The Function of Metaphors in the Relationship between Meaning and Structure in the *gazel*[1] Poem

Tunca Kortantamer

Information regarding the structural particularities of the *gazel*s in Divan literature is found in almost every handbook on the topic. Additionally, our colleague Cem Dilçin has produced a comprehensive and valuable investigation of the subject of the *gazel*.[2] The analyses of the *gazel* by Tarlan and his followers,[3] the attention paid to it by Hellmut Ritter, Jan Rypka, Annemarie Schimmel and others,[4] and the works by those who have employed modern methods, such as Walter Andrews, Cem Dilçin, Edith Ambros and Muhsin Macit[5] all made their contribution in shedding light on the structural characteristics of the *gazel* form. One aspect of the *gazel* which has not been directly examined as an independent subject in these types of works, but has been pointed out occasionally, is that of the functioning of metaphors in the relationship between meaning and structure in the *gazel* poem.[6] It must be mentioned that in this article this functioning will be explored within the framework of Turkish *gazel*s which developed in the Ottoman-Turkish context. In other words, due to time constraints, this study will not attempt to grapple with Persian and Arabic literature, except for a few minor references, which will be made where relevant.

As is known, within the Ottoman-Turkish context the most important names among the founders of Divan literature are Ahmedî, Şeyhî, Ahmed-i Dâî, Nesîmî, Ahmed Paşa and Necâtî. Poets like Hayâlî, Zâtî, and even Bâkî and Fuzûlî represent another period, i.e., the classical period, in which Divan literature attained maturity. As for Nev'î, Şeyhülislam Yahyâ, Nâilî, Nâbî, Nedîm and Şeyh Gâlib, they should be seen as important representatives of the post-classical, passionate (*âşıkâne*), Epicurean (*rindâne*) and philosophical (*hikemî*) manners and styles, which bear the name *Sebk-i Hindî*, or "Indian style". The subject of my present investigation are the shared fundament and the structural characteristics that are generally perceived in the works of all these poets.

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1 The transcription of the Ottoman words in this article follows the modern Turkish usage. The transcription of the poems quoted follows the transcription used in the books they are taken from (editors' note).

2 Dilçin 1986: 78-247; 415-17.

3 Namely the chapters in Tarlan 1981, "Edebiyat Üzerine": 85-117, and "Metin Tamiri": 207-206; as well as Tarlan 1985; Alparslan 1986, İpekten 1986.

4 Ritter 1927, Rypka 1926, Schimmel 1949.

5 Andrews 1985, Dilçin 1991, Dilçin 1992, Dilçin 1995, Ambros 1982, Macit 1996.

6 I would like to thank my colleague Docent Dr. Rıza Filizok from whose views on the topic I greatly benefitted while preparing this work.

In the initial reading of the *gazel*s of Divan literature, there is a world of certain, concrete elements that immediately strike the eye. This is a world in which visual images play heavily. Within it, nature (flowers, trees, running water, seas, animals, etc.) or other concrete objects (arrows, candles, chalices, fountains, buildings, etc.) appear in various forms, often stylized as in miniatures, to serve as a transition device, or transmission, especially in the form of a simile or metaphor. In this manner, paths are opened to the definition of the object – often worldly or divine love – which is the subject of the *gazel*. Yet, in the same way there is a progress toward an abstract ordering, that is to say, there is an increasing richness in the expression of affection for the object. In this way a transition is achieved by means of simile and metaphor, both toward the particularities of the sensory world of the object, and toward the emotions surrounding it.

We can see this in a *gazel* by Necâtî:[7]

Cām-ı hecrüñ nūş ider mestāneler gördüñ mi hīç
Yoluña cānlar virür merdāneler gördüñ mi hīç
Drunken men drinking the wine of your absence – have you seen them ever?
Valiant men giving their lives for your presence – have you seen them ever?

Zülfüñüñ zencīr-i sevdāsın ṭolayub boynına
Şehr-i ḥüsnüñ cerr ider dīvāneler gördüñ[8] *mi hīç*
Crazy men winding the chain of your passionate lock round their necks, while
Roaming like pilgrims your city of romance – have you seen them ever?

İtmege aġyārdan pinhān bu ʿışḳuñ gencini
Bu yıḳıḳ göñlüm gibi vīrāneler gördüñ[9]*mi hīç*
Don't you conceal from the view of the others this treasure of passion!
Deserts like my broken heart, any wastelands – have you seen them ever?

Göreliden sūretüñ naḳşın der-ü-dīvārda
Ṣūretüñ naḳş itmedük büt-ḫāneler gördüñ mi hīç
Thresholds and walls are all filled with reliefs of your face as I look there,
Walls lack your faces in temples of pagans?! Have you seen them ever?

Bezm-i ḥüsnüñde Necātī gibi yüzüñ şemʿine
Bāl-ü-perler yandurur pervāneler gördüñ[10] *mi hīç*
Beauty has made this Necati a guest of your candlewick banquet
Dipping his wings in your flames just like moths dance – have you seen them ever?

At first glance, some set pieces can immediately be perceived. These are, in order of their appearance, *the imbibing drunkards*, *the dying heroes*, *the madmen, wandering the city in chains*, *dervishes*, *hidden treasures amid the ruins*, *temples with painted walls*, *moths hovering around a candle*. When hearing about these in this

7 The transcription text is taken from Tarlan 1963: 168-69. The English translation was kindly contributed by Michael Reinhard Hess.
8 Tarlan 1963, by misprint, has *göndüñ.*
9 Tarlan 1963, by misprint, has *göndüñ.*
10 Tarlan 1963, by misprint, has *gönrdün*.

manner, it does not appear easy to establish any sort of link between them, nor is it clear what the poet wishes to say. But here the functioning of the similes and metaphors - in this poem, primarily similes – is easily seen.

Again, in order of appearance:

The drunkards (*mestāneler*) drink from "the chalice of your separation" (*cām-ı hecrüñ*). Separation is likened to the beverage in the chalice. Thus, the drinkers are portrayed as intoxicated from the effect of separation. The intoxication of separation simultaneously brings us to an allusion, to the *elest* covenant. In this gathering, the souls respond with "Yes!" to God asking them "Am I not your Lord?" (Ottoman *elest* < Arabic *a-lastu* "am I not?"[11]. But the poem is not mystical in bent. Starting from the simile, Necâtî expresses powerful emotions resulting from the continuing separation from his beloved, from beauty. The second line has the same subject. Persons who behave in manly, chivalrous fashion (*merdāneler*) die on the way to their beloved because they are separated from them and are struggling to reunite with them. Here again, the poet continues the chain of association begun with the simile of the chalice of separation. He desires to reunite that which is separated. We are confronted with the entire background of Islamic mysticism. The novice, or traveller on the mystic path, as illustrated so very beautifully in 'Aṭṭār's "Language of the birds" (*Mantıku't-tayr*), is confronted with the danger of remaining on the path and disappearing. But in the fables and non-Sufi stories the path to the beloved also carries the danger of death.

The cliché of "the chain of love of your lock of hair" (*zülfüñüñ zencīr-i sevdāsı*) in the second couplet also possesses a similar function. The likening of [the beloved's] hair to a chain is a fixed metaphor. As for the "chain of love", on one hand it likens love to a chain, while on the other hand it reminds, in an ambivalent fashion, of the black color of both the hair and the chain. The expression "the city of beauty" (*şehr-i ḥüsn*) found at the beginning of the second line stretches the boundaries of the hair-chain cliché through the metaphor of "the wandering madman" (*cerr ider divāne*) which is compared with the beauty of the city. Beauty is imagined as a city; as for the "wandering madman", it calls to mind a wandering mendicant dervish of the *Kalenderî* order, or a mad, vagabond dervish. In terms of the beloved one's beauty, to depart on a journey while bound by a "love chain" composed of her hair means to hope for certain things to be granted by that beauty. Thus, both the simile and metaphor making up a canvas composed of the concepts of the city, the chain, the madman and the dervish are a means for expressing the desire felt for the beloved – and as a result of this, the hope for certain things to be given by her beautiful face.

In the third couplet the simile of the "treasure of love" (*'ışḳuñ genci*), along with that of "ruins like my broken heart" (*yıḳıḳ göñlüm gibi vîrâneler*) are vehicles for describing the love that the poet wishes to hide from other poets, from his competi-

[11] See Quran VII (al-A`rāf), 172.

tors, and his injured feelings due to this love. Those things which have collapsed, the ruins, the heart, are each means of describing a state of being far from the beloved, and of suffering anxiety over others, over competitors (*ağyâr*); at the same time they allude to stories and fables whose events transpire amid the ruins.

The rhyme in the fourth couplet is a metaphor for the beloved because the form (*ṣūret*) of the beloved is painted on the walls of all of the temples (*büt-ḫāneler*). Again, it is not the beloved herself who is here, only her image. By means of allusions, this metaphor leads the human imagination in various directions. One of these is mysticism (*tasavvuf*). All of the drawings (*naḳış*) in the temples illustrate this. That is, everything in the world is a manifestation of the Divine. Another allusional direction, both here and in the third couplet, is that of going to the tavern (*meyḫâne*). The collapsed ruins (*vîrâneler*), the temple with the beautiful pictures on the walls are remindful of the tavern. The tavern is a place in which thoughts are scattered, but at the same time it contains many mystical dimensions, as well. All of these are means for describing another feeling: The lover is seeking his beloved in every place and believes that he has seen her.

The simile of the "beautiful feast" in the final continues the image of the tavern and of the *feast* of creation and separation (including its aftermath), which has been looming in the background from the beginning. The beauty of the beloved is likened to a feast, and her face compared to a candle. Necâtî is like a moth whose wings have been burned. The relationship between the moth and the candle is well-known as a symbol of burning or being annihilated by the force of love and yearning. It is a familiar means of expressing both worldly and divine love.[12]

The similes and metaphors in this poem comprise the basic building blocks for bringing to expression the feelings of separation, the wish to be reunited, the love and yearning that leads to madness, the fear of losing one's beloved, of seeing her in every place and, due to the inability to resist the power of her attraction, also of a burning desire. With the assistance of literary devices such as allusion (*telmih*), ambiguity (*tevriye*), symmetry (*tenâsüb*) distributed throughout the poem, and metonymy (*mürsel mecaz*) in the word *cām* at the beginning of the first couplet (where *cām* is used instead of *mey*), an entire literary culture is employed to assist with the interpretation of these feelings.

We are immediately confronted with the poem's rich palette, consisting of drunkards, dying heroes, madmen in chains, ruins, temples with painted walls, and moths hovering around a candle and burning their wings. Yet the metaphors, by associating the above-mentioned emotions with created beings, with man's experiences on the path to divine love, with taverns and with idolatry, help to transform these emotions into even more powerful and more beautiful feelings.[13]

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12 On this topic, see Tekin 1991.

13 For a linguistic study of the art of the simile (*benzetme*) in the *ġazal*s of Necâtî, see Kırman 1996.

In his studies on semantics, Doğan Aksan claims that similes are accepted as the first stage of the wordcraft known as the metaphor. He even makes the following quotation from Raymond Chapman: "The human mind may have begun the art of wordcraft with the simile." In investigations on semantics, similes are accepted as the first stage of the metaphor, which Doğan Aksan has called the transmission of the idiom.[14]

As has been stated in manuals on eloquent speech (*belâgat kitapları*), the simile and the metaphor are found alongside with metonymy (*mecaz ve kinâye*) in the section on discourse (*beyân*). In the summary by Kazvinî, the word 'discourse', for example, "describes a concept in different ways, meaning that it provides the ability to look at a topic from various directions". As for the simile, it informs of little known aspects of that which is being likened, of its honor and loftiness, its state of being, and its capacity. But just as the question whether the object to which something is compared (*müşebbehün bih*) is sometimes more perfect, more significant is that the original object (*müşebbeh*) can be discussed, the two of them may also be of equal value.[15] In all of the manuals on eloquent speech the metaphor is introduced as a simile in which one of the components is not mentioned, and at the same time it is defined as a metonymy without an object, i. e., a metonymy lacking the characteristic of a comparison. As is known, a great portion of similes has become formulaic over time, and constitute an aggregate of symbols, which in modern times have been given the name "allusion" (*mazmun*).[16] For instance, the moon (*mâh*) stands for the moon-shaped face of the beloved, the bow (*keman*) for the eyebrow, and the arrow (*ok*) for the eyelash.

Ahmet Nihat Tarlan sees "the internal perfection of our classical literature", as he calls it, as the story of a journey straight toward the personally symbolic, through the struggle of refining the simile, the closing up of the metaphor, and the recognition of the relationship between the thing being compared (*müşebbeh*) and its object of comparison (*müşebbehün bih*). In the originality of classical Turkish poetry, the poet accepts as basic the ability to conceal his intellectual efforts and bring a certain lyricism into being when establishing a connection between two concepts. He views his workmanship from this angle. He believes that, for the poet, the external world is not an end but a means.[17]

Students of Divan literature frequently assert that Divan poetry fundamentally relies on the art of metonymy, which uses the simile as its starting point. The opinions on this subject can be summarized as follows: words explain an entity, an object, an event (*olgu*), or an action. The explanation of one of these things by means of another one, or the imposing of the meaning of the second on the first, gives

14 Aksan 1995: 119ff, 125ff, 127ff, 131ff, 137ff.
15 Kazvinî 1990: 115, 125ff.
16 For more detailed information concerning the understanding of the term allusion and others, see Levend 1943, Onay 1992, Pala 1989, Çavuşoğlu 1984, Mengi 1993, Uçar 1993.
17 Tarlan 1981: 32, 44, 49.

birth to new understandings, to richness of meaning. In the concepts which are thereby brought into relation with one another, both the object of comparison and that to which it is compared can be either abstract or concrete.[18] That is to say, the concrete can be likened to the concrete or to the abstract, and likewise, the abstract to either the abstract or the concrete. For instance, in the poem we have used as an example the abstract 'separation' (*hicr*) is likened to the concrete 'chalice' (*cām*), the concrete 'lock' to the concrete 'chain' (*zencīr*), the abstract 'heart' (*gönül*) to the concrete 'ruins' (*vīrāne*), and the concrete 'form' (*ṣūret*) was put in the place of the concrete 'idol' (*büt*).

The entire material world of Divan literature, along with all its cultural assets, myths and ideology form a bountiful source of examples for the art of the simile and the metaphor, in which allusions, having been made into metaphors, formalized and transformed into symbols, can be employed. As has been stated by Tarlan, and frequently repeated after him, every conceivable concrete and abstract concept that the poet's power of imagination can hit upon becomes raw material for his poem.[19]

In Divan literature from earlier than the 16th century, in Sürûrî's *Bahrü'l-ma'ârif*, and in the section called "the third treatise" (*üçüncü makale*) of his own book, Şerafettin Râmî (14th-15th centuries) gives metaphors from such material, the great majority of which was taken from *Enîsü'l-Uşşâk*, a work written in Persian.[20] These are the metaphors concerned with the beauty of the beloved, her hair, forehead, ears, eyebrows, eyes, eyelashes, the twinkle of her eye, and with other, similar parts of her body.

Using this as his starting point, Tarlan examines the divan of Şeyhî and lists the metaphors he finds there, and also gives examples from Persian literature.[21] Tarlan's ideas[22] regarding the impossibility of making a complete judgement regarding the poets without acquiring a complete picture of this type of material found in all of the poems, and of the impossibility of fixing the various periods of lyrical poetry or of its internal perfection, have directed those emerging from his school particularly toward the above type of work. Çavuşoğlu and Tolasa, both of whom are adherents of Tarlan's ideas, have classified all of the material in the divans of Necâtî and Ahmed Paşa.[23] The religious-mystical, historical, epic, social and geographic material, and also everything in divan literature concerning man, nature and objects has already begun to be collected and classified. The divans of Hayâlî and Nev'î

18 See, for example, Çavuşoğlu 1984: 15, 21, 102, 134.
19 On the topic of this material being transformed into symbols by means of allusion, see Yavuz 1982.
20 On this subject see Okatan 1986, Şafak 1991, Râmî 1994.
21 See Tarlan 1964: 54-182.
22 See Tarlan 1963, p. v.
23 Çavuşoğlu 1971, Tolasa 1973.

have been subjected to this type of investigation.[24] Additionally, a number of master's theses have also been written with the same intention.[25]

Tarlan, as well as all other researchers, accept that this material comes in large measure from Iran. Moreover, Tacizâde's accusing Ahmed Paşa and Şeyhî of blind imitation in the 15th century, is famous.[26] When looking at commentary writers like Sürûrî, Şem'î, Sûdî, and İ. H. Bursevî, we see that the works most frequently commented were those of poets like Hafız, Saʿdî, ʿAṭṭâr, Mevlânâ and Örfî.[27] Since the 15th century the search for originality by a good number of poets, which began to be felt through a desire for change in the subjects chosen, is reflected here and there in the various sources. In the 17th century Turkish poets began to believe that they had surpassed their Iranian counterparts in the art of *gazel* writing.[28]

But it is necessary to recall that the Turkish poetry of this period does not simply consist of imitations of Iranian works, as is sometimes supposed. In Ottoman writings on the subjects of rhetoric and sound, there were attempts to express this situation in a detailed manner.[29] As to originality, it comes about after passing through a language which carries an entire historical, cultural and social accumulation, and the filter of individuality. Put otherwise, it is dependent upon how the material is employed. Every culture and individual can view the same objects differently, and locate it differently in their own worlds. This is certainly also the case in the employment of metaphors.

When discussing the basic function of metaphors in the *gazel*, there is one more point that we must name. It is not only metaphors that carry out this type of function in the *gazel*. The metaphor (*mecaz*), allusion (*kinâye*), poetic etiology (*hüsnütalil*), personification (*teşhis*), exaggeration (*mübâlağa*) and all of the other elements of discourse (*beyân*) and even of aesthetics connected with understanding can perform this function. In other words, they can bring about a transition from the world of the senses to the world of feeling and thought. There are some poems in which the metaphor does not play the most important role, and which can even be considered rather poor in terms of metaphors. However, it appears that when the *gazel* poets are reviewed in terms of their poems, the task very frequently attributed to the metaphor is that it allows for the introduction of other literary devices and that even in situations in which metaphors do not dominate the entire piece they still actively perform this task.

The sources and manuscripts provide us with the following information regarding the birth and formation of the *gazel*: A sense is born in the heart of the poet, which is affected by experiencing or witnessing a past event. The poet usually

24 See Kurnaz 1987, Sefercioğlu 1990.
25 For example, see Temizkan 1986.
26 On this topic see Erünsal 1983: LII-LIV.
27 See Oğuz 1998, Dündar 1998, Morkoç 1994, Toprak 1998, Duru 1998.
28 For detailed information on this topic, see Kortantamer 1997: 411ff.
29 Kortantamer 1979, Kortantamer 1982.

transforms it into a couplet. The rhyme (*kafiye*) or repeated word (*redif*) of that couplet then influences the associations of emotions and ideas. Of the greatest help are metaphors and other literary devices. A striking repetition of a word can draw poets to the point of embarking on a literary rivalry with one another. But the rhyme or repeated word is always supported by other elements, and in a way as ordering devices emphasizes sound and meaning.

In our example, the *redif* "*-ler gördüñ mi hīç"* wants to draw upon itself the attention of the beloved. This is realized through the question form as well as the implicit admonition "Dost thou not see?". This can be translated into an imperative: "Look!", i.e. the beloved is asked to look at the lover's – which is of course the poet's – pain resulting from separation and his desire to reunite. At the same time, the *redif* situates the entire poem within the art of inquiring. The plural suffix (*-ler*) does not merely rise these emotions above the level of the individual, it also multiplies them and communicates them to everybody. In this way it participates in the mystical secondary plan (*tasavvufî geri plan*) of likening.

The situations in which the repeated element (*redif*) in *gazel* poems has a comparative function are not few. 'Like' (*gibi* and *teg*), 'similar' (*benzer*), 'as if' (*gūyâ*), 'likewise' (*niteki*), 'as if' (*sanki*) come to mind. They are used very frequently. In these situations the entire poem is built from beginning to end upon metaphors. An example from Bâkî:[30]

Terk itdi ben żaʿîfini gitdi revān gibi
Gelmek müyesser olmadı bir daḫı cān gibi
He left me weak and weary like a mortal soul
A way back into life I could no more control.

Ser-keşlik eylemezse o servüñ ayaġına
Yüzler sürüyü varayın āb-ı revān gibi
If he permits, below this mighty cypress tree
My face to earth, like living water I shall roll.

Dehr içre gerçi sen de ser-āmedsin ey güneş
Olmayasın ol āfet-i devr-i zamān gibi
O sun, you are the leader in this earthly realm,
But do not like this plague of time demand your toll!

Ey āh māhuñ irişemezsin ḳulaġına
Başuñ gerekse göklere irsün fiġān gibi
O woe, you cannot reach the moon, its ears are shut,
But let your head rise to the sky that will condole.

Tīr-i ġamuñ nişānesidür diyü Bāḳīyi
Allāh ki ḫalḳ çekdi çevürdi kemān gibi
Allah is mankind's sculptor, he bent and bowed this Baki
The bow of sorrow meanwhile taking him as goal.

30 The text is from Küçük 1994: 426-27, the translation by Michael Reinhard Hess.

The comparative "like" (*gibi*), which is the repeated word (*redif*) in this poem, ensures that all of the couplets are built upon metaphors. The beloved, who is likened to the "spirit" (*revān*) and "soul" (*cān*), goes away and does not return. If she acts stubbornly the poet will act as running water, passing over the feet of the beautiful woman/cypress (*servüñ ayaġına ... varayın*). The sun (*güneş*) is also an entity that appears often, but it cannot resemble the beloved. Even if the cry of "Ah!" reaches the heavens, it does not reach the ear of his moon-faced beauty (*māh*). Just like a target for sorrow, which is like an arrow (*ok*), Bâkî is bent over like a bow (*yay*).

As we can see, in this poem the beginning of everything that tells of separation, sorrow and the longing for reunion is in the metaphors. The reason for this is the repeated word, which is at the same time a comparative element. It forces every line into a metaphor.

In the foregoing discussion we have attempted to assess some of the most basic functions of metaphors in Ottoman divan poetry. It can be added that a good many questions such as the various types of metaphors, particularities of language, the line of historical development, different periods of development, forms of usage in the different arrangements and styles, individual usages, other literary devices and the comparative usage of forms concerning all of the available material in Turkish, Persian and Arabic literature, will be subjects to be explored in the future.

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