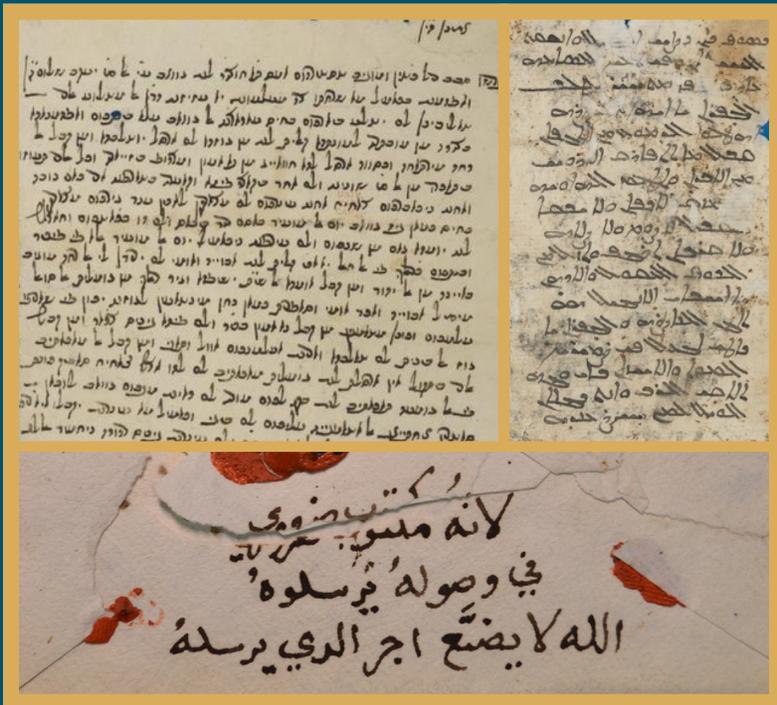


A Handbook and Reader of Ottoman Arabic

EDITED BY ESTHER-MIRIAM WAGNER





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Semitic Languages and Cultures 9.

ISSN (print): 2632-6906

ISSN (digital): 2632-6914

ISBN Paperback: 9781783749416

ISBN Hardback: 9781783749423

ISBN Digital (PDF): 9781783749430

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0208

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6. BASTARDS AND ARABS

E. Khayyat

Herr, du sollst den Streit beenden, der die Welt entzweit.
So wie du bist haben unsere Alten den beschrieben, der es
tun wird. Frieden müssen wir haben von den Arabern...
Reinheit, nichts als Reinheit wollen wir...

Jackals, from Kafka, "Schakale und Araber"

Commenting on Ziya Pasha's (1825–1880) anthology *Harabat*, the great poet Tevfik Fikret (1867–1915)—one of the pioneers of modern Turkish poetry—suggests that "even the *sahib-i fazlı*," which is to say 'the author of [this] gift or treasure', but also, as Fikret underlines, "the father of [this] illegitimate child [...]," confessed to the shortcomings of his final product (Fikret, 1898).¹ Ziya Pasha started off his anthology with disclaimers, explains Fikret, and announced his regrets already in the Introduction to *Harabat* "with a thousand *pîç-tâb-ı derûn*."

¹ *Sahib-i fazlı*: *sahib* is literally 'master' or 'owner'. The expression could alternatively be read 'the recipient of this blessing or grace', *fazlı* referring to Ziya Pasha's God-given talent, describing Ziya Pasha as blessed. In addition to 'that which is given as a gift or favour', *fazlı*, referring to *Harabat*, could be interpreted as 'the great service' Ziya Pasha provided. I use Ziya Pasha (1291–1292).

Fikret thus comes unglued already in the second paragraph of his critical essay on *Harabat*, showing off his twisted command of Ottoman Turkish. He demonstrates what a poet could make with the words of *elsine-i selase* ‘the three languages, i.e., Arabic, Farsi, and Ottoman Turkish’, the tri-lingual combination of the Ottoman Empire. *Derûn* is ‘deep’ and *pîç* is ‘bastard’; *pîçtâb* ‘distress or trouble’ and *tâb* ‘strength, light, or sparkle’, also the act of ‘annealing or tempering’, and much more. Pushing things a little, one could easily hear *تاب* as *طبع* or ‘print’, since corrupting (bastardising?) Arabic, in writing as in speech, is quite the Turkish habit. Ziya Pasha’s three-volume anthology (*mecmua-i mün-tehabât*, in Fikret’s vocabulary) of Ottoman Turkish poetry, which was one of a kind when it was published between 1874–1875, contains poems in *elsine-i selase*. Its multilingualism (*avant la lettre*, as it were) was considered its main shortcoming by Ziya Pasha’s fellow reformists and revolutionaries, who were calling for the elevation of the oral tradition in vernacular Turkish over and against *elsine-i selase* around the time when *Harabat* was published. Vernacular Turkish was the cornerstone of the Ottoman Turkish future that these revolutionaries sought to build through their literary-political activism (Levend 1972; Lewis 1999).² Instead *Harabat* covers and builds on Arabic and Farsi literary canons and focuses on Ottoman poetry under the influence of these traditions to develop a canon of modern Ottoman letters.

² The canonical history of the Turkish vernacular from the perspective of Turkish modernity is Levend (1972), which is somewhat teleologically minded. Also see Geoffrey Lewis (1999).

How does Ziya Pasha express his regrets, then, according to Fikret? Through a thousand painful sighs from the depths of his heart? Through a thousand adopted bastards in his orphanage of an anthology? Through the displaced, bastardised poems of the old? Through Arabic and Farsi poems of time immemorial that Ziya Pasha adopted as his very own, perhaps? Through the poems that do not belong to *us* but that *we* have made our own—Arabic and Farsi poems that, so deeply ingrained in our hearts and souls, are now part of our way of expressing ourselves, for better or for worse? Then again, what does *Harabat* show us when it sheds light on, prints, tempers the traits and movements in the depths of our souls? If the origins of Ottoman Turkish language, culture, literature, and self-expression—according to the logic of *Harabat*—might also be Persian and/or Arab, and thus perhaps even doubtful, what does that make of Ottoman Turks? Could the latter be the source of the anguish Fikret reads into Ziya Pasha's words?

Many before and after Fikret, including the giants of Turkish criticism, such as Namık Kemal (1840–1888) and Mehmet Fuat Köprülü (1890–1966), Rıza Tevfik (1869–1949), and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901–1962), scrutinised Ziya Pasha's Ottoman Turkish canon as it took shape in this unique anthology.³ They asked questions similar to the ones I summed up above, at times refuting the premises that guide Ziya Pasha's choices while acknowledging his ambition and great service, or sympathising with his politics while raising objections to some of his specific

³ See *Tahrir-i Harabat*, 1303. Rıza Tevfik's 'Harabat ve Harabati' was published in *Yeni Sabah* (1944). See also Fuad Köprülü (1917).

choices. Yet almost every critic since Kemal has made a point of addressing our reformist Pasha's revolutionary agenda and his reactionary attitude in *Harabat* as paradoxical. It is high time we scrutinise the theologico-political premises underlying Ziya Pasha's sense of literary history to make better sense of this most productive paradox. Ottoman Arabic was central to the theologico-political horizon that shaped Ziya Pasha's branch of what I shall refer to as Islamicate humanism, just as *Harabat* had an absolutely crucial role to play in the history of this Islamicate humanism at large. *Harabat* both fulfils and destroys that humanism—it announces the end of Islamicate humanism right at the peak of its centuries-long, cross-cultural trajectory, hailing the beginning of a new era. Gerschom Scholem's pioneering vision on the paradoxical moments of Jewish history will guide us to account for this productive paradox.

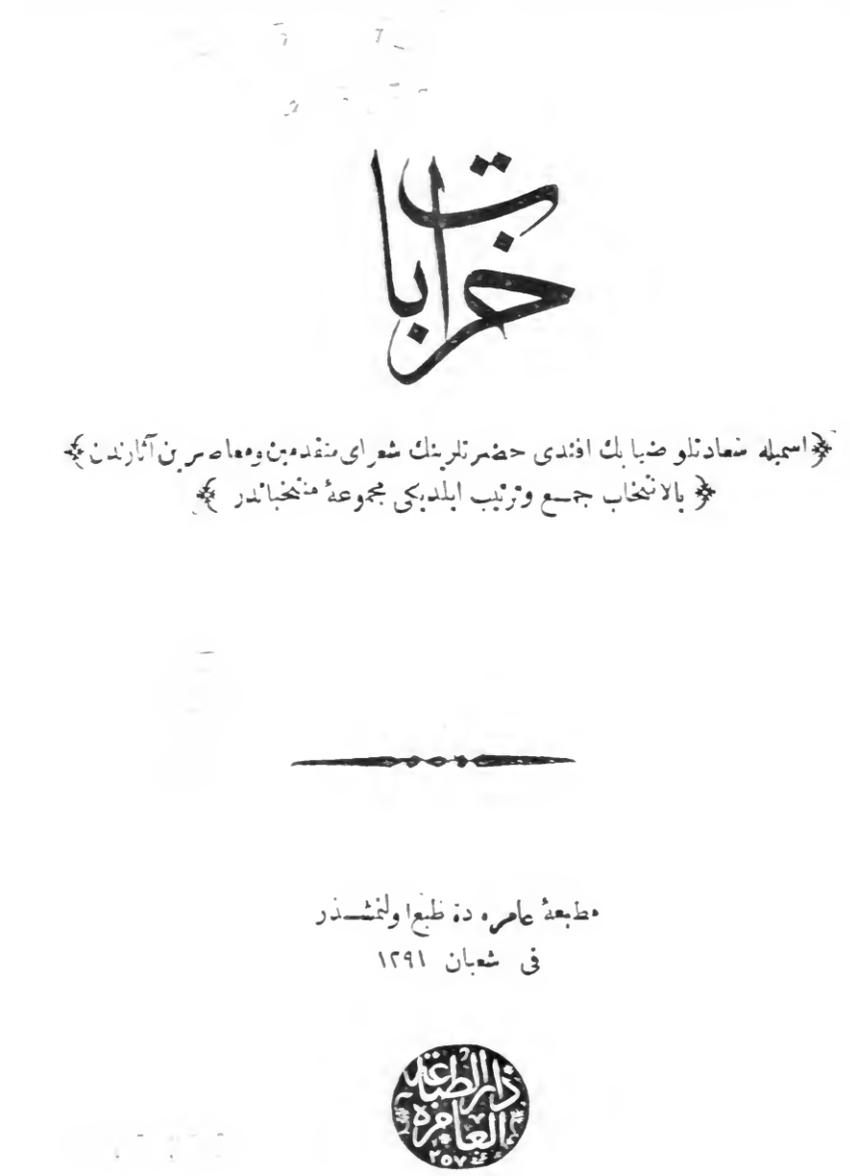
Unfortunately, by focusing almost exclusively on the limited role that *Harabat* played in the history of modern Turkish and Turkish literary modernity, critics, scholars, and students of Ziya Pasha have obscured the immense potentials *Harabat* still carries. The pure 'Turkish vernacular' that Ziya Pasha's fellow reformists and revolutionaries, and Ziya Pasha himself at one point, sought to elevate for the future of the Ottoman people, was not a reality at that point in time, but more of an idea or an ideal to pursue. *Harabat's* emphasis on Arabic, Farsi, and Ottoman Turkish, or the tri-language of the Ottoman Empire over and against the ideal of a Turkish vernacular, articulates another, a much older idealism, while carrying that idealism to its radical conclusions. A review of *Harabat's* languages and literatures, and,

finally, its Arabic canon, in the following pages will provide an opportunity to acknowledge these unaccounted-for aspects of *Harabat*, while raising an uncanny question: that of the relevance of Ottoman Arabic today.

1.0. The Bastards

Fikret's 1898 '*Harabat*'tan Bir Sahîfe', or 'A Page from *Harabat*', was a response to the reformist and/or nationalist critics of Ziya Pasha's anthology, who found the anthology's selection and multilingualism a little too reactionary. As mentioned, *Harabat* was published tri-lingually and covered the millennium-long history of Islamicate verbal arts in many of its genres and forms, from the *qasaid* to *khamriyyat*. The first volume, from which I have chosen a page to analyse closely in the concluding section of this essay, contains 37 Arabic, 38 Farsi, and 22 Ottoman Turkish *qa-said*. The curious thing is that, like Fikret and his other critics, Ziya Pasha was a reformist—a proto-nationalist of sorts, no less, and a member of the revolutionary Young Ottoman movement, who himself had a particular interest and investment in the vernacular, everyday, 'simple' Turkish, or Turkish as the tongue of the simple Ottoman folk.

About a decade before *Harabat*, when he and other like-minded reformists published a newspaper named *Hürriyet* in London exile, Ziya Pasha wrote a ground-breaking essay on reading

Figure 1: *Harabat* title page

and writing in the Ottoman language.⁴ ‘Poetry and Prose’, which was meant to translate ‘literature’ in the modern, Western sense, is an essay about the insurmountable impossibility of drafting ground-breaking essays in Turkish. Not that our Pasha lacked the gift. But the language in which he wrote did not allow such a thing, the essay suggests.

Ziya Pasha and his comrades had fled the Empire because of their oppositional views, which were not perceived favourably by the Sublime Porte. They had become outcasts, living far away from their fellow Ottoman subjects. These concerned intellectuals, also known as the Young Ottomans, felt an urgency to reach out to those whom they took to be the true ‘subjects’ of Ottoman imperial history, which is to say the Ottoman multitude, to warn them of the difficulties ahead. The problem was *not* just that they had no option but to publish their oppositional views in the London-based *Hürriyet*, which was smuggled to Istanbul through the British embassy. Ziya Pasha and other luminaries, from our Pasha’s perspective, had difficulty reaching out to the people even when they lived right in the heart of the Ottoman capital. The distance between the vernacular and their written, literary, Ara-

⁴ Ziya Pasha’s essay, ‘*Şiir ve İnşa* [‘Poetry and Prose’]’ was published in the London-based *Hürriyet* in 1868. For the story of the newspaper, see Mardin (2000). Among some sources about Young Ottomans and Ziya Pasha in this context are Ebüzziya (1973); Akçura (1981); Kaplan (1948) and Yetiş (2000), which has a comparative discussion of the pasha’s essay and its significance. Additionally, Tanpınar (2006) addressed the significance of the essay on multiple occasions.

bic- and Farsi-infused high Ottoman Turkish made literary address (in the modern sense), which is to say communicative action, or, more generally, mobilisation, practically impossible:

*İşte bu sebebledir ki elân
Türkîde yok irticâle imkân*

For this reason, in our day and age

Authenticity is not possible in Turkish (*Harabat* 1: v)⁵

In search of that vernacular, that pure medium, ‘Poetry and Prose’ challenged its readers to ask if Ottomans have, or ever had, a language of their own in which to produce poetry and prose free of Arabic and Farsi, and whether there existed a literature in that language, an archive of wordy material, per concrete evidence. The pasha responded in the affirmative, but with reservation, since he also seemed to admit that one cannot take this kind of thing as given, just as one cannot take the identity of one’s biological father or mother as given.

Why else would he call for the standardisation of orthography for Ottoman Turkish, the language of the ruling Ottoman Turks, if not in search for a birth certificate of sorts? Our pasha also recommended the promotion of mass literacy, to turn to the streets of the Empire, to the oral tradition in the vernacular, where the living language of the ruling Ottoman Turks could perhaps be found. His thinking, therefore, was that the true Ottoman

⁵ I translate ارتجال as ‘authentic self-expression’, relying on context here. In other contexts it can be translated ‘speaking wittily extempore, successful improvisation, or clear extempore expression of what is in one’s mind’.

language, the live language of the living multitude, and its literature, were potentially out there, but in an immaterial, non-tangible way in the people's mouths. So were the Ottomans as a unique nation: out there, yet nowhere to be found in the flesh, as if their unique identity, language, and culture (as distinct from—yet similarly to—the French, the British, Arabs, or Persians) amounted to hearsay. For as of Ziya Pasha's day, Ottomans (unlike the French, the British, Arabs, or Persians) existed in an ephemeral way, or, rather, more like a promise or potential, or, better still, silenced and invisible. That potential had to be objectified and the promise fulfilled, and the literary-humanistic archive—the birth certificate—organised and printed in actual, material books so that Ottomans might rightfully acknowledge their father- or mother-tongue and raise their voice.

Once the living language was elevated in this manner, and all these other measures were taken, then the sort of address such as the one Ziya Pasha sought to draft would easily reach the addressee—the people—and the interpellation would be felicitous. The Turk then would stop being Turk in name only and turn to, come to the name Turk. When Ziya Pasha drafted the essay in London, however, none of these conditions, and not even the condition of a uniform orthography, had been met yet. What sort of other changes the measures he listed would incite, or whether or not the creation of the conditions Ziya Pasha desired—or the interpellation itself, for that matter—would amount to fabricating an Ottoman Turkish language, literature, and identity, did not seem to concern him at this point. In other words, he was not

concerned with the validity of the premises justifying the engineering of a new media technology. The Ottoman masses had to be mobilised if the Empire was to survive, and mobilisation required a new media technology—of that much he was certain.

From the point of view of the future of the Empire, then, that “Türkîde yok irticâle imkân” at that point in time, or the present silence and invisibility of the vernacular Ottoman Turkish identity and tongue, appeared as an urgent problem to be addressed. What turns out to be problematic in this moderately optimistic, future-oriented point of view, which is emblematic of the haste that marks the late Ottoman intellectual universe, would appear in a completely different light when Ziya Pasha moved on to develop an alternative, strictly historical perspective on the very same issues. Ziya Pasha’s call in ‘Poetry and Prose’ voiced the concerns of his generation, which feared the unforeseeable future unfolding before them with the hasty reforms, oppressive rulers, and silent masses of the Sublime State. *Harabat*, in turn, takes a pause, and views the same state of affairs from the perspective of the Islamicate past, offering a sort of intellectual history on the silence or invisibility in question.

Perhaps Ziya Pasha himself took a first step in pursuit of the prescriptions of ‘Poetry and Prose’ when he put together *Harabat*. One could consider this anthology, then, the birth certificate that he called for—one that he himself drafted after a decade of research.

He set to work with his own archive, which had enabled and motivated him to consider his cultural identity unique and distinct from any other. He apologises in his Introduction, drafted

in verse, for his limited sampling bias, which Fikret does not fail to underline, but, at the same time, does not consider significant.⁶ Ziya Pasha organised the poems he grew up with, systematising, to the best of his ability, the one and only literary cultural archive of his era, collecting traditional verses in *elsine-i selase*. *Harabat* provides us with insight into the making of the traditional Ottoman intellectual and his/her lifeworld and, therefore, also outlines the fundamentals of the sort of humanism underlying such *Bildung*. The oral tradition in vernacular Turkish also figures in *Harabat*, but in a rather more critical manner, while Ziya Pasha of *Harabat*, looking back at his own intellectual journey, does not, of course, even consider offering translations of the Arabic and Farsi poems of his selection into Turkish.

Nor can he disentangle the centuries-old knots or cut off ‘Turkish’ poetry and prose from the Arabic and Farsi of his very own *Bildung*. In Fikret’s terms, when Ziya Pasha, and, through him, the proto-nationalist Young Ottoman movement, look into their father’s or mother’s face from up close, they end up finding themselves in sorrowful doubt, at a paralyzing moment of decision, and yet before a future ripe for poetry as well.⁷

In the section of his “Introduction” to *Harabat* that addresses the motives behind his compilation of the poems, Ziya Pasha praises vernacular Turkish poetry for its educational value, describing his exposure to folk literature as an early station in his

⁶ Ziya Pasha’s ‘Introduction’ (*Mukaddime*) was soon after published separately as *Mukaddime-i Harabat* (1311).

⁷ The poetry of the sort I have in mind here is that of the poet in the Vicoean key, i.e., ποιητής ‘maker, inventor, lawgiver’.

intellectual journey and an inspiration for his own early verse. What marks this moment in his intellectual journey, though, is some half-learned, childish pride, and inability to handle criticism:

*Kim ŷiirime atsa tane taŷı
Uđrardı benimle derde baŷı
Hicv idi muârza cevâbum
ŷemŷir-i zeban idi kitabum*

Whoever threw stones at my poems
Would get in trouble with me
Sarcasm was my response to opposition
Scimitar of the tongue my constitution (*Harabat* 1, iv)

One can surmise that folk literature in any language of the Ottoman universe could potentially serve the same purpose, which is initiation into culture. Mastery over cultural matter would require more than mere initiation. For soon after his exposure to folk literature, Ziya Pasha laid his hands on two *diwans* in Ottoman Turkish, the study of which proved to be a humbling experience for him. Then again even that was just another step in his intellectual trajectory. Only after reading Farsi poetry did he find true enlightenment, he admits, beginning to figure out what a poem is and what it takes to be a poet proper, or to claim mastery over words, speech, and culture:

*Amma okudukda Gûlistan'ı
Derk etmeđe baŷladım lisânı⁸*

Yet only after reading Golistan

⁸ The *lisân* at issue here is the 'poetic' or Farsi language.

I began to understand the tongue (*Harabat* 1, v)

To be a poet one must leave behind the childish pride that comes with the gift, then—the gift of a mother tongue and talent. One must learn to look beyond and even overcome the self (*Harabat* 1, xi). Talent is a must to be a poet, but it is only one of the conditions for being a poet proper. Talent needs to be cultivated through learning and morals, through something like a humanities education:

Şâni-i şurût-ı şâiriyyet
Tahşil-i maârif ü fazilet
İlim olmasa şâir olmaz insan
Dilsiz söze kadir olmaz insan

The second condition for becoming a poet
 Is the study of culture and manners
 There is no poetry without wisdom
 One cannot command words without tongues (*Harabat* 1,
 x)

The humanities training of this sort requires moving beyond Turkish for the Turkish pupil, beyond the oral tradition and more, as we shall see shortly. This is not to say that *Harabat* disregards issues concerning the state of Turkish that Ziya Pasha voiced in ‘Poetry and Prose’. Again, *Harabat* simply reframes Ziya Pasha’s earlier questions in ‘Poetry and Prose’. Ziya Pasha leaves behind his terror at the unforeseeable future of the Sublime State, along with his youthful haste, resentment, and pride. He develops a new perspective on the circumstances he observes in Turkish, which reflects a peculiar historicism and even realism, in so far

as *Harabat* was based on his own actual, material library and lived experience.

According to the Ziya Pasha of *Harabat*, the very nature of the Turkish tongue is corrupt, or bastardised, as Fikret would say, due to the immense influence of the Persianate cultural universe on Turkish and the insistence of some Ottoman poets on imitating the great Iranian masters in Turkish:

*Taklid ile çün lisân bozulmuş
Evzân-ı arazi ğâib olmuş
Çıktıkça lisân tabiatinden
Elbette düşer fesahatinden*

For imitation corrupted the tongue
Verses of the land vanished
The more the tongue betrays its nature
The weaker its ability for expression (*Harabat* 1, v)

The source of all the difficulties Ziya Pasha observes in Turkish and the weakness of the Ottoman Turkish tongue is the confusion that results from such influence corrupting the nature of Turkish. Instead of elaborating more on what the true nature of Turkish might be, Ziya Pasha of *Harabat* welcomes what he finds in his archive and interprets his contemporary moment of ‘weakness’ and corruption in the history of Turkish as a station on a centuries-long cultural trajectory. First, he suggests that the Turkish condition is not unique; that Iranians once imitated Arabs in the exact same way that some Ottoman gentlemen of his day imitated the Iranians:

*Türki’de değil bu hâl evvel
Olmuş idi Fâriside muhtel
Anlar da edip lisânı tecdîd*

Etmış Arab'a sîhanda taklid

It is not in Turkish that this happened first
 Farsi too once got corrupt
 They too refreshed their tongue
 And imitated the Arabs in discourse (*Harabat* 1, v)

Imitation leads to interesting outcomes in the case of Farsi. Its bond with Arabic only strengthens and eventually 'perfects' Farsi, enabling the Persianate cultural universe to dominate the Muslim world before the Ottoman Turks took the stage:

*Zira Arabi lisânla evvel
 Olmuş idi Fârisi mükemmel*

For it was with the Arabic tongue
 That Farsi reached perfection (*Harabat* 1, x)

Addressing what appears to be weakness in Ottoman Turkish requires not a search for the true nature of Turkish from this perspective, then, but to go beyond imitating Iranians, just as to get to the Persianate peak of Islamicate humanism, Iranians had to stop imitating Arabs, appropriated the Arabic archive, and produced in Arabic as well. The evident weakness of Turkish, similarly, required *appropriating* Farsi and reaching out all the way back to the source of learning to dig out wisdom.

The source of wisdom, the origin of learning, the ultimate reservoir of humanism in this mental theatre is Arabic. Arabic also serves as the measure of all things in this regard. It is not entirely clear whether Ottoman Turkish would be 'weaker' or stronger after appropriating Farsi and Arabic, or whether the goal here is to praise or condemn what Ziya Pasha regards as Turkish

weakness or corruption. Then again, using his recurrent metaphors of the seas, rivers, and oceans, Ziya Pasha suggests that Turkish and Farsi are but two rivers when it comes to wisdom, while Arabic is the ocean:

*Var ise de bazı fazla noksan
Evzân-ı Arab'dır anda evzân
Biz anlara nisbeten ceditiz
Güya ki Arablar'a hafidiz
Âşâr-ı Arab'dır ümm-i irfan
Bunlar iki nehrdir o umman*

If we are deficient or excessive at times
Arabic metre is its metre [measure]
We are novices by comparison
Being supposedly Arabs' heirs
Arabic poetry is the mother of wisdom
It is the ocean: the other two, rivers (*Harabat* 1, v)

The continuity Ziya Pasha relies on here—from Arabic to Farsi and Ottoman Turkish—is based on the theologico-political horizon of Islamicate humanism and its sense of history, which I will address at length in the next section with Tanpınar's guidance. Suffice it to say that the obligation to study Arabic is the obligation to have a particular mindset, if not historical consciousness, for Ziya Pasha:

*Şiir-i Arab'a tevessül eyle
Nahv ü ligata tevaggul eyle
Nazm-ı kudemâ vü fenn-i târih
Gül-nahl-i fesahate bün ü bih*

Embrace Arabic poetry
Study its syntax and vocabulary

The poems of the old and the science of history
 Are the root of this rose sapling of self-expression (*Harabat* 1, x)

Harabat, therefore, is a literary historical quest that, with its peculiar realism, forced our pasha to contradict the revolutionary politics he articulated in his earlier, proto-nationalist call to zoom in on and elevate the Turkish of the simple folk. *Harabat* shares the observations about the state of Turkish that Ziya Pasha first voiced in ‘Poetry and Prose’, but, elaborating on a historical continuity leading to that state of affairs, it offers an alternative, more complex path to literary-political action for the future. It still calls for action, like ‘Poetry and Prose’, but to ‘perfect’, or democratise the Ottoman tongue in a different way—through a more rigorous investment in Islamicate humanism by way of completely appropriating the Arabic and Farsi languages, literatures, and libraries into the Ottoman Turkish lifeworld.

From *Harabat* on there are two paths before the Ottoman Turkish intellectual history. Either dive deeper into that ocean of *harabat*, devour that ocean of wine—more to follow on *harabat* and wine poetry—and have Turkish, Arabic, and Farsi get further ruined and bastardised; or set Ziya Pasha’s archive, library, and that orphanage of an anthology on fire, claim poetic license for a new era, and start from scratch. Ziya Pasha comes to opt for the former, for, additionally, there is still a huge potential in Ottoman Turkish, according to him, when one considers it a fruit of Islamicate humanism.

If Arabic is the true ocean of our ancient wisdom where the Farsi and Turkish rivers must meet—flowing backwards if need be—it is potentially Ottoman Turkish, or rather *elsine-i selase* as

the native-Ottoman tri-language, that is the ocean of an infinite future where Arabic might finally become one with Farsi and Turkish. The three of them then would dissolve into one another to create something completely unprecedented: an ocean of oceans (*bahr-ı â'zam* as opposed to *umman*; *Harabat* 1, ix–x).⁹ That would truly ‘perfect’ Ottoman Turkish—by dissolving it.

Then again, for some, *Harabat*’s realism was so destructive, so ruinous, that none of this was feasible after its publication. For this realism had made both the Islamicate past and the Turkish future mere phantasy. I shall clarify how and why I read ‘realism’ into *Harabat*’s mental theatre, and how this realism differs from realism in the Western sense, at the end of the next section. Suffice it to remember for now that *Harabat*’s literary-political vision was based on Ziya Pasha’s actual library and archive, his real and material books, as opposed to the ideal, the pure phantasy of a distinctly Turkish identity, vernacular, or literature. Let me first explain how and why Ziya Pasha’s critics found his work ‘ruinous’.

Ziya Pasha himself wrote traditional poetry—his verse Introduction to *Harabat* is of the same genre. He was truly a *harabati*. *Harabat* is both ‘the tavern’ and ‘ruins’, and it is the proverbial and real gathering place of poets (who are called the *harabati* literally ‘the wasted’) to sing poems, literally being ruined and laid waste with the divine ecstasy of the words of poetry or with

⁹ Alternatively, for a recent discussion of Ziya Pasha’s anthology within the context of world literature, see Arslan (2017).

wine.¹⁰ The poems of the *harabati* directed one to the drunkenness of the wine, where one gave up on worldly concerns and differences to give in to whatever one was, and guided other perplexed, inquisitive souls to do so as well. This amounts to turning and turning in circles, like the whirling dervishes, to avoid reading too much into this world, and to go about one's business in divine ecstasy. Once, the word *harabat* in Farsi and Ottoman Turkish had a more general, mystical connotation within these parameters, but as the Ottoman Turkish literary modernity evolved, and especially after the immense impact of Ziya Pasha's *Harabat*, in Turkish the word came to mean more specifically the canon of pre-modern Islamicate poetry, as opposed to Turkish literature in the modern sense, while *harabati* came to refer specifically to the author of traditional poetry. Ziya Pasha's work and the stir it created would over time suppress the immensely rich connotations of the word *harabat* in Turkish, then. This is to

¹⁰ On Islam and wine, see Wensinck and Sadan (2018), and also Ahmed (2016). *Harabat* once referred to both the proverbial gathering place of mystics, poets, and lovers of poetry, and the actual space of worship and meditation of the Sufis (*tekke* or *hankah*); see Uludağ (2017). Dabashi (2013) explains:

Persian literary historians have concurred that the word [*kharabat*] originally meant a 'house or tavern of ill repute' but was eventually appropriated by the mystics to mean a place that they frequent by way of suspending all hypocritical pretense to piety.... The idea is that there are places that you can frequent that will dismantle your beliefs, and yet, in doing so, will also restore your faith. The proverbial tavern in Persian poetry is that *kharabat*.

say that if Ziya Pasha, with *Harabat*, contradicts his own revolutionary politics, and comes out as rather reactionary than progressive according to his own proto-nationalist vision, this is not to say that his *Harabat* is necessarily of the *harabat* of old either.

Some of his critics suggested that Ziya Pasha's scandalous work served as a bookend to the tradition, that Ziya Pasha's work at large did not open up new horizons and venues of action, but merely created an impasse. *Harabat's* path to *harabat*, accordingly, was a dead end. From this point of view, *Harabat* articulates the absence of a distinctly Turkish culture and identity (as distinct from Arabic and Farsi, to say the least) in Ottoman Turkish history not merely to terrorise Ziya Pasha's comrades. Its perspective on *harabat* also makes something new out of the material in Ziya Pasha's library, of his literary cultural archive. It makes out of a lively, mystical, proverbial gathering place, which was at once a place of worship and celebration, performance and deliberation, something that comes close to a canon in the European sense, or something like a proverbial cemetery. The Ottoman-Turkish literary cultural history Ziya Pasha framed, so that Ottoman Turks might know about their ancestry, turned the mystical *harabat* and its vibrant tradition into history, thereby ruining it, while it also ruined the reformist project to elevate vernacular Turkish and the nationalist vision of a future-oriented, Turkish cultural history. This latter judgment belongs to Namık Kemal, the poet-prophet of modern Turkey and one of Ziya Pasha's closest friends, whose *Tahrir-i Harabat*, meaning the destruction of the *harabat* or the damage *Harabat* brought about, was only the beginning of the torrent of criticism Ziya Pasha would receive in

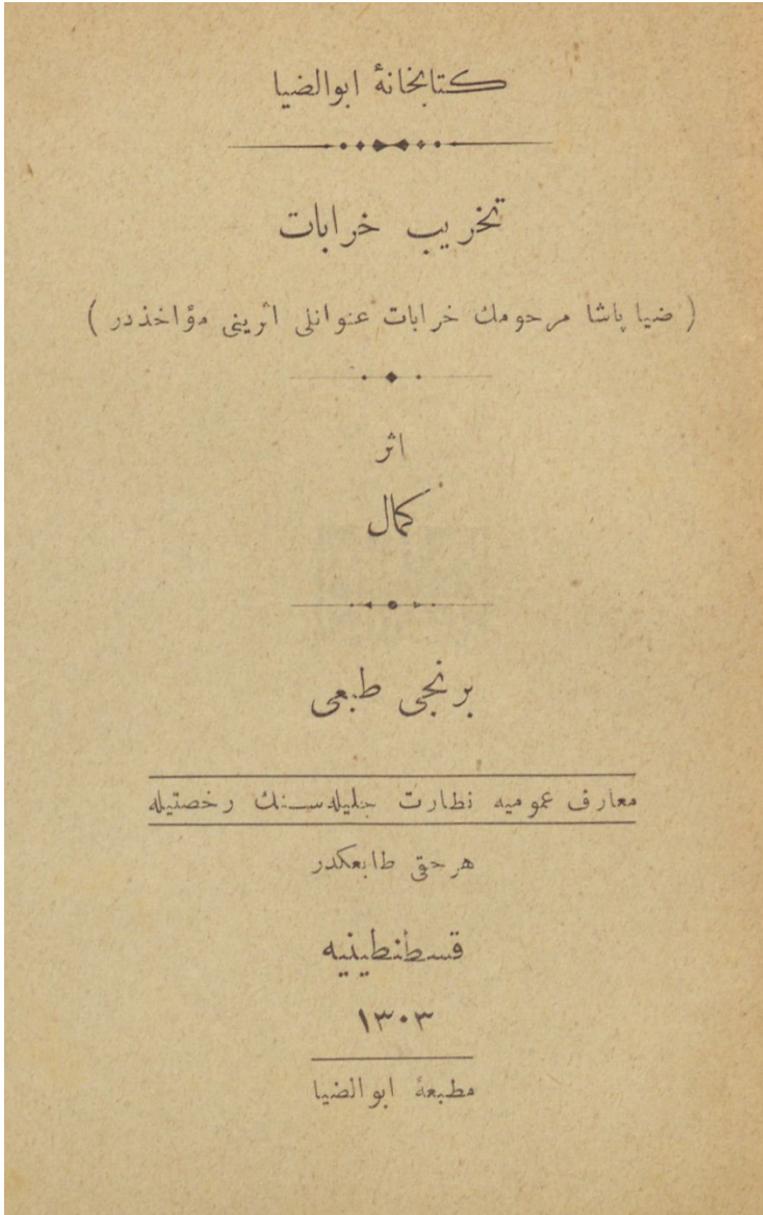
the coming decades. According to this school of thought, Ziya Pasha's work was ultimately 'ruinous', his Arabic and Farsi threatening to make out of the Turks mere bastards, helpless drunkards with no wisdom whatsoever.¹¹

Yet "there is only *Harabat*," writes Fikret defending Ziya Pasha, "and non-other [*sic*] than *Harabat*"—that *Harabat* ruined nothing but remained, even almost three decades after its publication, the only edifice, the only anthology worthy of the name (Fikret 1898, 67). Whether one takes *Harabat* to be ruinous or regards it as an edifice that survived the test of time, it should now be clear that by all accounts *Harabat* marks a crucial moment of an extremely difficult, painstaking decision—a moment that lasted over half a century, no less. This is because, from the point of view of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Harabat* both fulfils and destroys Islamicate humanism. That is how *Harabat* makes space for the articulation of modern Turkishness. I shall explain what this slightly more complex critique of *Harabat*'s Arabic entails in the next section, titled 'The Rings'.

In the section after 'The Rings', titled 'The Arabs', we will see what the Ottoman Arabic of the sort we find in *Harabat* does to Arabic language and literature. For *Harabat* bastardises not only 'Turkish', but Arabic as well. With its peculiar canon of Arabic poetry, it takes us beyond any idea of Arabic language and literature as the language and literature of Arabs. *Harabat*'s reactionary vision of Arabic could also be interpreted as a progressive model for the study of Arabic today. As if to embarrass our

¹¹ Thus concurs Köprülü (1917), for instance. Also see Bilgegil (1972).

Figure 2: Tahrir-I Harabat title page



contemporary departments of Arabic in the US and elsewhere, Ziya Pasha's Arabic language and literature are Ottoman and Turkish, African, South Asian, and European all at once: it is 'global Arabic'.

2.0. The Rings

Young Ottomans Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha, despite their revolutionary thirst, managed to cling to tradition, thus also to appear reactionary at times, thanks to their belief that the modern Western values and ideals they so admired had already been announced by Islam in its golden age. Modern democracy, for instance, was essentially the fulfilment of Islamic principles of faith for them.¹² The Qur'ān was the source of the law before which all persons were already equal, which conviction they could not stop explaining over and over again by turning to the Book and the *hadith*. To this end they developed a new critical vocabulary and political concepts as based on the sources of *sharia*. Through *biat* (the 'election' of the caliph by the community of Muslims) they argued for the parliamentarianism of Islam, or through *meshveret* for the Islamic sources of a politics of consensus and so on and so forth (Mardin 1962; Çiçek 2010).

¹² Ottoman Turkish intellectuals—from the drafters of the Tanzimat declaration (1839), which announced the first major reforms towards modernity and secularisation, to Young Ottomans and revolutionary Young Turks—often emphasised the continuities between modernity and Turkish or Islamicate pre-modernity. Historians of the late Ottoman era often find such rhetoric disingenuous, and the piety involved in it as rather opportunistic or pretentious.

Tanpınar's response to his predecessors' simultaneously revolutionary and reactionary, somewhat Eurocentric, yet equally Islamist mindset suggests that to have access to that mental theatre, one must be ready to rethink the fundamental concepts of the critique, beginning with history, historiography, tradition, and progress, and all these as they relate to the future and the past. Tanpınar does not agree with Ziya Pasha or Namık Kemal, yet he affords them the benefit of the doubt, and knows how to learn from them, too. This article is an attempt to learn from Tanpınar and Ziya Pasha in the same spirit.

Like Ziya Pasha, whom he regards as the "prototypical intellectual of the Tanzimat era," Tanpınar (2006, 19) thought that Ottoman Turkish letters followed "Arabic and Persian letters as the last great creative ring circling our common civilisation." This observation reads like a prose translation of the lines from Ziya Pasha's Introduction to *Harabat* that I have addressed above in a different context: Arabic, Persian, and Turkish are but three seas joining together in the Ottoman tongue to make up the ocean of oceans, or the ocean of Islamicate humanism (*Harabat* 1, ix-x). There is something distinct about the Ottoman language after all, yet this distinctiveness does not sit well with the thought of a history of a distinctly Turkish identity in the modern, European sense.

This distinctiveness has to do with a potential for (or the threat of, according to Tanpınar's double-dealing) radical fluidity or 'diffuseness', in Tanpınar's vocabulary, as opposed to homogeneity and groundedness. As mentioned earlier, one must trace the theologico-political premises underlying Ziya Pasha's thought of

an ocean of oceans to get a better sense of the singularity of his Ottoman mindset. This is exactly what Tanpınar did, interpreting the cultural history of the 'Muslim Orient' (*Müslüman Şark*) against the background of the millennia-long development of identity and self-expression in the West, while ascribing a crucial role to Ziya Pasha in this history.

Tanpınar did not think that Islam was born as democracy *avant la lettre*. Yet he underlines that it is almost impossible to be guilty of blasphemy in Islam so long as one practices worship and verbally attests to the One—the practice or the performative, or the performance generally, being the core of this religion of the deed as opposed to faith (Tanpınar 1969, 41). This is why Islam could effortlessly accommodate countless contrary theological views and all sorts of mysticisms, Sufisms and orthodoxies alike, for Tanpınar.

There is indeed something radically democratic about Islam in its very essence, then, according to Tanpınar: already at its birth, Islam comes with a set of “democratic principles” (Tanpınar 1969, 43). Nevertheless, this democracy arrives “before its time,” says Tanpınar, as if prematurely, and involves no sanctions or enforcement mechanisms to be politically relevant in modern times. In Tanpınar’s view, these principles articulate an idea of justice without legal mechanisms; moreover, they do not allow historical, or rather historiographic space in the Islamic intellectual universe for this idea to evolve.

Since Allah, unlike God in Christianity, is absolutely devoid of any human quality, and since Islam does not accommodate original sin and unequivocally denies the Incarnation as mere

idolatry, it does not offer a human tragedy of salvation or allow for a human “notion of historical intentionality” to develop (Tanpınar 2006, 43). “Tragic realism” is not a possibility in the Islamicate lifeworld, nor is a tragic (as opposed to comic) view of mundane, human reality: “in a world that is no more than the variety of transient manifestations of the same absolute being that would always return to itself,” there could not be anything of tragic import (Tanpınar 2006, 39). The Muslim Orient does not “own up to the real,” earthly life, but instead denies and ignores as immaterial its pomp, glory, poverty, wealth, or inequality (Tanpınar 2006, 44). Accordingly, “in our former civilization,” ideally, “human beings would never even imagine standing before their own fate... the human found its true dimensions not in relation to this mundane world, which is nothing more than shadow play... but in his grand destiny in infinity” (Tanpınar 2006, 40). Now, paradoxically, this also means that Muslims once sought to be at constant peace with their earthly destinies in indifference—such indifference is the ideal to strive for in Islam.

Islam ends up preventing the emergence of class consciousness, moreover, and thus the class structure in the Muslim Orient according to Tanpınar, which in turn disables the “struggles that have been the heart and soul of progress in the West.” This overly accommodating, a little too democratic attitude disables intellectual disagreement and trivialises opposition (Tanpınar 2006, 43). It renders all oppositional politics equally relevant or irrelevant—as a result, even the alterity of the pre-Islamic world is easily subsumed into the Islamicate lifeworld.

All the knowledge of “humanity’s past was ascribed to Islam” and yes, “anachronistically” if need be. Greek antiquity was embraced as part of a struggle between Islam and blasphemy, explains Tanpınar, which was resolved for good with the arrival of the Muslim peak of human history and civilisation (Tanpınar 2006, 38–39). Plato, for instance, was admired for “having defended Islam” long before Islam’s arrival. The true alterity of ancient, pagan cultures and civilisations was never recognised in Islamicate cultures. Needless to say, this indifference toward *alterity*, which is at once an ideal of diffuse or fuzzy *self*, could also be interpreted as an expression of a boundless humanism.¹³

Diffuseness and disintegration mark the Islamicate idiom in a variety of ways for Tanpınar. Above all, it is what structures Muslim Oriental self-expression. For instance, the pre-modern Muslim Oriental mind, *ideally*, had hardly any investment in prosaic composition, argues Tanpınar, although there are many exceptions, of course, and many historical movements that contradict the ideal. Regardless, this horizon has implications for temporal culture generally, but also for historiography and, eventually, for the development of a historical consciousness. Islamicate civilisational trajectory resembles “running backwards in time,” which is to say that, while world history evolves, and identity and self-expression mature in other parts of the world, the Islamicate lifeworld progresses in the exact opposite direction for Tanpınar (2006, 35). While Tanpınar appears to regard this Islam

¹³ The ‘fuzziness’ of premodern, non-Western identities has been an important issue for subaltern studies. The studies of Chatterjee (1993; 1996) are among the most often quoted in this context.

as an obstacle on Muslim Oriental peoples' path to self-expression, his comparativism enables him to elaborate on the distance between two alternative horizons—generally speaking, one Western and the other Muslim Oriental—shaping different ways of being and saying, and leads him to surprising conclusions as well.

The essence of 'Muslim Oriental art' as a form of self-expression is the *beyit* (couplet), Tanpınar argues, slightly overstressing the Muslim Oriental difference: the fragmented couplet as opposed to the solid 'stanza' of European poetry. The plot-driven 'narrative' that binds statements into stories or novels, or the 'frame', visible or invisible, of the Western plastic arts, contradicts the basic premises of this aesthetics. Tanpınar argues that the second line of most couplets appears redundant, unnecessary or superficial. The saying in the first line gives a motif. The second line says almost nothing, interrupts the discourse by way of expressing a forceful submission to form. It follows the first line strictly formulaically, thereby making the overall couplet—the form—appear empty of content, transforming the words of the couplet into an embellishment of the motif introduced in the first line. One half of the couplet annuls the content promised in the other, thereby rendering the couplet primarily, or even purely style. Individual couplets resemble precious stones bearing motifs. Couplets, *ideally*, should not join together in a singular and meaningful, plot-driven work or composition, regardless of the length of the poem. This is where style meets political theology in Tanpınar's literary history.

Now, on the one hand, this ideal, Islamicate-poetic way of making things with words could not have enabled the writing of

novels or histories proper because it was stuck to the intransitivity of the Muslim tongue. Tanpınar translates all this into the language of the society. After Louis Massignon, he argues that “there is no time in the Muslim Orient, but only moments” (Tanpınar 2006, 32). The sort of teleology that could enable plot-driven story-telling and narratives—history or fiction—does not sit well with this logic. Again, there are numerous exceptions to the rule, of course, and Tanpınar addresses them as well, *but critically*. “Islamicate civilization was forever bound to its golden age around which it was formed,” writes Tanpınar, which is to say that its progression could not be easily reconciled with a future-oriented teleology (Tanpınar 2006, 38). There is progress here—backward as it may be, according to Tanpınar’s reasoning—toward the golden age of Islam, and there are stages to this trajectory.

Let us get to the ‘exceptions’ to the rule or the deviations from the ideal I have been mentioning in passing, to make better sense of the stages in the development of the *idea*. Based on what we have seen, and given that the Islamicate mindset as Tanpınar has it is an obstacle on Muslim Oriental peoples’ path to self-expression, one would think that every deviation from this Islamicate path would be a welcome development from Tanpınar’s perspective. Obviously, it is also a simple fact that histories, historical fictions, and plot-driven narratives abound in every era of Arabic, Farsi, and Ottoman Turkish as well. Then again, in Tanpınar’s mind, it is as though the Islamicate ideal affects Arabic, Farsi, and Ottoman Turkish in different ways and to different degrees, and it is in Ottoman Turkish that we come closest to the

ideal, for better or for worse. It is here that Tanpınar's conclusions become slightly ambivalent.

As expressed earlier, Ottoman Turkish letters follow "Arabic and Persian letters as the last great creative ring circling our common civilization" (Tanpınar 2006, 19). Despite the peculiarities of Islamicate-poetic writing described above, "[Arabs] had embraced some sort of narrative vision," writes Tanpınar—one that enables a sort of historical consciousness in the modern, European sense (Tanpınar 2006, 19). After all, pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, the Qur'ān, and later poetry and prose in Arabic at least involve linguistic continuity that easily lends itself to the building of a library in Arabic; not in the form of an actual, national library of sorts, but as an accumulation of books that reference and build on each other, i.e., an archive of writing. Persia—the second ring circling "our common civilization"—preserves its language and the library that it had built before Islam, and thus also the ability for self-expression, because Islam finds "Iranians in a particular geography and at the end of a war that concludes decisively." Yet the ability of Persians to Islamise themselves, to heed the Quranic call and merge with the Islamicate ocean is greater than the Arabs', accordingly, in so far as Islamised Persia embraces the Arabic archive as theirs alongside their own.

Then again, it is as though in Tanpınar's mind, these previous 'rings' fail to completely Islamise those whom they encircle. It is in Ottoman Turkish that we reach the peak—or the rock bottom—of this overall civilisational track. It is as though, in the final ring—the Oriental Turkish ring—Islam becomes more of what it was meant to be from the outset, fulfilling itself, again for

better or for worse in Tanpınar's double-dealing. It is with the Turk—who did *not* come to the name Turk—that the Islamicate idiom sets on its most adventurous journey. Let us see what makes this all-engulfing, final creative ring so different.

There is a radical diffuseness, fuzziness to the Muslim Turk from the outset—some sort of separation from the origin, language, self, and earthly reality as well. It is this diffuseness that seems to have always already been the ultimate Islamicate-humanist horizon in Tanpınar's mind, as we have seen, i.e., the closest proximity to the 'golden age' of Islam, which remains in the past while shaping "our *common* civilization" traversing the future (Tanpınar 2006, 19).

Unlike Persians, Turks turn Muslim as small groups of people here and there, slowly and only gradually and as they move from one region to another. Until the 15th century, Turkic peoples only "struggled to control the changing conditions of life," moreover, which is why they could not even imagine building a library—a library in the sense that I have mentioned above, as an accumulation of books referencing and building on each other to enable, over time, a language of self-expression (Tanpınar 2006, 46). Only after the 15th century does the last great creative ring circling "our common [Islamicate] civilisation" emerge.

From the 15th century on, as Muslim Turks built their library and Islamicate idiom, they had already become a little too Muslim, a little too integrated into "our common civilization," expressing themselves, but only from within the boundaries of the common civilisation. Writers of "the last great creative ring circling our common civilization," thus, while writing in Turkish,

also mastered, read, and wrote in the common languages of the Muslim world to build on its common civilisational archive. They read and wrote in *elsine-i selase* and even miraculously merged these tongues in their poems. As a result, ‘alien’ linguistic sensitivities—the prosodic laws of Arabic and Farsi—and vocabulary came to dominate Turkish self-expression.

Ottoman Turkish poets often borrowed words from the people’s mouths, from the shared tongue of the common Turkish people, to mix them up with Arabic and Farsi and to subject them to the laws of these ‘alien’ tongues. Their art would thereby take those people, the humble Turks, beyond the cultural, linguistic, ethnic, etc. walls they were surrounded by and have them merge with humanity at large in the ocean of “our common civilization.” Such was the *social* character of the *harabati*’s craft: “The ability to express one’s self with such ready-made elements, to say what one had to say in this manner, which is what our old poetry mastered, constitutes both the weakness and the astonishing attraction of the Oriental imagination” (Tanpınar 2006, 33).

At the peak of the history of this Islamicate cultural trajectory, Ottoman Turkish poetry, over-determined as it was by the influences of multiple traditions, had become so “abstract” (*mücerret*) that it was hardly communicative. Its “world of imagination” was more of a toolbox containing the imagery, figures, syntax, and vocabulary that had already become frozen over the previous centuries of our common civilisation. It was in fact more craft than art at this point (Tanpınar 2006, 31). It was precisely these conditions, though—this “abstract” and overdetermined,

frozen language and its frozen world of imagery, motifs, and figures—that reduced this poetry to pure *voice*. Voice, in turn, enabled the most concrete (*muayyen*) praise of a most concrete beauty and provided us with a most concrete way of loving, too (Tanpınar 2006, 22). No made-up story, narrative, or history could produce or match such purity of voice. This voice, Tanpınar explains, was the most essential element and greatest accomplishment of Ottoman poetry—a voice that, like the Arabic call-to-prayer that one still hears in Turkey, called for a particular way of being and living-in-common, constantly transforming the lives of people by way of finding its way to the people’s mouths in recitations.

Having turned into pure style and voice over many a century, the language of Muslim Oriental poetry at its Turkish peak did not and could not depict mundane reality and its imperfections. Concrete reality was denied all imperfection in this tongue: “An entire inner world is visible in this literature, with gardens of roses and tulips painted in colors distilled through thousands of different kinds of alembics, with scents of spring and amber and all the refinements of a wisdom tired of pursuing life” (Tanpınar 1969, 55). Yet it continued to *express* and *represent*, as if in an endless recitation of a prayer in a partly familiar, foreign tongue, something far bigger, more real and equally this-worldly, with a clear voice: love for the Muslim way of life, for the real and everyday life of an entire Muslim humanity. It was the very “reflection on the individual of the order of a life-in-common whose entire history was built around the One and is nothing

other than the violent and passionate struggle to defeat everything that is other than the One” (Tanpınar 1969, 25). Everything moves around the One in this mental theatre (Tanpınar 1969, 25). There is only One Source that anyone and everything came from and would return to.

As the entire world turns around the One, earthly fortunes and all other accidents being immaterial under His infinite power and beauty, the human selves become one, too. What is at stake here is the making of a “common life of mankind on earth” then, and in Tanpınar’s *Muslim Orient*, poems and books were the building blocks for this edifice (Auerbach 1953, 552). *Muslim Orient* “constantly pushed its given limits” to reach out beyond the self, to undo the self dialectically to this end (Tanpınar 2006, 44). The cure that the poetry of the *Muslim Orient* prescribed to those who could not get over the self and come to terms with the infinite power and beauty of the One, for those who got distracted by the countless stories, wealth of events, and differences in this world, was wine. This is how Tanpınar accounts for the main figures and motifs of Islamicate letters: love, separation, desire, the passion and struggle to be one with the world and the One, and—perhaps most significantly—wine. Hence the significance of *Harabat*, of its multilingualism and its ocean-like coverage of the entirety of “our common civilization,” and its ambition to merge Arabic, Farsi, and Turkish together with indifference toward earthly differences.

Ottoman Turkish poems, thus, lead to the fulfillment of what Tanpınar repeatedly describes as diffuseness and disintegra-

tion, of the speaking self, of language and discourse itself, analogous to the way the *beyit*, itself an image of diffuseness, was based on the disintegration of its dual nature, and the disintegration of the overall work (Tanpınar 2006, 21, 32, 46). By the 19th century, written, poetic Turkish had hardly anything distinctly Turkish about it—it was not even called Turkish; thus, it disabled ‘Turkish’ self-expression in the distance between the written and living languages. This poetry, the only means of self-expression, destroyed almost everything distinctly Turkish about the Turk. It dragged the Turk closer and closer to the singular, common humanity of “our common civilization,” as if to have the Turk deserve the designations that the Western imagination reserved for the simultaneously fabulous and terrible Turk of Orientalism.¹⁴ This ‘Ottoman Turkish’ discursive formation required “always to speak from without one’s self, even to live outside one’s own self... This type of self-denial of the speaking self, a self-denial of such persistence” is “rare” indeed (Tanpınar 2006, 28).

Here we *also* have the two sides of a “latent conflict” Tanpınar traces in his history: the living Turkish of the humble and the language of Islamicate humanism (Tanpınar 2006, 20). The former lives secretly in people’s mouths and can hardly make it to the archive; the latter carries in itself the traces of its struggle against the *self* and the living tongue, thus archiving that conflict as well. Until the 19th century, Islamicate humanism is always one step ahead of the living Turkish tongue, mind, and self within the parameters of the dialectic outlined above. In the meantime,

¹⁴ See Khayyat (2018) for some commentary on this Turk and references.

the gap between the living tongue and the written word, between the humble and the poet-historian, grows bigger and bigger. According to Tanpınar, in the late Ottoman era the distance between *harabat's* poetry and the language of the humble, illiterate, simple-Turkish-speaking Anatolian multitudes had become insurmountable. It is as if Ziya Pasha's traditional poems had gradually lost their *social* character and their *voice*. Toward the middle of the century there comes a moment when, no longer able to reach out to the life-in-common or to find nourishment there, this poetry turns into a mere affront to the self and nothing more. This is the moment when *harabati* turn into wasted souls producing bastards at best, just "insulting Turkishness," as it were.

By the time *Harabat* was compiled, right at the peak of a centuries-long crescendo, Ziya Pasha and his expression of pure joy at the persistent "self-denial of the speaking self" that, paradoxically, was also the very means of self-expression of the human of his Islamicate humanism, had become inaudible. The three volumes and languages of *Harabat* were simply inaccessible precisely to the simple-Turkish-speaking multitude. His humanism had left behind the very people whom it was meant to unite and bring into the fold of "our common civilization," of Muslim humanity. Despite having reached a peak, Islamicate humanism could no longer even come close to fulfilling its task at this point. In its flight "backward in time," it had left behind an entire future, the living tongue of the living people, and consequently, the people themselves. This is to say that the figure of the 'fabulous' Turk, finding perfection in ultimate diffuseness in Ziya Pasha's

Harabat, also announces the end of the Islamicate humanism of “our common civilization,” making space for the modern Turk.

3.0. The Arabs

This interpretation of *Harabat* from the point of view of Turkish modernity and as the ‘fulfilment in destruction’ of Islamicate humanism might remind some the readers the way in which the great Gerschom Scholem (1973) interpreted another moment in Ottoman history, but from the point of view of modern Jewish history. I have in mind Scholem’s disgraced messiah, Sabbatai Sevi of Izmir. For Scholem, modern Jewish history begins with Sabbatai’s conversion to Islam, which left this messiah’s followers with one of the most difficult paradoxes in the history of religion. From Sabbatai on, salvation becomes a strictly this-worldly matter in Jewish thought for Scholem, Sabbatai’s antinomianism being more of a tragic inevitability than mere disaster. Needless to say, Sabbatai’s apostasy is not the end of Jewish history for Scholem, nor do I wish to suggest that *Harabat* is the end of the history of Islam or Turks. The point is that both Sabbatai Sevi and Ziya Pasha mark turning points in their respective cultural historical trajectories. There is no doubt that the theologico-political horizon of *Harabat* belongs to an earlier moment in Islamicate cultural histories, a moment that since the publication of *Harabat*, has become history, and in part thanks to *Harabat*.

This analogy should clarify the way in which I interpret *Harabat* here: just as Scholem had a keen eye on the ways in which Sabbatai *fulfilled* pre-modern Jewish history while destroying it, opening up a new horizon for a variety of Jewish futures,

so *Harabat* is capable of guiding us today as the yardstick that it is, exposing us to a bygone horizon for a number of possible Islamicate futures. Only some of those ‘futures’ came to take hold of our present. This is to say that it is important to underline the potentially enabling aspects of *Harabat*’s mental theatre as we observe the way in which it serves as a bookend to a centuries-long history. This is how, in the footsteps of Tevfik Fikret, I open ‘a page from *Harabat*’ here.

Fikret opens a random page to prove the anthology’s worth, hence the title of his essay. The page that I have reproduced here is not random like the one Fikret chose: it is a page from the table of contents of the first volume of *Harabat*. The page lists Ziya Pasha’s choice of canonical Arabic *qasidahs* that are as indispensably Ottoman Turkish as the canonical *qasidahs* in Ottoman Turkish in his mind. Under the title ‘el-Qasâidü’l-‘Arabiyye’, the page gives us a sense of the canon of Ottoman Arabic literature, which is quite different from the canon of Arabic literature we teach today in contemporary academia.

Let us start with some of Ziya Pasha’s remarks, which put this page, his Ottoman Arabic canon, or his Ottoman Turkish bastardisation of the canon of Arabic poetry, into context. His verse Introduction to the anthology contains separate sections that describe the different statuses and statures of Turkish, Persian, and Arab poets within the Ottoman cultural universe. The section

Figure 3: Table of contents from *Harabat*

(الفصائل العربية)	
(امرؤ القيس)	الاولى من المعلقات السبع ٢١٤
(هرقة بن عبد البكري)	الثانية من المعلقات ٢١٧
(زهير بن ابي سلمى)	الثالثة من المعلقات ٢٢٢
(ابيد بن ربيعة)	الرابعة من المعلقات ٢٢٢
(عمرو بن كلثوم)	الخامسة من المعلقات ٢٢٥
(عنتر بن شداد)	السادسة من المعلقات ٢٢٨
(الحارث بن حلزة)	السابعة من المعلقات ٢٣١
(الشنفرى)	لامية العرب ٢٣٣
(كعب بن زهير)	نمت نبي ٢٣٥
	ثوبان بن جبر ٢٣٧
(الشيخ محمد ابو دهرى)	قصيدة البرثة ٢٣٨
	ابو الصيب المتنبى ٢٤٣
	ابو العلا المعرى ٢٤٨
(الشيخ عمر بن الفارض)	القصيدة الخمرية ٢٥٠
	العبي ٢٥٢
(الطفران)	لامية الجهم ٢٥٣
	ذو الاصبع العدواني ٢٥٥
	قيس بن الخدادية ٢٥٦
	ابو زيد بن عبد الرحمن الاندلسى ٢٥٨
	ابو البقاء صالح الاندلسى ٢٥٩
	ابن عبدون الاندلسى ٢٦٠
	لسان الدين ابن الخطيب الاندلسى ٢٦٢
	ابن خفاجة ٢٦٥
	ابو القاسم عامر بن هشام الاندلسى ٢٦٧
	ابن حديس الصقلى الاندلسى ٢٦٨
	ابن الازرق الاندلسى ٢٧٠
	ابو الفتح البستي ٢٧١
	الخنساء ٢٧٣
	يزيد بن معاوية ٢٧٤
	قيس بن ذريح ٢٧٤
	جميل القضاعي ٢٧٦
مجنون العاصمى ٢٧٧	
الابيرد ٢٧٩	
علي بن جبلة ٢٨٠	
ذيك الجن ٢٨١	
ابو فراس الحمدونى ٢٨٢	
ابو علي سينا ٢٨٣	
الفرزدق ٢٨٤	

titled ‘Ahval-ı Şuara-yı Arab’ determines three eras for Arabic poetry: primal, middle (or mediocre), and recent. Alternatively: pre-Islamic, Islamic, and contemporary. Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry is that of al-Rāwiya’s seven poets, the *Mu‘allaqat*, or the suspended odes. There is nothing surprising here, of course. What is surprising is the way Ziya Pasha perceives these poets.

Given my description of the political theology that found its penultimate expression in *Harabat*, one might assume that our pasha’s ‘reactionary’ outlook would lead him to look down on the *Mu‘allaqat* or perhaps attempt to Islamise—or why not, even exclude the pagan Arab poets from his anthology altogether. Not only does *Harabat* embrace the *Mu‘allaqat* wholeheartedly, it also appropriates them, making the quintessentially Arabic seven odes Ottoman Turks’ very own, while Ziya Pasha just cannot sing enough praises for them:

Hakka ki Muallât-ı Seb’a
Hayret virir âşinâ-yı taba
Anlarda hakâyık-ı belagat
Anlarda menâbi-i fesahat
Kuran eğer etmeseydi iskât
Bunlar idi eblâğ-ı makâlât

Truthfully the seven suspended
 Are a source of wonder for the learned
 At times the truth of rhetoric
 At others the source of eloquence in expression
 Had the Qur’ân not taken them down
 They would remain supreme articulation (*Harabat* 1,
 xxiii)

Then comes the Qurʾān. The miraculous Book, or the miracle of the Qurʾān, brings about nothing less than destruction to the poets of the old, to those great men who, along with their *Muʿallaqat*, lose their lustre vis-à-vis the penultimate Poem:

*Mahv etdi anı Kitab-i Muciz
Zâil oldı güneşle yıldız*

The miraculous book destroyed their moment
The sun and the stars then expired (*Harabat* 1, xxiii)

This is because the beauty and originality of the Book's poetry, according to the doctrine of *iʿjaz al-Qurʾān*, or 'the inimitability of the Qurʾān' are bound to remain unmatched forever.¹⁵ After all creaturely talent is no match to the power of God:

*Kurʾan ne aceb olursa faik
Mahlûka şebih olur mu Hâlik*

The superiority of the Qurʾān can only be a wonder
How could the mortal match up to the Creator (*Harabat*
1, xxiii)

It is not only the Almighty's power that is the issue here. Once the Qurʾān takes the stage, the Book elevates Arabic to its ultimate peak—and this peak, or the beauty of Quranic Arabic, does not belong exclusively to some crafty loquacious men and women of good fortune and stature. That language and that poetry belong to anyone and everyone.

On the one hand, from then on Arabic is 'level' or 'smooth', as opposed to oscillating between the great performances of one

¹⁵ For a general introduction to the topic, see Martin (2019). For an elaborate introduction, see Larkin (1998), and Rahman (1996).

great orator or another and the Arabic of the simple, illiterate folk. On the other hand, from the Qurʾān on, anyone and everyone is a poet.

What Muslims celebrate every *laylat al qadr* is not only the power of God Almighty.¹⁶ Every year Muslims remember and celebrate ‘the night of empowerment’, or the night when the revelation began in the depths of a cave, as the illiterate Prophet miraculously learned to read/recite the penultimate Poem to share it with humanity as a whole, including the illiterate majority or the simple folk. The ultimate ‘message’ of the Qurʾān, then, is that we can all be poets—that the Qurʾān gives us voice:

*Ol rütbe Arab lisânu emles
Ez-tab ile şâir anda herkes*

At this stage the Arab tongue goes smooth
With its lustre turns everyone a poet (*Harabat* 1, xxiii)

Thus, with the Quranic (and literary-humanistic) revolution, Arabic becomes radically democratised, as it were. Ziya Pasha’s way of building a hierarchy between different stages of Arabic poetry proves his indebtedness to this very traditional, yet hardly ever discussed, aspect of the Muslim Mind and the literary politics of the Qurʾān.

For Ziya Pasha does not just appropriate the pre-Quranic Arabic *Mu‘allaqat*, but goes so far as to take the logic of the Quranic revolution to its radical conclusions when he continues to draw a rigorous hierarchy in his interpretation of *Islamicate* Arabic poetry.

¹⁶ For a general introduction see Marcotte (2018).

He does not feel obliged to hold in high regard Arabic poetry drafted by Muslims in his evaluation out of religious concerns, but rather prioritises the idea of poetry as it took shape with the Qurʾān, or the very politics of literature, as it were, of the inimitable Qurʾān. For instance, right after the miracle of the Quranic revolution, things go south in Arabic. The middle, or Islamicate Arabic poetry in Ziya Pasha's periodisation is also flat out mediocre in comparison to pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, and it starts with the coming to power of Umayyads:

*Andan sonra gelen kabile
Başlar Emeviyye devletiyle
Ancak zâil olup bedâvet
Yokdur bu takımda eski lezzet*

The tribes that come after
Start with the Umayyad State
Yet with the end of the *badawi* ways
This new folk no longer please (*Harabat* 1, xxiv)

Here the problem is that a dynasty gets established in Damascus, betraying the political-theological horizon and the literary politics of the Qurʾān. This ends up damaging Arabs morally, equates the Islamicate idea of freedom to bondage, and transforms Arabic poetry into mere worship or praise of power:

*Çün Şam'da saltanat kuruldu
Ahlak-ı Arab da fasid oldu
Mecidd oldu redâ ete muhavvel
Hürriyet esarete mübeddel
Bünyân-ı duruğ olub müesses
Medh-i ümerâya düşdü herkes*

For a dynasty was founded in Damascus

And left Arabs morally damaged
 Evil replaced sublimity
 Freedom became slavery
 A wall of lies was erected
 All began to merely praise the powers that be (*Harabat* 1,
 xxiv)

Moreover, Muslim conquests mix Arabs with non-Arabs, which renders 'secular' Arabic less poetic, a little too levelled perhaps, even if out of necessity. Arabs become one with the اعجام (un-idiomatic, vulgar-tongue-speaking) and the power of Arabic poems diminish:

Icem ile oldular muhâlit
Etdi bu da kadr-i şîri sakıt

They mixed with the vulgar ones
 And this diminished the power of poems (*Harabat* 1, xxiv)

Yet this state of affairs translates into the empowerment of Farsi poems, the two seas of Arabic and Farsi joining together to open a new chapter in the history of Islamicate humanism. Moreover, while Farsi becomes empowered thanks to its encounter with Arabic, this does not mean that Farsi becomes the exclusive literary language of the new era: Iranian poets drafting their verse in Arabic take the stage at this point, Iranians inheriting the glorious literary Arabic past and returning Arabic its poetic lustre.

As we have seen in the previous section, this second ring of Islamicate humanism would later meet its end when the Ottoman Turkish ring comes to encircle both Farsi and Arabic. Ziya Pasha's

canon of Arabic poetry reflects a continuity that constantly underlines this dialectic. I would like highlight some of his choices to make this point clearer.

I will not dwell on all the great Arab poets whose works we still consider part of the Arabic canon today and who also take their rightful place in this anthology, but instead underline the choices that make *Harabat* unique in its strategy. Right after the *Mu‘allaqat*, Ziya Pasha’s anthology gives us *Lāmiyyāt ‘al-Arab* by the quasi-legendary poet of the pre-Quranic universe, namely Al-Shanfarā. Not much later, though, we find *Lāmiyyāt ‘al-Ajam* by Al-Togharayi of Isfahan in *Harabat*’s canon of Arabic poetry, which was Al-Togharayi’s response to Al-Shanfarā. Ziya Pasha amplifies Al-Togharayi’s voice with his choice to reflect the sort of continuity he had in mind as the history of a developing Islamicate humanism.

Then comes a rather more surprising and obvious set of choices that bring us to the moment of the Europeanisation of Arabic. Out of thirty-seven poets in Ziya Pasha’s Arabic canon, eight of them, which is to say almost a quarter, are from Spain: Ebû Zeyd bin ‘Abdu’r-rahman al-Andalusî, Ebu’l-Beqâ Sâlih al-Andalusî, Ibn ‘Abdûn al-Andalusî, Lisânu’d-dîn Ibn al-Hatîb al-Andalusî, Ibn Hafâce, Ebu’l-Qâsim ‘Amir bin Hishâm al-Andalusî, Ibn Hamdîs al-Siqillî al-Andalusî, and finally Ibn Al-Azraq al-Andalusî.

Other choices of Ziya Pasha, for instance, to include in the canon Abd al-Salam Ibn Raghbân al-Himsî’s—known as *Dik al-Jinn of Homs*—suggest that our Pasha did his best to cover as

Figure 4: 'Ahval-ı Şuara-yı Arab' title page

مقدمه	
<p>مقصودری دكلمدراشهار هم كلشستی معنوی بی بازمش محمود شبستری وعطار نظم ایله حقیقتی بیساندر استناد نقیصدر كماله برشاعر تام ایچنیده نادر آزدر اعلاسی چوقدر ادنا بولدی نیجه نكته مناسب آدن کورینور براز بطائت اما بقدرچن قدرده چوقدر مهریسه سی وار برابکی خوشتر ایلا مجنوننی بك كوزلدر طهرانلی سلیم بك متیندر ایران شعراسنك تقیسی نوعی وجلال ایله برابر اشکنجه سی طبع مستقیم ادراکی مقوله محالات ایراه بلاغت ابتدی بدرد رد العجز ایلدی بیسانده حقا که بقیه السافدر مجالسه کیچ کلور اکابر</p>	<p>وارد بر صنف اهل گفتار مولانا مشوی بی بازمش بازمش نیجه برکزنده آثار مقصودری یونلرک عیساندر شاعر دئمک او یله اهل حاله بیکن صکره کلور او اواخر دیوان لیرین آراسک سراپا وادی جدید آجدی صائب نظمنده ایدر زیاده کلفت ارسال مثله مثلی بوقدر مجموعه مختشمده بکسر مدح ایتمک مکتبی محلد وحشی ووصال اکا یقیندر امیدی وواحدی انیدی صادق شرف ونصبر واذر اکثر سوزی طالب وکلیم شوکت بیدل بیون خیالات چون بوابکی شاعر اولدی موجود فاتی کلنجه صوگ زمانده اشعارده اشرف خلفدر کلمه نیج سافدن آخر</p>
احوال شعرای عرب	
<p>اول اوسط دخی اواخر هنکام شباب عمر اشعار مردانه بازاردی نکتته دانلر حسرت ویر آشنای طبعه آنلارده منابع فصاحت بونلار ایدی ابلیغ مقالات زائل اولدی کونشله بلدز مخلوقه شایه او اورمی خالق از طبع ایله شاعر آنده هر کس اصحاب معلقات سبعه</p>	<p>اشعار عربده اوج زماندر اسلامدن اول اولان آثار جهل ایله برابر اول زمانلر حقا که معلقات سبعه آنلارده حقابق بلاغت قرآن اگر ایتمدی اسکات محو ابتدی آتی کتتاب مجیز قرآن نیج اولور سه فائق اول ریه عرب لسانی املس مشهورری ذوات سبعه</p>

much ground as possible and had an almost geographic and inclusive vision as he sought to provide a genealogy of the globalised Arabic of his times. Dik al-Jinn, a contemporary of Abu Nuwas and one of the masters of Abu Tammam, is hardly studied along with these illustrious figures, but was included in *Harabat* probably because of his famously ruinous ways, his drunkenness and debauchery.

Thus, in *Harabat* step by step the glorious tongue of the miraculous Book, or Quranic Arabic, becomes globalised, as it were—not simply through Arab conquests or ‘colonialism’ of one sort or another, but by appropriations of Arabic by the newly Islamised masses of the world, and/or through the bastardisation of Arabic, to go back to Fikret’s terms. In other words, if modern Turkish is to be analysed within the context of a broader history of vernacularisation—vernacularisation of writing, of knowledge, and of power—then *elsine-i selase* must be interpreted within the context of the vernacularisation of Arabic itself. The latter, despite being the heart and soul of Islamicate intellectual histories more generally, is hardly ever addressed seriously by critics.

Arabic may not be the only language that went through vernacularisation of this order. Perhaps one might be so creative as to lay the grounds for comparing Ottoman Arabic to medieval Latin, or the ‘Middle Latin’ of ‘Catholic cosmopolitanism’. I was more interested in elaborating the unique character of Arabic from the point of view of the late Ottoman intellectual universe, and the very specific theologico-political context that nourished

this universe. Additionally, it may be the case that the vernacularisation of Arabic as a theologico-political matter (or of Latin, for that matter) does not sit well with, or cannot even have a place in, our modern historical narratives of vernacularisation and the democratisation of language. This is the reason why I welcome Fikret's vision and prefer the term 'bastardisation'.

Let me be clear that the bastardisation in question is no mere metaphor here: *Harabat's* Arabic contains many errors and typos, some of which could be considered ruinous mistakes in a dissertation on Arabic poetry today. For instance, *Harabat* has the name of one of the greatest figures of classical Arabic poetry, namely Abu Firas al-Hamdani's name in this table of contents as ابو فراس الحمدوني or al-Hamdouni. Then again, with respect to the liberties and limitations that Ottoman Turkish appropriation of Arabic reflect within the overall context of Islamicate humanism, this is hardly surprising—suffice it to say that one of the most popular names in modern Turkish is Mehmet, and Turkish armies are known to consist of *mehmetçiks* or 'little Mehments', from the prophet's name, محمد.

There is no doubt that *Harabat* was an imperialist, Ottomanist and also 'Islamist'—and 'Sunni'—although this is beyond the scope here. It reflects a certain degree of bias and bigotry, no doubt, especially when it is considered an anthology of Islamicate or even pan-Ottoman poetry and literature, and given what it lays claim to and appropriates and what it excludes. It merely reflects the ruling Muslim Ottoman Turks' self-perception at a crucial moment in the history of the Ottoman Empire. With its emphasis on the Islamicate pasts, and the insistence on the place of Ottoman

Turks in Islamicate history, *Harabat* is at the same time an Islamicate-humanist response to the burgeoning Turkish nationalism.

When *Harabat* was published, the ideal of a pure Turkish vernacular was still in the process of taking shape in the minds of revolutionaries and reformists, among whom we must count Ziya Pasha himself, as I have explained. The pure Turkish vernacular was not a reality yet, but at best a *literary-political* ideal. For no one wrote or spoke that pure vernacular. Arabic never became one with Farsi and Turkish in that ideal Ottoman Turkish tongue, or rather in *elsine-i selase* as the native-Ottoman tri-language. No one wrote or spoke that language either, and therefore, it, too, was a literary-political ideal. Both vernacular Turkish and *elsine-i selase* as the native-Ottoman tri-language were ideals, then—and they nourished two conflicting ideologies.

Clearly *Harabat* presents Ottoman culture and literature as the peak of Islamicate civilisation, and in that there is a degree of Ottoman Turkish pride and nationalism. This said, it is the paradoxical—most productively paradoxical—nature of this bias and pride that I find more interesting, and more instructive as well, with respect to the study of Islamicate pasts. Let me summarise this paradoxical condition once again.

In the mental theatre of *Harabat*, Ottoman-Turks stand right on top of the peak of the history of Islam. They are the perfect Muslims right at the end of that history, but *only in so far as* they are the most selfless, *only in so far as* their ‘identity’ and distinctiveness amount to the penultimate *self-denial* that fulfils the Islamicate-humanist ideals within the parameters I have outlined above with Tanpınar’s help. In other words, what we have

here is *also* a politics of ‘anti-identitarianism’ that necessitate religiously systematic acts of self-denial—acts of literature no less—in favour of a common Muslim humanity. “This type of self-denial of the speaking self, a self-denial of such persistence” is “rare” (Tanpinar 2006, 28).

This is also what *Harabat* reflects with its Arabic canon. Paradoxically, then, the degree to which the Ottoman Turks could distance themselves from everything that made them a unique and distinct collectivity, the readiness with which they embraced Arabic and Farsi as their own at the expense of a unique culture, language, and identity, and the fanaticism with which they embraced the Islamicate-humanist ideals to develop a language and literature that over time would become completely self-destructive, make them unique and distinct and place them right on the peak of this civilisational track.

How inclusive this ‘self-denial’ was or could have been is another question—suffice it remember, though, that in the context of Ottoman Arabic, the appropriation of pre-Quranic Arabic and the pagan *Mu‘allaqat*, notwithstanding recognition of their alterity, displays at least an attempt to take the logic of self-denial in question to another level and move toward embracing non-Muslim antiquity in the name of an Islamist politics. This Islamism beyond Islam, which is in no way modern or unique to Ottoman Turkish outlook, was perhaps on the path toward an even more inclusive humanism within the history of Islamicate civilisation.

For the Islamist-humanist readiness to embrace the other’s language and words as one’s own did require Ziya Pasha to take

other steps in that regard. The ambition to always look beyond and eventually overcome the self, having paved the way to what Tanpınar describes as Ottoman Turkish ‘self-denial’, additionally requires learning European languages *in the present* for our pasha:

*İster isen anlamak cihanı
 Öğrenmeli Avrupa lisânı
 Etmiş orada fünüin terakki
 Tahsilden eyleme tevakki
 Bilmek gerek andaki funiinu
 Terk eyle taassub-u cününu
 Ansız kişi tâm şâir olmaz
 Bir kimse lisânla kâfir olmaz*

If you wish to comprehend the world
 You must learn European tongues
 Science has progressed there
 Never fear its study
 You must know the science of the present
 You must avoid fanaticism and bigotry
 Without the present there is no poetry proper
 Learning a tongue is no apostasy (*Harabat* 1, xi)

But let us go back to *Harabat*'s Ottoman-Arabic canon. With the ‘Ottoman Turkish’ *Mu‘allaqat*, we observe an exemplary moment in the history of Islamicate humanism. In conclusion, I contend that Ziya Pasha’s canon of Arabic poetry as a whole is another extraordinary achievement that perfectly articulates the basic premises of what I am tempted to call ‘literary-political Islam’. This literary-political Islam, with its ‘reactionary’ vision of Arabic, could also be a progressive model for the future of the study of Arabic today—as ‘global’ Arabic.

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