

# 1 Poet, panegyric, and patron

## A Bahariye *Kaside* by Tacizade Ca'fer Çelebi for Sultan Bayezit II

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The poet-statesman Tacizade Ca'fer Çelebi was raised in the environment of the court of Prince Bayezit (b. 1447, d. 1512) during the future sultan's governorship of the "princely province" (*şehzade sancağı*) of Amasya. Ca'fer's father, Taci Beg, had entered the service of then fifteen year-old Bayezit sometime in 1461–62, about two years before Ca'fer was born (1463–64). As the son of a highly regarded courtier, Ca'fer received an excellent *medrese* (theological school) education from which he graduated to a successful career as a *medrese* professor in the provinces. By the time he was thirty, he held significant positions in Istanbul thanks to the patronage of Çandarlı İbrahim Paşa, tutor to Prince Bayezit in Amasya and, by 1486, vizier to Sultan Bayezit (r. 1481–1512). Ca'fer's rise in prominence, likely impelled by his connection to Bayezit's court, culminated in 1497, with his appointment to the Imperial Divan as *nişancı*, or inscriber of the royal signature, a powerful and influential position whose official status he did much to increase.<sup>1</sup>

A significant measure of Ca'fer's esteem derived from his abilities as a poet and as an engaging companion at the social gatherings of the great. Among his many poetic works, he has a fascinating *kaside* (panegyric) on the topic of spring (*bahariye*) and the praise of Sultan Bayezit II, which was written either before the author's appointment as *nişancı* or some years later.<sup>2</sup> *Kasides* are almost always occasional but unless a *kaside* refers to a specific event, it is usually impossible to tell for certain when and for what occasion it was composed. The "registers of gifts" (*in'amat defterleri*) which recorded gifts given by the sultan in recognition of significant poems, other works of literature, or life events, show only three awards for *kasides* made to Ca'fer in the spring or early summer: one in June of 1505, one in June of 1508, and one in April of 1509.<sup>3</sup> The fact that the *hüsn-i taleb* (beauty of request) section of this *kaside*, in which the poet begs for something, is limited to a simple statement confined to part of one half-line seems to indicate that he felt no need to elaborate on his needs or qualifications. The begging is introduced by a quite common geological (and astronomical) fantasy and draws a simple comparison:

If Argus' rays fall on a stone from the Yemen, oh Monarch,  
It becomes carnelian and then finds worth and value

Compared to the rays of your beneficence, Argus is less than a mote  
If I am not worth less than a rock, transport me to worthiness.

This sounds like a person, confident of his worth, looking for an increase in his income or influence more than a person looking for a better or specific job. This would fit Ca'fer who was already in an important divan-level position (*nişancı*) by 1505–08.

What is striking about Ca'fer's poetry in general and this poem in particular is the way he creatively plays with and often confounds the genre expectations of his audiences and does this in the context of reminding them of the realities of patron, place, and time. We shall see, in this *kaside*, numerous examples of Ca'fer's referencing the character and interests of Bayezit in clever and complex ways.

Ca'fer's spring *kaside* begins, as do most (if not all) spring poems, in the flower garden. The winter has been long and cold, and all entertaining has been done indoors, in warm clothes, huddled around braziers or fireplaces—the only flowers were woven into fabrics or carpets, painted on tiles or ceramics, or recalled in the words of poems. In spring, the entertainment gathering, the *meclis*, again moves outside into the garden, its traditional and preferred locale. However, Ca'fer's *nesib*, in contrast to the usual poetic introduction to a spring poem, takes the *meclis* for granted and reminds his audience that not only are the flowers blossoming but, in their blossoming, reflecting the ordinary life of Ottoman society preparing to bring its own color and joy to the world.

1. *Şâhid-i ra'nâ-yı lâle geydi gülgûn pîrehen*  
*Zînet idüb anı sîmîn tügmelerle jâleden*  
[The pretty boy poppy donned a rosy shirt  
And adorned it with silver buttons of dew]
2. *Kurs-ı germ-i âfitâbı gök tenûrında görüb*  
*İştihâsından sehergeh goncalar açdı dehen*  
[At dawn the buds saw the warm cake of the sun  
In the sky-oven and hungrily opened their mouths]
3. *Şâh-ı gülden kasd-ı fâsd idüb çü neşter çekdi hâr*  
*Hâzır itdi nergis-i zerrîn-küleğ çûb-u-legen*  
[When the thorn drew its lancet to bleed the rose sultan  
The golden crowned narcissus made ready stick and basin]
4. *Kâseler oynatduğunca lâle çûb üzre anun*  
*Eşreñfiler yagdurur hengâmesine nesteren*  
[When the poppy made goblets spin on its stick  
The briar rose rained down gold sequins on the crowd]
5. *Sebze sûzen târ-ı sünbül riştedür bâd-ı sabâ*  
*Berg-i gülden dikmege dilberler için pîrehen*  
[The grass is a needle, hyacinth stamen thread that the wind  
Might sew a shirt of rose petals for the heart-thieves]

6. *Yer yüzi tutdı pelengîne nihâlî sûretin*  
*Düşdi çün hâk-i siyâh üstine berg-i yâsemen*  
 [The face of the earth looked like a leopard skin carpet  
 When petals of jasmine fell upon the black soil]

The poppy is a beautiful beloved youth sewing silver buttons on his spring shirt. No more drab winter cloaks and furs! The warm sun reminds the hungry bud-children of round golden cakes of bread right out of the oven. The rose, sultan of flowers, is about to have blood drawn to relieve him of the melancholy humors of a dark winter and prepare him for the delights of spring. In the marketplace a crowd has gathered around open-air entertainers (*kâsebâz*) who spin cups and plates on sticks (and send out lovely boys to work the crowd for tips). The briar rose excites the crowd by generously scattering small gold coins at their feet as the sultans and the very wealthy would often do on glad public occasions. The wind helps the beloved boys dress for the occasion and the black earth, strewn with white jasmine petals, becomes a leopard-skin rug for the party-goers to sit upon in the garden.

The rebirths of nature and society coupled with images of beauty, joy, and generosity might well recall promise of the Resurrection to any pious Muslim—and by the later years of his reign, Bayezit, who led a rather wild life during his youth in Amasya had repented of his youthful excesses and gained a reputation for extreme piety (albeit with a dervish flavor).

7. *Hâkdan baş kaldurub her yirde emvât-ı nebât*  
*Halka mahşer hâlin izhâr itdi lutf-ı Zü'l-minen*  
 [Everywhere dead plants raised their heads from beneath the earth  
 As a generous God demonstrated the Resurrection to one and all]
8. *Verd-i ra'nâ Ahmed-i muhtârdan virüb nişân*  
*Râyet-i sebz olub üstinde turur serv-i çemen*  
 [The lovely rose displays the emblem of Ahmet the Chosen  
 Above it the meadow cypress is a flag of green]
9. *Kodı altunla mufassillar bahâr âyâtına*  
*Câ-be-câ nergis ki tutdı sebze-zâr içre vatan*  
 [Here and there narcissi that made a home of the greensward  
 Mark with gold separations between the verses of spring]

The Resurrection—instructively acted out by nature in springtime—leads directly to thinking of the Prophet, who brought God’s message of Resurrection to the people of this world in the form of the Qur’ân. Ahmet the Chosen (*Ahmed-i Muhtâr*) is one of the names by which Muhammad is known. His symbol is a red rose and his banner is always green. Also, in one traditional style of illuminating the Qur’ân, each verse is separated from the next by a floral design done in gold ink.

The next couplet effects a transition by continuing the “flowers/vegetation” theme but uncoupling it from the “religion” theme.

10. *Jâle ile zeyn olub berg-i beneşşe takılır*  
*Tıfl-ı sultân-ı Habeş gûşına lü'lü-yi 'Aden*  
[The petal of the violet was adorned by dew  
An Ethiopian child-sultan put an Aden pearl on his ear]

Next, the breeze is introduced as a character.

11. *Reh-zen-i bâd-ı sabâ ile reyâhîn ceng için*  
*Subh-dem girmiş silâha bâga olmuş encümen*  
[In early morn, to battle with the highwayman east wind, the herbs  
Took up weapons and formed a company for the garden]
12. *Hatmî tutmuş nîze nîlüfer ele almış siper*  
*Hârdan hañcer çeker gül sûsen olmuş tîğ-zen*  
[The hollyhock held a javelin; the water lily took up a shield  
The rose drew a dagger of thorn; the iris became a swordsman]
13. *Niçeler topraga düşmişler namâzın kılmaga*  
*Saf tutub turur ayag üstine serv-ü-nârven*  
[Ever so many of them fell to earth in order to pray  
The cypress and elm keep standing there holding the line]

The plants and trees are now soldiers some of whom take up arms against a highwayman wind, a robber from the wastelands, who will make off with their leaves and petals. Some plants bend down to pray at the onslaught of the wind while the trees stand firm and tall to block its way.

The next couplet effects another transition by following up on the theme of “trees” while moving away from the “wind as highwayman” theme.

14. *Ak çiçeklerle dıraht-ı sebzi zeyn eyler bahâr*  
*Künbed-i hazrâda yılduzlar sanur anı gören*  
[Spring adorns the green tree with white flowers  
Who sees it thinks it stars in the heavens' green dome]

The image of the flowering tree as a reflection of the visible cosmos hints at Bayezid's interest in astronomy and, gestures toward the garden party that lasts until dark, leading us gently towards thoughts of the beloved.

15. *Güyyâ âb-ı revânun gönline tokındı bâd*  
*Kim yüzün dürdü serâser çehresi oldu şiken*  
[It seems the wind has touched the heart of the flowing water  
For its surface puckered and its face became all wrinkled]
16. *Gül gül altunlu yeşil dibâ geyer güyâ nigâr*  
*Gülbünü kim zeyn ider evrâk-ı sebz-ü-nesteren*  
[It is as if the beauty donned green brocade strewn with golden florets  
When the blossoming branch adorns the green leaves of the briar rose]

The wind has been transformed from a robber of petal and leaf to its equally common role as messenger or go-between for lover and beloved. The message is such that the water is deeply touched and obviously troubled for its surface is wrinkled with distress. What causes this distress is the appearance of the inaccessible beauty, dressed alluringly in a magnificent costume of green brocade embroidered with florets done in gold thread. In a *kaside*, when the beloved appears, the beloved object of praise—the *memduh*—is usually not far behind.

The first major formal transition in a typical Ottoman *kaside* is the *gürizgâh*, the “taking-off place” from which the poet launches into the *medih* (praise) section of the poem. The *gürizgâh* usually consists of two couplets, the first giving a general reference to the official position or role or title of the object of praise and the second mentioning him or her by name. Ca‘fer’s next couplet could serve as a perfect example of the first couplet of a *gürizgâh*.

17. *Bir tek-âverdür su kim şâha yedek olmag-içün*  
*Baglamış ‘aks-i gül-i ter üstine la’lîn micen*  
 [The stream is a swift runner, serving as a guard for the Shah  
 It bound on a reflection of the fresh rose as a ruby shield]

The water and the rose (king of flowers) are brought together in the image of the ruler accompanied by the personal guards that run beside his horse on public occasions and we are ready to hear who this ruler, so honored by the natural world, might be. But our formal expectations are surprisingly not to be fulfilled.

18. *Husrev-i gül meclisinde Bârbüd-âvâ olub*  
*Dem-be-dem okur bu şî’ri bülbül-i şîrîn-suhan*  
 [It became the voice of Barbud in the gathering of the rose-king  
 The sweet-voiced *bülbül* now and again recites this poem]

The ruler is still the rose and the transition is not to the praise of a specific ruler but to a *tagazzül*, the embedding of a short love lyric (*gazel*), in which the main topic is, as always, the beautiful beloved. The subtext of the ruler and his court is kept alive in this by identifying the *bülbül* (the eastern nightingale)—commonly the counterpart of the poet or singer of poems in the garden imagined as a party—as the legendary musician and master-singer Barbud, who, the tales tell us, performed at the court of the glorious ancient Iranian ruler, Hüsrev Perviz. The *gazel* begins with a rhyming couplet (*matla*) that identifies its genre.

19. *Rişte rişte itdi cânı gamzen ey sîmîn-beden*  
*Kim ide sen dilbere cân riştesinden pîrehen*  
 [Oh silver-body, your glance tore the soul to shreds  
 That you might make a heart-thief’s shirt of soul-threads]

There is a play in this couplet on the words for “thread” (*rişte*) and “soul” (*cân*). In the first half-line, the beloved’s glance has torn the lover’s “soul” to shreds

(*rişte rişte itdi*), in which case “soul” means “life.” The beloved is “killing” the lover. In the second half-line, “soul” and “thread” are brought together in the compound “soul-thread,” which refers metaphorically to a concept in the popular religious mysticism of Ottoman poetry. According to a rather simple understanding of the mystical concept of “the unity of unqualified being” (*vahdet-i vücud*), human beings are born out of a primal unity into a state of separation. But they retain, in the form of what is understood as the “soul,” a link—resembling a “thread”—that attaches them to the former unity. If one can see beyond the attractive illusions of material existence, one will come to realize that feelings of passionate love, intense longing, burning desire, the irresistible pull of the beloved’s allure are, at the core, the desire of the “soul thread” to draw itself back into Divine Unity. It is the beloved (or *the* Beloved), who is the “heart-thief” that tears away or burns away the coating of material form, of “life” in this world, and reveals the true nature of eternal existence that lies hidden within us all—like the wick or “thread” within the wax of a candle burning with passion’s flame. And, in the poet’s metaphor, the “soul threads” of many lovers are woven together to create the “shirt” that cloaks the beloved in the willingness, in fact, eagerness of lovers to sacrifice their lives for love. In the context of Ottoman poetry, “beloved” can (and does) refer equally to this-worldly beloveds, to God, and to the ruler. In a *kaside*, this kind of reference would be understood by its audiences to refer to the relation of the sultan to his subjects and especially to his courtiers, all of whom would be willing to die for his sake—to give up the “soul” that equals “life” for the “soul (thread)” that equals “love as a link to eternal unity.” This also situates the ruler in relation to God. Just as the material world is a distant emanation from Divine Unity, so the ruler is an emanation from God in his role as Ruler—what an Ottoman means by “the Shadow of God on Earth.”

The *gazel* goes on to picture the beloved turned shyly and coquettishly away from the poet, so that his/her hair hangs down covering the face.

20. *Görinür haddün ser-i gîsûni bâd itse dü nîm*  
*Sanki ejderdür çıkar agzından od açub dehen*  
 [If the wind parts your tresses, your cheek appears  
 Like a dragon whose mouth spews fire when it gapes]
21. *Müşterî vakt-i küsûfında döner şol hâle kim*  
*Ol mehün Mirrîh çeşmi üzre tutmuşdur vatan*  
 [When the moon is in eclipse, Jupiter enters a state in which  
 It makes its home above the Mars-eye of that moon]

The hair is commonly compared to a great dragon, twisting and coiling, with many heads but, in this case, the hair parted by a gust of wind is likened to the mouth of a dragon which might reveal a red cheek resembling the dragon’s flaming breath as it protects its treasure. But when the moonlike face is eclipsed by hair, the result is an especially auspicious astrological event—again referencing the sultan’s interest in astronomy. When the moon is in eclipse, it does not go dark but turns some shade of dark red—the so-called “blood moon.” Jupiter

is the most auspicious of stars, ruling the transmutation of initial bad luck to ultimate good luck. It comes to dominate both the occluded moon, which in its redness resembles Mars, both representing the eye of the beloved, red with anger at being publicly embarrassed by the importunate lover. Now we are forced to consider that the flame in the dragon's mouth may not be the cheek or the cheek alone but also an angry red eye peeping out from behind a fall of hair. The message here seems to be that the beloved (and by extension, the sultan) may be shy (and easily offended) but this is an especially opportune time to approach nonetheless. Things might just turn for the better.

The poem then makes a transition to another revelation and a different set of comparisons while retaining the celestial theme.

22. *Bu ne sırdur gösterür rûy u leb ü dendân-ı yâr*  
*Âfitâb içinde zerre zerre içinde Peren*  
 [What a secret is revealed by the beloved's face and lip and tooth  
 A mote in the sun and the Pleiades in the mote]

The lucky viewer is now permitted a view of the beloved's face, which is no longer an occluded moon but a brilliantly shining sun. In this sun—and we must recall that the sun is the “ruler over the earth”—the mouth is the tiniest of motes and in that tiny mote shine teeth, bright as the stars of the Pleiades.

The reference to mouth and teeth moves the descriptive metaphors away from the sky and down to earth.

23. *Gördüğüm benler midür çâh-ı zenehdânundaki*  
*Dâneler midür yâhud sîb içre ey nâzûk beden*  
 [Are those freckles I see there in the dimple of your chin  
 Or are they seeds in an apple, oh you of the slim body]
24. *Zahm-ı tîrûn sînemi gırbâl ider anunla tâ*  
*Hâk-bîz adına kûyun geşt idem her lahza ben*  
 [Your arrows' wounds made a sieve of my breast, so that  
 I might ever pass through your neighborhood as a sifter of dust]
25. *Gamzeler yalun kılıçlarla önünce seyri der*  
*Kâfir-i çeşmün müselmân eyledün benzer ki sen*  
 [Glances promenaded before you with naked blades  
 It seems you have made your infidel eye into a Muslim]

Here we are led back to the kind of commonplace, this-worldly imagery with which the *kaside's nesib* began. The freckled chin is an apple with its seeds on the sapling-body of the beloved, which reminds us of the garden and the garden's bounty. The arrows of the beloved's glances have riddled the lover's breast so that he can take a most lowly position: both as the sieve and the person who uses it to sift the dust of the street—the beloved's street in this case—in hope of finding a lost coin or something of value. The image of a dust-sifter is a powerful reminder of the lover's (and courtly petitioner's) humility and willingness to seek only the smallest favor.

Then the glances materialize in the form of eyelashes that are imagined as the curving blades of guards marching before the sultan-eye. Transformed into a sultan, the eye, which is usually an infidel because it is haughty, heartless, and cruel, becomes a Muslim who can be expected to act with sympathy, generosity, and kindness. Thus, in this little embedded love lyric we are returned to the previous major themes that connect equally with the beloved and the ruler, themes that will recur throughout the poem: the garden and its rebirth in spring, mirrored by the rebirth of public life; love, lover, beloved; Beloved, longing for attachment to the object of desire and the humble lover's self-sacrifice, reflecting the self-sacrificial devotion of the courtier; poetry and music as the voice of desire; Islam, both esoteric and exoteric, as the religion of love and grounding of the social order; and the cosmos as affirmations of good fortune for the object of praise and the sultan's divine right to rule.

In the next couplet are combined the lover's suffering and single-minded devotion to the object of his affection.

26. *Senden ayru bâga varsam dilde artar derd-ü-gam*  
*Bülbüle firdevs olur gülzârsuz Beytü'l-hazen*  
[If I go to the garden without you, pain and woe mount in my heart  
Paradise without the rose-bed is Jacob's Tent of Sorrow to the *bülbül*]

The *bülbül*, we already know, is the poet/singer who serves the beloved/ruler. The poet without the object of his love finds the garden—which should be the ultimate site of relaxed pleasure—to be indistinguishable from the tent of Jacob at a time of intense sorrow and loss when his beloved Joseph is presumed dead. This also situates the beloved man/ruler as a Joseph who in Muslim lore is the most beautiful and attractive of men.

Then, with a play on the word *çin* meaning both “China” and “curl (of hair),” the poem returns both to the beloved's hair (with its lovely musky scent) and to the function of this little lyric interlude as an extended *gürizgâh* introducing the Sultan/Shah.

27. *Saçların yine getürmiş Çîn harâcîdur diyü*  
*Âsitân-ı Şâha yük yük nâfe-i müşk-i Hutun*  
[Your hair brought to the Shah's threshold  
The musk-sacs of Khotan in many loads as the tribute of China]

In what is to follow from this, the true *gürizgâh*, the beloved (the “you” in “your hair”) and the ruler (the “shah”) are conflated in the *shah-memdûh*, the object of praise in this *kaside*'s springtime. First the shah is identified by name:

28. *Pâdişâh-ı heft-kışver hazret-i Şeh Bâyezîd*  
*Zâtı bir cândur ki olmuşdur cihân ol câna ten*  
[Monarch of the Seven Dominions, the lord, Shah Bayezit  
Whose person is a soul—a soul to which the whole world is a body]

In this, the second of the *gürizgâh* couplets, the monarch is described not just by the extent of his rule (over the seven dominions or climes of the earth north of the equator) but by his place and function in a more universal and spiritual scheme. We are referred, quite delicately, back to the “soul thread” (*can rîştesi*) metaphor we encountered in the opening couplet (*matla*) of the embedded *gazel*. Here there is a clear analogy: just as the soul is a spiritual thread of connection to Divine Unity running through the material, physical body of a person, so is the person of the monarch—this monarch—a soul-thread that runs through this material world connecting it to its underlying spiritual origin. This also implies that the ruler—a beloved and gatherer of the soul-threads of this world’s people—is also a lover whose soul-thread and collected soul-threads are “gathered” by (or into) the ultimate, Divine Beloved.

The next couplet which both ends the *gürizgâh* and begins the praise (*medih*) section proper, moves from the spiritual abstract of Muslim mysticism (another interest of this sultan) to the pragmatic ordering of life in this world. His rule is linked directly to the line of Rightly Guided Caliphs—Abu Bakr, Omar, Osman, and Ali—who directly succeeded the Prophet (here “Ahmet”) in leadership of the Muslim community. He exhibits their most praised qualities, identifies the Caliph Osman with the Osman who founded the Ottoman (Trk. *Osman-ı*) dynasty, and as such shows himself a worthy and, perhaps, natural successor to their authority.

29. *Ol ‘Ömer-heybet ‘Alî-sîret Şeh-i Siddîk-sıdk*  
*İftihâr-ı Âl-i ‘Osmân Husrev-i Ahmed-sünen*  
 [Omar in grandeur, Ali in virtue, King of Abu Bakr’s veracity  
 Pride of the House of Osman, Lord of Ahmet’s path]

This linkage to the line of the original caliphs will be actualized less than a decade later, when Bayezit’s son Selim I will conquer Egypt and appropriate the title of Caliph from a putative descendent of the Abbasids. Nonetheless, from the time of Bayezit’s father, Mehmet I (the Conqueror), the Ottoman Sultans were the most active and successful defenders and spreaders of Islam and, as such, were in all but the title the successors (caliphs) of the Prophet (Ahmet/Muhammad).

The introduction of the sultan by name is followed by a return to the basic metaphoric contexts of the *nesib* but with a direct connection to the character, actions and destiny of the ruler. As did the *nesib*, this section begins with spring in the garden.

30. *Zulm ile fasl-ı hazânda her nesin aldıysa bâd*  
*‘Ahd-i ‘adlînde bu dem aldı bir eksüksüz çemen*  
 [Whatever of it the wind took by oppression in the autumn  
 A perfect meadow now took back, in the age of his justice]

Spring itself becomes a symbol of the sultan’s justice. In the Muslim world, justice meant something like “equity”: making sure that no one is treated unfairly

and restoring what has been unfairly gained or lost. Likewise, the lawful, ordained use of the sultan's power is to preserve equity and the social order in which equity can be maintained. Any other use of power is oppression or tyranny (*zulm, cevr*) which should arouse the sultan to anger and the will to punish the oppressor. The spring meadow is "perfect" or "not lacking anything" because what was stolen by an autumn wind has been restored. Note the implied reference to the previous "wind as highwayman" theme. This couplet can be seen as an introduction to the rest of the praise section which comprises an imaginative discourse on power and equity expressed through a continuation of metaphors referencing the spring garden and the cosmos which rules the seasons of the world and the fate of each individual.

31. *Devletün topı 'aceb mi göklere aḡsa Şehâ*  
*Çün urur dâ'im kılıcun âfitâb-ı tîg-zen*  
 [No wonder, oh Shah, if the cannonball of your fortune reach the skies  
 When your sword ever strikes at the swordsman sun]

The suggestion in this line is that the sultan's power is such that, if his cannon were fired on the trajectory of his fortune, it would reach the skies and never return to earth (and, perhaps, already has lodged in the sky in the forms of the sun or moon). In the second half-line, the sultan's competition with the ruler of the heavens (the sun) exalts his influence to a celestial level, resulting in a couplet that might be seen to say: your bright sword reflects the sword-like rays of the sun as though you were dueling with it and so, would it be that amazing if it turns out that the sun itself is no more than the cannonball of your shining fortune shot into the sky?

32. *Reh-zen-i bâd-ı sabâdan sana kaḡıd sunmaga*  
*Şâh-ı güller nâme-i ser-beste bağlar goncadan*  
 [To present you with a letter from the highwayman east wind  
 The flowering branch binds the bud into a message pouch]
33. *Kûşe-i çeşminden artuk dilberün 'ahdünde hîç*  
*Bir taraf yokdur kim ola anda âşûb-u-fiten*  
 [While you reign there is no place in the corner  
 Of the beloved's eye where are turmoil and disruption]
34. *Kadr ile ma'mûre-i mülk-i celâlünde senîn*  
*Oldı dünyâ âsumânı köhne çarh-ı pîre-zen*  
 [By Providence, in the inhabited domains of your glory  
 The ancient crone of heaven's wheel became the nether sky]

The east wind as a highwayman, against whom the garden greenery took up arms in the early lines of the poem, now returns overtly in this cluster of images as it offers a letter to the sultan in a more subdued and submissive posture. As we saw above, readers of Ottoman poetry are accustomed to the east wind acting in the role of a messenger who passes news between lover and beloved. Also the

blossoming bud is a commonplace metaphor for the heart “blossoming” with love. So the message that the robber wind sends sealed in a bud-pouch will, when opened, be a message of love and devotion. The couplet moves us from the symbol of disruption and unrest (the robber in the wilds) to love and thence, in the next couplet, to the beloved, who is, perhaps, a more civilized symbol of disruption.

The “corner of the beloved’s eye” is where the “turmoil and disruption” of erotic attraction lurk to be loosed by a sideways, coquettish glance. Affected by the glance, lovers, even those whose lives may have been hitherto marked by propriety and good manners, are driven to disgraceful public displays of desire. But under the rule of this sultan, even emotional, erotic, sexual feelings have been tamed, and the beloved, like the highwayman, has lost the power to cause social unrest. In this context it is worth noting that under Islamic law highway robbery and illicit sexual behavior are two of the three major capital crimes against the limits (*hadd*) imposed by God, the third being the drinking of wine/ alcohol, of which more later.

The next couplet introduces a third source of disruption in this world: the actions of destiny as determined by the influence of the stars and planets. Here the wheel of the concentric spheres of heaven, in which the stars and planets turn, is likened to an ancient crone—unsympathetic, untrustworthy, and often malevolent—who, as the embodiment of destiny, controls the lives of earthly people. In the domains of this sultan, even the negative consequences of a capricious fate are lessened to the point at which they do no more harm than does the world’s sky.

The sultan is capable of creating peace and order in his domains because awe of him and love and fear have been instilled in all the material world.

35. *Gördi cârûb-ı murassa’ yaraşur dergâhuna*  
*Dil-rübâlar zülfine dizdi ‘arak dürr-i ‘Aden*  
 [It saw that a bejeweled broom was suitable for your threshold  
 So sweat strung pearls of Aden on the locks of the heart-stealers]
36. *Bagrı kûhun bîm-i kahrundan tolubdur hûn ile*  
*Hûn-ı dildür la’l adına seng-i hârâdan çıkan*  
 [The mountain’s belly filled with blood in terror of your rage  
 What emerged as a ruby from hard rock is its heart’s blood]
37. *Halka gadr eyler diyü devründe her subh âfitâb*  
*Kor ‘azâb idüb sipihrûn başına kızmış legen*  
 [In your age, because the sky was unjust to people, every morn  
 The sun, as a torture, puts a red-hot basin on its head]

The beloveds of this world, famed for being capricious, unruly, haughty, and cruel drip with anxious sweat as they bow before him, tamed by his majesty. The mountains bleed rubies, fearing his wrath.<sup>4</sup> The sun punishes the fickle sphere of heaven with torture by becoming a red hot basin placed on its head.

There follows an extended series of alternating images of his auspicious majesty and of the fear he inspires in those who would do evil.

The ruler is so great that the heavens are no more than a table set for his delight, with the moon as platter and the Pleiades as grapes. This degree of success can only be determined by the tiny legless bird of fortune (*hüma*) that flies without rest around the world casting a shadow only on those who will become rulers. If other rulers could succeed to this extent then the shadow of carrion birds would be equal to the shadow of the *hüma*.

38. *Kibriyânun sofrasında bir tabak engür olur*  
*Her kaçan kim mâh ile gökde kırân eyler Peren*  
[On the table of his greatness, there is a plate of grapes  
Whenever the moon in the sky conjoins with the Pleiades]
39. *Sana devletde kaçan irür selâtîn-i cihân*  
*Kanda bir olur hüma ile Şehâ zâg-u-zagan*  
[When the sultans of this world attain your degree of success  
Then, oh Shah, the bird of fortune would be equal to crow and kite]

Next, the pupils (“little people” in the Turkish) in the eyes of the beloved, whom we last encountered with sweaty locks, are terrified by his wrath into giving up their practice of robbing the hearts of lovers (just as the east wind gives up stealing the flower’s petals).

40. *Korkusından hastadur yârun gözi merdümleri*  
*’Adlün eyyâmında ’uşşâka olalı râh-zen*  
[The little pupils in the beloved’s eyes are sick with fear  
When they act the highwayman to lovers in the days of your justice]

Then we return to the sultan’s power with a rather complex trope.

41. *Hey’et-i kadriün kitâbında felekler gûyiyâ*  
*Şol devâ’irdür ki ola anun ile hall-i fen*  
[In the book that diagrams your power, the heavens are  
The circles which demonstrate all the sciences]

In early modern astronomy, from the work of Nasru’ d-Din Tusi in the thirteenth century to Copernicus in the fifteenth-sixteenth, the motions of the planets were conceptualized mathematically in perfectly circular orbits. Other Muslim “sciences”—many of which we would call “arts”—were likewise diagrammed in circles: for example, calligraphy; poetic rhythm; musical modes; links between cosmology and medicine; and alchemy. Thus, the sultan’s power is diagrammed scientifically by the circles of cosmology (and their astrological consequences), in which is reflected in the “essential” nature of all arts and sciences.

According to the extravagant hyperboles of cause and effect (*hüsn-i ta’lil*) that dominate the rhetorical pallets of Ottoman poets, the sun shines brighter near the equator (here represented by the Yemen) because it is kept from straying (taking an eccentric orbit) by fear of the (brightness and power of) the

sultan's sword. Likewise, the sword, in the following couplet, is only indicated by the "frozen" metaphor inherent in the Persian word *âb* which is the common word for "water" or "stream" but which comes to mean "sword" because it shares qualities with water: gleaming like a stream of water in sunlight, bright and wavy (like the Damascus-steel blade). Thus, according to Ca'fer, the wheel of the heavens turns like a mill-wheel driven by a stream of water and the stream, in this case, is the sword of the Sultan which traditionally hangs above his throne as a symbol of his worldly might.

42. *Vehm-i tîgün düşdi mihrün içine ol havf ile*  
*Hâric olmaz girdi kıldı menzilin dâ'im Yemen*  
 [Fear of your sword passed into the sun with [such] terror  
 It could not take an eccentric orbit and so always resides in Yemen]
43. *Çarh dolâbın getürdi gerdişe ol âb-ı tîz*  
*Çünkü 'arş üzre asıldı tîg-i Şâh-ı saf-şiken*  
 [That swift gleaming stream-blade made the wheel of heaven turn  
 Because above the Throne was hung the rank-breaking sultan's sword]

The next line sharpens the focus on the sultan himself and his court and signals a transition to a very delicate approach to the poet's request (the *hüsni taleb*). The notion of the ruler speaking precious pearls (of wisdom or eloquence) is a commonplace in most panegyric traditions. However, there is more to the commonplace here than simple flattery. The ruler's words are more practically like jewels because his speech can confer wealth on an elite poet who bargains for such word-jewels in exchange for poems in the bazaar of the court. In the following lines, the poet ties together the bazaar (the kind of real-life imagery we saw at the beginning of the *kaside*), the sultan's court, and the cosmos.

44. *Hey ne cevherdür sözün gevherleri kim anlara*  
*Kıymeti dürr-i semînün olmaya sümm-i semen*  
 [Oh what gems are the jewels of your words [compared] to which  
 The value of a precious pearl is not worth an eighth of its fair price]
45. *Serverâ benzer günâh itmiş felek dergâhuna*  
*Kim şihâb asmag-içün boynına takmışdur resen*  
 [Oh Leader, it seems the Sphere has sinned against your threshold  
 For the meteor attached a rope to its neck to hang it with]
46. *Bunca berg ile olubdur gülşen-i nîlüferî*  
*Bôstân-ı himmetün cenbinde hazrâ-yı dimen*  
 [With its many leaves, the azure flower garden  
 Is greenery on a dung heap next to the garden of his care]
47. *Kendüzin evtâr ider hatt-ı şu 'â'-ı âfitâb*  
*Kim çala sazın anunla mutrib-i Şâh-ı zemen*  
 [The stripes of sunrays make themselves into strings  
 That the musician of the Shah of the age might use to play his lute]
48. *Çârsû-yı kadrünün fânûsıdır gerdûn-ı mâh*

*Üstine çarh-ı 'Utârid sebz-ü-vâlâ pîrehen*

[The sphere of the moon is a lamp in your power's bazaar  
And over it the sphere of Mercury is a blue-green gauze]<sup>5</sup>

It might seem far-fetched to read some of these lines—bracketed by overt references to the business of the bazaar—as having anything to do with the marketplace—but consider: It was common practice to hang criminals and especially rebels in the market square. So imagining the streak of a meteor as a rope from which to hang the disobedient sphere of heaven is not that distant from the reality of the market. The following comparison of the “azure flower garden”—the blue-green sky with its “star-flowers” growing on the material world (the “dung heap”)—to the garden of the court tended (materially and spiritually) by the gardener-sultan is a comparison of value echoing the earlier words—pearls comparison. The musician is overtly a court musician (the Shah’s musician), which continues the imagery of the previous couplet. However, in the context(s) of this poem, sophisticated contemporary Ottoman audiences might well have understood much more. For example, here is a familiar trope in which Venus, which is understood to be the musician of the heavens, is described as using sunrays for lute-strings. Given the number of cosmic/astronomical images in this poem, it seems unlikely that this correspondence would be missed. Likewise, in the context of many garden and bazaar references, it is equally unlikely that this musician would fail to bring to mind other musicians playing in public places or in private garden parties. Throughout this poem the ruler’s influence (power, protection) extends over everything from the private, to the public, to the cosmic. This inclusiveness is summed up in the next couplet, which imagines the world as a great bazaar dominated by the sultan over which the moon and its sphere becomes a night-illuminating lantern shaded by the blue-green gauzy sphere of Mercury.

In this cosmic bazaar, the ruler—and neither the jeweler nor the stars—is the ultimate source of value. He can turn the base substance of a poet’s life into a gem. The whole previous discourse on “value” has been leading gently to this point—another transition (*gürizgâh*) where the poet brings together the ruler’s power to create value and the poet’s need in another cosmic/astrological image introducing the *hüs-n-i taleb* (beautiful request) section of the poem.

49. *Pâdişâhâ çün 'akik olub bulur kadr-ü-bahâ*

*Üstine düşse Süheylün pertevi seng-i Yemen*

[If Argus’ rays fall on a stone from the Yemen, oh Monarch,  
It becomes carnelian and then finds worth and value]

50. *Pertev-i lutfun katında zerreden kemdür Süheyl*

*Ger hacerden kem degülsem kadre ırgür beni sen*

[Compared to the rays of your beneficence, Argus is less than a mote  
And if I am not worth less than a rock, then transport me to worthiness]

The poet tactfully does not draw out his request but instead introduces his name and changes the subject back to the ruler and the *du‘a*, a personal prayer for his

good-fortune and well-being—of course, with a reference to the laudable eloquence displayed in this petition.

51. *Âhir it Ca'fer sözi başla du'â-yı devlete*  
*Hüb olur olsa du'â-yı Şâh ile hatm-i suhan*  
 [Ca'fer, make an end [to this], begin to speak a prayer for good fortune  
 It is well if you seal your eloquence with a prayer for the Shah]

Following this transitional couplet, the focus shifts back to the garden echoing the *nesib* and returning the poem to spring and the occasion of the poem, which is either actually or notionally a gathering (assembly, *meclis*) in a spring garden. Often, in the final prayer (*du'â*), the couplets—which are usually expected to be syntactically and thematically independent units (or units capable of existing independently)—sometimes run-on syntactically or, as in the case of the following couplets, are closely linked by structure and theme.

52. *Nice kim sahn-ı gülistânda reyâhîn cem' olub*  
*Lâle vü nergis ola çeşm ü çerâğ-ı encümen*  
 [In the same way that the herbage gathers on the meadow field  
 Let poppy and narcissus be the eye and candle of the assembly]
53. *Rûşen olsun dâ'imâ çeşm ü çerâğ-ı devletün*  
*Tâze tutsun gülşen-i bahtun Hudâ-yı zü'l-minen*  
 [May your fortune's eye and candle be always bright  
 May Gracious God keep fresh the flower bed of your luck]

In the first couplet, the gathering of greenery and flowers in the meadow is compared to an elite garden gathering (the *meclis* or common “occasion” for poetry). The “folded” comparison (poppy=candle, narcissus=eye) is further developed in the second couplet to recreate the garden as the image of the sultan's good fortune. Here the poet plays on the Turkish idiom “may your eye be bright” (*gözünüz aydın*), which is used to congratulate a person who has been fortunate or successful. The final hemistich completes the prayer with the invocation of God. In a typical *kaside* this would be the concluding couplet but, in this poem, Ca'fer goes on in two similarly linked couplets to repeat the pattern and expand the imagery to bring up the recurring theme of the cosmic, astrological origins of fortune.

54. *Goncayı nice kim ide künbed-i hazrâ bahâr*  
*Şâhsâr üzre şükûfe göstere nazm-ı Peren*  
 [Just as spring makes the bud into the green dome (of heaven)  
 Let blossoms on the end of a branch display the Pleiades' string]
55. *Ravza-ı câh-u-celâlünde k'ebed ma'mûr ola*  
*Gonca olsun künbed-i eflâk ahterler semen*  
 [In the garden of your fame and glory, may the rosebud ever flourish,  
 Let it be the dome of heaven and let jasmine be the stars]

As in the previous two couplets, the poet creates an image of the garden that repeats and expands in the second couplet. The almost anticlimactic hyperbole in the final couplet suggests that the sultan himself is to the good and beautiful things in the world as springtime is to the garden and meadow.

56. *Gül yüzünden zîb-ü-fer bulsun cemâli âlemün*

*Nice kim bula bahâr ile şeref bâg-u-çemen*

[From your rose face let the world's beauty find adornment and brilliance

Just as the garden and meadow find nobility with springtime]

The problem one encounters in attempting a close reading of a *kaside* is that *kasides* are usually long and unwieldy. Moreover, the genre-style and the rhetorical consequences of the extensive intertextual awareness shared by the primary audiences of this kind of poetry make it difficult for a necessarily linear analysis to follow and display the undercurrents that connect a *kaside*'s seemingly bewildering shifts of imagery and focus.

What is even more to the point, however, is what a primary audience would have or could have known about the occasion and context of this particular poem. There are certain things that we know about Bayezit II (the *memduh* of this poem) that account for its peculiar character (and, perhaps, bias our reading of it in certain directions). The Bayezit who ruled the empire from Istanbul is a different man than the somewhat wild and debauched youth of his Amasya days. He ascended the throne in the wake of a bitter conflict with his brother. This brother, Cem, had briefly declared himself sultan and later, when defeated by Bayezit, fled to the Mamluks in Egypt, then to the Knights of St. John in Rhodes, and finally to Europe where he was for some time the honored "guest" (and hostage) of the Borgia Pope, who used him to extort tribute from Bayezit and threaten him with a crusader army led by a popular pretender to the Ottoman throne. As a result, Bayezit's ability to move against the infidel was, for a time, severely limited, which appears to have suited his inclination to avoid making war unless obliged by circumstances (of which there was no lack during his reign). His main interests, though, seem to have been religion and morality—for the practice of which he earned the sobriquet *sofu*, which means something near to "pious precisian"—and the study of astronomy.

As we have pointed out, it seems evident to us that Bayezit's character and interests are reflected in the dominant themes of Ca'fer's *kaside*. The references to cosmology, astronomy, and astrology are obvious as are the references to religion, ethics, and the enforcement of Muslim morality. What we do not see in this poem is also instructive. For example, the experience of many *kasides* induces us to expect that the themes of spring and the garden will bring with them the *meclis*, the garden-party with wine and merriment. In this poem there is no overt mention of the party and no wine at all—the only goblets are twirled on sticks by public performers. War is also noticeably missing. The violent exercise of the sultan's power is limited to the enforcement of moral behavior on the

world and the sultan's sword only contends on a cosmic level with the rays of the sun or hangs as a threat above his throne.

What we hope to suggest here is that there is more to the *kaside* than mere rhetorical excess in the service of fulsome praise for mercenary ends. Rather there is expressed a longing for personal attachment to a ruler who is "loved" with the same intensity, attention, and depth of desire that we see in the most sincere and heart-felt love lyrics.

## Notes

- 1 For Ca'fer, see İsmail E. Erünsal, *The Life and Works of Tâcî-zâde Ca'fer Çelebi, With a Critical Edition of His Divan* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1983), pp. XXIII–LXXI; İsmail E. Erünsal, "Tâcî-zâde Ca'fer Çelebi, as a Poet and Statesman," *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi* 6 (1978), pp. 123–148; for Bayezit II, see Feridun M. Emecen, *İmparatorluk Çağının Osmanlı Sultanları-I: Bayezid (II) Yavuz, Kanuni* (Istanbul: TDV Yayın Matbaacılık, 2011), pp. 17–52.
- 2 Our translation is based primarily on the text in Erünsal, *The Life and Works of Tâcî-zâde*, #11, pp. 66–71, with a few emendations using manuscript variants.
- 3 Erünsal, *The Life and Works of Tâcî-zâde*, p. XXXIII; İsmail E. Erünsal, *The Archival Sources of Turkish Literary History* (Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures, 85, ed. Cemal Kafadar and Gönül Alpay Tekin, Turkish Sources LXXV), published at the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures Harvard University, 2008, pp. 51–100.
- 4 We have chosen the variant reading *hûn* (blood) here because it retains a play on "blood." Erünsal chooses *havf* (fear). In traditional astronomical myth, rubies are formed when certain black stones are taken from the dark of the mine and exposed to the light (and warmth?) of the sun, which is why exposure to the sun of the sultan's glory makes the mine bleed rubies like droplets of blood.
- 5 In Erünsal: *Divan*, p. 70, #48, the editor selects the variant *gerdûn u mâh* (the sphere and the moon) but we prefer to read *gerdûn-i mâh* (the sphere of the moon), which creates an image in which the sphere is a lantern globe in which the moon is the flame and over that sphere is the next of the concentric spheres of heaven, that of Mercury (which creates the blue-green color of the sky) like a colored gauze lantern-shade.

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