

Özgün Makale

## A 16th Century Ottoman Gazel on Plague by Filibeli Vecdi (d. 1599)\*

### 16. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Şairi Filibeli Vecdi'nin Veba Salgını Konusunda Yazdığı Gazeli

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#### Abstract

Between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century the second large wave of plague epidemics hit the Middle East and Europe with frequent local outbreaks in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The sufferings of people facing a deadly disease were often recorded in contemporary literary works. The present article showcases two literary texts, two poems written around the same time in two distant parts of the cultural space Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kapaklı suggested to have existed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in their seminal work on the Age of Beloveds (Andrews and Kalpaklı, 2005). One of them was composed in Elizabethan England and the other in the Ottoman Empire. Besides giving a sketch of the Ottoman poet, Vecdi's life, focusing on his activities in Hungary, the study aims at highlighting how two poets hailing from two different cultural traditions recorded their thoughts and more importantly their feelings concerning the plague.

**Keywords:** English poetry, Ottoman poetry, plague

#### Öz

14. ve 18. yüzyılları arasında, ikinci büyük veba salgını Orta Doğu ve Avrupa'ya ulaştı ve 16. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında sık sık yerel salgınlar yaşandı. Ölümcül bir hastalıkla karşı karşıya kalan insanların çektiği acılar, çoğu zaman çağdaş edebi eserlerde kaydedildi. Makalemiz, Walter Andrews ve Mehmet Kapaklı'nın *Sevgili Çağı* adlı kitabında 16. yüzyılda var olmasını öne sürdükleri geniş kültürel alanine iki uzak yerinde aynı anda yazılmış iki edebi metni, iki şiiri analiz ediyor. Bunlardan biri I. Elizabeth İngilteresinde, diğeri ise Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda yazılmıştır. Çalışmamızda, Osmanlı şairi Filibeli Vecdi'nin Macaristan'daki faaliyetlerine odaklanmakta, hayatının ana hatları verilmekte, iki farklı kültürel gelenekten gelen iki şairin düşünceleri ve daha da önemlisi, vebayla ilgili duygularını nasıl kaydettiklerini ortaya konulmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İngiliz edebiyatı, Osmanlı edebiyatı, salgınlar

As literary products are often in dialogue with reality and reflect an author's circumstances and the world he/she is surrounded by, the horrors of various epidemics especially that of the

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plague often appear in ancient, medieval and early modern European literary texts. Thomas Keys' article published in 1944 (Keys 1944) gives a detailed overview of how one of the most deadly infectious diseases in human history is described in European literature. Starting with ancient Greek literary text Keys list include narrative texts with accurate accounts of the epidemic and description of the disease and literary works reflecting the trauma pestilence caused in various part of Europe.

Among the texts Key cites, there are a few lines from Thomas Nashe's (d. ca. 1601) poem, which is one of the most well-known lyric representations of the plague and as such it is often included in anthologies of English verse (e.g. Quiller-Couch, 1900: 202–203; Peacock, 1936, 11–12; Greenblatt, 2006: 1232).

The poem known under different titles but frequently mentioned as the *A Litany in Time of Plague* is part of the author's only fully preserved stage play. The comedy titled *A Pleasant Comedy, Called Summer's Last Will and Testament* (Nashe, 1600) is supposed to have been written in 1592 during an outbreak of plague in London as an entertainment for John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury.

The text of the show tells the story of the personified seasons, with the ailing Summer as the main character who prepares to pass his place and legacy to Autumn and Winter who will inherit them. As his death approaches, Summer summons his officers, *Ver* (Spring), *Solstitium* (Summer solstice), *Sol* (Sun), the constellation Orion, Harvest, Bacchus (the Greek God of wine) and calls them to account to see what is left of the wealth he entrusted to them. All the accounts delivered in an *ubi sunt* focus on the world transitory nature and speak about "the natural processes of growth and decay" (Johnston, 2008: 247).

The sixth song out of the seven included in the play, a "dolefull ditty" that mourns Summer's "neere approaching death" (Nashe, 1600, H1a), fits into the context very well.

*Adieu, farewell earth's bliss,  
This world uncertain is,  
Fond are life's lustful joys,  
Death proves them all but toys,  
None from his darts can fly;  
I am sick, I must die:  
Lord, have mercy on us. ...*

*Rich men, trust not in wealth,  
God cannot buy you health;  
Physic himself must fade.  
All things to end are made,  
The plague full swift goes by;  
I am sick, I must die:  
Lord, have mercy on us.*

*Beauty is but a flower,  
Which wrinkles will devour,  
Brightness falls from the air, ...  
Queens have died young and fair,*

*Dust hath closed Helen's eye.  
I am sick, I must die:  
Lord, have mercy on us.*

*Strength stoops unto the grave,  
Worms feed on Hector brave,  
Swords may not fight with fate,  
Earth still holds open her gate.  
Come, come, the bells do cry.  
I am sick, I must die: ...  
Lord, have mercy on us.*

*Wit with his wantonness  
Tasteth death's bitterness:  
Hell's executioner  
Hath no ears for to hear  
What vain art can reply.  
I am sick, I must die:  
Lord, have mercy on us.*

*Haste therefore each degree,  
To welcome destiny: ...  
Heaven is our heritage,  
Earth but a player's stage,  
Mount we unto the sky.  
I am sick, I must die:  
Lord, have mercy on us.<sup>2</sup>*

The poem is composed in six stanzas containing seven lines with a refrain “I am sick, I must die/Lord have mercy on us, which according to Johnston (Johnston, 2008: 248) evokes the phrase inscribed on the door of plague infested houses in Elizabethan London.

The first stanza is an introduction defining the subject and the tone of the poem. Each of the next four stanzas highlights various aspects of world's uncertainty and show how evanescent ‘life's lustful joys’, wealth, health, beauty, strength and intelligence (wit) are. The last stanza is a warning that everyone should ‘welcome destiny’ and prepare for death as ‘Heaven is our heritage’.

Besides the refrain the fourth stanza also contains a direct reference to the plague that ravished London in 1592–1593 causing the demise of more than 15000 people (Creighton, 1891: 353) and describes the hopelessness of people, no matter how wealthy they are, who are left without any effective remedy or cure.

Almost at the same time an Ottoman poet, Filibeli Vecdi worded very similar sentiments.

*Zaḥmine çünki ‘ilâc edemedi mat‘unun  
Yuf ṭabibe daḥı hâşşiyetine dârünün*

<sup>2</sup> For a better understanding the text is included here in modern English spelling.



*Gel emek çekme bunun zehrine panzehir olmaz  
 Buna te'siri yok afyon ile eftimünün  
 Bū 'Alī olsañ eger bulmyasın aña şifā  
 Şer'e uymaz bilürüz mes'elesin Kānūn'un  
 Çünkü eyyām-ı vebāda yemesi nāfi'dür  
 Korğarn dirhemi dīnāra çıkar afyūnun  
 Vecdiyā şeş-perile gelmeye çāvüş-ı ecel  
 Almak olurdu elinden meçigün tã'unun* (Kavruk ve Selçuk, 2012, 116)

The poem doesn't give any clue when and where Vecdi witnessed the plague and why he composed the poem. However, based on small pieces of data concerning his life and career it seems to be possible to give a tentative answer to these questions. Contemporary biographic anthologies, the most important sources of Ottoman literary history, do not say much about him. The *tezkires* of Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi (d. 1604) and Aşık Çelebi (d. 1572) include him under the pen name Bezmī, which must have been his first nom de plume. However, to the reader's disappointment, besides giving a short evaluation of Vecdi's poetry, the meagre amount of historical facts they offer doesn't really facilitate the reconstruction of the poet's life story (Aşık Çelebi, 2018: 179–180; Kınalızāde, 2017: 232–233).

Fortunately we have a notebook of Vecdi, erroneously published as his divan (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017), was preserved in an autograph manuscript. The poems and prose texts contained in it include clues and hints that make it possible to piece together at least a fragmentary picture of Vecdi's career.

Vecdi was born in Filibe (today Plovdiv, Bulgaria). The date of his birth is not known. However, a short text relating a conversation between Vecdi and Baba Mahmud Efendi (d. 1579) a well-known Nakshbandi spiritual leader of the time (Uzun 2008), tells that the poet was thirty two years old when the dialogue took place (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017: 232). The text ends with a chronogram yielding the date 978 [1570]. Though, according to a short note in the manuscript, the poet composed it in order to record the date when his father had a pavilion made, it also may have served here to record the date of his conversation with Baba Efendi. If this theory is right, Vecdi was born in 946/1539.

A 17<sup>th</sup> century tezkire writer, Riyazi (d. 1604) mentions that Vecdi studied with Ataullah Efendi (d. 1571) the tutor of Sultan Selim II (r. 1566–1574) and became a *kadi* (Riyazi: 333). However, a short text in his notebook celebrating his appointment to the Hayrabolu *medrese* suggests that first he became a *müderris* and aspiring for a position in a similar institution in Istanbul, he wished to take the career path of a *medrese* teacher (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017, 229). His life as a *kadi* was partly spent in the Balkans and partly in Ottoman occupied Hungary. The chronology of his appointments is not clear. He seems to have served as a judge in various *kazas* in the Balkans, in İbrail (today Braila, Romania) (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017: 110), Dubniçe (today Dubnitsa, Bulgaria) (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017: 53), Petriçe (today Petrich, Bulgaria) (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017: 230) Karinabad (today Karnobat, Bulgaria) (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017: 265), and also perhaps in Rudnik (today Rudni, Serbia) (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017, s.) and Menlik (today Melnik, Bulgaria) (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017: 147).

Scattered hints in his writings suggest that his appointment to a less peaceful region, to Ottoman occupied Hungary came in the 1580s. The first clue is a letter written to Hafiz-zade Efendi (d. 1582) the *kadi* of Vecdi's hometown asking for his help, which was signed by Vecdi as the *kadi*

of Peçuy (today Pécs, Hungary) (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017: 249,). The addressee of the letter is identical with Hafiz-zade Ebu'l-Meali Efendi the well-known calligrapher, the author of a versified treatise, titled *Risāle-i Hatt*, on the art of calligraphy (Schick, 2009: 254; Hâfiz-zâde, 2014). As according to Nevi-zade Atayî (d. 1635) Hafiz-zade Efendi passed away in 989 [1582] (Nev'î-zâde Atâyî, 2015: 925) Vecdi must have arrived in Pécs before this date.

He was still in Pécs in early 1587 as one of his texts confirms. In a letter addressed to an unknown person Vecdi, the *kadi* of Peçuy applies for the help of the addressee in freeing a deceased Peçuy sipahi's, Adil's family, who were taken captive by the Hungarians (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017: 252). The '*Kopan Vâki'ası*', as Vecdi mentions the event, can refer to the taking of the Ottoman fort of Kopan (today Törökkoppány, Hungary) by Hungarian troops on 23 February 1587 (*Koppány*, 1897: 632–634).

The next event Vecdi refers to is a battle fought close to Buda in the summer of the same year. In a *kaside* celebrating the victory of Yusuf, the *paşa* of Budin (today, Buda, Hungary), he describes how the Ottomans routed the Hungarians on 26 June 1587 (Kavruk and Selçuk). The aim of the Hungarian troops was to steal the horses of the Ottoman forces stationed at Buda. Though in the battle, first the Hungarians had the upper hand, they were finally routed (Takáts, 1915, 349–353).

It seems that Vecdi left Hungary in mid-1587 but returned a few months later because he speaks of a battle in one of his texts as an occurrence he was only informed about when he arrived back in Hungary. In an '*arż-i hāl*' addressed to Zekeriya Efendi he describes that after a perilous winter journey he arrived to Pécs where he learnt that the previous *kadi* lost his life in a clash Vecdi calls '*Şehsüvâr Muhârebesi*'.

The addressee of the petition, Zekeriya Efendi was Kaziasker of Rumelia twice, first between 997–998/1588–1589 and for the second time in 1000/1591 (Nev'î-zâde Atâyî, 2015: 1024). Vecdi mentions that he served for two years a previous Kaziasker of Rumelia, Ivaz Efendi, who though not directly but preceded Zekeriya. Thus the '*arż-i hāl*' may have been written sometime in the latter's first term. The first part of term '*Şehsüvâr Muhârebesi*' can refer to a well-known character of the late 1580s. Şehsüvar paşa, who earlier seems to have served as the *sancakbeği* of Solnok (Szolnok, Hungary) and the *beylerbeği* of Bosnia, became governor of the Sigetvar (Szigetvár, Hungary) *sancak* in March 1587 (Ács, 2002: 383–385; Dávid, 2005: 291–292). In the summer of the same year Şehsüvar paşa ordered his men to plunder the region around Kanije (today Nagykanizsa, Hungary) and the *sancakbeyis* of Koppan, Peçuy and Mohaç (Mohács, Hungary) joined him in this campaign. Hungarian troops intercepted them at the village of Kacorlak and in the ensuing battle the Ottoman army was utterly routed (Benits, 2009: 75–80).

Vecdi heard of the battle only when he arrived in Pécs in the winter. As he mentions that the battle took place in the tenth month, this would correspond with August, and he applied for the kaza of Samakov (today Samokov, Bulgaria) in the third month, which could refer to Rebiülevvel, the next year. All this suggests that Vecdi returned to Pécs on a mission he doesn't detail in February–March 1588.

A few years later he was back again in Hungary joining the Ottoman army that occupied a series of important forts. Vecdi witnessed the siege of Yanık (Győr, Hungary) in 1594, (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017: 49) and the occupation of Egri (Eger, Hungary) in 1596.

Though literary historians suggest that Vecdi passed away in 1599, his matla' commemorating Ahmed I's (r. 1603–1617) succession to the throne (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017: 200) shows that he was still alive in 1603.



The plague represented an ever-recurring threat during Vecdi's career. From 1570 to 1600 the Ottoman Empire was constantly suffering from frequent outbreaks of the epidemic (Varlık, 2015, pp. 185–203) and it hit Hungary as well in 1585 (Benits, 2009: 56), at a time when Vecdi was supposedly serving as *kadi* in Peçuy. Some of his friends may also have been infected, like Hafiz-Efendi, whom Vecdi evidently held in high esteem and whose illness made him compose a *kita* in an elegiac tone (Kavruk and Selçuk, 2017: 170–171).

It would be tempting to see Vecdi's plague poem quoted above, as an elegy composed to mourn his friend's mortal illness and his coming death, but the note attached to it, '*Eyyâm-ı vebâ ve hengâm-ı inâda dinilmişdür*' (It was composed in the time of plague and in a period of hardships), suggests that Vecdi himself witnessed and survived an outbreak somewhere in the Empire, perhaps during one of his postings as a *kadi*.

Compared to the poem mourning Hafiz-zade's illness, the sombre personal tone is not present in Vecdi's plague gazel, which doesn't reflect the same level of emotional involvement and shock the Hafiz-zade poem convey. The plague poem instead expresses the poet's frustration over the lack of effective medicine and the helplessness of doctors in the face of epidemics, the rising price of drugs thought to be helpful and the inevitability of death.

The gazel composed in the metre *remel-i müsemmen-i maḥbûn* relies on the rhyme -ûn and the third person singular possessive suffix (-uḡ) as *redif*. Though its subject makes it special, its poetical framework consisting of the metre, rhyme and *redif* combination is not unique at all. Pervâne bey's well-known anthology contains a large paraphrase (*naẓîre*) network containing more than forty poems that use the same poetic framework (Pervâne b. Abdullah, 2017: 1504–1518).

The base poem (*zemin şiiiri*) of the network is a lyric (*âşıkâne*) gazel by Bursalı Rahmi (d. 1568) describing the sufferings of the poet lover yearning for his beloved. The paraphrase network includes poems by acknowledged and celebrated poets of the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century such as Hayreti (d. 1535), Zati (d. 1547), Hayali (d. 1557). As a manuscript titled *Mecmû'a-yi Neẓâ'ir* copied in 1594 and preserved in Berlin (*Mecmû'a-yi Neẓâ'ir*, ff. 150b–151a), another collection of paraphrase networks kept in the Hüsni Paşa sub-collection of Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi (Samancı, 2013: 84–89) and Peşteli Hisali's anthology (Kalyon, 2013: 195–200) indicate the paraphrase network was still in fashion in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century when outstanding contemporaries of Vecdi, such as Behiştî (d. 1571), Nev'i (d. 1599) and Baki (d. 1600) joined the lines of poet who composed *naẓîres* with the above mentioned poetic framework.

Except for Vecdi's plague gazel, all the poems included in the *naẓîre* network are *âşıkâne* poems. Not only their subject and style is common, they also share the same *mundus significans* ('signifying universe') constituted of a small and very limited set of rhyming words, like *Ceyhûn* ('the river Oxus'), *gerdûn* ('sky; destiny'), *Mecnûn*, *maḥzûn* ('sorrowful') and key words, such as Şeb-dîz ('the horse of Hüsrev; black horse'), Leylâ, etc.

Though because of its topic Vecdi's plague gazel is only loosely connected to other poems of the '-ûnuḡ *naẓîre* network' there are two rhyming words present in the signifying universe, *afyûn* ('opium') and *kânûn* ('law; a kind of stringed instrument') Vecdi also applies.

The noun *kânûn* is used in three different senses in the network. Firstly it can refer to a stringed instrument of classical music and it can also mean 'law'. Rahmi in his gazel uses the double meaning of the word. Though its second meaning is more focused in the couplet (*beyt*) quoted below, the presence of two nouns *def* ('drum') *çeng* ('harp'), with which in its first meaning *kânûn* has a semantic bonding and thus forms a rhetoric figure called *tenâsüb* ('congruency'), makes



it clear the Rahmi's intention was to use the word in both meanings and insert a *tevriye* ('word-play') in the *beyt*.

*Sinemi def edüben kâmetümi çeng etdün*  
*Hüblar içre bu müdur kânünun* (Pervane b. Abdulla, 2017: 1507)

The third meaning is a reference to a celebrated work of Islamic medicine, *Kânün fî al-Ṭıbb* ('The Canon of Medicine'), written by the distinguished doctor and scholar Ebu Ali Ibn Sina (Avicenna, d. 1037).

Hafiz-i Konevi's couplet relates that the poet was told by doctors, the *Kânün*'s chapter on how to cure diseases doesn't mention a medicine that would help those who suffer from the illness of love.

*Ben eṭıbbâdan işıtdüm ki marîz-i 'ıřka*  
*Yoğ imiş bâb-i Şifâsında devâ Kânünun* (Pervane b. Abdulla, 2017: 1507)

As it has been mentioned earlier, the noun *afyün* is also part of the network's signifying universe and similarly to Vecdi's poem it appears together with *zehr* ('poison') in Hitabi's couplet.

*Şüfî tiryâkîlenüp yine ötersin neyki*  
*Dağı yetişmedi mi ol zehr olası afyünun* (Pervane b. Abdulla, 2017: 1519)

It's not without reason to suggest that Vecdi was aware of the poems of this *naẓıre* network and used those elements of its signifying universe that suited his poetical purposes when he composed his plague gazel. This type of poetic creation is not without earlier examples. Baki used a very similar method to compose his gazel describing the how the wine transporting vessels burnt on the Sultan's order were in flames one night on the water of the Golden Horn (Küçük, 1994: 272–273). In this case Baki also used pre-existing poetic elements, a fashionable poetic framework and select rhyming words and key words available in the signifying universe of a well-known *naẓıre* network and put them into a new and unusual context in order to reflect contemporary realities.

Vecdi's opening couplet (*maṭla'*), like in the case of many other poems belonging to the paraphrase network is heavily loaded with emotions and mainly expresses the poet's frustration over something that is not feasible. In many cases it is because the poet's Oxus like tears cannot be stopped; in Vecdi's gazel it is because there isn't an effective cure to help people who contracted the lethal disease.

*Zahmine çünkü 'ilâc edemedi mat'unun*  
*Yuf tabibe dağ hâşşiyetine dârünun*  
'He couldn't produce a medicine against the effects of the plague,  
Damned be the doctor and the quality of his medication.'

The second *beyt* worded in a carpe diem tone focuses on two substances and says that it's no use to be worried and feel sorry in such a helpless situation when even opium and dodder (*Cuscuta epithimum*) prove ineffective.



*Gel emek çekme bunun zehrine panzehir olmaz*

*Buna te'siri yok afyün ile eftimünün*

'Come, why would you worry? There is no antidote for its poison,

[Even] opium and dodder are ineffective.'

As it has been mentioned earlier the *afyün* ('opium; antidote') is semantically bonded to *zehr* 'poison' and together they form a rhetoric figure, *tenāsüb*. Vecdi added the word *panzehir* 'antidote' to them and placed the *tenāsüb* into the focus of the couplet. This is not Vecdi's invention either as in some gazels of the *naẓīre* network this *tenāsüb* also occurs, though with a slight modification, with the noun *tiryāk* 'opium; antidote', a synonym of opium, taking the place of *afyün*.

The presence of *afyün* in the couplet is understandable as opium was an important ingredient of medicines applied to treat plague patients. Mehmed Nidai Efendi, an acknowledged medical expert of Selim II's time mentions in his versified treatise on plague that one of the generally applied medications in case of plague was an electuary called *tiryāk-i Fārūk* (Öztürk, 2013: 38), which contained a high dose of opium (Öztürk, 2013: 38). However, as far as *afyün* is concerned it's strange that Vehbi mentions it in connection with plague. Though it's a well-known medical plant, often used in Islamic medicine, it doesn't seem to be part of any medical mixture suggested by Nidai or any other 16<sup>th</sup> century doctor for the treatment of plague. A possible explanation for its inclusion in the couplet can be that like *afyün*, it belongs to the semantic field of medicine, a semantic field dominating the poem, and at the same time it is a rhyming word ending in *-ün*.

It's evident that the rhyming word of the third couplet, *kānūn* had to be included somewhere in Vecdi's poem. First of all because it is part of the signifying universe of the '*-ünüñ naẓīre* network'. Secondly because it belongs to the semantic field of 'medicine' that dominates Vecdi's plague gazel and thirdly, because with its potential for a wordplay it offered an opportunity Vecdi couldn't let pass by. Vecdi didn't have to think long where to place the couplet with ending in the rhyming word *kānūn*, as the logical sequence of the first two *beyts* defined its place.

*Bü 'Alī olsañ eger bulmıyasın aña şifā*

*Şer'e uymaz bilürüz mes'elesin Kānūn'un*

'[Even] if you were Avicenna himself, you couldn't find a cure for it,

We know well that the Canon doesn't always agree with the Sharia.'

The wordplay based on the double meaning of *kānūn* referring both to the short title of the famous work of Ibn Sina and the codified Ottoman administrative law is not the only pun in the couplet. The last word of the *beyt*, *şifā* 'healing' also has a double meaning here, because besides its original meaning in the context of the couplet, it also contains a reference to Ibn Sina's other well-known medical treatise, *Kitāb al-Şifā* 'The Book of Healing'.

The second hemistich (*mişrā'*) based on the original meaning of *kānūn* gives the reader a glimpse of the difficulties that marred the everyday life of a 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman jurist, the "disparity between the sacred and the secular law" (Imber, 2002: 244). In Vecdi's line the two concepts are in contrast and thus they form a rhetoric figure called *teẓad* ('oppositness').

The fourth *beyt* introduces the reader to another difficulty that made the days of the plague period more difficult for everyday people. The price of commodities thought to be effective or at least useful to fight the disease considerably rose due to the high demand and relatively inexpensive ingredients of medical products like opium reached exorbitant levels.



Çünkü eyyām-ı vebāda yemesi nāfi'dür

Çorğarın dirhemi dīnāra çıkar afyonun

'Since it is useful to consume it at times of plague,

I fear that the price of opium is going to rise from a dirhem to a dinar.'

The message of the last couplet 'Let's hope that Death isn't coming to take those who caught the plague' is also put into an Ottoman context. Death sends his messenger in the form of an Ottoman official, a messenger delivering important orders and messages. The messenger of Death like some Ottoman officials, carry a special type of flanged mace, the *şesper* as a sign of his office and high standing. His intention is to take Vecdi's life, symbolized by his stick, from the hands of the disease.

Vecdiyā şeş-perile gelmeye çāvüş-ı ecel

Almak olurdu elinden meçigünj tã'unun

'Vecdi! The messenger of Death shouldn't come with his flanged mace,

He wishes to take your stick from the hands of the plague.'

## Conclusions

The two poems written around the same period have similarities and differences defined by the topic and the two poets' natural disposition. Both of them treat the epidemic as a mortal danger that can end anyone's life. The situation as it is depicted by both poets is evidently hopeless because doctors are helpless and their medicines are ineffective. However similar the two descriptions of the situation are, the two poet's reactions are rather different. While for Nash it brings the time of reckoning, and despair induces him to bid farewell to earthly pleasures, Vecdi expresses his frustration over the ineffectiveness of medications, doctors' inability to cure the plague and the rising prices of commodities thought to be useful against the disease. Nash's poem is characterized by a solemn resignation to the inevitable; Vecdi's gazel is about rebellion. Vecdi rebels against the general hopelessness that overcomes everyday life. Death appears in both poems. It comes as hell's cruel executioner in Nash's poem who turns deaf ears to the wailing of people and as nobody can escape him Nash advises his readers to prepare their souls for the end. Vecdi on the other hand hopes that he can still avoid the worst and the *çavuş* of Death delivering the death sentence will not arrive and he will be spared.

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