thrown on the water  
 the plane tree's, mine and the cat's.  
 The sparkle of the water hits us  
 the plane tree, me and the cat.

We are by the waterside  
 the plane tree, I, the cat and the sun.  
 Our reflections are thrown on the water  
 the plane tree's, mine, the cat's and the sun's.  
 The sparkle of the water hits us  
 the plane tree, me, the cat and the sun.

We are by the waterside  
 the plane tree, I, the cat, the sun and our life.  
 Our reflections are thrown on the water  
 the plane tree's, mine, the cat's, the sun's and our life's.

The sparkle of the water hits us  
 the plane tree, me, the cat, the sun and our life.

We are by the waterside.  
 First the cat will go  
 its reflection will be lost on the water.  
 Then I will go  
 my reflection will be lost on the water.  
 Then the plane tree will go  
 its reflection will be lost on the water.  
 Then the water will go  
 the sun will remain  
 then it will go too.  
 We are by the waterside  
 the plane tree, I, the cat, the sun and our life.  
 The water is cool  
 the plane tree is huge  
 I am writing a poem  
 the cat is dozing  
 the sun is warm  
 it's good to be alive.  
 The sparkle of the water hits us  
 the plane tree, me, the cat, the sun, our life.

Translation by **Richard McKane\***

\* Source: Nâzım Hikmet, *Beyond the Walls: Selected Poems*, trans. Ruth Christie, Richard McKane and Talât Sait Halman (Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2001), pp. 203-204.

## The Walnut Tree

My head is a foaming cloud, inside and outside I'm the sea.  
I am a walnut tree in Gülhane Park in Istanbul,  
an old walnut tree with knots and scars.  
You don't know this and the police don't either.

I am a walnut tree in Gülhane Park.  
My leaves sparkle like fish in water,  
my leaves flutter like silk handkerchiefs.  
Break one off, my darling, and wipe your tears.  
My leaves are my hands – I have a hundred thousand hands.  
Istanbul I touch you with a hundred thousand hands.  
My leaves are my eyes, and I am shocked at what I see.  
I look at you, Istanbul, with a hundred thousand eyes  
and my leaves beat, beat with a hundred thousand hearts.

I am a walnut tree in Gülhane Park.  
You don't know this and the police don't either.

1 July 1957  
Balçık

Translation by **Richard McKane\***

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\* Source: Nâzım Hikmet, *Beyond the Walls: Selected Poems*, trans. Ruth Christie, Richard McKane and Talât Sait Halman (Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2001), p. 197.



**MEHMET SAİD AYDIN** (b. 1983, Diyarbakır, Turkey) is originally from Kızıltepe, lives and works in Istanbul, Turkey. He studied Turkish Language and Literature and has published three poetry books: *Kusurlu Bahçe* (Tainted Garden, 160. Kilometre, 2011), which was awarded the Arkadaş Z. Özger First Book Special Award and translated into French (*Le Jardin Manqué*, Kontr, 2017); *Sokağın Zoru* (Rocks of Streets, 160. Kilometre, 2014) and *Lokman Kasidesi* (Qasida of Lokman, Everest, 2019). His autobiographical narrative book, *Dedemin Definesi* (The Treasure of My Grandpa, 2018), was published in a trilingual edition. He has also written two pocketbooks on rakı gastronomy and has translated three books from Turkish to Kurdish, as well as various poems from Kurdish to Turkish. He was a columnist at *BirGün*, *Evrensel Pazar*, and *gazeteduvar.com* and worked as an editor.

**DONAT BAYER** (b. 1977, Istanbul, Turkey) completed both his BA (2003) and MA (2006) in Piano at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University State Conservatory. His first poems were published in magazines such as *Milliyet Sanat*, *Şiir Atı* and *Kitaplık* in the early 1990s. Between 2004 and 2006, he gave lectures on the analysis of twentieth-century Western music and the history of popular music at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul. In 2007, he received a second Master's degree in music from City, University of London, UK. He completed his PhD in 2012 at the same university with his thesis on Anglo-American female singer-songwriters. His article on Turkish popular music and women's rights in modern Turkey was published in *Resistance in Contemporary Middle Eastern*

*Cultures: Literature, Cinema and Music* (Routledge, 2013). Between 2014 and 2015, he studied piano at Trinity Laban Conservatory of Music and Dance, London, UK. He completed his PGCE at UCL Institute of Education, London, UK, in 2016. Between 1999 and 2004, he hosted a weekly radio programme on Açık Radyo. Between 2001 and 2011, he wrote extensively on both Western classical music and popular music in newspapers and magazines such as *Roll*, *Radikal*, *Andante*, *Kitaplık* and *Milliyet Sanat*. From 2002-04, he worked as a presenter and music consultant for one of Turkey's national television channels, TRT2. His first poetry collection, *Kötü Kan* (Bad Blood, 160. Kilometre) was published in 2017. His translation of selected poems by Ben Lerner, *No Art* (160. Kilometre) was published in 2019, and his second poetry book *Eyüp* (160. Kilometre) was published in 2021.

**ZELİHA B. CENKÖİ** (b. 1995, Antalya, Turkey) lives in Berlin, Germany. They studied Philosophy at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey, during which they worked as a translator, editor and journalist for various publishing houses and media organisations. Their poems, critiques and interviews have been published in well-known literary magazines in Turkey and America. Their first book, *Odalar ve Şehir*, was published by May Publishing (Rooms and Cities, 2018) and was awarded at the Arkadaş Z. Özger Poetry Awards in 2018. After living in Istanbul for 8 years, they migrated to Berlin, Germany due to the rising political oppression in Turkey. Currently, they continue their second Master's degree at Freie Universität Berlin on the Interdisciplinary Studies of the

Middle East. On the one hand, the poet works as a workshopper on the gender hierarchy at the Mobile University for Migrant Workers, organised by European Alternatives. Alongside their literary interest, they has a passion for photography, collage art and hip-hop culture.

**SEVİNÇ ÇALHANOĞLU** (b. 1988, Istanbul, Turkey) received her Bachelor's in History at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey. Her work revolves around memory of space, childhood narratives and transformational aspects of literature. In addition to poems and essays, she creates interdisciplinary literary works incorporating sound and photography. Among the festivals and exhibitions in which she has participated are *The Myth of the Death Dance Illuminates the Questions*, Zilberman Projects, Istanbul, Turkey (2017); *HER HÂL*, Salt Galata, Istanbul, Turkey (2017); *Double Language* performance series, Soloway Gallery, New York, US (2018); Read My World Festival, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2018); *Echo Exhibit*, LMCC, New York, US (2020) and reading performances at Collapsible Hole by Ugly Duckling Presse, New York (2019), and at Grolier Poetry, Cambridge, MA (2021). Her published books are *Eve Bir Gezinti (Periferik)* (Nod, 2016; English edition, *A Promenade at Home*, Bored Wolves, 2021); *Et/ve/Fal (Meat/and/Fortune)*, Heterotopya, 2017); *My Life in Curves Recently* (Bored Wolves, 2020) and *Gezintide Bir Ev [Home in a Circuitous Path]* (Can Yayınları, 2021). She is the editor of the Turkish poetry journal *Moero*.

**CEVAT ÇAPAN** (b. 1933, Darıca, Turkey) studied at Robert College (1945-53), and read English at Peterhouse, Cambridge University (1953-56), UK, after which he worked as a programme assistant, translator and announcer in the BBC's Turkish Section until 1957. After returning to Turkey, he worked as a professor at Istanbul University Department of English Language and Literature (1960-80), Mimar Sinan University Faculty of Fine Arts (1980-1996), Yeditepe University Faculty of Arts and Sciences (1996-2012), Haliç University Conservatory Department of Theatre (2012-17), and in the early 1980s was Fulbright Professor at New

York University, US. He has also lectured at Boğaziçi, Marmara, Anadolu and New York Universities. Besides his various published poetry books, he is the author of several critical studies of English-language drama, has edited anthologies of contemporary Greek, English and American poetry, and has translated poetry and plays by major European and North American authors.

**ERSUN ÇIPLAK** (b. 1976, Adana, Turkey) graduated from the Çukurova University, and works as a psychological counsellor. He is married, and has a daughter. He completed his PhD with his thesis on 'An Experimental Study of Using Poems in Group Counselling' in 2015. His poems, reviews, translations and interviews have been published in many journals, especially *Varlık*, *Kitaplık* and *Natama*. He has served on the editorial board of *Yom* and *Karayazı* literary magazines. Çıplak's published books are *Eksik Emanet* (Impaired Consignment, Karahan/Karayazı, 2009), *Minima Poetika* (Dedalus, 2013), *Sen Anlama* (Let You Not Understand, A5, 2017), *Kaostan Düzen Arayışına* (From Chaos to Search for Order: Essays on the Mythological Adventure of Man, A7, 2020).

**DEVİRİM DİRLİKİYAPAN** (b. 1974, Nevşehir, Turkey) currently works at Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey. He studied Economics at Eskişehir Anadolu University (1997) and then worked as a journalist and editor, and ran a cultural café in Eskişehir. He has served on the editorial board of several journals like *DüşeYaza Edebiyat* (1998-99), *Genç Edebiyat* (1994) and *Akınrya Karşı Şiir* (1993). He completed his Master's thesis 'İkinci Yeni Dışında Bir Şair: Edip Cansever' (A Poet Outside the Second New Movement: Edip Cansever) at the Department of Turkish Literature in Bilkent University. He received his PhD in 2007 from the same university with his thesis on 'Phoenix'in Evrimi: Edip Cansever'de Dramatik Monolog' (The Evolution of Phoenix: Dramatic Monologue in Edip Cansever). His book *Ölümü Gömdüm, Geliyorum: Edip Cansever Şiirinde Varolma Biçimleri* (I Buried Death, am Coming:

The Ways of Existence in Edip Cansever's Poetry) was published in 2013 by Metis. He edited *Şiiri Şiirle Ölçmek* (Measuring Poetry with Poetry, Yapı Kredi, 2009), which consists of Edip Cansever's essays and interviews, and *Yokluğun Derdi: Nevşehirli Âşık Ahmet'in Yaşamı, Sanatı, Şiirleri* (Suffering Poverty: The Life, Art and Poetry of Ashik Ahmet, Ürün, 2014), a study of a minstrel of modern Turkey. His first poetry book *Epitaph* (Çankaya Municipality, 1995) won several awards. His second book *Karla Gelen* (Who the Snow Brings, Bilgi, 1998) also won the Behçet Aysan Poetry Award in 1997, and Cemal Süreya Poetry Award in 1999. His third book *İmdat İşaretleri* (SOS Signs, Yitik Ülke) was published in 2014. He worked at the European University of Lefke in Cyprus between 2007 and 2010, and at Çağ University between 2011 and 2017.

**HAYDAR ERGÜLEN** (b. 1956, Eskişehir, Turkey) is married, and Nar's father. He studied Sociology at the Middle East Technical University, and worked as a translator and advertising copywriter. His first poetry book *Karşılığını Bulamamış Sorular* (Questions Who Could Not Find Answers) was published in 1981. He has published 16 poetry volumes and 30 essay books. He has won various Turkish poetry prizes, served as a jury member for many poetry contests, and attended various poetry festivals and events in Turkey and abroad. Together with friends, he published the poetry magazines *Üç Çiçek* (Three Flowers) in 1983, and *Şiir Atı* (Poetry Horse) in 1986. He participated in the preparation of the *Yazılıkaya* (Written Rock) magazine published in Eskişehir and is the Director of the International Eskişehir Poetry Festival and the İzmir International Literature Festival. He gives lectures at universities on creative writing, poetry and philosophy, organises workshops on creative writing and poetry, and writes regularly for newspapers and magazines on poetry, literature, and culture. His published books in foreign countries are *Carnet Intime* (Al Manar, France, 2012); *Grenade ou Nar* (Editions L'Harmattan, France, 2015); *Die Ecken Deiner Stille* (Elif Verlag, Germany, 2019); *Pomegranate Garden* (Parthian Books, United Kingdom, 2019) and *La Casa Nella Melegrana* (Valigie Rosse, Italy,

2020). Many of his poems have been published in international poetry anthologies and magazines.

**MEHMET ERTE** (b. 1978, İzmir, Turkey) completed his undergraduate studies in Physics at Sakarya University. He was introduced to the literature world in Turkey with his first poem, 'Yıldırımları Beklemek' (Awaiting the Lightenings) published in the literary journal *Varlık* in 1999, by the poet and writer Lale Müldür. Erte's poems, short stories, essays and interviews have been published in various literary journals, such as *Varlık*, *Kitaplık* and *Yasakmeyve*. In 2003, his poetry collection *Suyu Bulandıran Şey* (What Muddies the Water) won the Yaşar Nabi Nayır Poetry Award (with Seyyidhan Kömürcü), and was published as a book by Varlık Publications. His second poetry collection, *Alçalma* (Humbling, 2010) was published by Yapı Kredi Publications. His two poetry collections were combined into one book by the publisher zoomk-itap in 2016. His third poetry collection, *Çatlak* (*Crack*, 2021) was published by Edebi Şeyler. His first short story collection, *Bakışın Kirlendiği Ayna* (The Mirror Smearred by the Looking, 2008), his first novel, *Sahte* (Fake, 2012), and his second short story collection, *Arzuda Bir Sapma* (A Swerve in Desire, 2015) were published by Yapı Kredi Publications. He worked as an editor of *Yasakmeyve* from 2003-05 and at Varlık Publications since 2003; since 2015, he has been working as the editor of Turkey's longest-standing literary journal *Varlık*.

**SÜREYYA EVREN** (b. 1972, Istanbul, Turkey) completed his PhD in Political Science at Loughborough University, UK, on the relationship between avant-garde art and radical politics. Since 1991, he has published many novels, storybooks, poetry books, essays, compilations, research books, children's books, and translations, including poetry books *Ebu Garib Neşesi* (The Joy of Abu Ghraib, Pan, 2011) and *Houdini'den Sonra Ölüm* (Death After Houdini, Pan, 2021). His art criticism has been included in many art magazines, including *Framework*, *İstanbul Art News*, *Kunstforum*, *Milliyet Sanat*, *Sanat Dünyamız*, *Springerin* and *Third*

*Text.* He has lectured on modern and contemporary art and the sociology of arts at many institutions, including SPOT, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Kültür University, Hayat Bilgisi and Kadıköy Moda Sahnesi. He wrote essays for the catalogues of the 11th and 13th Istanbul Biennials in 2009 and 2013, and worked as the editor of all the publications of the 14th Istanbul Biennial in 2015. He co-curated the Berlin-Istanbul exhibition *Lock Your Mind* at sox 36 and Apartment Project, Berlin, Germany and Istanbul, Turkey (2004); the group exhibition *Go Get Them Tiger!* within the framework of Group P, Vienna, Austria (2013) and curated Şener Özmen's solo exhibition *Unfiltered* at Arter, Istanbul, Turkey (2016). He edited the artist's book series of *Art-ist* publications and co-curated the 6th edition of the international literature festival *Read My World* in Amsterdam, Netherlands, focusing on Turkish literature. Evren now works as the Publications and Content Coordinator at Arter, Istanbul, Turkey.

**FAİZ AHMAD FAİZ** (b. 1911, Sialkot, British India; d. 1984, Lahore, Pakistan) was one of the most celebrated poets and authors in the Urdu and Punjabi languages. He studied Arabic and English literature and began his teaching career in 1939. He started his poetry with *ghazals* and steadily shifted his attention to *nazm*, becoming renowned in both forms among progressive poets. He released his first poetry collection *Naqsh-e Faryadi* (The Image of One Who Laments) in 1941. Faiz's early poems were conventional, light-hearted treatises on love and beauty, but later he began to expand into politics. Taking up posts on the *Pakistan Times* and *Imroz* newspapers, he soon became an acclaimed journalist as well as a poet. In 1951, Faiz was arrested together with 14 others in what was became known as the 'Rawalpindi Conspiracy' case and spent four years in prison. He was later arrested again when Pakistan's first military dictator General Ayub came to power and served six months in prison. His poetry collections include *Dast-e-saba* (Hand of the Wind, 1952); *Zindan Nama* (Prison Notebook, 1956); *Dast-e Tah-e-Sang* (Hand Under a Stone, 1965); *Sar-e-Wadi-e-Sina*, (The Valley of Sinai,

1971); *Sham-e-Sheher-e-Yaran* (Evening of Kings, 1978) and *Mere Dil Mere Musafir* (My Heart, My Traveller, 1981). Faiz was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize (1962) and Lotus Prize for Literature (1976) and was a nominee for the Nobel Prize in 1984.

**NĀZİM HİKMET** (b. 1902, Thessaloniki, Ottoman Empire; d. 1963, Moscow, USSR) was a poet, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, director and memoirist. He was exposed to poetry at an early age through his artist mother and poet grandfather, and had his first poems published when he was seventeen. He left for Moscow in September of 1921. Having been acquitted from many cases brought against him due to his poems, Hikmet was arrested in 1933 and 1937 for forming secret societies. In 1938, he was arrested on charges of 'inciting rebellion in the army and navy' and was sentenced to 28 years and 4 months in prison. Although he was under no legal obligation, he was drafted into the army and left İstanbul in 1951 for Moscow via Romania. His Turkish citizenship was revoked upon a decision taken by the Council of Ministers. Hikmet's works, which include poems, newspaper articles, novels, short stories, and translations, were banned in Turkey from 1939 to 1965. Published in different editions from 1965 onwards, they were brought together as complete works, and many translated into English, including *Selected Poems* (Cape, 1967); *The Moscow Symphony* (Swallow Pt, 1970); *The Day Before Tomorrow* (Carcenet Press, 1972); *Things I Didn't Know I Loved* (Persea, 1975) and *Human Landscapes from My Country: An Epic Novel in Verse* (Persea, 2009).

**CEM KURTULUŞ** (b. 1985, Istanbul, Turkey) directed, for stage, Woody Allen's *God*, Chekhov's *Short Skits* and Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* during his high school years in Istanbul. Having lost his mother, he published *Madde* (Matter, Yasakmeyve, 2005) in collaboration with Efe Murad. He completed his BA in Literary Theory at Bates College in the post-industrial ghost town, Lewiston Maine, US, and then returned to city life in New York, which quickly proved a dystopian version of

what Istanbul, later by Gezi, actually became. He first waited tables, and, thanks to the mentorship of important documentary and TV leaders such as Volga Calderon, Morgan Spurlock and Tom Donahue, eventually became a video editor, making *The Hungry Boy* (short animation, 2012) with Jake Nelson, distributed by ARTE. He published the poetry collection *surun cem e* (160. Kilometre, 2012); two chapbooks (Sub Yayın, with Efe Murad, 2016) and other poems and writings in various online and printed zines like *Da Baddest*. Aside from editing TV and documentary projects, he assists in the day-to-day responsibilities of running Lotus in the Mud, a public compost garden founded by painter/illustrator Justyna Milczuk, who is also the co-director of Kurtuluş's second animated short, currently in production.

**BEJAN MATUR** (b. 1968, Maraş, Turkey) is a pioneering figure in contemporary poetry and lives between London, UK, and Istanbul, Turkey. She is a graduate of Ankara University Faculty of Law. Her poems have been translated into 42 languages, and have won numerous awards. She has participated in countless conferences and festivals in many countries and has written articles and essays, and published eleven books, nine of which are poetry. Her music-accompanied poetry has been presented to a wide audience on prestigious stages like the Royal Opera House and Kings Place London, UK, Ubud, Bali, Indonesia and Princeton University. Her book *How Abraham Abandoned Me* (Arc, 2012) became the 'Recommended Translation for Spring 2012' by the Poetry Book Society founded by T.S. Eliot.

**MUSTAFA ERDEM ÖZLER** (b. 1967, Muğla, Turkey) lives and works in Datça, Turkey. He graduated from the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Istanbul University in 1988 and continued with a Masters at the Institute of Social Sciences of Boğaziçi University. He published his poetry book *Kelebekli Zaman* (Stages of Butterfly, Can Publications) in 2001. He presented his sound installation *Surrender!* at Sox36 Art Gallery in Berlin in September 2004. In 2008, he received

the Cemal Süreya Poetry Prize and the following year he published his poetry book *Erdem Devesi* (Virtue Camel, Metis Publications). His notebook design *Istanbul Istanbul* was selected for the *Destination Istanbul* project of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, US, in 2011. He exhibited the sound installation *Calling the Precarious! in Go Get Them Tiger* at P Group in MuseumsQuartier, Vienna, Austria in 2013. In 2013, his poetry book *Tarihi Ayı Öfkesi* (Historic Bear Rage) was published by Metis Publications. His sound installation *Rupture* was included in the exhibition *Land Without Land* at Heidelberger Kunstverein, Heidelberg, Germany, in 2016.

**GONCA ÖZMEN** (b. 1982, Burdur, Turkey) lives and works in Istanbul, Turkey. She graduated from the Department of English Language and Literature at Istanbul University in 2004. She received her MA degree in 2008, and PhD degree in 2016 from the same department. In 1997, her first poem was published in literary journal *Varlık*, and she was named 'a poet to watch in the future' at The Yaşar Nabi Nayır Youth Prizes. Her first poetry book *Kuytumda* (In My Nook) was published in 2000; then came *Belki Sessiz* (Silent Perhaps) in 2008, and *Bile İsteğe* (Knowingly, Willingly) in 2019. Her poems have been translated into English, German, French, Spanish, Slovenian, Italian, Romanian, Persian, Greek and Hebrew. *The Sea Within (Selected Poems)* was published by Shearsman Books in 2011, and her second book *Vielleicht Lautlos* was published by Elif Verlag in 2017. Having participated in international poetry readings in various countries abroad, Özmen has won numerous poetry awards. She edited *Çağdaş İrlanda Şiiri Seçkisi* (Selection of Contemporary Irish Poetry, Edisam, 2010) and İlhan Berk's *Çiğnenmiş Gül* (Trampled Rose, Yapı Kredi, 2011), a collection of the late poet's unpublished poems. She sat on the editorial board of a literary translation magazine *Ç.N.* (Translator's Note), and the literary magazines *Pulbiber* (Chilli Flakes) and *Çevrimdışı İstanbul* (Offline Istanbul). She has translated five children's books for Kırmızı Kedi Publications: *Small in the City* by Sydney Smith (2020); *The It-Doesn't-Matter-Suit* and

*Other Stories* by Sylvia Plath (2020); *I Talk Like a River* by Jordan Scott (2021); *Flibbertigibbetty Words-Young Shakespeare Chases Inspiration* by Donna Guthrie (2021) and *Town Is by the Sea* by Joanne Schwartz (2022). She was one of the members of the advisory board of Bursa Nilüfer International Poetry Festival, Three Seas Writers' and Translators' Council (TSWTC) based in Rhodes, Greece, and the magazine, *Turkish Poetry Today*, which was published annually by Red Hand Books, UK. She is currently editing the Turkish poet Küçük İskender's work for Can Publishing, and translating the *Collected Poems* of Sylvia Plath.

**ANİTA SEZGENER** (b. 1971, Istanbul, Turkey) is from a Sephardic Jewish family and is the mother of Alina since 2017. Her poems, prose, essays, translations, and interviews have appeared in various journals and books. She is the translator of Anne Carson's *Short Talks* (2018), Raymond Federman's *Voice in the Closet* (2018) and Jennifer Martenson's *Xq28(1)* (2015), published by Nod Publishing House. She also makes archetypal drawings for books and covers. Since 2008, she has been the maker and editor of the culture-art-literature zine *Cin Ayşe*, a visibility project for women. She is also one of the editors of *Moero Fanzine*, an online poetry zine. In 2022, she was one of the participants of an exhibition titled *Why do poets paint?*, which was curated by Dr. Necmi Sönmez and held in both Antalya Kültür Sanat and Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, *Saraçhane Exhibition Hall*. Her published books are: *Pusu Bilici* (Ambush Finder, Norgunk, 2008); *Taşlık* (Stony Place, Yasakmeyve, 2011); *Hafif Zehirler* (Light Poison, Pan, 2012); *Normalia* (NOD, 2014); *Çok Sesli* (Voice Many, Heterotopya, 2015); *Tikkun Olam: Walter Benjamin Şiirleri* (Tikkun Olam: Walter Benjamin Poems, Nod, 2017); *Nabız Kayıt* (Pulse Records, Nod, 2020); *Aritmi Koridoru: Toplu Yazılar* (Corridor of Arrhythmia: Collected Writings, Everest Essay, 2020) and *She Threw the Rope & Pulled the Lake* (Alina said, Anita drew) (Bored Wolves, 2021).

**NEŞE YAŞIN** (b. 1959, Nicosia, Cyprus) lived in the mixed Greek/Turkish village of Peristerona, in the south of Cyprus during her early childhood years. She moved to Nicosia with her family in 1963 after the intercommunal strife in Cyprus, and lived in the Turkish enclaves for three years. She graduated from the secondary education institution, the English School, which was then named Turk Maarif Koleji. She studied Sociology at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara. She worked as an active peace activist from a very young age for the reunification of Cyprus. As a poet, she became well-known and read on both sides of the divided Cyprus. Her poems have been translated into more than 40 languages, and published in literary magazines and anthologies in several countries. She has participated in international poetry festivals and readings in various cities of Europe, Asia, North and South America, Africa and Australia. Currently, she is teaching language and literature at the Turkish Studies Department of the University of Cyprus, writing weekly columns for *Yenidüzen* newspaper (Cyprus), after working as a columnist for *BirGün* newspaper for six years. Her published books of poetry are *Sümbül ile Nergis* (Hyacinth and Narcissus, Cem, 1979); *Savaşların Gözyaşları* (Tears of Wars, Yeni Türkü, 1980); *Kapılar* (Doors, Cem, 1992); *Ay Aştan Yapılmıştır* (The Moon is Made of Love, Gendaş, 2000); *Bellek Odaları* (Chambers of Memory, Dünya, 2005); *Şiir Seçkisi* (Selected Poems, Amargi, 2008); *Üşümüş Kuşlar* (Cold Birds, Ayrıntı, 2016); *Garden of Light* (Epifani, 2016); *Rose Falling into Night* (Heterotopia, 2017) and *Απαγορευμένοι κήποι* (Forbidden Gardens, Vakxikon, 2019). She has also published the book *Şiirle Hatırlamak* (Remembering Through Poetry, Söylem, 2013), and the novel *Üzgün Kızların Gizli Tarihi* (Secret History of Sad Girls, İletişim, 2002). Among other prizes, Yaşin received the Anthias Pierides Award in 1998.

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