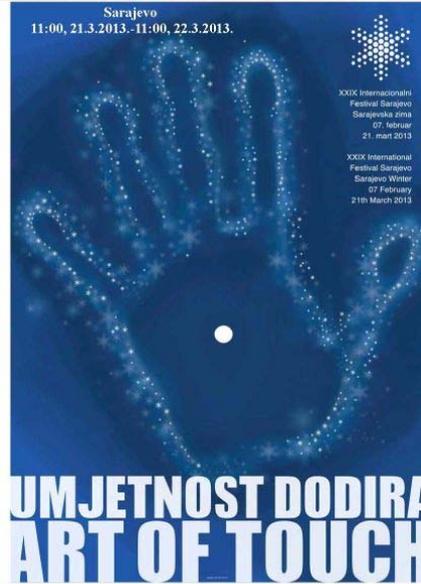


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Ali F. Bilir, Turkey

Prior To Long Journeys

To my daughter Defne

Looking back to my roots,
long journeys, many steps,
how gracefully my homeland
has run after me, snow covered
those glittering clouds
just above the changing mountains.

Like a small child am I
whose heart cannot match
the rhythm of this world.

The lonely wind has gone
with me. In me is desire, desire
such hope it brings!

Maybe I will fall into
the emptiness of my youth.
Quite alone is this home
with the door latched
and behind me the serenity
the emptiness
all my long journeys.

Translated by M. Ali Sulutas
Edited in English by Susan Bright

Autumn Memories

Autumn,
time to collect
late summer vines of dried peppers
from the earthen roof-tops of huts,
in rushing rain,
black damsons, sliced apples,
melancholy around us,
amber bunches of grapes
that pale in boiling ash water.

Dried passions
gradually lean across the day,
from a shadowed-faced sky,
are bagged up, taken away,
along with an urgent desire to arrive
at last.

Anticipating the next migration,
we moderate our worries.
<http://www.dilogipro.com/2132013---world-poetry-day.html>
Life settles back,
to the ancient riverbed
and we remember only traces
of bitter sorrows
which and quickly,
like summer, like life.

Autumn
is this bunch of sweet basil
I hold in my palm
like a faded photograph
that appeared suddenly
and was wiped clean
by time.

Autumn,
at night, as moonlight
flows down from my window
your smell lingers on my flesh
along with ancient memories
as we wander far from home
together again.

Translated by M. Ali Sulutas
Edited in English by Susan Bright

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Fearsome Game

I pick up thrown stones
instead of roses. At dawn I walk
over broken glass to the gallows
barefoot, heartbroken
but forthright, without bowing.
Do not avert your glance
from my passion.

My quivering body is witness
to the fear. It is a long walk
I know. The cinders beneath my feet
are burning, they are the soil.
I wear a shirt of fire.
Let your attention water my voice.

I am picking up thrown stones
instead of hope. Constantly bleeding
is my heart. I wish my vessel of sorrow
were full. I wish I walked in the garden
of words like Pir Sultan¹

I have been picking up these thrown stones
since Spartacus.²
Every love is an Ebabil.³
Bad words are like bullets.
I am again crucified.

¹ **Pir Sultan Abdal:** A 16th Century revolutionary poet; leader of the rebellions against the unjust, oppressive and cruel Sultan of that era. He was arrested, stoned and later hung by the Ottoman Governor Hizir Pasha. While he was stoned, one of his loved friends was throwing him roses instead of stones. He was offended nevertheless. Two verses of his poem he wrote relate to this event: *"Dropping down over my head like the rain / Most hurting me are the roses thrown on me by my best friend."*

² **Spartacus:** The revolutionary and fearless leader of first slave uprising in history happened in the Roman Empire. He was captured in the year of 71 BC by the Roman General Pompeus and later executed.

³ **Ebabil:** A bird resembling a swallow mentioned in the Holy Koran. Legend says that these birds, carrying stones with their beaks, were sent over the soldiers of Ebrehe, the tyrant Governor of Yemen and the entire army of Governor was killed by stones dropped down by the birds.

My only life is with you
in the past. To escape this fear
the whistle of memory trills on.
Sorrow's poison cannot kill,
hope is born of you.
Oh! My heart carry me!

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Edited in English by Susan Bright

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On The River Bank

Tell me where to stand,
here, on the river bank, how dark
and wet the road we walked.

Here,
at the threshold,
the key under the doormat remains.

Whenever a bird flies
overhead, I turn my face
toward the mountains.

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Edited in English by Susan Bright

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Life Is Better Today

The life is a little better today,
the voices of children
in spite of a smell from the distance.

Life is a little better today.
I am over fifty and grow
tranquil, as after a storm.

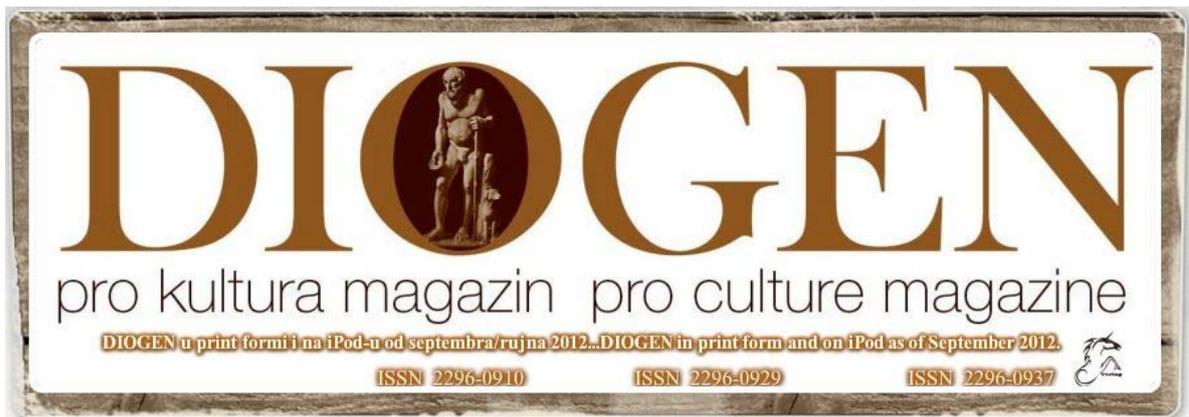
Life is a little better today.
We serve only olive and bread,
the happiness of a cup of tea.

Life is a little better today.
In the poems of Nazim⁴ I search
for the longing of my father.

Translated by M. Ali Sulutas

Edited in English by Susan Bright

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⁴ **Nazim Hikmet** (1902-1963): The first and foremost modern Turkish poet, was sentenced as a political prisoner to exile and spent his last thirteen years away from his homeland.