

Licit Magic – GlobalLit Working Papers

No. 1

**FUŽŪLĪ’S PREFACE TO HIS TURKISH *DĪVĀN*
INTRODUCTION & TRANSLATION**



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Headnote:

Measuring by the number of streets, squares, institutions, statues, coins, stamps and even cities and airports that are named after him Fuḏūlī is arguably one of the most famous Turkish poets of all time. Indeed, he is as much Azerbaijan's national hero as his eastern counterpart, Navā'ī, is of Uzbekistan. Unlike Navā'ī, however, much of Fuḏūlī's life is shrouded in mystery. On the one hand, this may seem surprising, considering his impressive output and in light of the fact that he became famous already under his lifetime. On the other hand, this shouldn't cause too much of a surprise. Famous as he may have been, he never made it to the seats of political, and hence artistic, power and thus remained beneath the radar of contemporary biographers.

Fuḏūlī was born as Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān at the end of the 15th century, probably in Karbala or Najaf (Central Iraq), a geographical origin that explains his (albeit contested) Shiite confessional identity, as well as the Azeri touch in his Turkic, which differs slightly from that of his contemporaries in the Ottoman realm. Next to nothing is known of his education, but this must have been considerable, as he wrote in Arabic and in Persian with the same ease and smoothness as he did in Turkic. Fuḏūlī's trilingual literary output allowed him to address a broad audience, and this is exactly what he did. In fact, whenever Central Iraq changed its master, Fuḏūlī followed suit. Without any qualms about changing political allegiance, he offered his writings to Aqqoyunlu, Safavid and Ottoman rulers alike. Much to his dismay, however, these literary offerings never translated themselves in any sustained patronage. Towards the end of his life, Fuḏūlī came close to become a formal client of the then master of Najaf, the Ottoman sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520-1566), but in the end, also this fell through.

Many poets have vented their frustration over lack of patronage, but few did so entertainingly as Fuḏūlī did in his celebrated *Letter of Complaint* (*Şikāyet-Nāme*)¹. Having finally obtained state-sanctioned Ottoman patronage in writing, Fuḏūlī headed for the local waqf administration, to cash his first monthly stipend, only to find his hopes crushed by an indifference masked by red tape:

¹ An excerpt only, taken from Recâizâde Mahmûd Ekrem, *Ta'lim-i Edebiyyât. Eleştirel Basım*, ed. Furkan Öztürk (İstanbul: Dün Bugün Yarın Yayınları, 2016), pp. 71-72 (translation mine).

(The clerks') composure was a snare of tricks; as for those present (at the administration), "They are like cattle, - nay more misguided"²; their improper gestures were a nuisance, and their most vexing words were like the surges of Noah's flood. I saluted (them, but) they didn't accept (my salutes), since it was not a bribe. I showed (them) the edict (that granted me a stipend, but) they didn't take notice of it, saying, "That's of no use!" Even though they made it appear as if they were compliant, their sole response to my questions was silence.

I said, "Gentlemen! Why the lousy job (in dealing with my case), what's with all the frowning?"

They replied, "We have always worked like this..."

I objected, "The (Ottoman state) has deemed it proper to consider me, and they have given me a pension certificate, allowing me a continuous share in the waqf (profits, something for which) I devotedly pray on behalf of the ruler."

They said, "Wretched soul! What they have done to you is most unjust! The share that you have been given is (not one in profits, but) one in (pointlessly) frequenting this place! So (feel free to) continue your pointless struggle, to come and see (our) unfortunate faces and hear (our) harsh words."

I asked, "How come are the provisions of this certificate not put into effect?"

They responded, "It is because of the net accrual of the waqfs. Of that, one cannot draw a pension!"

I said, "Are waqfs like that without net accrual then?"

They replied, "Even if something would be left after the indispensable (costs) of the Palace are covered, (do you honestly think that) something will be left once we (have taken our share)?"

I asked, "But to spend waqf property excessively is a sin!"

They said, "We have purchased it with our money, for us, it's legal."

I pushed on, "If they check the accounts, they will find out about the malice of your ways!"

They said, "Such reckoning will be done in the Hereafter only!"

I cried out, "But there is reckoning in this world too!"

Their response: "Such reckoning we've never seen, only heard of! That doesn't scare us. (All that matters to us is) to keep the scribes happy."

I understood that this would be their final answer, and that they did not deem it proper to approve my certificate and my business. Helplessly, I gave up the fight, and desperately and deprived, I retired into my recluse, offended because I had been insulted over my certificate, ashamed because my certificate had been uselessly wronged, regretful like a wounded martyr because of the official statement, perplexed like a lying claimant because of the slandering, prevented from working like an abrogated Qur'ānic verse, cut of from all hope like people who had changed into the shape of a beast.

To (the clerk), I mean trouble; to me, he means a calamity.

I abhor him; he abhors me.

To him, I mean anxiety; to me, he means misery.

He grieves me; I grieve him.

² Qur'an 7: 179, translation Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an: New Editions with Arabic Text and Revised Translation, Commentary and Newly Compiled Comprehensive Index* (repr. Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 2002).

Perhaps due to this lack of patronage, Fuḏūlī appears to have spent most of his life as an attendant at the Shiite shrine of ‘Alī in Najaf. He passed away there in 1556, and was buried in Karbala.

The penname that Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān had assumed for his literary works was Fuḏūlī, a delightful pun, as it translates both as “Inappropriate” or “Presumptuous” and as “Most Meritorious”. Under this nom-de-plume, he authored 2 works in Arabic and six works in Turkic and Persian respectively. In spite of this linguistic diversity, he is remembered first and foremost as a Turkic poet. Famous titles include his Turkic *dīvān*; his versification of Niḏāmī’s celebrated rendering of the story of Laylā and Majnūn (*Dāstān-i Leylī vü Mecnūn*); his *Hashish and Wine* (*Beng ü Bāde*), a debate between the two over which is best; and his *Garden of Pleasures* (*Ḥadīkatü’l-Sü’adā*), a work that deals with the martyrdom of Husayn, son of ‘Alī, at Karbala, and which has become a foundational work for the Alevi community. Fuḏūlī’s work stands out for its intense expression of pity for the unfortunate and of patience in the face of adversity, but most of all, for its integration of the mystic and the erotic. The tragedy of human and personal love is raised to the plane of mystical longing; pain has become the essence of love, suffering of love the path that leads to God.

A presentation of the selected text³:

Presented here in translation is the author’s own prose *dībāce* or preface to his Turkic *dīvān*, a work that has gone through well over thirty editions by now.⁴ What makes it stand out is not so much its contents or the fact that it is interspersed with poetry in three different languages — all fairly conventional for a poet’s autobiography — but rather its tight formal structure, which, unfortunately, translates poorly into English. Indeed, of the various rhetorical figures Fuḏūlī puts to masterly use, most prominent is that of *tarsī’*, literally “embellishing with jewels or gold”. Much of the text is easily divided into larger sections that have a bipartite structure, consisting of two subsections separated by a conjunction and one or more structural features, the result being a pleasant and internally structuring cadence and rhyme. Consider, e.g., the second section of the preface, in praise of the Prophet Muḥammad:

³ The author wishes to thank Nasrin Askari, Bakir Mohammad, Rebecca Ruth Gould and Kayvan Tahmasebian for checking the Arabic and Persian translations.

⁴ The edition used here is *Türkçe Divan*, eds. Kenan Akyüz *et al.* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1958), pp. 1-12, which has been compared to *Fuzûlî Dîvânı*, ed. Abdûlbâki Gölpinarlı (İstanbul: İnkılâp, 2005⁴), pp. 1-8.

Dürüd-i nā-ma 'dū ol muḥāṭab-i kelām-i mu 'ciz-nizāma ki fūnūn-u ṣi 'ri maẓmūn-i "Ve mā 'allemnāhu 'ş-ş'i 're ve mā yenbaġi leh" merdūd-i ṭabāyi ' kılmıř iken lisān-i ḥikmet-beyān-i "İnne mine 'ş-ş'i 'ri le-ḥikme" takrīr-i dil-peẓīriyle maḳbūl-ı ḳulūb-ı ehl-i ḥāl etmiř VE senā-yi bī-pāyān u bī-riyā ol ḳāfiye-i nazm-i enbiyāya ki 'adem-i iltifatlarıyla rütbe-i ṣi 'r pāye-i ihānetde ḳalmıř iken sa 'ādet-i intisāb-ı řerīfleriyle fī'l-cümle derece-i i 'tibāra yetmiř.

This section consists of two subsections that are separated by the conjunction *ve* ("and"). Rewriting the first and second subsection into the following table reveals the structural parallels that combine these two into one closely-knit and cadenced section:

<i>Dürüd-i nā-ma 'dūd</i>	<i>ve</i>	<i>senā-yī bī-pāyān u bī-riyā</i>
<i>ol</i>		<i>ol</i>
<i>muḥāṭab-i kelām-i mu 'ciz-nizām-</i>		<i>ḳāfiye-i nazm-i enbiyāy-</i>
<i>-a ki</i>		<i>-a ki</i>
<i>fūnūn-u ṣi 'ri maẓmūn-i "Ve mā 'allemnāhu 'ş-ş'i 're</i>		<i>'adem-i iltifatlarıyla rütbe-i ṣi 'r pāye-i ihānetde</i>
<i>ve mā yenbaġi leh" merdūd-i ṭabāyi ' kıl-</i>		<i>ḳal-</i>
<i>-miř iken</i>		<i>-miř iken</i>
<i>lisān-i ḥikmet-beyān-i "İnne mine 'ş-ş'i 'ri le-ḥikme"</i>		<i>sa 'ādet-i intisāb-ı řerīfler-</i>
<i>takrīr-i dil-peẓīr-</i>		
<i>-iyle</i>		<i>-iyle</i>
<i>maḳbūl-ı ḳulūb-ı ehl-i ḥāl et-</i>		<i>fī'l-cümle derece-i i 'tibāra yet-</i>
<i>-miř</i>		<i>-miř</i>

Apart from this intra-sectional parallelism, it should be noted that there are also instances of supra-sectional parallelism. Consider, e.g., the first section, e.g., in praise of God. As this also consists of two subsections that each end in *-miř* and that use *ol* and *ki* for sake of parallelism, it combines with the second section into a larger supra-section, the structural features of which can be tabulated as follows:

Suprasection	Section 1	Subsection 1	<i>ol</i>	<i>ne ki</i>		<i>-miř</i>	
		<i>VE</i>					
		Subsection 2	<i>ol</i>	<i>ke ki</i>		<i>-miř</i>	
	Section 2	<i>VE</i>					
		Subsection 1	<i>ol</i>	<i>-a ki</i>	<i>-miř iken</i>	<i>-iyle</i>	<i>-miř</i>
		Subsection 2	<i>ol</i>	<i>-a ki</i>	<i>-miř iken</i>	<i>-iyle</i>	<i>-miř</i>

Turning our attention to the contents of the preface, this can be detailed as follows:

- Praise of God, with particular focus on poetry as a gift from God.
- Praise of the Prophet, again with particular focus on His connection to poetry.
- A highly stylized autobiographical section: Fuẓūlī is called to poetry and wisdom at a young age, and is educated at school. Given his young age, at first he engages in love

poetry only, thus acquiring considerable fame. However, as “poetry without knowledge is like a mould without a soul”, he decides to master the various sciences.

- The reason why Fuzūlī collects his earlier love poems in the present *dīvān*: a dear friend of his points out that Fuzūlī’s increasing audience shouldn’t just be able to enjoy his prose, riddles and *mathnawīs* in Arabic and Persian, but should also have access to his earlier love poems in Turkic. In fact, he should bring these together in a *dīvān* in order to draw the utmost benefit thereof. Fuzūlī appreciates the suggestion, as this might yield him, at last, reliable patronage.
- Fuzūlī begs his audience to judge his *dīvān* by its merits alone and not to slight it because of the author’s humble background. While it is possible that his audience of “Rumis” and “Tatars” may find fault in its lack of phraseology that they are more accustomed to, he defends this. Indeed, so he claims, the fact that poetry shows traces of its author’s origins is a laudable trait.
- Having “published” his *dīvān*, Fuzūlī thanks God for His guidance and expresses his hope that God will make it a success and will protect it from three types of wicked people who might jeopardize his high reputation as a poet: stupid copyists, weak poets, and envious ones.

Suggested reading⁵:

Walter G. Andrews, Najaat Black & Mehmet Kalpaklı, *Ottoman Lyric Poetry. An Anthology. Expanded Edition* (Seattle/London: University of Washington Press, 2006).

Hamide Demirel, *The Poet Fuzuli: His Works, Study of His Turkish, Persian and Arabic Divans* (Ankara: Ministry of Culture , 1991).

Muhammed Nur Doğan, *Fuzûlî'nin Poetikası* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 1997).

Michael Erdman, “Tomayto, Tomahto: Identifying Azerbaijani Manuscripts in the British Library Collections”, British Library Asian and African Studies Blog, 29 March 2021, <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2021/03/tomayto-tomahto.html>.

Fuzuli 500, eds. Nazım İbrahimov & Yaşa Garayev (Ankara: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı Türk İşbirliği ve Kalkınma Ajansı, 1996).

⁵ Only a selection of items is included, with particular focus on translations and studies in Western languages. For a bibliography of titles in Turkish and in Azeri, see Şahin and Khalilov.

E.J.W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry III*, ed. Edward G. Browne (London: Luzac & Co., 1904).

Abdülkadir Karahan, “Fuđülî, Muḥammad b. Sulaymân”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., (Leiden: Brill, 1991), II: 937-939.

Abdülkadir Karahan, *Les poètes classiques à l’époque de Soliman le Magnifique* (Ankara: Ministère de la Culture, 1991).

Aydın Khalilov, *Mahammad Füzuli. Bibliografiya* (Bakı: Nurlan, 2011).

Tunca Kortantamer, “Eroticism in Ghazal Poetry. Bâkî and Fuzûlî – the Two Most Famous Ottoman Poets of the 16th Century”, in Thomas Bauer & Angelika Neuwirth (eds.), *Ghazal as World Literature I. Transformations of a Literary Genre* (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2005), pp. 395-412.

Necati H. Lugal & Osman Reşer, *Des türkischen Dichters Fuzûlî Poem “Laylâ-Meğnûn” und die gereimte Erzählung “Benk u Bâde” (Haşış und Wein) nach dem Druk Istbl. 1326 übersetzt* (İstanbul: s.n., 1943).

Mehmet Fuzuli, *Leyla and Mejnun*, transl. from the Turkish by Sofi Huri, with a history of the poem, notes and bibliography by Alessio Bombaci; transl. from the Italian by Elizabeth Davies (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1970).

Benedek Péri, “Muḥammad Fuzûlî’s *The Debate of Weed and Wine (Beng ü Bâde)* Revisited: Towards a New Interpretation”, *Diyâr. Zeitschrift für Osmanistik, Türkei- und Nahostforschung* 1/2 (2020): 219-239.

Esma Şahin, “Klâsik Türk Edebiyatında Fuzûlî Biyografileri”, *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 5/9 (2007): 507-534.

Vügar Sultanzade, “Koranico-Biblical Names in Fuzuli”, in Nurettin Demir & Fikret Turan (eds.), *Scholarly Depth and Accuracy. A Festschrift of Lars Johanson – Lars Johanson Armağanı* (Ankara: Grafiker Yayınları, 2002), pp. 363-368.

Şerife Yalçınkaya, “Klâsik Nesirde Türkçe Paralelliği Üzerine – Fuzûlî’nin Türkçe Divân Dîbâcesi”, in Yavuz Akpınar (eds.), *Prof. Dr. Tunca Kortantamer İçin* (İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi, 2007), pp. 529-549.

Keywords:

Sixteenth century – *dīvān* – Ottoman poetry – Azeri Turkic – preface – autobiography – patronage – training

Translation:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

Endless praise and innumerable laudation be to the Speech-Creating [*nuṭḡ-āferīn*] Speaker [*mūtekellim*], who has fixed onto the ship of hope of the inhabitants of the seas and waters of versification — a ship rising and falling (on) the waves of immersion of “And the poets, - it is those straying in evil, who follow them” [*Wa-l-shu‘arā‘u yattabi‘uhumu l-ghāwūna*]⁶, and ^(p. 2) immersed in the whirlpool of hopelessness — the chain of exception of “Except those who believe” [*Illā lladhīna āmanū*]⁷, thus pulling the poets of Islam onto the true and sound shore of salvation; and incomparable thanksgiving be to the Arranger of the order of Heaven and Earth, who has made the (phrase) “In the Name of God” [*basmala*] of order the crown of the (surah) division of the Discriminator between Truth and Falsehood (i.e., the Qur’ān), and who has planted onto the arable field of the hearts of the people of knowledge and comprehension the sapling of love for measured speech, thus making (it) a storehouse of secrets. A fragment (in Turkish) [*kıt‘a*]:

What a Creator, who, with the reed pen of His beautiful divine guidance,
has written onto soul’s slate the exigency of soul-nourishing order from eternity,
and without whose aid a full mastery of poetry is not possible!
Praise to Him, for kindly having favoured [man] with the natural disposition of order!
[*Zihī sāni‘ ki levḡ-i cāne kilk-i ḡusn-i tevḡīki*
Ezelden iḡtizā-i nazm-i can-perver rakem kılmıṡ
Kemāl-i ši‘r kesbi mümkin olmaz bī-meded andan
Aḡa minnet ki ṡab‘-i nazm luṡf itmiṡ kerem kılmıṡ]

(A fragment in) Persian:

(He is) an Inventor, whose pen of divine guidance has drawn
figures of imagination onto the page of the poet’s genius.

A harmonious natural disposition is a sign of His special favour,
something that, unlike any other science, cannot be acquired perfectly (without Him).

[*Mubdi‘ī k-az khāma-i tawḡīq-i ū dārad raqam*
ṡafḡa-i idrāk-i arbāb-i sukhan naqsh-i khayāl
ṡab‘-i mawzūn az ‘alāmathā-i luṡf-i khāṡ-i ū-st
Nīst chūn ‘ilm-i digar maqdūr kasb-i īn kamāl]

(A fragment in) Arabic:

We praise Him, who has led the souls to (their) destiny,
and who has decreed the forms (i.e., the problems) of the affairs and their solutions.

⁶ Q 26: 224. Yusuf Ali.

⁷ Q 26: 227. Yusuf Ali.

We glorify Him, who, were it not for the aid of His favour,
Would not have taught all the names.

[*Nusabbiḥu man ahdā l-nufūsa ilā l-manā*
Wa qaddara ishkāla l-umūri wa ḥallahā
Nukaddisu man law lā i'ānatu faḍlihi
La mā 'allama l-asmā'a Ādama kullahā]^(p. 3)

Uncountable blessing of the Addressee of the Word of perplexing order, who — by (His) wisdom-expressing tongue (that uttered) “Verily there is wisdom in (some) poetry” [*Inna min al-shi'r la-ḥikmatan*] and through (His) heart-soothing words — has made the arts of poetry accepted by the hearts of the mystics [*ehl-i ḥāl*], even though (these arts of poetry) — what is meant by “We have not instructed (the Prophet) in poetry, nor is it meet for Him” [*Wa mā 'allamnāhu l-shi'ra wa mā yanbaghī lahu*]⁸ — are rejected by the natural dispositions; and infinite and sincere praise to the Rhyme [*kāfiye*]⁹ of the Versification [*naẓm*] of the Prophets, who — through a noble chain that links His to felicity — has fully reached the rank of reverence, even though the standing of poetry unflavoured and held in contempt. A fragment (in Turkish) [*kiṭ'a*]:

He is the pearl in the jewel casket of “I am the most eloquent”, whose
soul-Nourishing lip wisdom’s midwife has not wetted with poetry’s honey.
Poetry is an ornament, but for those who portray (Him),
We have made Him perfect as He is, with no need for an ornament.

[*Ol dūr-i dūrc-i “Anā afṣaḥu” ki ḥikmet dāyesi*
Şi'r şehdiyle leb-i can-perverin ter kılmamış
Şi'r bir zīverdūr ammā biz kimi nāқиşlara
Ol ki kāmildūr anı muhtāc-i zīver kılmamış

(A fragment in) Persian:

Aḥmad, the Sent One (i.e., Muhammad), is the One
who sustains all that is in the world with His attention¹⁰.

Indeed, poetry’s rank is elevated because of Him,
He who is the touchstone of the jewel of prophethood.

[*Aḥmad-i mursal ān ki dar 'ālam*
Har chi bāşad ṭufayl-i himmat-i ū-st
Rutba-i shi'r ham az-ū-st buland
Miḥak-i gawhar-i nubūvat ū-st

(A fragment in) Arabic:

I praise the best of mankind, Muḥammad,
who dispelled the darkness with the light of His moon(-like) beauty.

⁸ Q 36: 69. Yusuf Ali.

⁹ Just as rhyme comes at the end of the verse, the Prophet, being the Seal of Prophets, comes at the end of a long series of prophets sent by God.

¹⁰ Literally: “Everything is the *ṭufayl* of His attention”, a *ṭufayl* being an uninvited guest or party-crasher.

(As) our nobility is further elevated by praising Him,
our salutations are only to Him and to His family.

[*Uthnī 'alā khayri l-anāmi Muḥammadin*
Kashaḥa l-dujā bi ḍiyā 'i badri jamālihi
Bi thanā 'ihi rufi 'at madāriju qadrinā
Khuṣṣat taḥīyatunā 'alayhi wa ālihi] (p. 4)

Now (I), the writer of the rough drafts of the(se) pages of sinfulness [*'iṣyān*], the weak Fuḏūlī, explain about myself in the following way, and expound on what is in (my) heart in the following manner. When the ship of my existence, with its sails of natural disposition, reached the coast of comprehension and perception from the sea of somnolence of childhood, and the fire of my captivation (by the word), being stoked up by desire and zeal, blazed up, its heat affecting my heart and soul; when the domesticator of the requirements of spiritual perfection attached the reins of the intractable horse of my felicity to the earning of *adab* [*ādāb*], and the sun of wisdom cast the trace of acquisition of knowledge onto the gem of my disposition; and when I desired to gain *adab* [*edeb*], and the rose of my fortune opened with the desire to acquire skill, (then If found myself) a mine of gems of earning perfection at a paradisiacal school, which delicate courtyard, with its rows of pages, announced the sublime Paradise, and the star of attainment of my fortune found its rising place at a courteous school, which noble space, with its cypress-statured idols, brought to my soul joyful tidings of Paradise. (A poem in) Persian:

A pleasant courtyard, with beloved ones lined up in rows,
their faces as blessed as the lines of the Qur'ān,
holding a tablet in front of them, like the moon holding the sun's table before itself¹¹,
holding a book in their palms, like the rose holding its petals.

[*Şahn-i laṭīf va khūbān dar vay nishasta ṣaf ṣaf*
Dīdār-ishān mubārak hamchūn suṭūr-i muṣḥaf
Khūrshīd-i lawḥ chūn mah har yak nihāda dar pīsh
Barg-i kitāb chūn gul har yak girifta bar kaf]

But as sprouting youths [*nev-res*], due to the delicacy of (their) disposition, still lack the power to acquire the subtleties of the sciences and the strength to (endure) the hardship of learning the truths of the boundaries and usages, nothing but love poems [*eṣ'ār-i 'āṣīḳāne*] were being read [*oḥın-*]¹² in those paradise-like assemblies, and no other writing than tormenting *ghazals* were to be found on the pages that they read. A verse (in Turkish):

¹¹ That is, just as the moon positions itself before the sun to receive its light the pupils position themselves before their tablets to learn what is written on them.

¹² One of the few grammatical features in the text that reflects Fuḏūlī's Azeri-Turkic background.

Poetry is what embellishes the beauty of expression of (the feelings)
that the lover has, in his heart and in his soul, for the delicate beloved one.

[*Şi'r bir ma'şūkadur hüsn-i 'ibāret zīveri*
Cān ü dilden nāzenin maḥbūblar 'āşıkleri] (p. 5)

Through their unremitting attention to the arts of the poems and their assiduity (in considering) the subtleties of speech, that precious party (of students, including myself), had acquired knowledge of the aspects of beauty and had come to know the values of love. A fragment (in Turkish) [*kıṭ'a*]:

O pleasing one! As for students of poetry with a measured natural disposition,
(see to it that) these handsome-faced ones get to know the poems' purport!
Did you not say, "Let them understand the nature of the secrets of love!
Let them be cognisant of the condition of the helpless lover!"?

[*Ey hoş ol kim tab '-i mevzūniyle baḥs-i şi'r idiüb*
Hüb-rūlar vākıf-i maẓmūn-i eş'ār olalar
Dimedın fehm ideler keyfiyet-i esrār-i 'ışk
'Āşık-i bī-çāre ḥālinden ḥaber-dār olalar]

(As for me) — on whose page of natural disposition the reed pen of God's decree has written the letter of love for versification at the beginning of the day of past eternity, and in whose garden of natural constitution the seed of affection for versification has been sown at the beginning of creation — the sapling of my natural disposition had (begun to) display the flowers of aptitude in versifying, drawing moisture from the cloud of blending with that group (of beloved fellow-students), and the rose bush of my natural disposition had (started to) flourish and the rose of the palate of poetry has sprouted in the field of my temperament, by mingling with the atmosphere of their assembly. A fragment (in Turkish) [*kıṭ'a*]:

From behind the curtain of power, the witness of the poetry
saw the feast and walked gracefully onto the plain of deeds.
The light breeze granted the nightingale permission to delicately open its heart,
like a rose bud, and to stir the pen that is its (voice).

[*Şāhid-i nazm serā-perde-i kuvvetde iken*
Qıldı ol bezmi görüb fi'l feẓāsına ḥırām
Ğonce veş gönlini açmağa letā'if birle
Bülbüle viridi şabā ruḥşat-i taqrīr-i kelām]

It goes without saying that I too became (as) intoxicated as a nightingale madly in love, and I obtained permission from the aptitude of (my) disposition to (start) singing to those roses. The new moon of versification rose over the horizons of my disposition, and it continued to grow with every day that I received the light of eagerness from the sun-like (beauties to such an

extent that), within a short period, many cities and provinces were filled with the rays of light of my poetry. A fragment (in Turkish) [*kıt'a*]:

(Although) my words are already taking the world by their famed eloquence,
I am still (but) a child of the tongue in the cradle of expression.
(Although people's) minds are already perfumed by my pleasant smell,
I am still (but) a drop of blood in the musk bladder of existence.

[*Şıyt-i feşāhat ile sözüüm dutdı 'ālemi*
Men mehd-i i 'tibārda tıfl-i zebūn henūz
Būy-i hoşumla oldı mu 'aṭtar dimāğlar
Men nāfe-i vücūdda bir kaṭre hun henūz]

Every now and then, (my) passion for poetry overtook all my (other) actions, and people flocked around me in order to listen to (my) poetry in throngs, like Majnūns flocking round Laylas [*Leylī veşler Mecnūn kimi*]¹³. My identity as a poet ^(p. 6) [*şā'irüğüüm*] became established, and the world was filled with the fame of my versifications [*naẓm*], (which) became wholly celebrated. A verse (in Turkish):

By nature, I was eager to become famous all across town.
Why hide this? (Already my) passion has made me an object of scorn.
[*Tabī'at şöhre-i şehre olmağa meyl-i temām itdi*
Ne pinhān eyleyem sevdā meni rüsvā-i 'ām itdi]

(However,) the hairdresser of my zeal, associated to this condition, did not deem it proper for the veiled lady of the beauty of my versification to unveil herself [*celve*]¹⁴ at the bridal seat [*minaşsa*]¹⁵ of the world while being destitute of the embellishments of knowledge, and the money-changer of the aptitude of the exaltedness of my rank did not give permission for the thread of the string of my poetry to be the world's necklace while being devoid of the gems of knowledge, since poetry without knowledge is (like) a wall without a foundation, and a wall without a foundation commands no respect. Understanding that the lack of ornaments of knowledge could cause the rank of my poetry to be treating with contempt, and that a mould without a soul — what poetry without knowledge is — disgusts people, for some time, I spent the coins of my life on the acquisition of the arts of both the rational and traditional science(s), and I used my daily earnings for assimilating whatever useful things philosophy

¹³ From its origins in pre-Islamic poetry, the story of Laylā and Majnūn has spread across the Islamic world. A young Kays was so infatuated with lovely Laylā that he became nicknamed *Majnūn*, “The Crazy (with Love)”. When the two lovers were separated by Laylā's family, Majnūn attempts time and again to catch a glimpse of his beloved one.

¹⁴ The *celve* is the first unveiled presentation of a bride to her husband at the wedding.

¹⁵ The *minaşsa* is the highly decorated raised seat on which the bride is exhibited to public view.

and mathematics had to offer. For (the benefit of those who) witness my versification, I orderly supplemented (my poems with) embellishments (that are taken) from the pearls of the classes of talent, and I closely studied, step-by-step, the (Qur'ān) commentaries and the hadiths. (In short,) I came to understand that any contempt for the virtue of poetry comes forth from a less than perfect zeal (of the poet). A fragment (in Turkish) [*kıt'a*]:

The one who is a stranger to poetry's relish
should not reproach the poets!

He should admit his own ignorance,
not call each of its miracles sorcery!

[*Şi'r zevkından olmayan āgāh*
Ehl-i nazmı mezemmet eylemesün
Kendü cehline i'tirāf itsün
Her kerāmāta sihr söylemesün]

In brief, at those times when the ropes of invention of poetry's arts were collected by me, and works came forth from me as was ordained, every instant the hand of my capacity hung its amulets of manufactured inventions around the neck of all creation, and every hour the traveller of my natural disposition set foot into a rose bed of the gardens of wonderful compositions.

One day, my beloved one, with his graceful gait, walked elegantly towards me, a musky-downed friend with a musk mole that would be wronged if called Khotan musk and with hair locks haughtily black as the breeze that drifts from the Tatar musk deer. Casting a shadow of mercy over me, wretched one, he inquired after me with such sweet words and he captured my heart. During our conversation and while talking, he said: ^(p. 7)

“O tree blossom in the garden of eloquence! O verdurous plant of the spring of beauty-expression! Praise be to God, (for) the volition of (God's) divine guidance — Praise be unto Him — and the will of His lordly support has made the conquest of the realms of the arts of prose and poetry easy for you, and has allotted you, step by step, the dominion over the climes of speech, step by step. However numerous the unique accomplished ones may be among the Arabs, the Persians and the Turks, there is nobody who masters all of the language(s) and who combines the arts of prose and poetry (like) you do! Now that the key of your tongue is opening the gates of prosperity that opens onto the world, and the diver of your natural disposition is bringing up gems of rhetoric from the sea of eloquence and is scattering these among the high and the low, the people of the

world have obtained some pearls of your epistolary prose [*münşe'ât*] and a share in the abundance of your riddles [*mu'ammayât*], they have derived benefit from some of your *mathnawîs* [*mesnevî*] and your *qaşîdas*, and while some of your Persian *ghazals* have embroidered their hearts, some of your Arabic *rajaz* poetry [*recez*] has met their delight. God forbid that the beloved ones of Turkic breed would not share in the abundance of your versification, and that the tasteful ones of Turkic stock would not find the blossom of a *dīvān* of your *ghazals* in the garden of your speech! (Without such a *dīvān*), the fundamentals of the building of your natural disposition could be vulnerable to deficiency, and, hence, the foundation of the aptitude of your words could become cracked. A fragment (in Turkish) [*kıt'a*]:

The *ghazal* is what purifies the clear-sighted.
 The *ghazal* is the rose in the garden of skill.
 The hunt for the fawn that is the *ghazal* is not an easy one.
 The one who rejects the *ghazal* is not the wise.
 The *ghazal* displays the poet's capability.
 The *ghazal* enhances the versifier's fame.
 Heart! As many modes there may be (when it comes) to poetry,
 of all these modes, choose the one of the *ghazal*!
 For at every assembly, it is the *ghazal* that is the ornament,
 and the art of the wise is (none but) the *ghazal*,
 If you want to gain renown throughout the ages, compose a *ghazal* that is
 easy to recite and easy to write!"

[*Ĝazeldür şafâ-bahş-i ehl-i nazer*
Ĝazeldür gül-i bû-sitân-i hüner
Ĝazâl-i ĝazel şaydı âsan degül
Ĝazel münkiri ehl-i 'irfân degül
Ĝazel bildürür şâ'irüñ kudretin
Ĝazel arturur nâzımuñ şöhretin
Gönül gerçi eş'ara çoğ resm var
Ĝazel resmin it cümleden ihtiyâr
Ki her mahfilüñ zînetidür ĝazel
Ĥired-mendler şan'atidür ĝazel
Ĝazel di ki meşhûr-i devrân ola
Oĥumağda yazmağda âsân ola]

In truth, those heart-soothing words that I have heard from that unequalled one I have taken as pure advice, and I have persevered in obtaining patronage. After all, the decree of time, has not yet allowed me perfect contentedness (in this regard), as a result of which the money-changer of my intellect — while (wishing) to spend (all) of the coins of time (that it has been allotted) on esteemed compositions — still has to squander these on trifling things

(such as livelihood), and as a consequence of which the royal falcon of my natural disposition — while longing for the esteemed hunts (for literary compositions) — still has to pursue these shorter hunts (for patronage). ^(p. 8) Considering the fact that the camel litter of my esteem, so light still, could do with another camel load, I have thought it wise to assemble a succinct *dīvān* of *ghazals* that date back to the time of my childhood and that are not yet collected. I then went after these both with myself and with those who had received (some of my *ghazals*), got hold of all of them, and finished collecting them in a succinct way. The hope is that the people of eloquence and masters of rhetoric — while looking into my work and reading it, and when taking into account the facts that I was born and raised in Arabic(-speaking) Iraq and that I have travelled all my life in other countries — will not consider (my origins) as something that lowers me in their esteem, and that they will not find the degree of my aptitude as low as my (present) place and station are. After all, neither does the esteem that a country (enjoy) have anything to do with the aptitude of the person (living there), nor does the lustre of gold pale (simply) by lying on the ground, and neither does the fool become agreeable (simply) by mingling with townsmen, nor does the wise man turn savage by staying in the wild. A fragment (in Persian) [*kitā'a*]:

Even if an ill-disposed man would spend
all of his life with the houries in Paradise,
(and) would learn *adab*'s arts from Gabriel Himself,
all day long, at that assembly filled with purity,
This I believe, that, in the end,
only bad things will come forth from him.
Even if a resplendent gem would lie on the dirt
for many years, (just like) a worthless piece of rock,
This I know, that but little of dirt's dust
will settle on that mirror of esteem,
and that, the very moment it is picked,
it is once more the gem worthy of the king's crown.

[*Agar 'umrhā mardum-i bad-sirišt*
Būd hamdam-i hūrīyān dar bihišt
Dar ān mahfil-i pur-ṣafā rūz u ṣab
Za Cibrīl hvānad funūn-i adab
Bar ān i 'tikādam ki ancām-i kār
Na-gardad az ū cuz badī āṣkār
Va gar sālḥā gavhar-i tābnāk
Fatad hvār u bī-ḳadar bar rū-yi ḥāk
Bar ān-am ki kamtar naṣīnad ḡubār
Za ḥāk-aṣ bar āyina-i i 'tibār
Çū az ḥāk ḥīzad hamān gavhar-ast
Ṣahān-rā burāzanda-i afsar-ast] ^(p. 9)

As for the people of honour and esteem in general and for the rhetoricians of Rum and the eloquent ones of Tatar(istan) in particular, in the case that they would find the beauty of my beautiful expression not to be adorned with the words and expressions of their regions and the veiled lady of my poetry not to be embellished with the subtleties and proverbs of their lands, the hope is that they will excuse (this humble author,) who prays (on their behalf). After all, what suffices me as an apology (for not using the local phraseology) are the facts that any country's people can only be shamed [*'ār*] by borrowing things (from other people) [*'āriyet*], that everybody everywhere knows that imitating others can only give rise to jealousy, and that the idioms of some lands are not within reach for somebody (from elsewhere. In light of this), what would be the point of impertinently attacking me (for not using the local phraseology)? Praise and thanks be to God that the dust of Karbala is acknowledged as nobler than the elixir of any other country, and that it is everywhere and truly recognized as (something that) adds to the standing of my poetry.

O God! This flourishing love-letter [*maḥabbet-nāme-i nāmī*] and pleasing and excellent child — (that is, my *dīvān* of Turkish *ghazals*), which are the offspring of my captivating natural disposition and the outcome of my enchanting understanding — have set out for foreign lands, with weakness and supplication as their merchandise and with burning and consuming as their guide, and have brought into motion a trade caravan into the world's wide plain, selling gems of meaning in return for carpets of admiration. As a matter of fact, You, (God), have made (Your) divine guidance of favour (my work's) fellow traveller, You have brought (it) out of the narrows of non-existence onto the restful place of existence, You have aided me (in its composition, in) confirmation of (Your) mercy, and You have taken (it) out of the valley of invisibility onto the plain of visibility. To whatever region it goes and whatever province it reaches, may You make its noble arrival blessed and auspicious and its place of rising fortunate and sacred! O God, may You guard and protect within the fortress of Your protection the world-measuring beloved one and delicate beauty (that this *dīvān* is), whose cheek the hairdresser of Your kindness has embellished and whose beautiful embellishments the ornaments of Your divine guidance has brought to the rank of perfection, (keeping it safe) from the people of wickedness in general, and from three wicked groups in particular.

One of those (three groups) is the incapable scribe and the stupid (page) filler [*mümlī*], whose reed pen, moving in the opposite direction [*hāme-i muḥālif-tahrīri*], is the stone mason's pick (that wrecks) the building of knowledge, and whose sadness-stirring nib is the architect that constructs earthly vanities, now (changing) a single dot, thus showing “love”

[*maḥabbet*] as “trial” [*miḥnet*], and then (changing) a single letter, thus making “blessing” [*ni‘met*] read as “revenge” [*niḳmet*].^(p. 10) (A poem in) Arabic:

May perish the hands of the scribe without whom
the structures of knowledge and *adab* would not have been destroyed.
In corrupting his copy, he is even worse than wine.¹⁶
By always writing ‘*ayb* (“disgrace”) instead of ‘*inab* (“grapes”), his disgrace becomes
ever more evident.¹⁷

[*Tabat yadā kātibin lawlāhu mā kharibat*
Ma ‘mūratun ussisat bi-l- ‘ilmi wa-l-adabi
Ardā mina l-khamri fī ifsādi nuskhatihi
Yastazhiru l- ‘aybu taghyīran min al- ‘inabi]

(A poem in) Turkic:

May (not hold)¹⁸ a pen the hand of that scribe of poor writing,
whose wicked writing turns our “wedding feast” [*sūr*] into a “riot” [*ṣūr*],
who now leaves out a letter, turning “rare” [*nādir*] into “fire” [*nār*],
And then leaves out a dot, turning “eye” [*göz*] into “blind” [*kūr*].

[*Ḳalem olsun eli ol kātib-i bed-tahrīrūn*
Ki fesād-i raḳamı sūrumuzı ṣūr eyler
Gāh bir ḥarf sukūtiyle kıhur nādiri nār
Gāh bir noḳta kuṣūriyle gözi kūr eyler]

(A poem in) Persian:

May become limbless like a pen that person¹⁹
whose pen is a mattock (that demolishes) the foundation of knowledge.
While his writing may look like words, what’s its use,
(when) the ink (stains) of his writing blot out the beautiful meanings?

[*Bād sar gashta basān-i qalam ān bī sar u pā*
Ki bavād tīsha-i bunyān ma ‘ārif qalam-ash
Zīnat-i ṣūrat-i lafz-ast khaṭṭ-ash līk chi sūd
Par-da-i shāhid-i ma ‘nī-st savād-i raḳam-ash]

(Another) one of those (three groups) is the inexpert (poet) of poor writing, who
claims aptitude in assemblies and at gatherings in spite of his unmeasured disposition. When
poetry [*ṣi‘r*] is being read (at the gatherings), may it not be chose from his poetry and his
prose writings, and may the veil (that covers) the comeliness of the beautiful meaning not be
lifted by his feeble performance [*edā-i süst*]. (A poem in) Arabic:

How many faulty tongues are there, as a result of their conduct,
The pearls of poetry’s necklace are bound to be scattered.
(Faulty) speech is what renders commands without effect,

¹⁶ With the implication that wine, being spilled, blots out diacritical dots.

¹⁷ In this poem and in the next, the various words differ in one letter only in Arabic script.

¹⁸ *Ḳalemi olmasun*, emended from *ḳalem olsun*.

¹⁹ *Bī sar u pā*, litt. “headless and footless”, thus describing the shape of the pen as a body without limbs.

(The way) he spends it turns “u” into “i” (i.e., alters the words).²⁰

[*Kam min lisānin saqīmin min taṣarrufihi*
Ṣārat la’ālī ‘uqūdi l-naẓmi manthūrā (p. 11)
A’rā l-qaḍāyā ‘ani l-intāji mantiquhu
Taṣrīfuhu qalbu l-maḍmūmi maksūrā]

(A poem in) Persian:

May be cut off the tongue of he who, on the wide expanse of speech,
has the edifices of thoughts torn down,
who, with the perverted spending of his bad speech,
wipes out the existence of beautiful expressions.

[*Burīda bād zabānī ki dar faẓā-i sukhan*
Az ū mabānī-i afkār munhadim gardad
Z-inqilāb-i taṣārīf-i lahja-i bad-i ū
Vujūd-i ḥusn-i ‘ibārāt muta ‘addam gardad]

(A poem in) Turkic:

May not share in the ease of Paradise that unseemly one,
whose harsh speech renders the measured unmeasured,
the mattock of whose words wrecks verification’s edifice,
and whose worthless speech dupes eloquent ones.

[*Bī-naṣīb olsun na ‘īm-i ḥuldden ol zıst kim*
Nā-mülāyim lechesi mevzūni nā-mevzūn ider
Tiṣe-i lafzı binā-i nazmı vīrān eyleyüb
Süst güftarı feṣāḥat ehlini mağbūn ider]

(The last) one of those (three groups) is the envious one of cruel calling and the obstinate one of bad thought, who claims (mastery in) poetry in spite of his unmeasured natural disposition and in spite of lacking the comprehension of the subtleties of the poems, and who strikes words of versification in spite of his unreliable understanding and in spite yet not finding the road that one requires for reaching the truths of speech. Envy is bound to blind the eye of fairness, bound to utter utterly useless words in the presence of those stupid ones who rely on his understanding, and is bound to heap nonsense onto nonsense [*herze herze daḥller*], so that, as a result, poetry is no longer a pleasure to listen to. (A poem in)

Great are the sins of those who envy the word[s of others],
their understanding an outright aberration among the people. (p. 12)

The observance of the skills is lost on them,
(thus) blocking their way to attain highness.

[*Ma’āthimu ḥussādi l-kalāmi ‘azīma*
Baṣīratuhum maḥḍu l-ḍalālāti fī l-malā
Taḍī’u murā’ātu l-ṣanā’i ‘baynahum
Tusaddidu minhāja l-wuṣūli ilā l-‘ulā]

²⁰ Or, alternatively: “(The way) he spends it changes the purport and breaks it.”

(A poem in) Persian:

Woe the one who roams in the desert of jealousy,
for his dark heart holds no light of knowledge.
In the few verses that he weaves like a spider,
he estimates himself higher than the builder of the Kaaba.
Wherever he looks, he finds a fault,
his eye of fairness blinded by the dust of envy.

[*Āh az ān bādiya-paymāy biyābān-i ḥasad*
Ki na-dārad dil-i ḡalmānī-sh az 'irfān-i nūr
Chūn 'anākib bi-dū baytī ki ba-ham mī bāfad
Khwīsh-rā dāda bih az bānī-i bayt al-ma'mūr
'Ayb bāshad hama cā maṭraḥ-i madd-i nazar-ash
Gardad az gard-i ḥasad dāda-i inṣāf-ash kūr]

(A poem in) Turkic:

As autumn is envious of the rose garden of knowledge,
God, forever vilify the envier!²¹
As scolding the people of knowledge is what he does,
God, forever make the envier weep bitterly!

[*Hazandur gül-şen-i 'irfāna ḥāsidi*
İlāhī ḥāsidi ḥār eyle dā'im
İşidür ma 'rifet ehline āzār
İlāhī ḥāsidi zār eyle dā'im]

May God's mercy be upon that honest man [*ḥelāl-zāde*] of good character and pure belief, who — as can be witnessed by the freshly ripe [*nev-res*] witness — who embellishes the perfect beauty of his exalted (works) by (adding) the jewel of embellishment, who removes the knots of disgrace from the hair locks of error of his performance by (using) the comb of munificence, and who clears the mirror of his capacity from the dust of deficiency by (applying) the polish of embellishment. “God is the one sought for help and reliance is upon Him, with His blessing and His generosity” [*Wa llāhu l-musta'ānu wa 'alayhi t-tuklān bi mannihi wa karamihi*].

²¹ Or, alternatively: “Make the envious one scratch (himself at its thorns)!”