

OĞUZ ATAY

waiting  
for fear



Translated by  
Fulya Peker

Bu nedenle bitiremiyor belki yavaşlarsın;  
sonuna kadar yazıyor. Belki de değil. Belki  
ki bin yazıya sonuna kadar sürebilirim,

İhtimam, bir saat ölecek olduğumu hissediyorum.  
Yanm yasamlar indirerek, bütün ölümlerden  
kayıyor.



OĞUZ ATAY

waiting for feat



OĞUZ ATAY

waiting for feat

Translated by

Fulya Peker



Contra Mundum Press New York · London · Melbourne

*Waiting for Fear* © 2021 Fulya  
Peker; *Korkuyu Beklerken*  
© 2004 İletişim Yayıncılık  
First published in 1975 by  
May Yayınları

First Contra Mundum Press  
edition 2021.

All Rights Reserved under  
International & Pan-American  
Copyright Conventions.  
No part of this book may be  
reproduced in any form or by  
any electronic means, including  
information storage and retrieval  
systems, without permission  
in writing from the publisher,  
except by a reviewer who may  
quote brief passages in a review.

Library of Congress  
Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

ATAY, OĞUZ, 1934-1977  
[*Korkuyu Beklerken*. English.]  
*Waiting for Fear* / Oğuz Atay;  
Translated from the Turkish by  
Fulya Peker

—1<sup>st</sup> Contra Mundum Press  
Edition

300 pp., 5 × 8 in.

ISBN 9781940625485

- I. Atay, Oğuz.
- II. Title.
- III. Peker, Fulya.
- IV. Translator.
- V. Translator's Note.
- VI. Peker, Fulya.

2021935831

translator's note	0
the man with the white coat	0
the forgotten	22
waiting for fear	34
a letter	122
neither yes nor no	154
the wooden horse	178
letter to my father	222
railroad storytellers — a dream	242



TRANSLATOR'S NOTE



“I am afraid we are not rid of God  
because we still have faith in grammar.”

— Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*

Oğuz Atay, one of the most influential figures of 20<sup>th</sup> century Turkish literature, was not only a writer and a professor, but also a civil engineer. He was born in 1934 into a post-war society (Turkish War of Independence, 1919–1923) where the effects of a revolution, along with the efforts of westernization, had yet to be digested by the people of this emerging republic, established among the remnants of an old empire. By seamlessly mending the autobiographical and the fictional in his stories, Atay not only reflects on this transitional period & makes great use of the fractured language of the historically multilayered topography of Turkey, but also struggles to stand at an equally critical distance to the cultural mannerisms & social stratifications each layer signifies.

While translating the stories collected in this book, I focused in particular on Atay’s playful syntactical arrangements, pronoun amalgamations, punctuation patterns, rhythmical repetitions, agile verb tense deflections & ironic reinforcements. I refrained from sacrificing his style, which is that of a language engineer, for the sake of a naturalization of the content into some fluent idiomatic English. Atay’s construction of cultural contexts is tightly connected with his linguistic choices, which invokes an orienting,

or rather disorienting reading experience. Hence, I sought to not only translate the content but also infect English with that essential experience. After all, languages are contagious cultural organisms.

Upon seeing the title *Waiting for Fear*, people usually focus on the word 'fear.' But be aware: 'fear' is a feeling Atay's protagonists are 'waiting for.' Before elaborating on how and why they wait for fear, I would like to point out a particular syntactical difference between Turkish and English, which reminds me of an impalpable act of 'waiting,' ingrained already within Atay's native tongue. In Turkish syntax, the 'hidden subjects' usually reveal themselves via the suffixes added to verbs, located at the end of the sentences. In other words, the agents are conjoined to the actions, and not articulated in advance. Atay utilizes this innate syntactical suspension feature of Turkish while constructing his sentences. His sentences, and by extension his protracted paragraphs, are memory mazes and readers are invited to 'wait' until reaching the end of these mazes to confront the subjects.

When in conversation, these subjects declare their presences momentarily via pronouns. However, such pronouns also dissolve into one another with the subtle omission of quotation marks. These occasional choices mute the steering interjections of the third person narrator. At such moments, readers, being left alone with the subjects, could encounter their own narrative choices, or confront their suppositions. Atay initiates a dialogue with his readers through which

their inner voices could speak back to them, like quotations buried beneath the narration of these 'human, all too human' stories. [*S*]ince facts and factors are nesting together, by setting the associations free, an organic and mental progress may be realized, as Atay noted in his diaries. Hence, rather than easing things out with the help of extra quotation marks, or using names instead of pronouns, I stayed strictly loyal to Atay's tacit invitation to his readers to participate in the construction of his memory mazes, if not to occasionally undergo dissociation, or to get lost in free association.

Such constructions demand temporal measurements & calculations as well. Atay deftly works the Turkish verb tense engine, especially the layers of past tenses that function as the gears of storytelling. In Turkish, any tense can be converted into 'story tenses' with the addition of a suffix (-di). Some of these compound tenses are: the story of the simple present, the story of the present continuous, the story of the future, the story of the past heard, and the story of the past seen. By constantly drawing lingual tangents from the present moment to the memories stored in different layers of the past waiting to become stories, Atay presents a fluxional passage in and of time, for his readers.

In each story there are phrases and words that are continuously repeated that suggest a distinctive semantic universe. And, sometimes, these universes intersect through a subtle phrase or word choice. These mutual references and vocabulary-based intersections complement the composition of a shared language and help trace the shortcuts



the man with the white coat



He was in a big crowd. He was unsuccessful. He had no money. He was begging. He was in front of a mosque. It was a big mosque. It had it all: minarets, domes, arches, barred windows and such. Its yard in particular: the most substantial space for beggars. He was standing on the side. Since he wasn't presenting any skills, or since he didn't have some pitiful weirdness, or since he wasn't able to contemplate long enough to be saddened for his lack of success by setting himself apart from the crowd, he was unsuccessful in begging as well. Since he wasn't selling corn seeds in tiny cups, he couldn't have accrued merit on behalf of others, together with kids & birds; besides, he was neither living in a cabin on wheels with leather walls and a front section suddenly shutting its owner in by functioning as a shutter during lunch breaks, like that old man who resembled a red robed soothsayer; nor could he push the gas pedal and get away from there by his motorcycle stall the moment he could no longer sell evil-eye beads and tesbihs and lighter flints, like that fat cripple. He had no capital & no apparent disability. Maybe, he could've stopped some passer-by and said that he was just discharged from the hospital and had no money to go to his fellow construction sergeant townsman, pretending to be a peasant, but since he wasn't speaking, it was hard for

him to gain success in this as well. He was doing nothing interesting other than leaning against the wall of the mosque. Furthermore, he hadn't even attempted to turn his palm up yet. That being said, when the pigeons and corn seed cups, and sexological and theological books that were lined up on one of the sloping walls of the mosque, and newspapers that were wrapped around the tree trunks and warning people of certain social evils, and the people dealing with charitable deeds but in exchange for receipt, all condensed in the yard, a withered woman in a burka turned this half-hearted beggar's palm up and put some money in it, supposing him to be disabled. Maybe because he was rapidly blinking his eyes due to the high sun, he didn't look at the money; maybe because his eyes were caught up with the kids playing in the inner yard of the mosque, he forgot to close his palm. All of this had happened after the first benefactor of the day had moved a little away. While the woman was looking at his face, he didn't move his eyeballs at all, knowingly or unknowingly. Therefore, his first customer had supposed him to be blind. He kind of recovered with the sound of some more money falling into his palm: Once he lifted his head up, he saw a shabby man with an overgrown beard, like himself. Then a young woman scrabbling in her bag made of an old rug, looking for her coin purse in frustration, came across him; a large coin weighed his hand down, covered the rest.

A dark woman with a swaddled baby in her arms crouched down by him. For a while, as if two stains, they stayed leaning against the wall. Then, the lighter stain

walked toward the center of the yard. A cane reached out of the red robed old man's cabin toward his legs, he almost fell down. "Take me to the shade young man," grumbled the old man, with a grumpy voice. Once his cabin was pushed in the direction of the wheels, "Not there," stomped the red robed soothsayer and came out; they turned the wheels toward the direction he wanted.

The old man furiously covered the open side of his cabin and opened a tiny window on another side. Through that, he looked at the yard in anger.

He left the old man in the shade; went back, leaned against the wall and gazed at his money.

"You're a healthy man; aren't you ashamed of begging?" A fat man was standing right beside him: "You wouldn't work if you were given a job." He looked at the luggage of the fat man, tried to lift the load up with both hands; it was of no success. Then he saw a porter farther away, competent. He did just like him: Crouched down and leaned his back to the luggage, grabbed the handle; it didn't work. Finally, with the help of the fat man, he took the load on.

On the way, the fat man with his high-pitched voice said "I wouldn't give more than two ₺ a half liras." They walked side by side. While approaching the dock, he collapsed with the load on his back. The owner of the luggage stood still and remained hesitant for a while; then he handed him the money. Probably, he had evoked some pity in the fat man. He could've entered the ferry with a separate charge; but he couldn't break through the wall of the



the forgotten



“I am in the attic my darling!” she shouted down through the hole. “Old books are worth a lot of money nowadays. I’d like to check them out.” Did he hear the last words I said? “It might be too dark in there; hold on, let me give you a flashlight.” Fine. A calm day. Someone used to tell me that I had constantly been seeking attention all throughout my life. If only there was a mirror that reflected me smiling; ☺ a little bit of light. “You will break a bone in that darkness.” A flashlight reached up through the hole. The light at the tip of the hand with the flashlight randomly illuminated an insignificant corner; she caressed this hand. The hand disappeared. What is he thinking about, I wonder? She smiled: Is he thinking again?

She hadn’t been climbing up to this dusty darkness full of spiders for years. Seeing the light, some bugs scattered about. She was scared; but thinking of being useful empowered her. Maybe, I should’ve achieved this without saying anything. He isn’t expecting anything from me in return. Is this ‘helping him’? I don’t know, I sometimes feel confused; especially when I’ve some humming in my head. I would’ve liked to know how to think like him. He watches me, trying to be discreet. He’s feeling timid. If so, I should hurry up. She held the flashlight toward a nearby spot; photos of

her mother and father. Between them, an old shoe bag, a few broken lamps. Why had they never loved one another? I used to feel so afraid of them dying. She fumbled in the bag; I had worn these for the first ball I went to with a gown. I used to go out with someone every night, to dance. Oh my God! How had I done that? She wiped the dust from her hands with the dress. She looked at her purple shoes: Wrinkled, molded. She put one on her left foot: My measurements haven't changed. She was embarrassed; yet still couldn't take it off of her foot. She took a few steps, limping. Then she looked at the photos; kneeled down, put them side-by-side. She dusted them a little with her elbow. They understood neither themselves nor me. How I had cried. Could I find a spot for them downstairs? At the hallway, in the storage room... I'm being nonsensical. I haven't forgotten them, haven't forgotten them. There was a proud sulkiness on her father's face. I can't hang them on the same wall. She quickly visualized the set-up of the house. They wouldn't have liked to be side-by-side; not even in the grave. She took one of the photos; she had left the flashlight on the floor, thus she couldn't see which photo she took. She put it on a higher spot. She became a bit nervous; hit her knee on a piece of wood. She staggered, fell down; it was a light fall. She couldn't dare stand up; crawled toward the flashlight. Yet another bag. She emptied it out: Old photos! She was moving away from her purpose. I shouldn't think about him putting pressure on me. Even if I say it to his face, I shouldn't let it cross my mind. She urgently laid the photos out on the

floor, ran the flashlight over the dusty silhouettes. I could've moved to another house, could've left all this with someone I would never see again. She flipped through the photos; I had way too many photos of myself taken, my God! Most of them hadn't come out good either. She smiled: How long the skirts used to be back then. An ugly length. Poses look ridiculous as well. Who knows which movie they are from! Apparently, I had turned my back pretending like I was walking away, and suddenly looked back. Who had I looked at, I wonder? Another photo with the same dress. There is someone beside me. The photo had become too dusty. One recognizes oneself even in dust. She wetted her finger with her tongue; dust turned into mud first, then... she saw the smiling face of her first husband at the tip of her finger. Oh my God! I was also married once... then, I was married once more. One cannot arrive anywhere in a day, what to do? To where? How sad we used to feel because of some emotions I couldn't identify, couldn't give a name to. She leaned down and took a handful of photos from the floor: Just before this photo had been taken, how I had made a scene for no reason and then walked away. Then, what had happened? Then... here you are, in this house. That means nothing related to him has happened since then. Neither a good nor a bad thing: which means nothing. However, I've never sensed that. Transitions happened in such an inconspicuous manner. No, your thoughts are all mixed up; simply your words... What's that got to do with this? But I... while running away from him, how come I had looked back and had this photo



waiting for fear



Yesterday night while returning home, the dogs barked at me. The dogs of our neighborhood. A few of them dogged my steps; I quickened my pace. I've never seen them acting like this before; I feared. They had always been looking at me up and down with their sluggish eyes; I had been sensing that there was a tension between us. Only, this tension had been going on for a long time; so I had become used to it. When they began walking after me, I felt bound to remember one of those proverbs, which in my opinion are weak and embarrassing to think of, such as a barking dog never bites. I belittled myself before myself because of the dogs. Maybe it was a coincidence, however right at that moment, I was thinking badly of someone; putting him in situations he wouldn't be able to handle, I was grinding my teeth. No, the dogs couldn't have heard the grinding. Maybe it was a silent grinding, a spiritual grinding. Since I had long lost my past sense of humor, I couldn't have felt the sarcasm I feel right now either. But, the eruption of the tension between the dogs & me in such a time couldn't have been interpreted favorably.

All of this had happened close to my street; they had barked at me on the last street crammed with houses. I was thinking they wouldn't be able to come all the way to the door

of my house; there were three houses on my street, which means three trashcans for each house. No, they wouldn't have been able to take shelter in there. Only I would've been able to take shelter on this street. And I had reasons. Dogs couldn't have had such reasons; they couldn't have reasoned. I was able to rationalize the situation in my own way. My ways of rationalization weren't the kind easily accessible to everyone, though it was hard to tell this to others. Besides, as in the dog matter, in some situations my ways were being shaken from their roots. For this reason, I got more angry than necessary with the dogs; some large portion of my anger coincided with the period after the barking was over. As I predicted, they couldn't dare to enter my street; that dirty slim dog pretended to come after me for a few more steps, extending his neck, he barked for one last time; then turning around, they all left together. I walked along my three-housed street contemplating; suddenly I found myself in front of my door. That means, I've contemplated, I said. Because this would happen whenever I contemplated. Before I could find the chance to take out my keys and get them ready I would suddenly see my door. Then, some other things to contemplate would come up until I reached my rocking chair in the living room: the theft lock must be unlocked; the main lock must be turned twice; room keys must be taken out of the vase. The dog matter slowed me down; I stood a little too long in front of the vase. If you fear, why are you living this far away from the city? Why are you residing at the far end house of a three-housed street?

What are you doing fifty-five steps away from even the last pavement stone? I smiled at my weird fate; looking in the mirror, of course. A sweet smile. To show that I haven't lost my past joy. Then I felt down. Why? I forgot. Wait, no; I didn't forget. The more I become lonely, the more I fear to be lonely... I moved away from the mirror; but, I knew that what I thought was something like that. The dogs got on my nerves; I will get back to myself now. Found it: The more I fear to be lonely the more my loneliness grows. This time I really smiled. Whether you saw it or not, I did smile. I haven't lost everything yet; while there is life there is hope, a barking dog never bites. Goddamnit!

Then, I saw the things surrounding me, things outside of the vase; that means, my contemplation had been over. (To keep feeling alive, it was good for a person to refer to some invariable measurements.) Then, I suddenly saw that envelope. I saw it right away since it was the only foreign thing among the familiar things in the corridor: It was on the shelf. Since the keys of the room doors were put into it, this was the right spot for the vase; the lighter which I haven't been able to use for a month, because of its flint being worn down, was also where I had left it; a book I would take with me while going to the bathroom, a sculpture that hasn't been taken into the living room because of it being broken, an ashtray as a new year's gift from the bank in which I had an account with a balance of a thousand and two hundred liras. (I would put my cigarette in it only while wearing my shoes)... all were in their proper places. That means, this



a letter



Not sent.

Your most venerable highness,

Since the moment I first saw you, I loved you so much so that I could not help writing a letter to you, explaining everything that has happened. I hope you don't take my sincerity as disrespect. Actually, my respect for you is so immense so that when we first met, through the impression I received of the milieu around us, I found it inappropriate to tell you my thoughts with a worn out language & an old fashioned narration; and immediately finding a dictionary, I took it as a duty to keep it by my side while writing these lines, to address you without turning you off. In reality, we do not have a great age gap; I could also be regarded as a literate person. Nevertheless, the differences between people can not be evaluated with such simple measures. I know that. I have mixed feelings and difficulties with a language I am not able to use well; forgive me. Surely, I could be sheltered by your 'act in accordance with whom you interact' way of understanding, as your tall friend with glasses, who always seems to be smiling though he is not, has put it. No, I revolt against this (my apologies). It occurs to me that a truly honorable person like you would not settle for just this.

Actually, since I was a little drunk when we were together (again my apologies), I put myself in such places next to you that... But, the crucial thing is me reaching beyond my... (You understand, I cannot continue). A tailor I knew... (I have to indicate one thing from the start that I'm determined to write to you with my sincere feelings, so much so that I'll bring this letter all the way to the end without ever erasing or correcting anything, but even among the first lines, I wanted to erase the... Let me at least abandon this sentence halfway through.) Yes, there was a drunken tailor I knew. He was such a fraud. Furthermore, he had tailored a very loose-fitting outfit for me. I was too young back then ☺ that, of course since you do not know him how could you tell, inconsiderate father of mine — as if we were the same age — took me to his own tailor by force; just because he paid for the sewing, I was compelled to endure that despicable outfit. Moreover this tailor — he surely has no right to be in a letter written to you, I know — was drinking during the fitting as well. As if beer was not booze, he was chugging it, in an unceremonious manner. He used to say to me “I'm a bit drunk, pardon me.” Owing to this man and the ill-fitting outfit I had to wear for years, I hate the word ‘drunk’; I would have liked to choose a better word than ‘drunk’ while I was telling you about my condition. But, as I have indicated before, I write without ever correcting, as I have so much respect for you as to be seen as I am. One should never lie in one's life; not even to a single person, right your highness? This contemptible tailor once said something despicable ☺

foreign to our language like “I had taken a little drink.” I apologize for not being able to somehow throw the image of this scumbag out of my mind. Actually, I would have liked to tell you about the pain I feel for lingering way too long in such unfortunate coincidences. Only, with your permission, I would like to indicate that, I would not even for a moment like to think that a person of your caliber (I’d like to precisely indicate that I would never associate such situations with you) would not understand this, despite never being involved in such situations. If you permit, I would like to make a paragraph; I got a little tired ☺ I feel like I am moving away from the actual matter.

I would have really liked to write my entire letter as a person who just got to know you. But, you know (such a silly phrase, isn’t it? I mean, saying ‘you know’ is so meaningless, isn’t it? I meant to say), I came to your office then, and because I was unemployed back in the days I met you, receiving your words “come on in sometime, we may help you” with immense joy, maybe I bothered you earlier than you expected. Since I have this trait, which I cannot avoid, that is to take the words spoken too seriously right away, I rushed to you the next day. In fact, in you, I have not seen the attitude of a person wearied of the unnecessary responsibility of a promise randomly given at an alcohol assembly. While talking to me, you gave me the impression that we were two equal people. As if I were a good friend who stopped by for a cup of coffee. (I would’ve liked it more if it was so.) Of course, you ordered some coffee; that is different. But I suppose,



neither yes nor no



I finished high school four years ago. In the meantime, I had been in and out of various jobs, completed my military service. I had tedious occupations such as insurance clerk, gas bill collector, medical salesman & advertisement agent. Advertising was the one occupation I felt closest to. Since I was fond of reading & writing, I was, kind of, keen on writing advertisements. That being said, I could not say that the advertisements I have prepared were much appreciated. Maybe I could not hold down that job because of my silence and timid attitudes at the company. I was probably using too many adjectives and my sentences were somehow never ending. In that same company, even the ignorant ones who were yet to write a single word properly, appeared to be more successful than me. Since I did not like gimmicks, I was not able to comprehend why cars were the “conquerors of the roads” & why razors were “conquering women’s hearts,” I guess. Currently, I am working as a journalist, if we could call this journalism. Since they did not like the titles I have been coming up with they assigned me to the ‘heart affairs post.’ Let’s see you find a cure for people’s troubles, they said. I wouldn’t make a sharp and effective journalist, apparently. Yet, I am not a complying person at all. I do not give money to beggars, I get very angry with valets who would come out

of nowhere whenever we roam around with my rich friends' cars. In my opinion, everyone should have an occupation that is beneficial to humanity. Maybe because of such ideas of mine they call me a maniac at the newspaper. Of course, they reveal their own ignorance by using this word. I asked a friend who knows a foreign language, we checked the dictionary together: A disorder of the mind that shows up in the form of a high and an uncontrollable excitement, this is how "mania" was defined. I explained this definition to the people at the newspaper; "Come on, you maniac," they responded. They find me pretentious; I feel the same about them. You, they say, you're Doctor Akın Korkmaz now; you'll heal the hearts. Now, every goddamn day, I receive tons of letters. I would like to fulfill every duty assigned to me appropriately; for that reason, I began reading psychology books. I do not understand people writing such long and nonsensical letters because of such insignificant troubles. Nevertheless, since I would like to do all of my work honestly, I began writing long and serious responses. And, I really do not understand why, but once they saw the things I have written, they again called me a maniac at the newspaper. According to them, I needed to either find a cure for their troubles or evade the matter with some vague phrases. Inspired by the books I have read probably, I was either telling them that their troubles have no solution or advising them to find the solution by themselves. Anyway, a friend taught me a few standard solutions; by just reading the first and last lines of the letters, and with a heartache indeed, I began deceiving people.

Then one day, this letter arrived. Here, I said to my friends at the newspaper, let's see you find a solution to this one. And right away, I began reading the letter to them. No one listened till the end. I read just half a page and again it was decided that I was a maniac. But, I was not the one who had written that letter. Neither could I say that I felt love or pity for M.C., the person who had written it. For me, M.C. is someone who has a disorder of the mind and psyche. Believe it or not, while I was reading this letter, a friend from the newspaper, I say 'friend' just as a figure of speech you know, said that this man resembles me. I came at him.

Then I showed the letter to some friends; there were some who found it interesting. Therefore, I found it appropriate to publish it as it was. But, I could not help adding my own comments to some parts of it, in parentheses. There were hardly any punctuation marks in the letter. A friend of mine said that it would be nicer to publish it the way it was. Furthermore, this kind of literature was now regarded as some sort of skill, apparently. I have not accepted that idea. M.C.'s already mixed up thought-order would only become more confusing that way. Other than that, I corrected the spelling of some words and that was it.

Dear Doctor Sir

I present my deepest sincere love and respect to you, I shake your hands.

Excuse me sir: Between the years 1967–1971, I mean since 1967, up to this day I really deeply sincerely honestly



the wooden horse



**B**ring us some fresh air now; tell us how the Wooden Horse was made. How the trap was set; sing its song. The walls sustaining their strength even today are from the Roman Empire. Tell us a fine tale, I said to him, so that I may also tell some new things to the world. Once upon a time, in the well you see here, there was water, enough for the whole city. Apparently, the poet was already much afflicted; after these words he began telling such a tale that it became impossible to silence him again. The lowland could be viewed once atop this hill & the river would flow among the greens just like the way I indicate with my finger. If only you knew the kind of hardships they had gone through to construct this Wooden Horse. Calling it a gift of the gods, they dragged it up here, the highest spot in the city, with such endeavor. Some of these hills are just hills as you know them, & some of them, I mean the ones with doors, they had been constructed as graves. Yes, inside the Wooden Horse was filled with warriors. Anyone who had a mind wouldn't have let the Wooden Horse in the city. Nevertheless, the gods had already decided to help us, nothing could've stood before that. Therefore, people hadn't been able to see this immense danger. Be careful, your feet may slip while jumping over the rocks. Some of our

warriors getting on the ships had pretended to leave. How had they fallen for this hoax? Thus had the gods wanted it. This Wooden Horse is sold at the information booth by the entrance for ten liras. Once the darkness had settled at night our warriors had scattered around the city like bullets. Bullet here is just a figure of speech, you know; back then there were no bullets yet. As you walk among the ruins of the city you will see old rocks. Some of them are just rocks as you know them; I mean, they're natural rocks that had been tasked with forming humps at the time this Wooden Horse was constructed and they haven't changed their conditions since then. On these rocks Odysseus, some of you know him as Ulysses, ☺ just like Aphrodite and Venus they're also the same, had taken his sword out of its scabbard, while getting ready to attack the enemy. The four rocks visible on the left were the fish market in the past. As the good ol' fishes are no more, the fish market, having consisted of one thousand four hundred and twelve rocks, is now also represented only by these four rocks, just the way it goes in the parliament, ha-ha. While showing you the big temple, I will repeat this joke one more time for the ones who couldn't get it. Yes, for the new arrangements to be made to restore the fish market to its old state, these four rocks are also numbered; now it is just a matter of waiting for the funds required for the transportation of one thousand four hundred and eight rocks. And as you know, our warriors getting on their horses, pardon me, leaping out from inside of the Wooden Horse, our cavalry, pardon me, our soldiers, had rapidly looted the

entire city. These ruins are from the sixth settlement after the looted city, and thus what would eventually become of the cities even if there were no Wooden Horse becomes apparent, ha-ha. I regard it as a duty to state that for the German travelers in our group, I will arrange a panel discussion concerning the last two jokes, before we get on our buses. Yes, the warriors spreading through the steep hills of the city moved forward, leaving ruins behind them; and circling around & back we finally arrived at the entrance door. Departure will be right after the food service; toilets with no running water are right across from the Wooden Horse whose concrete was just poured.

The half naked human herd teetering through history, which makes sun and dust gain meaning, were wiping the sweat accumulated on their inexpressive faces while watching their guide. What to say about this ugly horse base, he thought. A square shaped concrete base had been poured; wooden formwork were still in place. They had stabbed four planks into the concrete. They are to be the legs of the horse in the future, I guess. It was the mayor's invention, or maybe the director of the museum's, or maybe the members of the town beautification association had conceived this kindness all together: How about a Wooden Horse that looks like the old one, and so big that a troop of soldiers can fit in, located at the entrance to these unique ruins which make tourists' eyes pop out of their head, dear members! As if it wasn't enough for us to beautify our town, now we also turn a hand on the ruins. Right in front of the door, we intend to build



letter to my father



Dear Dad,

Maybe you wouldn't recall, however today it has been two years since you died. Unfortunately, during this time I couldn't become better or smarter; that's to say, I couldn't make good use of this opportunity either. Whereas, years ago, I used to think at times that I could've done many things, if you were not. Now, I have to acknowledge that the guilt was mine.

I couldn't get to tell you some things. If you lived one or two more years or returned to the world — for a little while — everything could've been different, I suppose. A lot of things lose their meanings out of despair. As you are no more, what good is a letter written to you? But, I became a professional, dad. When I recount a memory I have about you to my close circle of friends, "how nice," they say, "you should use this somewhere." Therefore, I apologize dear dad; I have to use you somewhere; in this letter for example. The passage of time gains value only as such, apparently; one's past life gains meaning only as such. While recounting the incidents related to you, I'm actually trying not to reveal what kind of a person you were; keeping my actual father to my self, in my mind. Then, when they couldn't understand

you, I get angry with them. When you got angry with me — this used to happen quite frequently — “What you see in the mirror I see in the ‘wawl’” you used to say. Together with mom, we used to ridicule the way you said ‘wawl.’ Today, before the people younger than me — there are people younger than me now, dad — I use this saying of yours; they laugh. They don’t sense the actual reason why I use this saying, of course. They suppose I try to put you in a ridiculous position, or usually, to ridicule the older generations altogether. I’m possibly not able to indicate what exactly I mean to say. That means, I’m not able to express the love within a smile. The youth of today is something else, dad. They infer only one meaning out of a word. Then I really lose it: Forgetting my actual purpose, I try to make them appreciate you. Actually, it isn’t that I don’t sense the nonsense in this struggle. As long as they don’t feel like you felt while the richest man of the country was holding your coat or insisting on helping you wear the coat by saying, “Please Mr. Cemil, allow me,” as long as they don’t feel proud as if they are in that coat, what good is them appreciating or understanding you? Or as long as they don’t feel embarrassed like you did before the party leader who, around the time you first got in the parliament and after you asked for the party leader’s permission to take a few days off, said, “Mr. Cemil, I guess you are new here,” what is the point of them learning such little details? Who could feel as relieved as you did after hearing: “You could take a leave whenever you like, Mr. Cemil; you don’t need my permission.”

These are the things you already know, dad; let me tell you a little bit about the things you don't know: For example, how was your burial service? Who did attend? How was your funeral prayer? Most of it went off without a hitch, dad. I cried. Since I was in a 'reputable' position at the school back then, a wreath and a fair amount of faculty members were sent by bus. Some people, whom you have never seen throughout your life, pretended to contemplate on the inconceivable truth of death by clasping their hands and lowering their heads before your grave. After the coffin was put into the pit, large concrete blocks were placed on top of it. (I don't like this technical tradition dad; I'm against impassable obstacles.) We didn't bury you at the cemetery where mom lies. Some friends saw this as fitting. They want the conflicts between people to continue, even after death. The friend who separated you from mom in the grave by taking advantage of my grief, doesn't actually in any way believe in the other side and such. Whereas, "your mother would've wanted it this way," he told me. You never liked this guy and for some reason you were friendly with him. And for that reason, even if he had no right whatsoever, he used to call you 'dad.' Now, I'm totally against people calling one another 'mom, aunty, son, brother,' unless they are relatives. Since I have no real relatives left, I'm against all these unpleasanties. Everyone should call one another by their names. As a rational person you also wouldn't have much to say against this opinion, I suppose.



railroad storytellers  
— a dream



In a mountaintop town, far away from the big cities of the country, we were three storytellers working at a railroad station. We had three cabins side by side attached to the main building. A young Jew, a young woman, and I. We were working as itinerant storytellers. It couldn't be said that our sales were great, because the trains would seldom stop by at our station. Neither could it be said that we were making money on the days only the mail trains showed up. On the mail trains arriving in the afternoons, mostly apple, ayran, & sucuk-bread would be sold. Usually, at those hours, we, the storytellers, would be asleep. This way we would be well rested for the night: Because all our hopes were bound to the express train passing by our station after midnight. Most of the time, the other itinerant sellers wouldn't be awake at those hours. Well, there were also times when we (the storytellers) also overslept and missed the midnight express. Although we were on good terms with the stationmaster, for some reason he, the only civil servant at the station, would often neglect to wake us up. We were granting him the right in a way: He was working as a switchman, checking telegraphs, arranging all the signs, selling train tickets, opening & closing doors ... All this work was on one man's shoulders. Just to get in his good books,

we were often giving our stories for free; yet still he was sometimes forgetting to wake us up. Most of the time, we had to wake up by ourselves. This wasn't easy obviously considering the fact that we were writing stories all day long. Yes, we were sleeping in the afternoons; however, inspiration would usually arrive at dusk & not let go of our collars until the late hours of the night. The stationmaster used to make fun of this "not let go of our collars" phrase; in such instances, forgetting that he was working all alone, that he couldn't meet every demand by himself, we were violently criticizing him: Couldn't he just go to the bother of stopping by our cabins, which were attached to the stationmaster's room, upon the arrival of the express? We could be regarded as co-workers in a way. Moreover, on some nights, skipping meals, we were making clean-copies of the handwritten stories with a single typewriter in the stationmaster's room. Since I was the first to start working as a storyteller, my friends were giving me the first turn in typing. But, I was usually giving my turn to the young Jew. I loved that slim & sickly young Jew so much.

Yes, in a way, we could've been regarded as the civil servants of the railroad administration. Our cabins had been constructed on the area allotted for the station building; moreover, they were identical to each other and had the same architectural properties as the main building. The stationmaster was sarcastically calling us "civil servant storytellers." Then would begin that everlasting argument: No, we couldn't have been considered for civil servant positions:

First of all, we were being paid per piece. Besides, since our payments were being made by express passengers, they couldn't have been regarded as official payments. The stationmaster then was calling us "trader storytellers." Actually, I wanted to be regarded neither as a civil servant nor as a tradesman; we were artists. We should've had a privileged status. Nevertheless, it couldn't be said that we had a 'privileged status' while we were pushing one another, trying to make the passengers like our goods during the nights when ayran, apple, and sucuk-bread sellers were awake. In order to sell our goods we were shouting out as much as the other sellers. Of course, the young Jew's voice wasn't coming out as high, & the young woman was getting stuck in between the food sellers and the passengers getting off the train. We didn't have many goods to sell anyway. With the stationmaster's ramshackle typewriter, we were able to make only one or two copies of each story. The last copies would always come out faded; it wasn't possible to find buyers for those. If we couldn't sell the stories in a period of one or two nights, they would get old; it would get harder to find customers for them. Because we would always write stories on current topics, whenever we handed those old-fashioned stories written one or two days ago to the passengers, they would say with sour faces, "we already know these, don't you have new stuff?" and throw our stale stories at our faces. Then apple and ayran sellers would take over our turns.

We had other hardships as well: Trains weren't always pulling in before our cabins. The stationmaster was making



## about the author

OĞUZ ATAY was born in 1934, in Inebolu, a Black Sea coast town in northern Turkey. He went to school in Ankara because of his father's position as a member of parliament. Later, he moved to Istanbul to study Civil Engineering at Istanbul Technical University. Aside from working as an engineer, he began teaching at the Istanbul State Engineering and Architecture Academy, and in 1975 became an associate professor. He is best known for his novels, such as *Tutunamayanlar* (1972) and *Teblikeli Oyunlar* (1973). His book of collected stories, *Korkuyu Beklerken* (Waiting for Fear), was published in 1975. Atay died in 1977, due to a brain tumor, before he could complete his novel *Türkiye'nin Rubu*. He gained widespread recognition only after his death, in the 1980s, when his controversial books were republished and found a wealth of readers.

## about the translator

FULYA PEKER is a New York and Istanbul-based theater artist, poet, and educator. She holds a BA in Theater (H.U. Ankara State Conservatory), and an MA in Theater, Literature, History, and Criticism (Brooklyn College/CUNY). She has performed in works by Richard Foreman, John Zorn, Robert Ashley, Katsura Kan, Object Collection and David Michalek. Some of her most prominent credits as a writer/director include: *Requiem Aeternam Deo*, *The Void*, *The Plague*, *The Red Book*, *DEM*, *The Blind!(s)*, and *Maldoror*. She is the founder and artistic director of Katharsis Performance Project and Modern Mythologies Project. Her articles on experimental theater, translations, and poems have been published both in Turkey and in the USA. Currently, she teaches and continues to present performances and workshops internationally.



## COLOPHON



WAITING FOR FEAR  
was handset in InDesign cc.

The text typeface is IM *Fell Double Pica*

The titles are set in EMIGRE *Elektrix Light*

The *Fell Types* are digitally reproduced by Igino Marini, [iginomarini.com](http://iginomarini.com)

Book design & typesetting: Alessandro Segalini

Cover image: *Egon Schiele in Orange Jacket*, 1913

Cover design: CMP

WAITING FOR FEAR  
is published by Contra Mundum Press.



Contra Mundum Press · New York · London · Melbourne



## CONTRA MUNDUM PRESS

*Dedicated to the value & the indispensable importance of the individual voice, to works that test the boundaries of thought & experience.*

The primary aim of Contra Mundum is to publish translations of writers who in their use of form and style are *à rebours*, or who deviate significantly from more programmatic & spurious forms of experimentation. Such writing attests to the volatile nature of modernism. Our preference is for works that have not yet been translated into English, are out of print, or are poorly translated, for writers whose thinking & aesthetics are in opposition to timely or mainstream currents of thought, value systems, or moralities. We also reprint obscure and out-of-print works we consider significant but which have been forgotten, neglected, or overshadowed.

There are many works of fundamental significance to *Weltliteratur* (& *Weltkultur*) that still remain in relative oblivion, works that alter and disrupt standard circuits of thought — these warrant being encountered by the world at large. It is our aim to render them more visible.

For the complete list of forthcoming publications, please visit our website. To be added to our mailing list, send your name and email address to: [info@contramundum.net](mailto:info@contramundum.net)



Contra Mundum Press

P.O. Box 1326

New York, NY 10276

USA

## OTHER CONTRA MUNDUM PRESS TITLES

- 2012** *Gilgamesh*  
Gh erasim Luca, *Self-Shadowing Prey*  
Rainer J. Hanshe, *The Abdication*  
Walter Jackson Bate, *Negative Capability*  
Mikl os Szentkuthy, *Marginalia on Casanova*  
Fernando Pessoa, *Philosophical Essays*
- 2013** Elio Petri, *Writings on Cinema & Life*  
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Greek Music Drama*  
Richard Foreman, *Plays with Films*  
Louis-Auguste Blanqui, *Eternity by the Stars*  
Mikl os Szentkuthy, *Towards the One & Only Metaphor*  
Josef Winkler, *When the Time Comes*
- 2014** William Wordsworth, *Fragments*  
Josef Winkler, *Natura Morta*  
Fernando Pessoa, *The Transformation Book*  
Emilio Villa, *The Selected Poetry of Emilio Villa*  
Robert Kelly, *A Voice Full of Cities*  
Pier Paolo Pasolini, *The Divine Mimesis*  
Mikl os Szentkuthy, *Prae, Vol. 1*
- 2015** Federico Fellini, *Making a Film*  
Robert Musil, *Thought Flights*  
S ndor Tar, *Our Street*  
Lorand Gaspar, *Earth Absolute*  
Josef Winkler, *The Graveyard of Bitter Oranges*  
Ferit Edg , *Noone*  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Narcissus*  
Ahmad Shamlu, *Born Upon the Dark Spear*

- 2016 Jean-Luc Godard, *Phrases*  
 Otto Dix, *Letters, Vol. 1*  
 Maura Del Serra, *Ladder of Oaths*  
 Pierre Senges, *The Major Refutation*  
 Charles Baudelaire, *My Heart Laid Bare & Other Texts*
- 2017 Joseph Kessel, *Army of Shadows*  
 Rainer J. Hanshe & Federico Gori, *Shattering the Muses*  
 Gérard Depardieu, *Innocent*  
 Claude Mouchard, *Entangled — Papers! — Notes*
- 2018 Miklós Szentkuthy, *Black Renaissance*  
 Adonis & Pierre Joris, *Conversations in the Pyrenees*
- 2019 Charles Baudelaire, *Belgium Stripped Bare*  
 Robert Musil, *Unions*  
 Iceberg Slim, *Night Train to Sugar Hill*  
 Marquis de Sade, *Aline & Valcour*
- 2020 *A City Full of Voices: Essays on the Work of Robert Kelly*  
 Rédoine Faïd, *Outlaw*  
 Carmelo Bene, *I Appeared to the Madonna*  
 Paul Celan, *Microliths They Are, Little Stones*  
 Zsuzsa Selyem, *It's Raining in Moscow*  
 Bérengère Viennot, *Trumpspeak*  
 Robert Musil, *Theater Symptoms*  
 Dejan Lukić, *The Oyster (AGRODOLCE SERIES)*  
 Miklós Szentkuthy, *Chapter on Love*
- 2021 Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen*  
 Marguerite Duras, *The Darkroom*  
 Andrew Dickos, *Honor Among Thieves*

#### **SOME FORTHCOMING TITLES**

- Robert Musil, *Literature & Politics*  
 Evelyne Grossman, *The Creativity of Crisis*

# THE FUTURE OF KULCHUR

## A PATRONAGE PROJECT

LEND CONTRA MUNDUM PRESS (CMP) YOUR SUPPORT

With bookstores and presses around the world struggling to survive, and many actually closing, we are forming this patronage project as a means for establishing a continuous & stable foundation to safeguard our longevity. Through this patronage project we would be able to remain free of having to rely upon government support &/or other official funding bodies, not to speak of their timelines & impositions. It would also free CMP from suffering the vagaries of the publishing industry, as well as the risk of submitting to commercial pressures in order to persist, thereby potentially compromising the integrity of our catalog.

CAN YOU SACRIFICE \$10 A WEEK FOR KULCHUR?

For the equivalent of merely 2–3 coffees a week, you can help sustain CMP and contribute to the future of kulchur. To participate in our patronage program we are asking individuals to donate \$500 per year, which amounts to \$42/month, or \$10/week. Larger donations are of course welcome and beneficial. All donations are tax-deductible through our fiscal sponsor Fractured Atlas. If preferred, donations can be made in two installments. We are seeking a minimum of 300 patrons per year and would like for them to commit to giving the above amount for a period of three years.

#### WHAT WE OFFER

Part tax-deductible donation, part exchange, for your contribution you will receive every CMP book published during the patronage period as well as 20 books from our back catalog. When possible, signed or limited editions of books will be offered as well.

#### WHAT WILL CMP DO WITH YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS?

Your contribution will help with basic general operating expenses, yearly production expenses (book printing, warehouse & catalog fees, etc.), advertising and outreach, and editorial, proofreading, translation, typography, design and copyright fees. Funds may also be used for participating in book fairs and staging events. Additionally, we hope to rebuild the *Hyperion* section of the website in order to modernize it.

From Pericles to Mæcenās & the Renaissance patrons, it is the magnanimity of such individuals that have helped the arts to flourish. Be a part of helping your kulchur flourish; be a part of history.

#### HOW

To lend your support & become a patron, please visit the subscription page of our website: [contramundum.net/subscription](http://contramundum.net/subscription)

For any questions, write us at: [info@contramundum.net](mailto:info@contramundum.net)

Oğuz Atay (1934–1977), one of the most influential figures of 20<sup>th</sup> century Turkish literature, was not only a writer and a professor, but also a civil engineer. Aside from his widely acclaimed novels, in this book of collected stories, Atay engineers the language of a historically multilayered society that was in the midst of a cultural and political transition. By smoothly mending the autobiographical and the fictional, he invites the reader into a maze of seamlessly shifting narrative voices.

Atay cracks the walls constructed over time between singular and plural pronouns, between the rather ambiguous victims & victors of each story. Without merely trying to impose pity for the ‘other,’ he traces the existential conflicts of different ‘selves’ struggling to survive, and peels away the layers of each isolated & alienated persona, while standing at an equally critical distance to the social stratifications each layer signifies. Atay’s lingual precision in short-circuiting familiar processes of reasoning and memory within the daily flow of time, along with his dark, yet highly ironic tone in dismantling the edifices of social norms call to mind writers such as Dostoevsky, Kafka, and Joyce.

This is the first translation of *Waiting for Fear* into English.

“Fulya Peker’s masterly translation brings the complexities of Oğuz Atay’s deeply ironic, multilayered, parodic, polyphonic text to English with a clear affinity for the source text, and displays a deep understanding of what Atay was trying to achieve in Turkish.”

—Armağan Ekici

