Toward a Rose Forever in Bloom:

Translations of Yunus Emre, a 13th Century Anatolian Sufi

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Abstract

Toward a Rose Forever in Bloom is a translation project aimed at creating a sample framework through which Sufi poetry can be understood in its traditional and Islamic context. I outline my translation methodology, as well as the resources that I used in making my translations, such as a new dictionary dedicated solely to the works of Yunus Emre as well as a recent critical edition of his original works, neither of which were available to previous English translators. Through my annotated translations sampled from six overarching themes found in the works of Yunus Emre, a 13th century Anatolian Sufi, an analysis of the legends surrounding his biography, and a discussion of the historical context, I portray Sufism as a path within mainstream Islam, in contrast to modern perceptions and varying translation methods that suggest otherwise.

Keywords

Islam, Sufism, Mysticism, Dervish, Yunus Emre Divanı, Anatolian, Turkish Literature, Friedrich Schleiermacher

To begin, it will be beneficial to define what we mean by *Sufism*. There are volumes of books written across centuries and cultures on reaching such a definition, from Al-Qushayri's *Epistle on Sufism* (1045) to Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1975) to Alexander Knysh's *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (2010). The definition I will be using is from Knysh, not only because he was the most accessible to me, but also because he has written extensively on the early *Sufi*s and even translated Al-Qushayri's aforementioned famous work thought to be an authority on the subject by most if not all of the *Sufi* orders today. In *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, he writes:

> Many *Sufi* theorists divide the *Sufi* path (*tariq* or *tariqa*) into three major parts. The first consists in a scrupulous observance of the precepts of the Revealed Law (*shari'a*). After fulfilling the basic requirements of this stage, the wayfarer (*salik*) is ready to embark on the path to God (*tariqa*) per se. Having reached the end of the *tariqa*, he enters the stage of the ultimate Reality, or God (*haqiqa*). In *Sufi* literature, the three stages of the mystic path are sometimes associated with distinct religious attitudes: *islam*, *iman*, and *ihsan*. While *islam* is identified as a complete and unconditional surrender of the seeker (*murid*) to the will of God, as expressed in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, *iman* implies his realization of their inner meaning . . . When the seeker enters the state of *ihsan*, he begins to serve God, "as if you see Him.'' This state is usually explained by *Sufi* authors as one that presupposes a final internalization of the true realities of faith: in each instance of his existence the seeker feels himself to be in the direct and unmediated presence of God, who observes his every action. (301)

Thus, a *Sufi* is a Muslim who sets on a path of devotion starting with the observance of all the rules (*shari'a*) in the Quran and Sunnah

(sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad), afterwards, they start to internalize these rules through a specific *Sufi* order (*tariqa*) in order to reach a state of acute awareness of God in every aspect of their life (*haqiqa*). Knysh continues:

> While most *Sufi*s agreed that the *haqiqa* in one or another form represents the goal of the mystic path, they varied as to the means of achieving it and as to the number of stages or stations to be traversed by the wayfarer . . . *Tariqa* constitutes the framework within which the mystic's spiritual progress— psychical, ethical and spiritual— was expected to unfold. This progress was accompanied by the mystic's "spiritual struggle'' (*mujahadah*) against his lower ego and a series of inner unveilings (*kashf*) and mystical "states,'' which along with the "stations'' (*maqamat*) became the foundation of mystical life in Islam . . . The spread of different devotional techniques and styles of spiritual guidance, which often varied only in matters of detail and accent, gave rise to a wide array of *Sufi* "ways'' that served as sources of identity for various *Sufi* groups. (302)

The *Sufi* orders (paths/ways or *tariqa*) are really different styles of living Islam with the goal of reaching a state of mind where one is constantly aware of God.

I had always felt these definitions were self-evident due to my upbringing as a *Sufi*. Unfortunately, Islam has been artificially removed from *Sufism,* especially in the English translations that exist today. This phenomenon dates back to the Victorian period when "[t]ranslators and theologians of the time could not reconcile their ideas about a 'desert religion,' with its unusual moral and legal codes, and the work of poets like Rumi;" they thought that *Sufism* arose as a reaction to Islam (Ali).

Yet others assume *Sufism* to be a separate Islamic sect. Many news articles labeled the attack on the Al Rawdah Mosque in

Egypt in November of 2017 as having been carried out against a "*Sufi* Mosque" (Walsh and Youssef). This was the first time I ever heard such a term; some of my friends even texted me to send me their prayers and well wishes because in their minds, I, as a *Sufi*, must have been a member of this "*Sufi* Mosque." I believe the mistake comes from how close *Sufi* looks and sounds like the two major sects of Islam, *Sunni* (87-90% of Muslims) and *Shia* (10-13% of Muslims) ("Mapping the Global Muslim Population"). As we have seen, *Sufism* is not a sect, and the various *Sufi* orders are the same in their goal of reaching a high level of mindfulness in their practice of Islam, whereas *Sunni* and *Shia* are sects that differ on some theological and judiciary aspects of Islam.

An article featured in *The Atlantic* shortly after the attack, titled "The Dangerous Myths About Sufi Muslims," points out that the efforts to label *Sufi*s as a distinct religion or sect are among the most detrimental things that could be done to both *Sufism* and Islam. Extremist groups see *Sufis* as heretics who must be destroyed, and fans of *Sufism* in the West reinforce this artificial divide by falsely agreeing that *Sufis* are heterodox believers (Hellyer). Hellyer considers this "an extraordinary fallacy":

> Until relatively recently, it would have been unthinkable for students in Muslim communities to consider *Sufism* anything other than an integral part of a holistic Islamic education. The essentials of theology, practice, and spirituality—that is, *Sufism*—were deemed basic, core elements of even elementary Islamic instruction. And religious figures known for their commitment to *Sufism* would not have been considered a minority; they would have been by far the norm. Indeed, the very label of an Egyptian "*Sufi* minority" being bandied about since the mosque attack is a peculiar one: *Sufism* isn't a sect—it's integral to mainstream *Sunni* Islam . . . It's too easy to cast Sufis as a quasi-sectarian group that is somehow detached from Islam. *Sufism* never betrayed Islamic orthodoxy; if anything, it is Islamic orthodoxy in its purest form. (Hellyer)

Adding that there are *Sufis* in the *Shia* sect of Islam as well (though they are fewer in number as one would expect with the aforementioned proportions of Muslims in the two sects), it is clear that such a complex system of thought and practice deserves and, in fact, requires not only historical research up to academic standards, but also scholarly translations that serve to clarify, rather than obscure, the strong ties between *Sufism* and Islam. So, I decided to dig deeper and translate the poems of a 13-14th century *Sufi*, Yunus Emre, to focus directly on the ideal *Sufi* that he depicts in his works. Yunus had intentionally used such a simple and efficient language in his works that even today, seven centuries after his death, almost everyone in the Anatolian peninsula knows one or two lines from his works. One can imagine Yunus as a Turkish variant of Rumi, shaping the hearts and the minds, the thoughts and imaginations of Anatolians to this day. My translations contextualize Yunus in the Islamic *Sufi* tradition that he inherited during his time; they represent a small but important step in closing the artificial gap between *Sufism* and Islam.

A Note on Biographical Information

The very first thing that I came across in my search for biographical information was that historical documents related to Yunus Emre were scarce, leaving room for speculation stemming from interpretations of his poems and *menkıbe*s (short legend-like stories among *Sufi* orders) surrounding his biography. Until more manuscripts are unearthed, the only insight we can have into Yunus' life is through a very careful consideration of Yunus' poetry and the legendary accounts found in the early texts of *Sufi* orders. In fact, that is what all four of my main sources ultimately do; what sets them apart from other books on the topic is that they emphasize a need for a holistic look at the *Divan* and the *menkıbe*s, meaning that we must look at all that is available to us in Yunus' poetry and the legendary

stories, instead of focusing on only a few of them.

Historical Context of Yunus' Time

Yunus Emre was born sometime around 1240-41 and passed away when he was 82 years old in 1340-1. According to Dr. Tatci, there is no reason to distrust evidence that confirms this (Tatci, *Yunus Emre Dîvanı I – İnceleme* 14). Yunus' popularity among the people led to multiple claims for his location of birth and site of burial, but Özçelik situates him in Western Anatolia (Tatci 34). He is also thought to have travelled across Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Persia (Tatci 52). While biographical information on Yunus might be scarce, Baskal and Özçelik suggest that considering the historical context for his biography will give us a good idea of who he was.

Baskal points out that "[m]any modern scholars have depicted the Beylik period as one of chaos, instability, and warlike conditions and have portrayed Yunus Emre as a product of this period" (Baskal 159-161). The First and Second Crusades had considerably challenged the Anatolian Seljukids, the *Sunni* Muslim Turkish state established in Anatolia in the 1070s, and the Mongolian expansion into the region later made the state a vassal of the Mongolians. Besides the economic and political implications of these events, there was also religious competition in the region, evident in the *Babai* rebellion against the Seljukids led by Baba Ishak who claimed prophethood as he led people against the *Sunni* state. On the other hand, Baskal argues that

> when one considers the culture and conditions of the earlier period, it becomes clear that the poetry of Yunus Emre was more a culmination of this last period of the Seljukid state . . . Starting in the 13th century, the number of *madrasas* increased rapidly in the major centers of the Seljukid state . . . the dervish lodges, another institution of religious life, flourished at the height of Seljukid power. Konya, Sivas, Malatya, Tokat, and Kayseri became centers for Sufi learning and practice. From various sources

> and architectural remains it is safe to say that there were *kulliyas* (complex of buildings) with *Sufi* hospices, schools, hospitals, and kitchens in every part of the country. (Baskal 162-163, 245-252)

In sum, Baskal makes the case that the Anatolian Seljukid state inherited and fostered a culturally rich atmosphere that promoted *Sunni* Islam: "[The Seljukids] were part of a bigger cultural and political tradition, and the period of Yunus Emre also should be considered within this broader perspective" (Baskal 371-375).

Although Özçelik and Baskal agree that Yunus Emre's world of thought was closely related to Rumi and that he most likely met him, they believe that there is no solid evidence to make the claim that he was the follower of a single specific *Sufi* order. In the end, Baskal notes:

> Confining Yunus Emre and his poetry to a specific group deprives him of his place within the greater context of the Sufi world in the 13th and 14th centuries. It is very important that the poetry and ideas of Yunus Emre should be analyzed by relating them to the general worldview and Sufi understanding of the time, rather than by relating him to a very specific group, particularly since there is not a great deal of reliable information about the group or the relationship he may have had with the group. (Baskal 769-774)

Agreeing fully with this statement, Özçelik highlights how Yunus' aim was to deliver a message of divine love not to a particular group of people, but to all who would listen to his poetry. We must be careful to note that Yunus was never against or outside of a *Sufi* path. He did have a teacher, Tapduk Emre, and he highlights the importance of having a teacher, but, for one, the order he followed was not

a formally established one that continues to this day; for the other, he learned from multiple *Sufi* leaders of his time, to whom he makes references in his poetry; and, lastly, he did not found a formal *Sufi* order of his own (66-68). It is due to these three factors that Özçelik emphasizes how instead of being called Yunus the *Mawlawi* or *Baktashi*, Yunus Emre was called by the people *Our* Yunus.

Yunus in the Legends

Although Özçelik says that, chronologically, the first *menkıbe* starts with Yunus as a farmer, I will be working with the assumption that Yunus has already encountered Rumi at this stage. Yunus was 33 years old when Rumi passed away. Baskal says that "[t]here is a strong possibility these two met, and it is a fact that Yunus Emre was familiar with Rumi and his works" (260-261). As all sources agree that Yunus was Tapduk Emre's student for a long time (varying between 30-40 years), I believe it is safe to estimate that this meeting between Yunus and Rumi took place before Yunus was a student of Tapduk. The fundamental connection that Yunus shares with Rumi's work could have dated to a time where he learned of the *Sufi* path with such a grand master of poetry and scholar of Islam. As we will see, this makes more sense with the traditional interpretations of the legends. So, his story begins.

After a drought hits his village, Yunus decides to travel to the *Dervish* lodge (*Sufi* center) of a renowned *Sufi* Master, Haji Bektash Wali, to ask for wheat, knowing the reputation of Haji Bektash as someone who does not turn anyone away. Having utmost respect for the Master and not wishing to go empty handed, he picks hawthorn berries as he passes through the mountains on his way to the lodge. He is welcomed as everyone else and invited to stay for a few days. At the end of his stay, Haji Bektash asks him, "What is your wish? Would you have wheat, or our breath?" Anxious to return to his village with the much needed food, Yunus asks for the wheat despite the amazement of the *Sufi*s around him. Coming upon a mountain pass halfway back to his village with as many bags of

wheat as he could take with him, he realizes his mistake. He returns to the lodge to give back the wheat and ask for Haji Bektash's breath. Haji Bektash tells him, "It is too late, for we have given the keys to that lock to Tapduk Emre. Go to him, and get your share," directing him to another, lesser known *Sufi* Master of the time.

The first thing to clarify is what "breath" means. The short answer is that it means "blessings," meaning Haji Bektash offered to pray to God for Yunus' wellbeing (Albayrak 602). Albayrak points out another meaning of "breath" in *Sufi* literature. "To give someone a breath" in this context can mean "to revive someone who is spiritually suffering or dead," and the traditional comparison is to the breath of Jesus that resuscitates the dead (602). Yet another meaning is "to settle the pains of someone who is in Divine love," providing the person with a peace of heart, a calm, resolute sense of being (602). When Yunus refused Haji Bektash's "breath," the *Sufis* around him were so surprised because he declined the blessings of a Master to aid his spiritual development. Özçelik points out that this blessing is not offered to everyone, and that Haji Bektash most likely saw the potential in Yunus during his stay at the lodge. Yunus shows his deep respect for the Master by bringing hawthorn berries to his lodge despite coming from a drought, and this, Özçelik says, points to his good nature despite not having been trained fully at a *Sufi* order (42-43). One could imagine it came from Yunus' brief interaction with Rumi.

A way to interpret the refusal of the Master's blessing is that, at this stage, Yunus prefers mind-based knowledge over heart-based knowledge. Yunus reasons that he needs food to feed his town, and does a mathematical analysis of the situation, whereas a *Sufi* might have accepted the blessings instead, leaving aside the worry for food while prioritizing spiritual development (43). The mountain pass might represent a symbol for an atmosphere of introspection and solitude in which Yunus considers and choses to be a part of the

Sufi path. Recognizing his poetic capacity, Haji Bektash sends Yunus to Tapduk Emre, one of Haji Bektash's students who had received permission to train *Sufi*s as a Master (48). The lock, a symbol for Yunus' mind-over-heart attitude, opens in yet another story.

Yunus arrives at the *Dervish* lodge of Tapduk Emre shortly after his exchange with Haji Bektash. Willing to accept any position of service at the lodge, Tapduk assigns him to be a lumberjack for the center. The words for "service" (*hizmet)* and "blessings" (*himmet)* in Turkish, are separated by only one letter, and Yunus completely dedicates himself to the services of the lodge, while at the same time learning of the *Sufi* path and filling all the time left with spiritual exercises prescribed to him by Tapduk Emre (46). In addition to taking utmost care to fulfill the Islamic obligations such as fasting and the daily prayers, Yunus practiced "repentance (*tawba*), self-criticism (*muhasaba*), reflection (*tafakkur*), privacy and retreat (*halwat*), self-supervision (*muraqaba*), reliance [on God] (*tawakkul*) and patience (*sabr*)" under the guide of his Master (Baskal 483-488). As time passes and Yunus matures in Tapduk's service, he receives Tapduk's blessings. At a gathering of the Anatolian *Sufi*s at Tapduk's lodge, someone named Yunus-u Guyende, a well-known poet at the time, is asked to recite some of his poetry but remains silent. The story describes him as being in a particular spiritual stage that rendered him speechless. Seeing that he could not speak any words, Tapduk turns to Yunus saying, "It's time Yunus; we've unlocked the chest of treasure that was promised to you by Haji Bektash. Take your share and speak" (48). From then on, Yunus began to recite his poetry and those who heard it wrote it down in a *Divan* (collection of poems).

Here, Özçelik points to an important aspect of this story: the inspiration for Yunus' poems. According to him, Yunus wrote poetry before becoming a *Dervish*, but stopped composing when he started to follow this path, for "[p]oetry is concerned with inspiration; it is the voice of the heart. The source of inspiration depends on one's emotional state and the values one carries in their hearts . . . To

speak of The True One is possible only by turning the heart towards The True One" (49). The story where Yunus starts to recite poetry once again shows that he has attained a spiritual state in which his Master deems him able to reflect The True One well enough in his heart to be inspired by Him. When Tapduk says, "we've unlocked the chest of treasure," it points to the change that Yunus has gone through in purifying his heart and allowing for Divine guidance to take precedence over rationality in a step from mind-based knowledge to heart-based inspiration, in an acute awareness of God (41).

After this point in Yunus' life, he begins his occasional travels to various *Dervish* lodges to recite his poems, sometimes with his Master and other times without him (50-53). A turning point in his life, though, happens when he is back in Tapduk's service, potentially in between his travels. As a lumberjack, Yunus takes care to bring only the straight pieces of firewood back with him to the lodge. His consistency in this practice for many years draws attention. One day, his Master asks him, "Brother Yunus, is there not a crooked tree in the mountains that you bring such perfect firewood back every time?" Yunus replies on the symbolic gesture, "My Master, this lodge is such a door to The True One and righteousness that even the firewood must be true and straight to enter through it," expecting a response of approval. His Master shocks him with his disappointment, "you still smell of this world." At nightfall, Yunus leaves the lodge in sorrow without telling a soul. For several years, he wanders around alone in a state of loss and turmoil. One day, he comes across a group of *Sufis* in the mountains, they invite him over to sit and dine with them at a small cave. Yunus' disappointment at the absence of food turns into shock as food descends from heaven at the quiet prayer of each Sufi. When the turn to pray comes to him, he asks for their secret and they reply, "each night, we pray to God for food in the name of a *Dervish* who served as a lumberjack at *Tapduk*'s lodge for thirty years; that is how we eat." Yunus immediately returns to his Master, Tapduk, who forgives him, but says

that Yunus' time in his lodge is at an end as he now "smells of the Beyond." He instructs Yunus to go on a journey to recite his poems to all until he finds Tapduk's staff. It is through this process of growth under Tapduk Emre that Yunus receives his second name *Emre*, meaning one who is in love (23). Yunus Emre travels all across Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Persia before finding Tapduk's staff in the city of his own birth, which Özçelik accepts to be Sarikoy. There he draws his last breath (69).

The last popular *menkıbe* takes place after Yunus' death. According to the legend, someone named Molla Kasim sits by a waterfront to read and evaluate the compatibility of Yunus' poems with the rules of Islam (*sharia*). A *molla* (better spelled *mullah* in English) is a graduate of an Islamic school where they learn Islamic theology and jurisprudence. Molla Kasim is such a *mullah* who has not received any training in *Sufism*. He judges the first thousand poems that he reads to be against *sharia*, so he burns them. The second thousand, he throws into water for the same reason. Starting the third thousand, he reads the following lines from Yunus:

> *Dervish* Yunus, don't tell this word in a crooked way,
> A Molla Kasim shall come to question you

Shocked, Molla Kasim realizes his mistake, accepts Yunus as a great Master and preserves the last thousand. Now, the story ends, angels and birds read Yunus' poetry in the heavens; fish read the thousand in the seas, and the remaining thousand were left for us humans to appreciate (55).

We can see this story as a commentary on the apparent contrast between the rules of Islam and their meaning. Even in his time, Yunus Emre was sometimes misunderstood and his words were met with harsh reactions, but eventually the meaning hidden behind them was realized and accepted by others just like Molla Kasim did (56). Another interesting interpretation of this story is that Molla

Kasim could actually be Yunus himself, symbolizing the process for Yunus to refine and perfect his poetry over the years of his *Sufi* education. Holding himself to such a high standard, it is easy to imagine Yunus burning drafts of his works because they do not convey the exact meaning he has in mind. On another level, the story underlines the universal audience of Yunus' poems. Considering the birds and fish as metaphors for people living far from Yunus, we can interpret the story to understand how the poems are distributed in all directions on land, air, and water to cover the globe with Yunus' words. After mentioning these perspectives, however, Özçelik supports a view that I find to be the most intriguing. He describes Arif Nihat's opinion that Molla Kasim is not just an uneducated vulgar man who rips Yunus' works to shreds. "Kasim" means "one who splits up" or "one who shares out" things. Therefore, Molla Kasim is a figure of justice who, in the end, either knowingly or unknowingly divides the heritage of Yunus Emre to their rightful heirs according to *sharia* by a Divine guidance. With his justice, angels, humans, and fish have all inherited their parts in Yunus' heritage and appreciate their share in their own ways, whether we can perceive this or not. In the end, Özçelik sees Yunus as inviting us to read and contemplate on "the air, the water, the earth, the fire, the land, and the skies" through this legend (56).

Ultimately, Yunus' biographical legends are up to interpretation. I have found these explanations not only to be in line with the historical context of his era, but also to fit perfectly into the description of Knysh's description of the *Sufi* path. Yunus continues the path followed by *Sunni Sufi* scholars, such as Ibn Arabi and Rumi, at the fall of the Anatolian Seljukid State and the beginning of the Ottoman Empire, both of which have been centers for *Sunni* Islam. He goes through the two parts of the *Sufi* path outlined by Knysh, perfecting the observance of *sharia* (Islamic Law) and completing an education at the lodge of a *Sufi* Master named Tapduk Emre. In addition, he attains the third part and main goal of *Sufism* in reaching a state of "final internalization of the true realities of faith . . .

[where] in each instance of his existence the seeker feels himself to be in the direct and unmediated presence of God, who observes his every action" (301). He makes a conscious decision to use Turkish as his language in order to reach the widest audience that he possibly could reach at the time, bringing *Sufi* philosophy into Turkish consciousness with such effectiveness that his words are still spoken in even the remote villages of modern-day Turkey. Perhaps it is fitting to his message that most of his biography is open to interpretation. As the lover's goal is to dissolve completely in the experience of the Beloved, the identity of Yunus Emre (Yunus "the Lover") has dissolved in his poems of The True One. In fact, Özçelik writes that Yunus might not be the name he was given at birth (22). Regardless, let us see a drop of what Molla Kasim has left us for our share.

Notes on Translation

Methodologically, I attempted to follow Friedrich Schleiermacher's theory on translation as best as I could. Summarizing a few of his important points from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy should provide a good sense of how I translated Yunus Emre's works in this project. For Schleiermacher, the grand problem of the translator is the "conceptual gulf between the source language and the target language" (Forster 6a). For this project, the added difficulty is that the source language is a mixture of mainly Turkish (~57%), Arabic (~30%), and Persian (~13%) from the 14th century (Albayrak 49). Besides "faithfully reproducing the original meaning in the target language," in this case 21st century American English, I also needed to consider what Schleiermacher says is essential to translating poetry: "musical aspects of the original, such as meter and rhyme" as these features "serve as essential vehicles for the precise expression of meaning" (Forster 6b-6c). Although not as necessary, the translator should at least attempt to convey "where an author was being conceptually conventional and where conceptually original" (6c).

There are only two ways to solve a translation problem; either by bringing the author's "linguistic-conceptual world closer to that of the reader of the translation or vice versa" (6e). Schleiermacher finds the former unacceptable, as it "inevitably distorts the author's concepts and thoughts" (6e). Instead, he says that the only course of action is to "bend the language of the translation as far possible toward that of the original in order to communicate as far as possible an impression of the system of concepts developed in it," which is made possible by the plasticity of language (6f). Although, as I will shortly demonstrate, I try my best to shape my translations around this theoretical outline, the limitation of this approach is the reason why I cannot fully commit to Schleiermacher. He points out that "this approach requires that large amounts of relevant material be translated, so that the reader of the translation becomes habituated to it and acquires enough examples of a particular word's unfamiliar use in enough different contexts to enable him to infer the unfamiliar rule for use that is involved" (6i). I only have a portion of the more than 400 poems translated, and I know that it is not enough to expect the reader to become habituated to the words over the course of their reading.

Let us consider the following two lines from Yunus to demonstrate the usage of these concepts in my translations:

Turkish:
Cânını ‘ışk yolına virmeyen ‘âşık mıdur
Cehd eyleyüp ol dosta irmeyen ‘âşık mıdur
English:
He who doesn't give his life to the path of love, is he in love?
He who doesn't struggle and arrive at that Friend, is he in love? (Tatci, *Yunus Emre Dîvanı II - Tenkitli Metin* 36)

Like the majority of Yunus' poetry, this piece is written on a syllabic meter. The repetition of "*âşık mıdur*" (is he in love?) is also a defining feature of the poem as it is repeated until the end of each couplet. Although meter and rhyme are essential to poetry for

Schleiermacher, these are secondary to conveying the original meaning, and the very first problem that one encounters in translating Turkish in general is that it is an agglutinative language, meaning that it makes extensive use of suffixes to create new words and economically convey grammatical ideas. In this sense, the most difficult word of the first line to translate into a single word is "virmeyen," which means "one who does not give." Further adding to its grammatical efficiency, Turkish has no grammatical gender or noun classes. So, using any third-person singular English pronoun "he, she, it" inevitably distorts the meaning. The use of pronouns at all is optional, as the suffixes added to the verbs also imply person. Due to all of these factors, I do not focus on preserving a meter in my translations as it is beyond my capacity to reconcile the grammatical factors placing the languages so far apart in this regard. I also do not try to preserve the rhyme scheme for the same reason.

What I do, however, in bending the English language to follow Schleiermacher's suggestion, is to identify the parallelisms in the couplets and make sure I preserve them. While this makes these two lines evidently bend the target language, (a more conventional way to put the line might be to say, "Can someone who does not give his life to the path of love claim to be in love?"), they keep the order of the verbs and the negating suffixes consistent in each line.

Another example where this strategy works better is in:

Turkish:
Gâh tozaram yirler gibi
Gâh eserem yeller gibi
Gâh çaglaram seller gibi
Gel gör beni 'ışk n'eyledi
English:
Sometimes I drift about like dust

Sometimes I gust with the winds
Sometimes I cascade down with the floods
Come, see what love has done to me (Tatci, *Yunus Emre Dîvanı II - Tenkitli Metin* 404)

Even though I could not keep the repetition of "*gibi*" in the translations, the strong parallelism of the first three words of each line in the first three lines, "Sometimes + I + verb" allows for the powerful effect of the original to translate decently into English. Bending the word "to gust" that is unusually coupled with "I" as its subject, I was able to hide this strange depiction in between the first and third lines which do not stand out as semantically odd.

I also sometimes use foreign words in the translations that I explain with footnotes, as in the following translation of an excerpt of poem 231:

Turkish:
Biz dünyâdan gider olduk kalanlara selâm olsun
Bizüm içün hayır-du'â kılanlara selâm olsun
English:
We leave the earth now; to those who remain, *salaam*
To those who pray with our wellness in mind, *salaam*

The repetition of "selam olsun" at the end of each line is used with such varying grammatical functions that it is impossible to keep the parallelism. Because the word *salaam* (shorthand for the Islamic phrase meaning "Peace be upon you") nowadays exists in English due to the presence of a growing Muslim community, I chose to include it in my translation as a solution to keep the end of each line uniform. Instead of using foreign words such as *Dost* which Yunus uses as an endearing term for God, I chose to capitalize the term in English to point out that he is addressing God. For *Dost*, I use "Friend"; for *Cânân,* I use "Beloved."

Besides these points, there are concepts that need extensive background information that are impossible to include in the poems, such as the definition and context of the word *Mi'raj*. As a solution, I have added footnotes to give this background information along with an explanation of my translation choices as needed. Keeping in mind that Yunus' poetry was primarily intended as a means of instruction for the masses, my main goal as a translator has been to make his poems as simple as they can be without sacrificing their accuracy in conveying Yunus' message while staying within Schleiermacher's theoretical groundwork (Baskal 1023-1025). The shortcoming of this approach was the fact that I have placed secondary importance on the meter and rhyme of his poetry. His poems were sung in sometimes forty different tunes for a single poem, and my translations are certainly not up to that standard (Baskal 2169-2173). However, I do hope that they will provide the much-needed accuracy in the face of our introductory discussion and that they will inspire others to make better translations that can also be sung in English.

Lastly, I would like to describe in general terms why I have chosen the six themes (*Origins*, *Guidance & Companions, The Dervish, Love, Death,* and *Destination*) to categorize my translations. After reading Dr. Tatci's critical edition of the *Divan* and categorizing each poem thematically on a detailed spreadsheet, the two most prevalent themes were those of "Love" and "Path." The Turkish for the word "road/path" is *yol* and for the word "traveler" is *yolcu*. I came to realize that the physical and spiritual travels of Yunus on the roads of Anatolia and the path of Sufism encompass even the grand theme of "love." Once I pinpointed this main trend in Yunus' *Divan*, I noticed how everything in his work revolved around this concept of a traveler on a path that began before a physical existence and ends somewhere even after death. Through this theme, we can analyze Yunus' origins, his sources of inspiration, his advice to others on how to behave on earth, his experience of Divine love, his perception of Death, and finally the goals he has on earth

and in the Hereafter. I think that these six categories to be explored in more detail provide the much-needed holistic look at the *Divan* until the translation of the whole critical edition is completed.

Besides the prevalence of travel and path motifs in his works, Yunus' biographical stories also led me to arrange my sections in this way. We saw how his travels through mountains before becoming a *Sufi* and after abandoning Tapduk's *Dervish* lodge marked points in his personal growth and spiritual development. We also know that he travelled extensively both during his training as a *Sufi* and after he completed his education. So, I consider this theme to be the best way to summarize his entire *Divan* in an efficient manner. On the other hand, Yunus Emre is a very multifaceted individual and it can have other benefits to focus translation efforts only on the theme of love in his poems or perhaps the theme of advice, though they must be placed in the proper context to make sure to give the audience an idea of the bigger picture.

Let us finally answer Yunus' invitation and take a brief look at his journey on the *Sufi* path as he welcomes us to his work:

> Today the discussion is ours; those who call us "ours," let them come
> Love has fed us its honey; those who have tasted and drunk it, let them come (Tatci, *Yunus Emre Dîvanı II - Tenkitli Metin* 230)

The translations of all poems that follow are based on Mustafa Tatci's *Yunus Emre Dîvanı II - Tenkitli Metin*. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1990.

355

Before earth and sky were created, The True One[1] made an ore
He gazed at the ore; melting it, He made a pearl

From the ore, He drew out a vapor; from the vapor He created a sky
As the sky's decoration, He made many stars

He told the sky; "Turn," He said, "let the moon and the sun walk,[2]" He said
He put the water suspending in space, He made earth on top of it

The earth shook; for a time, it did not find stability
Grand, high mountains, The True One made as pegs[3]

Azrael[4] descended from the sky, he took a handful of earth
The four angels[5] kneaded it and made a prophet[6]

When life entered the body, he sneezed and stood up
In that moment, he opened his hands and thanked The True One

Allah asks[7] Adam, "Now that you've reached this moment,
What did you say in this world, what has your tongue spoken?"

"'You created me when I did not exist, you gave me life when I was earth,
You named me with the tongue of Power,'[8] my tongue speaks," he said

This reply pleased The True One, He made His servant glorious
He gave him whatever came to his heart, prepared all of it

From where do these words come to Yunus? Who brings the news of life?
It seems that The Owner of Generosity has gazed upon him

Notes

In a narration (hadith), the Prophet Muhammad says:

. . . the souls (*Ruh*) are troops collected together and those who had a mutual familiarity amongst themselves in the store of prenatal existence would have affinity amongst them, (in this world also) and those who opposed one of them, would be at variance with one another (Ibn Al-Hajjaj Al-Naysaburi 2638 b).

Such "prenatal existence" is the very first instance of human consciousness and interaction for Yunus Emre, where all humans exist in a non-physical form outside of time and space. This section seeks to tell the reader about Yunus' "eternal homeland," and how he came to be on Earth. Poem 355 draws on references from the Qur'an and narrations from Prophet Muhammad to talk about the formation of the universe and the creation of the first human and prophet, Adam.

1. The True One – In the Qur'an and Hadith, Allah is referred to by various attributes that highlight specific divine characteristics, collectively called asma ul husna ("beautiful names of God"). Yunus makes extensive use of Allah's name, Al-Haqq, which means "The Truth, The Reality, The Truly-Existing, The Only Reality."

2. let the moon and the sun walk – The precise wording here "ay-gün yürisün" also means months and days, which is a reference to verses in the Qur'an such as 55:5.

3. made as pegs – This is a reference to at least two verses in the Qur'an, 78:7 and 16:15, that describe mountains as pegs on earth.

4. Azrael – One of the archangels in Islam, responsible for separating the souls of humans from their bodies at the command of God.

5. The four angels – These are the four archangels in Islam, referring specifically to what in the English Biblical accounts as Gabriel (Jibril in Arabic), Michael (Mikail), Raphael (Israfil), and Azrael (Azrail).

6. made a prophet – The implication here is that they made Prophet Adam by the command of God.

7. Allah asks – The grammatical tense in Turkish also shifts to present tense, emphasizing that this is a conversation outside of the sense of time as we perceive it.

8. tongue of Power – This is a reference to the many verses in the Qur'an such as 2:117 describing God's power of creation: "When He decrees a matter, He only says to it 'Be,' and it is."

314

Come, hold onto one of God's true servants; come, pledge yourself to the Masters
They will wipe the rust off your heart; come pledge yourself to the Masters

Strengthen your promise so much that you have wealth and things for your journey
Knowing The True One will be your fight; come, pledge yourself to the Masters

Masters are God's true servants; they wipe the rust off the hearts
Their conduct is with the Friend; come, pledge yourself to the Masters

Disperse your heart's mayhem; don't wear the fabric of vulgarity
Before the bird of your life flies, come, pledge yourself to the Masters

Go past this lingering worry; he who breaks down his ego, matures it
Don't look upon the Friend from afar, come, pledge yourself to the Masters

This life will not remain with you for an eternity; one who goes to Him, does not return
The last regret will be of no avail; come, pledge yourself to the Masters

Let go of this world; make your preparations for the afterlife
Don't be far from those who have reached[1]; come, pledge yourself to the Masters

If you love Allah, call out cheerfully to that Ruler
I swear by God, The True One will treat you with mercy; come, pledge yourself to the Masters

Yunus, before you regret it, be near to the Master before you die
Before this world smiles at you;[2] come, pledge yourself to the Masters

Notes

This section outlines one of Yunus' most common pieces of advice: to follow the path of a *Sufi* Master. Ultimately, the Masters of the *Sufi* paths are those who follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad. For Yunus, these Masters are accessible and living models of Islamic conduct, which needs to be emulated by the *Sufi*s in order to develop their relationships with God. This necessity for Yunus arises from the Qur'anic commands such as the one in 9:119, "O you who believe! Keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, and keep the company of the truthful (those who are also faithful to their covenant with God)" and poem 314 is perhaps one of the most direct and earnest calls to follow this verse.

1. **those who have reached –** This is another way of addressing the *Sufi* Masters, who have attained a spiritual level where they are constantly aware of God's presence.

2. **Before this world smiles at you –** Yunus implies that the world attempts to fool people with its charms, which he wants to avoid.

111

O, one who says, “I am a dervish,” in this path, shame is not fitting[1]
Those who are dervishes, their hearts are wide; narrow is not fitting[2]

A dervish must be without desire, without a tongue to those who swear
Without a hand to those who hit; being with the crowd is not fitting

His work should not resemble that of the people; he must rid the mayhem from his heart
One hundred thousand dervishes are all one; a stranger in between is not fitting

O dervish, if you are a dervish, all the universe is a known friend to you
Exchange pride for a soft nature; a stranger in between is not fitting

Those who are dervishes, poverty is their wealth/stock
Other than poverty, wealth, riches, or property is not fitting

If you took a Master’s hand, if you gave your heart to a Master
If you came with a pledge, then denial to a Master is not fitting

Yunus you saw the Master; don’t increase the one you see
Saying this or that, a dervish distorted is not fitting

Notes

Having looked at the companions and the guidance Yunus accepts on the path, we can now look at the advice he has for the *Dervishes* (interchangeable with *Sufis*) as he directly describes some of the characteristics of what makes one a *Sufi*. For Yunus, all the requirements of being a Muslim (such as fasting and the obligatory prayers) are integral to being a *Sufi*/*Dervish*. So, what makes a Muslim a *Dervish*? His answer to this question is the subject of many of his poems. In Poem 111, we find some of the most direct descriptions of the extra mile a Muslim can go to elevate their relationship with God and how *Dervishes* see everything around themselves.

1. shame is not fitting – The context of this phrase reveals much about one of the essential characteristics of a *Dervish*. At first sight, Yunus Emre urges one to be completely shameless, but one predictable result of this would be that the shameless *Dervish* would feel absolutely no guilt, no remorse, no need for repentance. Yet, we know from our introductory discussion that repentance for sins is one of the key practices of *Sufism*. The solution to this paradox is revealed in the next few lines of this poem. A *Dervish* must “exchange pride for a soft nature” and abandon a love/desire for wealth, riches, and property. Normally we feel shame in relation to others around us. Socially unacceptable behavior brings us shame, not because it is objectively a bad thing to do, but because the people in our community look down upon it. For example, being overweight might be shameful in one culture, but a sign of pride and wealth in another. It is this type of shame that Yunus finds unfitting. One must feel ashamed of an act only with God in mind. One’s basis for judgement should only be God. Any shyness from society is not fitting. While freeing *Dervishes* from social constraints, this actually increases their sensitivity. One of the most common examples of this is that, although there are no strict guidelines on how one should sleep, *Dervishes* might be ashamed of lying down with their backs toward the direction of Mecca. This is due to the condition of their relationship with God. Doing the same thing only because society expects one not to lie down with one’s back toward Mecca would be considered a shallow behavior by a *Dervish*.

2. **narrow is not fitting –** The wideness and narrowness of the heart is about embracing all of humanity. A Dervish must keep his heart open to all.

404

My heart has fallen into a love
Come, see what love has done to me
I've given my mind to disarray
Come, see what love has done to me

I shall walk burning on and on
Love has dyed me in the color of blood
I'm neither sane nor crazy
Come, see what love has done to me

I walk from country to country
I ask about the Friend from tongue to tongue
Who knows my condition in exile?
Come, see what love has done to me

My face has turned yellow, my eyes with water
My breast is in pieces, my heart is wounded
O, troubled brother who knows my condition,
Come, see what love has done to me

I walk in foreign lands
I see the Friend in my dreams
Waking up, I become *Majnun*[1]
Come, see what love has done to me

Sometimes I drift about like dust
Sometimes I gust with the winds
Sometimes I cascade down with the floods
Come, see what love has done to me

I surge with the flowing waters
I sear my troubled heart
I cry remembering my Master,
Come, see what love has done to me

Either take my hand and raise me
Or bring me to the Reality
You've made me cry for so long, make me laugh
Come, see what love has done to me

I am Yunus the Helpless
Wounded head to toe
Wandering in the country of the Friend
Come, see what love has done to me

Notes

One of the most common themes in Yunus Emre's works is also the one most taken out of context. Hence, I have decided to place this section after the previous three. After grounding our understanding of Yunus' poetry in a long tradition of *Sunni* Islam, the poetry in this section can give us a true glimpse into the heart of a *Sufi*. While Yunus also has happier and more cheerful poems on the love of God, the majority of his works on this subject are lined with a deep sense of longing as beautifully exemplified in Poem 404. Detached from his "eternal homeland" as we examined in the first section, Yunus feels the pangs of separation.

1. *Majnun* – Layla and Majnun are iconic lovers in Middle Eastern literature. Layla shows her love in hidden ways that only Majnun can understand, as befitting her name, which comes from the Arabic word *layl*: night. Majnun's name refers to someone who has lost their mind. "Crazy" is a good translation. His love is beyond human expression, and it encompasses his being to an extent that he forgoes sleep, food, social norms, and even himself.

Section 5: Death

291[1]

Love for my homeland has plunged into my mind,
 I shall depart, saying "O, Friend; dear Friend"
Those who arrive there, stay;
 I will hurry to stay there, saying "O, Friend; dear Friend"

Azrael[2] will come and clutch the soul,
 no father or mother can help
Descending from the tree, I shall mount the wooden horse[3];
 I shall depart, saying "O, Friend; dear Friend"

I shall be busy in seclusion;
 I shall be a rose, forever in bloom
In the Friend's garden, I shall be a nightingale;
 I shall sing, "O, Friend; dear Friend"

Five or ten yards of cloth,
 they shall make into a shroud on my back
I shall sew the life's clothing;
 I shall wear it, saying "O, Friend; dear Friend"

Like *Majnun*[4], I shall walk;
 I shall roam grand mountains
Like a candle, I shall melt;
 I shall burn, saying "O, Friend; dear Friend"

Days shall pass, the year shall turn;
 my grave shall cave in on me
My body shall decay and become earth;
 I shall drift like dust, saying "O, Friend; dear Friend"

Yunus Emre, get on your way;
 disbelievers don't enter your path
Like a grebe, I shall dive into the Friend's lake,
 saying "O, Friend; dear Friend"

Notes

Although one might consider death to be the end of all journeys, it is only one of the stops along the way for Yunus Emre. Following the many *hadiths* (narrations) that instruct Muslims to contemplate on death and prepare oneself for this transition into the hereafter, Yunus has written extensively on the matter. Poem 291 invites the audience on such a contemplation as Yunus examines death as a reunion with the Friend (God) and an end to the separation and longing that he experiences.

1. Because this poem has longer lines in Turkish as well, the English translation extended each line to a logistically impossible point. Thus, I've chosen to format this poem differently.

2. *Azrael* – See Section 1: Note 4.

3. wooden horse – As part of the Islamic burial proceedings, the deceased person is placed in a wooden coffin and carried on the shoulders of the funeral attendees to the grave.

4. *Majnun* – See Section 4: Note 1.

389

I've revealed my secret today
Giving my life, I found the Beloved

Life and heart are wonderstruck by the Beloved
With the Beloved I steer my fate

One must have concern[1]; concern is necessary; concern is required
So that I can give all my strength to my concern

So, I am placeless on earth
No one knows where my place is

I've found the source, what would I do with else?
I've given my shop to plunder today

The polo ball is mine, I've taken the mallet to hit it,
Who shall take the ball from my place?

The earth is mine[2], the sky is mine, the plateau of heavens is mine
See how I've spread out my tent

If my name has become Yunus, then, how strange
May they read my books and *Divan*

Notes

If death is not the end for the *Dervish* in love, then what is? This section looks at the idea of destination in Yunus' works. In poem 389, Yunus has given his life and "found the Beloved." Although this is not the full reunion promised in the Hereafter and despite its briefness emphasized by the word "today" in various places, Yunus has dissolved himself in Divine love to "steer his fate" in unison with the Beloved. This union, only a part of which Yunus has experienced while alive, is the ultimate destination and goal for all Muslims in the Hereafter.

1. One must have concern – The word *dert* can mean "concern, sorrow, grief, worry, pain, trouble." In *Sufism*, Albayrak writes, *dert* is almost used synonymously with Divine love. While it removes any other worldly suffering, this feeling brings with it an immense longing for God that dwarfs all sufferings while at the same time being more pleasant than anything else.

2. The earth is mine – The couplet that begins this way is usually seen in poems of loss of self in Divine love. Yunus is a poet of the Wahdat al-Wujud (Unity of Being/Existence) philosophy, where the only reality that exists is God, and everything else is accepted to be but reflections of His attributes. During a state of intoxication, Dervishes lose themselves in the presence of God, completely abandoning any sense of self. Abandoning the material world is one level of *Sufism*, the next level is to abandon the desire for the world, and finally to forget even abandonment itself, so there is no self left. At this state of intoxication, where the lines between the lover and the beloved are dissolved, Yunus speaks these two lines.

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Love for my homeland has plunged into my mind,
I shall depart, saying “O, Friend; dear Friend”

314: Dutgıl bir Tanrı hâsını gel ikrâr it erenlere
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