

Fahri ÖZ

Excerpts from the poetry collection

[Meşrutiyet Street: Heavily Overcast, 15 Degrees Celsius with Zero Chance of Rain]

An indigo-blue Škoda truck loaded with calico moves with wobbling tires on the over-cooked asphalt road along the Mediterranean

The driver takes off his hat and wipes the sweat from his forehead—the tin-like hood of the old truck wedges through the air like a bird of beast, like a hound that knows where to go

Innumerable adverbs of place disperse into the June tableau through the flapping end of the sweaty roll of flowery fustian (there are birds on the branches) and the poplin rolls

The unforeseen rain, seeking vendetta (like an Italian so intent), smashes from such heights on the shepherd taking refuge under his felt cloak under the bushes on the southern side of the hill

The heaven's vengeance rolls into a huge cannonball and, exploding, sprawls over like wafer in smithereens over the cedar-covered Taurus mountains, *lightning!* the hailstones crumble over the rocks!

– a jabbering lyric stork that perched on the TV aerial, sir, I get the smell of japonica flowers, from the south and the east

migrating birds gone astray, swooping, light on a paddy field; miners (asleep) walk into their crucifixion into gaping tunnels of the night

flour mills keep turning in a village, a man wipes his forehead off white powders reclining on a mulberry tree, a child squints his eyes (rolling his hand into binoculars) before gazing into the sky

the river guzzles o l e a n d e r leaves boiled in ash, an oily and murky liquid rises gradually into the grisly stomach of the sky

“istikrar”¹ variations: staccato & stuttering

1.

tik-tak, it is a rat, it is a kraut, a satirik aktrist, a star at ski,
 as it is, a trik, ask it, a kit? a kis?
 is it a star? it is a risk! isa is a star, a tiriksta,
 “tak dis sirtaki, sir, tak it!”
is-tik-rar, make turkey great again

2.

hark! hark! ik is a rat. ik di rat det is kist. “is it art?”, start a tart!
 dis is tea, sir. is it di kar? is it ark? irk is tar.
 tart is siirt taksi. tak it, sir! it is a risk;
but make turkey great again

3.

is kris a rat?! kart is ilk! is dis art. art is irk. kris is tikt. stair is di ki.
 arktik iris, trik, art, hart, bard, aktris, akt, sir, akt,
 sick tir at.
shut up! and make turkey great again

4.

mais ki si rirait, ki tirait koua? ta ski? mais ki irait, ki s’irritait,
iris sait si belles airs, sitar, art irait rire, ki tarissait?
 ki sait? rat rat rat!
ta gueule! make turkey great again

¹ Turkish word for “stability”. The poem is based on the use of anagrams of the word “istikrar” and their phonological interplay. Verse 1 and 2 are attempts in English while 3 sounds more German and 4 French. This is the original of the poem in its entirety.

“istikrar” çeşitlemeleri /²

1.

satirik aktrist kirasını istifra etti taksit taksit istikrar
deyyu deyyu siirtte sirtaki oynayan taksici ters ters baktı
karstakine

isli bir gece cümle atlar iksir içti istifa etmeden aksi
satirler içinde raks ediyordu sirke ait bi takside bunu kasti
mi takrir ettiler
is-tik-rar, make turkey great again

2.

adres timokrasi bulvarı, istikbal caddesi, istihbarat sokak,
sirkat sitesi. zile basmayın. şifre çalışmıyor. hırsızlar kolu
kırmışlar.

sirkat var sirkat var! deyyü bağırın aktriste ne oldu? ne
mi oldu? kirasını ifa edemedi asri bir isa gibi
is-tik-rar, make turkey great again

3.

tikkat tikkat! katli itaat irtikap taklit! iktidar istifra! tikkat
tikkat, iktidar istifra!
is-tif-ra, make turkey great again

² This is a continuation of the previous *sound* poem, the only difference being the fact that it is in a Turkish using more Ottoman words written in an unconstrained fashion, employing more letters than the anagram of the word *istikrar*. I attempted no translation of the poem since it would not mean much. Let it suffice to say that once again the sound and rhythm play a more prominent role.

the evening coughs, choking on smoke, the horses are at the mercy of an inapt soothsayer, the constipated king waiting for an answer, the subjects are desolate, storehouses empty

I even thought of telling them not to tie my hands, for an instant I desired for getting lost in the waters, being tempted by the beauty of those marine creatures and their songs.

now howls my body with those voices, my skin convulses in agony, my throbbing mind expands vein by vein like the ragged bark of a pine

(wasn't this what you always wanted, o lazy reader? to lend an ear to the new adventures of Ulysses now that you yourself dare not?)

this is my second voyage: gray, dry wind from barren craggy islands and briny sea licks on my face – my hands are tied to the mast of the ship, as before.

I hear once again the voices of the Sirens, slimy like tentacles of an octopus, stuff up my ears, choking me with their songs.

this is my second voyage: I fled Ithaca once more – I fled my people, my wife Penelope, my mature Telemachus – chasing other lives, other winds

they call me from the waters, the Sirens, my obedient crew are deaf to such voices. the distant horizon broadens, the blue sea swells gently like a famished beast

my brain begets another consciousness in my head: atoms of time disperse into tiny droplets like waves exploding on the shore.

here I am: echo of an echo. the great Ulysses I am, *poliplutos* –seeking unrest and finally finding it; yet insatiate, it is still the desire of desire that I seek.

haikus inspired by japanese/chinese song titles
(originally written in English)

chatting with an old friend by the window

I hear storks

migrating

as wild geese glide on the sandy shore

I remember your words—

The moon is up in the sky

the plum leaf takes leave of the branch

and falls near my feet:

september

(kojo no tsuki)

the moon over the ruined castle

like my heart

in darkness

long journey of the poet ends
here among the reeds
in the quiet lake.

“atete mite!” says the playful
willow twig tapping the
window

late butterfly does not resist
the iron fist of autumn:
whirlwind

the mountain-top is high and arduous
what is it that awaits us
there?

March 2018