Hajji Bayram – poems

(translated by Henry Bayman and Stephen Hirtenstein)

1.
If you wish to know yourself\(^1\)
   Look for the Soul within your soul\(^2\)
Abandon your soul and find Him
   Know yourself, just know yourself.

Whoever knows His Actions
   also knows His Attributes
There he perceives His Essence\(^3\)
   Know yourself, just know yourself.

What is seen is your Attribute
   The one who sees it is your Essence
What else do you need to know?
   Know yourself, just know yourself.

Whoever arrives at bewilderment
   Is plunged into divine light
And finds the Unity of the Essence
   Know yourself, just know yourself.

**Bayram** knew his own Essence
   There he found the Knower
The finder became himself
   Know yourself, just know yourself.

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\(^1\) Referring to the hadith: “he who knows himself knows his Lord” (*man ʿarafa nafsahu ʿarafa rabbahu*).
\(^2\) Compare with Yunus Emre’s line: “*Bir ben vardir bende, benden içeri*” (There is an I inside me, more inner than myself).
\(^3\) This alludes to the three degrees of affirming Unity: *tawḥīd al-ṣifāt* (attributes) and *tawḥīd al-dhāt* (essence).
2.

My Lord created a city
    between the two worlds.
If you look, you'll see His Face
    at the outskirts of that town⁴.

Of a sudden I went to that town
    and saw it being built.
I too was built together with it,
    between stone and clay⁵.

Arrows are shot from that city
    they come and pierce my breast.
The words of the knowers are for sale
    in that town's marketplace⁶.

Apprentices carve stones
    and present them to the master.
They invoke the Lord's name
    at every chip of that stone.

What they call “city” is the Heart:
    it is not ignorant, neither does it know.
The blood of lovers flows freely
    on the outskirts of that city.

The real knowers understand these words;
    the ignorant don’t know and chide.
**Hajji Bayram** himself sounds
    the call to prayer from that town's minaret⁷.

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⁴ The ‘city’ is the (spiritual) heart (see below). The Face of God is seen at the very edge of theophanic experience.
⁵ Clay or earth is the substance of the human body. Stone, the unformed potential of the self, is its inner content.
⁶ ‘Knowers’ here means knowers of reality, gnostics (ʿārif), whose words come at a price for the seeker.
⁷ He has attained his goal and become himself a guide for others.
3.

What has happened to this heart of mine, to this heart of mine?
It is filled with Your worry and sadness.
My heart has burned, my heart has burned
And has found its cure in that burning.

It burned for the Truth, it burned for the Truth
Was painted all through in the color of love;
It found in itself, it found in itself
How nicely my heart has found its desire.

“Poverty is my pride”, “poverty is my pride” —
Did not the Pride of the Universe (Muhammed) say?

Know your poverty, know your poverty,
My Heart found what it found in annihilation.

The greatest love, the greatest love
The Greatest Throne has fallen to me.

House of the Beloved, House of the Beloved –
Why should it be strange that my heart has become [that]?

O Bayram, O Bayram, now is the time;
Now is the time to feast with the Friend.
Praise and twofold praise, praise and twofold praise

My heart has been celebrating its feast with the Beloved.

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8 Referring to the Prophet Muhammad, who said “al-faqr fakhrī” (poverty is my pride).
9 Literally, “… has happened to me”, in the sense of “I have been blessed with...” According to a well-known hadith, “The heart of the person of faith is the throne of the All-Compassionate”. Ibn ʿArabi describes the heart as “the Throne upon which the All-Compassionate is seated”, and “the House of His Names” (Fut.I.667). Cf. Sa’di’s lines: “I sit on the throne of the heart, that is the style of my poverty!”
10 The two words used here for praise, hamd and senā (Arabic thanāʾ), have particular resonance: thanāʾ means a doubled or twofold praise, i.e. the praise given by the one who praises AND the praise received by the one who is praised. Ibn ʿArabi speaks of hamd al-hamd, the praise of praise itself, which lies beyond the twofold praise. Here Bayram is alluding to the nature of praise as a relationship between two parties who are really one – this is the ‘feasting’.
4.

My aim is not of this world
   except only “none but He”\textsuperscript{11}
There is no cure for my suffering
   except only “none but He”

Neither houris nor servants,
   nor heavenly palace nor Ridwan\textsuperscript{12}
These things are not the king of my heart
   except only “none but He”

Of the weaving\textsuperscript{13} of His imagination
   This world is but a particle
Looking from that mote, we see
   Nothing, only “none but He”

\textbf{Bayram}, if you understand
   the reality in this world
this secret’s secret none can grasp
   except only “none but He”

\textsuperscript{11} The original has “… ʿillā Ḥū”, implying “lā ilāha ʿillā Ḥū” (there is no god but He).
\textsuperscript{12} The archangel who acts as gatekeeper to Paradise.
\textsuperscript{13} Turkish nakş (Arabic naqš), literally ‘engraving’, ‘colouring’ or ‘tracing’.
5.

Nobody can draw it
   The bowstring of fortune is tough
Don’t be enamored of its trouble
   Some day it’ll end in “Alas!”

It plays along and deceives
   Due to its sleight of hand
How can so much mischief
   Come together in one place?

Once it turns your face away
   It doesn’t tarry an instant
It makes feet of so many heads
   Then turns around and makes heads of feet

It is transient and disloyal
   Do not believe a word it says
Sometimes it makes the poor wealthy
   Sometimes it makes the wealthy poor.

All scholars are enchanted
   By the meaning of this,
Those who rule the world from end to end
   Cannot fathom this mystery

He is One in Unity,
   Where the distinction of Diversity?
Khidr\(^\text{14}\) did not attain this secret
   Nor did he inform Moses of it.

\textbf{Hajji Bayram}, poor in spirit,\(^\text{15}\)
   Don’t be enamored of this world
It is a great workhouse –
   Don’t take on its infatuation.

\(^\text{14}\) Literally, ‘the Green one’, the patron of all those who go directly to God, and the esoteric teacher of Moses according to the Islamic tradition.
\(^\text{15}\) Turkish \textit{miskın} (Arabic \textit{miskīn}), which means one who possesses nothing, who is poor. The Prophet used to pray: “O God, make me to live \textit{miskīn}, make me to die \textit{miskīn}, and gather me among the congregation of the \textit{miskīns}.”