

## Preface

TURKISH LITERATURE REMEMBERS and reveres Sait Faik as its premier master of the short story. In a career that spanned a mere quarter of a century, Sait Faik (1906–1954) turned out some 190 original short stories, two novellas, a few essays, and nearly forty poems. His fame rests squarely on his fiction, which deals mainly with the fishermen, workers, clerks, children, idlers, and mavericks of Istanbul. Many of his principal characters are from non-Muslim communities. The author often speaks in the first person and figures prominently in some of the stories as a persona. With a subtle style that, despite occasional complexities, was attuned to the simple natural rhythms of colloquial Turkish, Sait Faik portrayed the predicaments, maladjustments, and disillusionments of the man in the street, frequently himself, living on the fringes of society.

Among hallmarks of Sait Faik's fiction are narcissistic narration, a style that blends the vernacular with lyric touches, a tender humanistic empathy, and ironic twists in the story line. A romantic at heart, he often approached harsh reality without cynicism and with an underlying sense of optimism.

*Sleeping in the Forest* contains a representative selection from Sait Faik's work—twenty-five short stories, the first part of a four-part novella, and twelve poems. The translations have been done by a distinguished roster of experts in the field of Turkish literature. The introduction is by one of Turkey's most successful academic critics. The book has benefited immeasurably from Jayne L. Warner's meticulous editing.

Editing the work of Sait Faik is a formidable task. He often wrote in great haste, carelessly. The translators and editors of this volume occasionally struggled with surprising leaps in the story lines, shifting tenses, and stylistic oddities. Numerous critics have dwelt on this type of carelessness. It must be pointed out, however, that there is a counterargument. Melih Cevdet Anday,

one of Turkey's eminent literary figures, has defended this lack of meticulousness as a hallmark of Sait Faik's unique style. "As far as I am concerned," Anday said, "Sait Faik was not sloppy in his use of language. Whatever he did stylistically, he did for deliberate effect."

Sait Faik, immensely popular in his native country, has also attracted attention abroad. Books featuring his work have been available in French, English, Russian, and Spanish. Dozens of his short stories have been translated into many languages and published in anthologies and literary magazines around the world. There is one Sait Faik book in English: *A Dot on the Map: Selected Stories and Poems*, published by Indiana University in 1983.

"The Armenian Fisherman and the Lame Seagull" is a shorter and somewhat different version of "An Episode of Two," which appears in my translation in *A Dot on the Map*. The poem "Letter I" originally appeared with the title of "First Letter" in the same book.

"*The Stelyanos Hrisopoulos*," in a more recent translation by the late Nermin Menemencioğlu (Streater), was in *A Dot on the Map* in Spiro Kostof's translation.

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The present book is a testament to Sait Faik's enduring stature in Turkey and to the growing interest in him in the English-speaking world. I hope readers will derive pleasure from the selected stories of the Turkish master.

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