



The Poetics of Migrant Everyday Life in Fakir Baykurt's Duisburg

Fakir Baykurt'un Duisburg Treni'nde Göçmen
Gündeliğinin PoetikasıTreni

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Abstract

Fakir Baykurt's *Duisburg Treni* places ordinary exchanges under pressure: an interview becomes an inquiry into the interviewer's life, and an offer of leave changes meaning when its cost is announced. I examine five stories from the 2015 Literatür edition to show how such shifts shape the collection's social realism. Close readings follow self-address and the framing of private letters, then turn to the persistence of working time and the uncertain consequences of protest and planting. Bakhtin's account of dialogic relations helps explain how speakers question and answer themselves. Lefebvre and Régulier clarify the reach of employment into hours ostensibly free of work. I call the connection between these narrative choices and unequal opportunities to know, answer, or act *relational realism*. The poetics of migrant everyday life describes its recurrence and variation

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across the stories. Hüseyin's sympathy offers no justification for reading another person's letters; elsewhere, permission to take leave proves financially unusable for some of those who requested it. The endings introduce a further uncertainty, separating what a character does from what that action may achieve. Letters and recordings serve as portable archives where the survival and renewed accessibility of words affect an encounter. By tracing the placement of questions, conditions, and responses, I extend existing thematic and structural readings of Baykurt. His social detail acquires force through the telling, and comparable pressures leave his characters with markedly different choices.

Keywords: *Fakir Baykurt, migrant everyday life, relational realism, narrative form, portable archives*

Öz

Fakir Baykurt'un *Duisburg Treni* adlı eserinde gündelik bir konuşma, sözün kime yöneldiğine ve yanıtın ne zaman geldiğine göre anlam değiştirir. Bu makalede 2015 Literatür baskısından seçtiğim beş öyküyü yakından okuyarak bu değişimlerin toplumcu gerçekçi anlatıdaki işlevini inceliyorum. İncelemeye, görüşmecinin kendi sorularına yanıt verdiği açılış öyküsüyle mektupların izinsiz okunduğu "Mektupçu"yu karşılaştırarak başlıyorum. Ardından "Bayram İzni"ndeki ücretsiz izin koşulunu, Habil'in işten ayrıldıktan sonra da süren çalışma alışkanlıklarıyla birlikte ele alıyorum. "Yuh Yuh!"daki ses kaydı ve son öyküdeki fidan dikme eylemi ise anlatının bildirdiği sonuçlarla kişilerin geleceğe ilişkin beklentilerini ayırmayı gerektiriyor. Bahtin'in diyalojik ilişkiler yaklaşımı, kişilerin kendi sözlerine dönerek kararlarını nasıl sorguladığını açıklıyor. Lefebvre ve Régulier'nin çalışma zamanı çözümlemesinden, vardiya dışında kalan saatlerin neden ücret ilişkilerinden ve bedensel alışkanlıklardan bağımsız olmadığını anlamak için yararlanıyorum. İlişkisel gerçekçilik terimiyle, anlatım tercihleri ile bilme, yanıt verme ve eyleme olanaklarındaki eşitsizlik arasındaki bağı adlandırıyorum. Göçmen gündeliğinin poetikası, bu bağın öyküler arasındaki tekrar ve değişimini ifade ediyor. Hüseyin'in bir ailenin sıkıntısını anlaması, mektuplarını okuma hakkını ona vermiyor; izin kararı da bu iznin maliyetini herkes için karşılanabilir kılmıyor. Sonlarda ise gerçekleşen eylem ile güvence altına alınamayan sonuç ayrışıyor. Taşınabilir arşiv kavramını, sözlerin saklanması ve başka bir ortamda yeniden erişilebilir olması karşılaşmayı etkilediğinde, mektup ve kayıtlarla sınırlı olarak kullanıyorum. Soruların, koşulların ve yanıtların sırasını izleyerek önceki tematik ve yapısal okumalara sahne düzeyinde katkıda bulunuyorum. Çözümlemelerde alıntılanan seslerin kime ait olduğunu, anlatıcının neyi bildirdiğini ve neyi belirsiz bıraktığını gözetiyorum. İlk ve son öykünün karşılaştırılması, bir yaşamı anlatma yükümlülüğüyle yaşanan yerde iz bırakma isteğini ilişkilendiriyor. Böylece toplumsal ayrıntının gücünü korurken, benzer baskıların bütün kişilere aynı seçeneği ya da sonucu vermediğini gösteriyorum.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Fakir Baykurt, göçmen gündelik hayatı, ilişkisel gerçekçilik, anlatı biçimi, taşınabilir arşivler*

Introduction

An interviewer questions her reflection. Elsewhere in *Duisburg Treni*, a worker opens letters addressed to his coworkers, while two advocates of a holiday discover that they cannot afford the leave they have won. Baykurt builds these encounters around changes in what a person can know or expect. A condition attached to an offer revises its apparent generosity; a wife's letter unsettles her husband's reassurance. A completed action may be followed by wishes whose eventual fulfilment the story leaves open. The order in which readers receive this information shapes their judgment of the people involved.

I argue that Baykurt's social realism draws much of its force from the gap between being able to do something and having the right or power to determine what follows. Hüseyin can understand a family's distress through letters he has no permission to read. Emine can make a protest heard while remaining subject to inspection. I use *relational realism* to describe the narrative handling of these unequal capacities. The poetics of migrant everyday life refers to the ways such arrangements recur and change across the selected stories. The terms connect the details of individual encounters with the collection's broader treatment of everyday life. I use them descriptively, without proposing a new school of realism.

Baykurt's narrator often condemns exploitation openly. Yet this political commitment leaves room for inconsistency in a worker's account or for sympathy on the part of someone who violates another person's privacy. A judgment voiced by the narrator can sit beside an exchange that complicates it. In reading these passages, I attend to both. The presence of several voices does not make every position equally authoritative, and comparable vulnerabilities may have very different political consequences.

The analysis concentrates on "Duisburg Treni," "Bayram İzni," "Mektupçu," "Yuh Yuh!," and "Ardımızda Meşeler Yeşersin...". I begin with the investigator's self-interview and the letter-reader's intrusion, two sharply different ways of making a private life known. The discussion then follows the price of holiday leave and the habits that outlast Habil's employment. Recorded protest and tree planting bring the question of consequences to the fore. This is the order of the argument, not the order of the book. Alongside these pairings, I read the title and closing stories together in the positions they occupy in the collection.

M.F. Yanardag's reportorial account and structural classifications, E. Dervisoglu's attention to domestic conditions, and A.O. Ozturk's reading of German characters provide specific points of departure. I ask how the features they identify acquire their force as a story unfolds. When does an answer become inadequate? What happens when the price of a concession is disclosed only after it has been announced? Following these changes in five stories allows a focused account of Baykurt's technique, including the moments that resist a consistent moral division between his characters.

1. Critical positions and analytical procedure

1.1. From social detail to the organization of an encounter

Yanardag traces the reportorial character of Baykurt's stories to the writer's use of what he has seen and heard (2007: 261). His structural study also distinguishes plot, character,

space, time, and narrative perspective, including combinations of authorial and character-based narration (2010: 45, 67–69). These accounts establish the importance of observation and the range of Baykurt’s narrative methods. At the scale of a single exchange, however, the timing of a question or a change of address demands closer attention. Experience may supply the material, but the writer still decides when and through whose words readers encounter it.

“Bayram İzni” exposes the importance of that timing. Yanardag describes a struggle for leave in his thematic survey and workers declining leave in his structural account (Yanardag, 2007: 239; Yanardag, 2010: 53). Both descriptions can be sustained: the workers receive an offer whose financial terms divide those who demanded it. The announcement, the qualification, and the later list of names explain the passage from one situation to the other. A similar question arises from Yanardag’s identification of resistance to bribery in “Yuh Yuh!” (2007: 230). How does the story give the protest force while ending before the inspection’s outcome is known?

Dervisoglu records Habil’s early rising and cramped accommodation in a discussion of migrant families (2016: 13–14). That observation opens a question about the day narrated in the closing story. Habil wakes at the familiar hour after his employment has ended; the memory of work then carries him towards the factory before he turns back. The routine does more than establish hardship. It initiates an action and gives direction to a day whose former purpose has disappeared. Reading this sequence extends the account of domestic conditions into an analysis of remembered and redirected time.

In an online critical essay, Ozturk reads Elke as a differentiated German character, attending to her rejection of her father’s Nazi past and her relationship with her daughter (2002). His reading also acknowledges the writer’s normative commitments. The coexistence of differentiation and judgment is important here. Elke quotes her father inside an account of her own life, while the framing narrator evaluates the industrial landscape beyond the window. I examine how these voices are placed in relation to one another, treating Ozturk’s essay as prior criticism and retaining the distinction between this online publication and peer-reviewed scholarship.

L.A. Adelson’s introduction warns against asking literature for a comprehensive portrait of Turkish social life or using comparisons that erase specific Turkish and German referents (2005, Introduction). This warning is pertinent to a collection whose social relations extend beyond migrant protagonists. M. McGowan’s corpus, by contrast, is defined through a substantial relationship with Germany and publication in German, with no assumption of uniform themes or techniques (2007); T. Cheesman’s preface approaches settlement through novelists and novels (2007, Preface). Their differently delimited projects offer useful contexts without placing Baykurt’s Turkish-language stories on a developmental ladder towards German-language fiction. Here, migrant everyday life includes the relations created through labour migration and the non-migrant people, such as Elke, who participate in them.

1.2. What the concepts explain

I read each encounter through the distribution of information and the demands its participants make on one another. Who has access to a letter, who can set the price of an

absence, and who is expected to explain a decision? The next question is how the narrative lets readers assess these arrangements. A helpful act may look different once its informational source becomes known. An offer of leave may lose much of its value in the sentence that announces its terms. Relational realism describes the link between these changes in presentation and the social judgments they make possible.

Focalization and dialogue remain essential to this account of social realism. They help identify who perceives a situation and how one utterance answers another. Relational realism brings those techniques to bear on a recurring difficulty: a person's ability to know, speak, or act may exceed the legitimacy or effectiveness of that ability. In "Mektupçu," an institution protects private correspondence by limiting access to it. Elsewhere an intermediary speaks in the employer's interest, and a forceful refusal leaves its speaker exposed to uncertainty. Neither nationality nor institutional affiliation settles the value of a character's conduct.

For M.M. Bakhtin, dialogic relations arise between utterances voiced from positions that can answer one another. They differ from logical relations between propositions, and can include a speaker's response to their own words once some distance has opened within the utterance (1984: 183–184). Elke's self-interview makes that distance audible: a prompt can demand more than the answer has supplied. Emine's approving and apprehensive responses to her own decision work differently, disputing its consequences. Bakhtin's distinction allows both exchanges to be read as dialogic without positing a second physical speaker or classifying the collection as a polyphonic whole.

Time raises another difficulty. H. Lefebvre and C. Régulier describe the extension of measured working time into waking, meals, private life, and dwelling (1985: 191). Their account helps explain why hours outside a shift can remain subject to employment. In the holiday story, the wage cost determines who can use the offered leave; in Habil's day, an earlier schedule persists as habit. I keep these constraints distinct from repetition in the prose. The narrated waits and routines show how each constraint becomes perceptible, but a repeated interval in a story is not, on its own, evidence of a bodily rhythm.

I use "portable archives" for letters and recordings whose preservation and movement allow earlier words to be read or heard in a new setting. Their archival function lies in keeping an absent person's words available for consultation or replay. The interpretation turns on the gap between that stored utterance and the person who now handles it. Access may be concealed, invited, or imposed on an unintended audience. A signature list, which registers a present choice, serves a different purpose. So does a tree planted in one place for an uncertain future. These objects enter the comparison without all being designated archives.

1.3. Corpus and method

The five stories bring different formal problems into focus. The title story and "Mektupçu" contrast self-disclosure with unauthorized access. "Bayram İzni" can be read alongside the opening movement of Habil's day to distinguish conditional leave from the habits that survive unemployment. "Yuh Yuh!" and the planting sequence each end before a character's action has yielded all its possible effects. I therefore follow Habil's story across two sections,

moving forward through his day. This purposive selection from the twenty-two stories also permits a comparison of the opening and closing texts. It is not intended to represent the full range of migrant experience.

All references to Baykurt use the printed pagination of the November 2015 *Literatür* edition.¹ The selected stories occupy pages 1–7, 83–88, 110–116, 146–149, and 163–171; a separately headed press item begins on page 172. English translations of the Turkish passages are provided for this analysis. I distinguish the narrator’s statements from represented thought, quotation, and recorded speech, attending to whether an event is reported, remembered, conjectured, or desired. Statements about governments and employers remain claims made within the fiction. References to the reader concern the judgments the text makes possible, rather than the measured responses of an actual audience.

2. Knowing a life: self-disclosure and unauthorized access

2.1. The interviewer as respondent in “Duisburg Treni”

Elke Ostermann makes the journey to Duisburg three days a week to conduct a survey of relations between Germans and foreigners. An unemployed teacher, she depends on the supplementary income (Baykurt, 2015: 2). During one such journey she becomes the subject of her own questions. The procedure she uses to gather other people’s accounts is turned back on her private circumstances, exposing the demands that accompany an apparently ordinary request for information.

Dark vegetation and heaps of coal turn the train window into a mirror. The industrial surroundings supply the surface on which Elke encounters herself. “Frau Ostermann” alternates with “Elkeciğim” in the opening exchange (Baykurt, 2015: 2): the German honorific addresses a formal respondent, and the Turkish endearment brings her closer. Baykurt’s Turkish rendering accommodates both registers, allowing intimacy to accompany the expectation of an answer. The language of this narration should be distinguished from the language the fictional German woman might speak or think.

An invitation to become better acquainted prompts a long account of political activity, relationships, and lost employment. Elke then asks, “Özel yaşamım üstüne bu kadar bilgi yetmez mi sayın bayan?”—whether this much information about her private life is enough. Her reflection replies, “Hayır yetmez, biraz daha anlatın lütfen...” (Baykurt, 2015: 3). The courteous insistence that she continue presses against the limit she has just proposed. The word “please” makes the demand socially acceptable without making it less demanding. A flow of recollection becomes an exchange over how much she owes the questioner.

Elke would end the account; the reflected questioner asks for more. This disagreement over the sufficiency of an answer gives substance to Bakhtin’s account of distance within self-address (1984: 184). The reflection has no independent consciousness, yet its prompts place Elke under an obligation she can acknowledge or resist. Calling the passage an interior monologue captures its access to thought but leaves this local pressure unexplained. Each answer creates the occasion for a further demand, and the self-interview continues because the respondent temporarily accepts that demand.

Only after the longer recollection does the compact questionnaire appear. “İşiniz?” receives the answer “İşsiz”—occupation: unemployed—even though Elke is travelling to conduct paid survey work (Baykurt, 2015: 2, 4). The label remains in place beside the work it fails to describe. She has already explained that the authorities know nothing of her supplementary earnings. Readers thus hold together an official occupational status and the effort required to survive within it. The brief exchange draws its force from the longer account surrounding it: the questionnaire records unemployment, while the narrative shows the labour that supports the unemployed woman.

The question “Aile durumunuz?” also exceeds the bounds of a standard form. Elke answers with Doris, fares, and the number of interviews she can finish in a day. Three questionnaires earn 150 marks, of which 54 go on travel for mother and daughter. A fourth would delay their return beyond midnight (Baykurt, 2015: 4). By placing this calculation inside her answer about family status, Baykurt makes care part of the conditions under which survey knowledge is produced. The figures measure how conducting interviews can sustain a household and where that livelihood reaches its practical limit.

The account of her father introduces another response to a demand for explanation. Defending his Nazi past, he insists, “Ben de sadece buyrulanları yaptım!”—“I only did what I was ordered to do”—and repeats her question about his conscience (Baykurt, 2015: 4–5). His remembered voice contains his version of her earlier challenge; Elke’s present answer contains both. Readers hear the defence through the daughter who rejected it. The nesting gives his justification room to unfold while preserving the challenge to its authority. Neither his words nor the question as he recalls it can be treated as a direct statement by the narrator.

This family history returns the opening recollection of a train to Buchenwald to a larger sequence of mediated memories (Baykurt, 2015: 1, 4–6). A novel, family speech, and television testimony offer different routes to the past. Doris’s refusal of money from her grandparents turns that inheritance into a decision with immediate financial consequences (Baykurt, 2015: 5). The connection concerns participation, responsibility, and the cost of sustaining a relationship. It does not make the contemporary survey equivalent to the camp system. Buchenwald carries weight here because subsequent voices and responses develop the memory introduced by the place-name.

At the close of the self-interview, Elke turns from her reflection to touch Doris: “Sen de varsin!”—“You are here too!” (Baykurt, 2015: 6). The daughter already present in her calculations now receives the gesture. An obligation described in answers becomes a relationship enacted through touch. The narrator then voices direct judgments about labour and industrial domination in the closing panorama (Baykurt, 2015: 6–7). Ozturk’s differentiated character and Yanardag’s plural narration can be read together through these changes of address and scale. Elke gives an account of others’ claims on her while the narrator places her journey within a wider political judgment.

2.2. Sympathy without entitlement in “Mektupçu”

Mail arrives at ten in the morning in “Mektupçu.” Night-shift workers collect it before going to sleep; other residents are at work or already asleep. Hüseyin’s access to the mailbox

develops into a habit of opening his coworkers' letters, reading them, and resealing the envelopes with glue (Baykurt, 2015: 146). Baykurt tells the reader early on what the recipients have yet to discover. From then on, an intact envelope means different things to them and to us: its apparently reassuring surface is the result of concealment. The later confrontation begins from a discrepancy the narrative has already established.

Before Hüseyin is confronted, Baykurt gives him a considerate act. Having secretly learned what Hakkı's wife has requested, he helps Hakkı buy it by disguising the shopping trip as an errand of his own (Baykurt, 2015: 146–147). The trick resembles the resealed envelope. Both preserve a helpful or harmless appearance by concealing how he knows what he knows. His discretion and concern complicate the intrusion: calling him an intermediary describes a role he performs, but leaves his right to perform it in doubt. The help he offers makes the ethical problem more difficult to dismiss.

Asiye states her own claim to privacy: “Kendi mektuplarımı kendim yazıyorum. Sırrımız gizimiz aleme dökülüp saçılmasın” (Baykurt, 2015: 148). She writes the letters herself so that their private affairs will remain private. The repeated forms of *kendi* insist on her authorship. Learning to write has removed an intermediary at one end of the correspondence; Hüseyin has installed himself at the other. Readers encounter her attempt to control the audience in the knowledge that it has already failed. The quoted letter and its narrative frame make control over composition visibly different from control over circulation.

She goes on to ask whether Cemil has forgotten how to read and write, suggesting that a friend read the letter if necessary. The conditional reproach challenges an unresponsive husband; it does not establish that he is illiterate (Baykurt, 2015: 148). Her complaint also precedes the conversation in which Hüseyin raises the family's circumstances. By the time Cemil says “Rahatları iyi!”—“They are comfortable!”—the reader has heard much that his answer excludes. Longer complaints frame the reassurance on either side. The absent wife consequently occupies more of the text than the husband speaking in the scene.

The reader now shares an uncomfortable advantage with Hüseyin: both can test the husband's answer against the letter. Only Hüseyin has gained that advantage by intruding on the family's correspondence. Baykurt supplies enough of Asiye's voice to sustain sympathy for her, while keeping the manner of access in view. The accusation alone would give little sense of the neglected household; Hüseyin's explanation alone could make his interference seem justified. Their placement around the letter allows his understanding and his wrongdoing to remain visible together. In this encounter, *relational realism* describes the failure of knowledge and entitlement to coincide.

Hüseyin drops the letters when İbrahim appears. He invokes İbrahim's prospective role as muhtar, a local headman, and urges him to intervene with Cemil. İbrahim responds by asking what right he has to open other people's correspondence (Baykurt, 2015: 148–149). The proposed help for a family is interrupted by a challenge concerning its privacy. Later, “Nerden öğrendin?”—“How did you find out?”—turns to İbrahim's own unannounced intention to seek office (Baykurt, 2015: 149). Hüseyin has tried to enlist a future official's authority and instead drawn attention to his unexplained knowledge of that man's plans.

Hüseyin repeats the question to himself, and the text gives no source for this particular knowledge. İbrahim reports the intrusion without naming anyone; the mailboxes are subsequently moved into the management office. The narrator welcomes İbrahim's discretion with "Bereket," echoing the earlier qualified relief that Hüseyin kept the secrets he read (Baykurt, 2015: 146, 149). The echo turns discretion into an object of judgment. Hüseyin keeps information acquired without permission. İbrahim withholds names while seeking to prevent further intrusion. The same evaluative word accompanies markedly different ways of protecting a secret.

The office protects the correspondence by changing who can reach it. Hüseyin, still curious, now studies recipients' faces, wondering whether he can read the letters in their eyes (Baykurt, 2015: 149). The narrative gives no confirmation that he succeeds. His effort has moved from words he could repeatedly consult to an expression he must interpret without verification. Access to the material record made his earlier knowledge possible; once that access is withdrawn, curiosity survives with a much less reliable object. The ending gives the archive metaphor a precise limit.

3. Time released, time still governed

3.1. The changing object of permission in "Bayram İzni"

Bekir's demand for holiday leave grows within a workforce whose habits and circumstances differ. He still fears the descent into the mine after many coworkers have adjusted; in his account, his contract ties leaving mining to returning to Turkey (Baykurt, 2015: 83). Prayer rooms are available, but shifts affect who can worship together (Baykurt, 2015: 84). İbrahim's agitation nevertheless attracts people with different religious habits. Shared religious space has not secured shared time, and the common demand brings these differently placed workers together without erasing their differences.

Talk and exchanged looks lead to a spoken pledge of solidarity. Chosen to represent the group, Bekir demands equal treatment for religious holidays. When management postpones an answer, the workers renew their commitment with "Anca beraber, kanca beraber," affirming that they will stand together (Baykurt, 2015: 86–87). The formula commits them publicly before the cost of participation has been assigned to individuals. Its later confrontation with the list of signatures gives this familiar saying a particular role in the dispute. The question becomes what their words will bind them to do.

Cevat returns three days later with "İstedığınız oldu arkadaşlar!"—"You have got what you wanted, friends!" The celebration precedes the condition: "Ama ücretsiz"—"But unpaid" (Baykurt, 2015: 87). Those two words leave the days off intact while changing their value to the workers. The reader must revisit an achievement already declared complete. Cevat's announcement grants permission at the same moment that it makes accepting permission a financial sacrifice. The sequence explains why neither a refusal of leave nor an unqualified victory adequately describes the episode.

Cevat then asks what "our company" would do if every national group demanded paid holidays of its own, inviting the workers to put themselves in management's place (Baykurt,

2015: 87–88). “Our” draws the listeners into the reasoning of the party that controls payment. As translator, Cevat also becomes an advocate for the decision he transmits. The workers he greets as friends are asked to identify with the employer’s costs. The references to national rules belong to that justification and remain claims voiced by a character, rather than independent evidence about labour law.

A cardboard list turns the public pledge into separate written decisions. Sixteen workers sign, but Bekir and İbrahim are absent. Baykurt singles out some who have scarcely spoken during the dispute (Baykurt, 2015: 88). The names alter the prominence established by the earlier speeches; those sixteen people matter through what they record, although their motives remain unreported. The narrator’s “ne yazık” registers disappointment at the leaders’ withdrawal. Economic pressure makes their decision understandable without cancelling this judgment. Baykurt leaves the constraint and the disappointment side by side.

Another three days pass before Cevat takes the list to management. The first wait had suspended an institutional answer; the second ends by making the workers’ responses countable (Baykurt, 2015: 87–88). Both intervals are compressed, drawing attention to what has changed between them. The opening claim to collective resolve gives way to a record of different choices. Neither the pledge nor the two leaders’ withdrawal speaks for everyone. The sixteen names register acceptance of unpaid leave, although the story supplies no subsequent holiday scene or completed strike.

Even away from the shift, the workers remain dependent on wages. Lefebvre and Régulier’s account of working time extending into other activities helps explain this reach of the employment relation (1985: 191). Management can release the men from attendance while fixing what their absence will cost. Baykurt makes that power felt through a congratulation followed by a condition, then through the distance between a public pledge and a signed name. The two waits regulate what the narration makes visible at each stage. Their recurrence in the prose should be distinguished from the financial terms under which the men act.

The final exchange returns to the cost. İbrahim asks how they could take leave if their earnings were deducted; Bekir repeats “Alamadık”—“We could not obtain it”—and denies that they have holiday leave (Baykurt, 2015: 88). Retrospectively, their demand has included the ability to use the days granted. Yet the sixteen signatures remain beside their account of failure. This is the change of terms linking Yanardag’s descriptions of a demand and a refusal: formally, permission has arrived, but its advocates now confront a different practical choice. The story returns the two men to sleep with the disagreement unresolved.

3.2. The former shift inside Habil’s present day

Habil recalls twenty-two years of work through a sequence of demands he has met: “Gel dediniz geldim, çalış dediniz çalıştım”—he came when told to come and worked when told to work. He has now signed an agreement preceding his departure (Baykurt, 2015: 163–164). State and company payments enter his account later, along with an offer available today but not tomorrow (Baykurt, 2015: 165–167). These terms give his agreement the urgency of an economically constrained choice. The text supplies no deportation ruling. Habil has signed,

but the signature cannot settle how freely he has chosen to go.

When Habil switches on the light, the clock reads 4.45. “Niçin bu kadar erken kalkayım? Hiç gereği yok!” asks why he should get up so early when there is no need (Baykurt, 2015: 164). The narrator answers with “Ama”—“But”—and years of habit. A present question opens into the recurring actions of former mornings: rising, Cemile preparing food and drink, the bicycle journey, work. Habil can explain why the routine is unnecessary more readily than he can stop following it. The shift into habitual narration gives the past workday room inside his present.

Dervisoglu discusses the early hour as part of Habil’s former domestic and working conditions (2016: 13–14). Here it also sets the day in motion. Lefebvre and Régulier’s account of work reaching into waking and private life helps explain why the timetable persists after the job has ended (1985: 191). No employer needs to issue a fresh command at 4.45; the demand has become habitual. Baykurt’s return to the repeated past makes this continuing force perceptible at the very moment Habil recognizes that he is free of a shift.

His feet take him towards the factory before he stops himself: “Ne işim var?”—“What business do I have there?” He turns back towards the bakery (Baykurt, 2015: 167). The remembered schedule has become a route, and losing the job has made its destination questionable. Employment has organized the neighbourhood into places to which he habitually goes. Buying bread offers another practical destination within the same domestic life. The changed direction carries the former-routine observation forward into action: his day begins to find a use that the old timetable can no longer provide.

At home Habil declares everyone free to sleep, although he has already been unable to stay in bed (Baykurt, 2015: 166–167). His freedom differs from the leave announced by Cevat. The miners face a current wage cost; Habil faces habits and routes that survive the shift itself. Reading the two scenes together exposes the inadequacy of simply calling either interval free time. What a person can do with it depends on relations that persist after the hours have nominally been released.

Habil’s explanation of himself is equally unsettled. He says he has avoided politics, then remembers participating in a strike (Baykurt, 2015: 164, 168). The statements belong to different attempts to justify his conduct. Preserving their inconsistency allows his account to change with the person or demand he imagines himself answering. His day likewise acquires its new purpose gradually. Cemile’s question about what remains of those years, taken up below, gives him something to do with hours that unemployment alone has emptied.

4. Making words available and leaving something behind

4.1. The recorded reply in “Yuh Yuh!”

At Yeşilköy airport in Istanbul, Emine must pass through customs before continuing to Adana (Baykurt, 2015: 112). By then the story has moved from the flight back to her preparations and anticipated difficulties. Her gifts carry a history of earnings in Germany and obligations in Turkey (Baykurt, 2015: 110–112). The tapes include recordings made in Cologne that her daughters have requested in letters (Baykurt, 2015: 111). Written requests

thus direct recorded voices back towards Turkey. The itinerary gives cultural transmission several stages and directions, well before a recording is heard in the customs hall.

An object intended for home acquires a public audience. The tapes share with Asiye's letters the capacity to keep words available in the speaker's absence, but the conditions of renewed access differ. Asiye seeks to reserve her words for a particular reader. Emine chooses to make recorded words audible during inspection. Possession alone explains neither situation. The record retains the utterance; its holder and the circumstances of use determine who next encounters it. This distinction gives portable archives an analytical role in the comparison.

After refusing an intermediary's demand, Emine argues with herself. The narrator imagines two people in her chest, one praising the decision and the other criticizing it. Approval distinguishes payment to the state from payment to the intermediary; apprehension anticipates what the officials will now take (Baykurt, 2015: 115). Each voice responds to the same decision by judging its consequences differently. Bakhtin's account of dialogic self-distance helps describe the exchange (1984: 184): commendation draws an objection, and that objection calls for another defence. Emine's uncertainty develops through replies, rather than appearing as a list of emotions.

The dispute with herself has a price. Emine measures the demanded payment against days at the fish factory, while the porter promises easier passage (Baykurt, 2015: 114–115). Refusing him preserves something she values and leaves her anxious about what comes next. Yanardag's reading of resistance to bribery identifies the conflict (2007: 230). The self-address adds the uncertainty with which that resistance is undertaken. Pride in refusing the intermediary accompanies fear of the official route, and the narrative lets each feeling disturb the other.

Emine takes out the radio-cassette player while collecting her suitcase, unsure which tape is already loaded. As her turn approaches, she starts it; the passage names the singer as Mahsuni Şerif (Baykurt, 2015: 115–116).² A first stretch of singing precedes the placement of the suitcase and the inspector's "Aç!"—"Open!" Then comes "Bavulu açmadan önce teypin sesini açtı Emine": she raises the volume before opening the case (Baykurt, 2015: 116). The two uses of *açmak* give the command an unexpected continuation. Opening possessions to inspection is delayed in the telling by turning up words that the inspector has not requested.

The verbal relation belongs to the narration; it gives no reason to suppose that Emine planned this exact effect. She remains subject to the demand to open her suitcase. In the interval before compliance, however, she determines how loudly the recorded voice will be heard. The inspector's control of access and her control of volume operate together, unevenly. The resistance lies in this brief appropriation of the encounter's sound, with no subsequent concession needed to make it perceptible to the reader.

Repeated "Belki"—"perhaps"—fills the space between the command and the increase in volume with possible histories and motives for the inspector (Baykurt, 2015: 116). He can command with certainty while remaining difficult to know. The narrative proposes several explanations and settles on none. Because it does not consistently attribute these conjectures

to Emine's thought, their source also requires care. Selecting one as his true biography, or assigning them all to her, would erase the uncertainty their modal phrasing sustains. Practical authority exceeds what either traveller or reader can establish about the person exercising it.

The recording closes the story. Neither the official's answer nor the result of the inspection follows it (Baykurt, 2015: 116). Baykurt gives the protest the last word while leaving Emine's passage through customs uncertain. This ending extends Yanardag's thematic account by locating expressive force in the decision to stop at that point. It also reverses the final movement of "Mektupçu": access to preserved words is restricted there and amplified here. The archive remains materially available, but its ethical and political force depends on who hears or reads it, with whose permission, and in what circumstances.

4.2. From an account of labour to an act in a place

Cemile asks what Habil's twenty-two years have left behind. Trees planted in the village might by now have grown; what remains of him here? "Ne kaldı yirmi iki yılda senden şurada?" turns the years from a measure of time spent into a question of what survives them (Baykurt, 2015: 168). Her bird-filled branches will return in his final wishes. The language of that ending has begun in a domestic exchange, and the question prompts the action through which Habil seeks an answer. Cemile's intervention is part of the planting's narrative cause, rather than an accompaniment to a resolve he has reached alone.

Facing a mirror, Habil also prepares an answer to a journalist. Where was the press when striking workers needed support? Why should he appear on request now? "Gel dediğin anda gelmek zorunda değilim" denies the obligation to come whenever told (Baykurt, 2015: 168). The wording recalls his earlier account of coming and working when commanded (Baykurt, 2015: 164). He keeps the familiar terms while refusing the obedience they had expressed. The journalist is absent, so the refusal remains a speech Habil rehearses to himself. Even there, he begins to claim the right to set conditions on an account of his life.

Elke also tests a demand for an account through self-address. As an interviewer, she accepts and negotiates questions about her own circumstances. Habil, an anticipated interview subject, disputes the timing and purpose of the request (Baykurt, 2015: 2–6, 168). The same device puts each character in the position of answering a demand, under very different obligations. Reading these scenes in the collection's opening and closing positions connects the reflective surfaces through a specific verbal problem: who can require a life to be explained, and when may that requirement be refused? The comparison concerns these two positions in the collection; it establishes no necessary plot for the intervening stories.

At the nursery, Habil's wish for a lasting trace meets questions of price and care. He asks for a long-lived tree, then for an immortal one; the seller replies that such trees belong to fairy tales. Habil chooses oak and rejects pine as expensive and demanding maintenance (Baykurt, 2015: 169). His choice concerns the survival of something he will leave behind. An oak seems to offer the durability he seeks with less dependence on his continued presence. Roots acquire their significance through this practical decision; even then, the purchase can only express his hope for endurance.

The seller assumes that returning Turks will take the saplings to Turkey, although previous customers have never confirmed this. Habil raises his order from five to seven, buys a spade, and drives to the Wedau area and the woods along the Mülheim road. He plants the trees there while intending to take the spade back to Burdur (Baykurt, 2015: 170). Objects bought together are assigned different journeys. The action corrects the seller's assumption more decisively than a speech about belonging would: the worker will depart, but the trees remain where he has lived and worked.

The narrator prolongs the planting through "Dikti, dikti, dikti, dikti" (Baykurt, 2015: 170). Seven saplings have been specified; the four completed verbs extend the telling of their planting without counting them. Habil then wishes for growth, moving leaves, birds, and people beneath the branches (Baykurt, 2015: 170–171). At this point the grammatical mode changes. The narrator can affirm that the trees have been planted, while their survival and future use remain in Habil's wishes. The planting is accomplished; endurance remains a hope.

"Bilseler de, bilmeseler de"—whether future visitors know or do not know—qualifies the remembrance he seeks (Baykurt, 2015: 171). He has already contrasted the worker's fate with kings commemorated by monuments and mayors remembered in street names (Baykurt, 2015: 168). The concession allows something useful to remain even when its maker goes unrecognized. This is a diminished certainty, not a cure for exclusion. A tree may matter to people who never learn Habil's story. Unlike a letter or recording, it retains no prior utterance for consultation; its value depends on growth and uses that later inhabitants may give it.

The landscape keeps the cost of this future in view. Habil links the clearer sky to reduced production and disappearing work (Baykurt, 2015: 167). Beside Elke's polluted panorama, that explanation makes environmental improvement painfully ambivalent (Baykurt, 2015: 1, 7). His memories of earlier sexual encounters in the woods also keep them within his social past (Baykurt, 2015: 169). Baykurt ends with the drive back towards Hüttenheim and a backward glance, leaving the border crossing and the trees' maturity outside the account (Baykurt, 2015: 171). Habil has answered Cemile with an act. How others will receive that answer belongs to the future.

5. Discussion: authority and the limits of action

Readers of these stories repeatedly have to reconsider what an action permits them to conclude. Knowing Asiye's circumstances sharpens the objection to Hüseyin's intrusion even as it makes his sympathy understandable. Cevat's offer acquires a different value once its cost is heard. Such changes depend on when information appears and who gives it voice. The movement from a completed planting to a wish makes the same demand on judgment at an ending: the act is certain, its consequences are not. Across the five stories, social conditions acquire force through these local revisions of expectation.

The moral positions are correspondingly unstable. An institution protects private correspondence, a sympathetic man violates it, and workers whose retreat is financially understandable still disappoint the narrator. Relational realism names the connection between

these judgments and the way each encounter distributes knowledge or capacity. Assigning solidarity to migrant networks and domination to institutions in advance would obscure that connection. Baykurt's explicit social criticism remains, but its object becomes clearer when the particular relations are followed through the scene. The stories complicate judgment without suspending it.

Within self-address, the grounds of a decision are questioned as it is being made. Bakhtin helps explain how one speaker can become answerable from another position in their own words. The cost and habits of working time create different pressures, illuminated by Lefebvre and Régulier. Their accounts meet most closely where a claim to freedom is qualified by the speaker's next response or movement. Elsewhere they remain distinct: the route of a secretly opened letter demands an account of access, not an explanation through rhythm. Each theoretical connection follows the problem the passage presents.

The uses of cultural expression are just as particular. A saying commits workers to solidarity and is later tested by a list of names. Daughters' letters bring recordings towards a home audience before Emine plays one publicly, while Cemile's bird-filled branches return in Habil's wishes. These movements give the folkloristic reading something more precise than a catalogue of surviving forms. Letters and recordings can preserve words for renewed access, but the written voice quoted to a literary reader differs from sound replayed inside a scene. Reception is shown only as far as the narration takes it. Shared availability offers no assurance of shared response.

This attention to use and sequence extends the reportorial and structural accounts discussed at the outset. Observation supplies Baykurt with social detail; his ordering of that detail gives readers grounds for accepting, questioning, or withholding a judgment. Structural categories identify available perspectives, while close reading locates their changes within an exchange. The opening and closing self-addresses bring the comparison to the demand that a person account for a life. Habil's last act suggests a value that such an account may fail to capture. The contribution lies in connecting these specific narrative choices across the five stories, whose pressures remain comparable without producing a common resolution.

Conclusion

Baykurt's social realism makes the telling of an encounter part of its ethical and political force. The wife's letter reaches the reader before her husband's reassurance; the price of leave follows the declaration that it has been won. In these sequences, a change in knowledge changes the grounds of judgment. The recurrence of such effects across different circumstances constitutes *the poetics of migrant everyday life* proposed here. Ordinary experiences matter through the particular ways in which they are narrated, with no single migrant condition able to explain every character's response.

Relational realism describes how that formal work discloses uneven capacities to know, answer, and act. By tracing changes within an encounter and comparing them across stories, this study extends earlier thematic and structural accounts of Baykurt's social realism. It retains the force of social detail while examining the choices through which Baykurt conveys

it. A narrator can understand withdrawal and register disappointment; a story can complete an action and leave its success uncertain. Bakhtin's dialogic relations illuminate the questioning within self-address, while Lefebvre and Régulier clarify the continuing reach of work. The analyses draw on these accounts where they explain a textual problem, and allow the differences between the stories to remain.

The difference between a recording and Habil's trees brings the argument to its limit. Preserved words can be heard elsewhere under conditions their first speaker may never have anticipated. Planting commits Habil's saplings to a future he can neither foresee nor control. It leaves his job unrestored and the pressures of return in place, yet gives him a way to act within them. Against the opening demand to explain a life, the closing story imagines what that life might leave in a place. Habil has planted the trees. Their future and the memory they may carry remain unwritten.

Notes

1. The 2015 copyright page records "Birinci Basım, 1982," although the title and closing stories bear the dates 1985 (Baykurt, 2015: 7) and 1984 (Baykurt, 2015: 171). This study follows the wording and arrangement of the 2015 edition without resolving that publication chronology.
2. The 2015 edition prints "Mahzuni" on p. 111 and "Mahsuni Şerif" on p. 116. I retain the latter spelling when discussing the playback passage.

Araştırma ve yayın etiği: Bu makale özgün bir edebiyat araştırmasıdır ve başka bir dergide değerlendirme sürecinde değildir. Savların, yorumların, atıfların ve gönderimin sorumluluğu yazara aittir.

Yazar katkısı: Makale tek yazarlıdır; akademik katkının sorumluluğu yazara aittir.

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