

Ottoman Gazel

Ey vücûd-i kâmilin esrâr-i hikmet masdarı

6.1.0 Dramatic Interpretation
Entrant #001

Original

Ey vücûd-i kâmilin esrâr-i hikmet masdarı
Masdarı zâtın olan eşyâ sıfâtın mahzarı
Mahzarı her hikmetin sensin ki kilik-i kudretin
Safha-i eflâke nakş etmiş hutût-i ahteri
Ahteri mes'ûd olan oldur ki tab'-i pâk ilen
Kâbili feyz ola lûtfundan safâ-yi cevheri
Cevheri ma'yûb olan nâkiş benim kim muttasıl
Sâdedir hattın hayâlinden zamîrîm defteri
Defteri a'mâlimin hatt-i hatâdandır siyâh
Kan döker çeşmim hayâl ettikçe hevl-i mahşeri
Mahşeri eşkim verir seyl-âba Ger Rûz-i cezâ
Olmada makbûl-i der-gâhın sirişkim gevheri
Gevheridir aşk bahrinin Fuzûlî âb-i çeşm
Lîk bir gevher ki lûtf-i Hak anadır müşterî

-Fuzuli, 1562

Translation

O Thou Perfect Being, Source whence wisdom's mysteries arise;
Things, the issue of Thine essence show where thy nature lies.
Manifester of all wisdom, Thou are He whose pen of might
Hath with rays of star illumined yonder gleaming page, the skies
That a happy star, indeed, the essence clear of whose bright self
Truly knowth how the blessing from Thy word that flow to prize
But a jewel flawed am faulty I: alas for ever stands
Blank the page of my heart's journal from thought of Thy writing wise
In the journal of my actions Evil's lines are black indeed;
When I think of Day of Gathering's terrors blood flows from my eyes
Gathering of my tears will form a torrent on the Reckoning day;
If the pearls, my tears, rejecting, He but view them to despise.
Pearls my tears are, O Fuzuli, from the ocean deep of love;
But they're pearls these, Oh! Most surely, that the Love of Allah buys!

-Translation by Elias John Wilkinson Gibb, 1901

Analysis

This is a *gazel* style poem that was originally written in Turkish. This translation was done by Elias John Wilkinson Gibb. A *gazel* is a love poem, however they are allegories; the subject of these love poems are not for the love of a particular person, instead they are for the love of Allah (Gibb, 1901, 9). Each word in the poem has a separate, significant meaning to those who know the language of the *gazel*. This poem is about the flawed nature of humanity and of the writer, as he fears judgment day due to his actions in life.

The meter of the poem is known as a *qasida*. In a *qasida* style poem, the first two lines rhyme together, and then every other line rhymes throughout the poem. This rhyme scheme appears in every *gazel* and was strongly influenced by Persian poets of the time (Gibb, 1901, 4). We are fortunate that this translation manages to maintain the meter of the original, despite the big differences between Turkish and English languages. When we look at the original text of the poem, we notice that this is composed in a “chain verse” style as well, where the last word of each couplet is repeated as the first word in the next couplet throughout the poem. Unfortunately this is not apparent in the translation to English.

Translations of Turkish poems done by Gibb have been criticized (Black et al., 2006, 9) as being more focused on the formal features and obscure references of Ottoman poetry. The format of Gibb’s English translation does not appeal particularly to the modern ear and sensibilities. In the original Turkish, these poems are filled with language specific puns and allegories that do make translating Ottoman poems into English a difficult task (Andrews, 2004, 22). However, no large translation project has been attempted since Gibb in 1901.

This poem was written by Mahammad bin Suleyman, better known by his pen name Fuzuli, who is considered one of the great masters of Ottoman poetry (Warner et al., 2005, 12). The name Fuzuli literally means “impertinent, improper, unnecessary”, which was an intentional, playful choice made by the author. The poem follows standard *gazel* convention, wherein the poet's pen name is mentioned in the last or in this case, second to last line (Black et al., 2006, 8).

References

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