

# The Love Ailment: A Prescription for a Lover

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## Context

Based on the information contained in this *mecmū`a*, I could not ascertain its date or determine its ownership. This *mecmū`a*, officially cataloged as T 3005, can be found in İstanbul University's Rare Works Library. In the *mecmū`a*, the marginalia (*der-kenār*) that I transcribed is a love potion recipe produced in the *hezl* genre, which passes from the Arabo-Persian literary-cultural field to the Ottoman-Turkish-based literary-cultural field. Its contents cover a plentiful assortment of material from the Ottoman Turkish-based literary-cultural field such as the lover suffering physically and mentally due to the disease of love. Various frequently used phrases and literary arts are also included. This marginalia gives the recipe for the *ma`cūn* (elixir) that must be prepared for the lover to recover from the disease of love, as well as the symptoms that the lover demonstrates when he/she falls in love, how to prepare the *ma`cūn*, and how to use it.

*Mecmū`as* play a crucial role as primary sources of events and facts within the Ottoman literary-cultural field. The *mecmū`a* culture contributes to the same literary-cultural field as other sources such as *divans*, *mesnevis*, encyclopedias, works with biographical elements, and *tezkires*. *Mecmū`a* literature, consisting of compilation works that encompass diverse subjects in both verse and/or prose, is structured by one or more literary producers. Agâh Sırrı Levend classified *mecmū`a* literature as follows: those (works) that have the nature of parallels, those that have the characteristics of anthology, those that are composed of treatises brought together, those that are based on the same subject, and those that are prepared by well-known people.<sup>1</sup> Based on this classification, it can be asserted that anthology literature emerged by drawing on various sources. Moreover, it can be said that the compilation nature of the *mecmū`as* have helped to reveal the literary tendencies and tastes of the period in which the work was produced. In this respect, the genre is important since it conveys the literary producers and/or literary productions that are not included in works such as *divans* and *tezkires*.

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<sup>1</sup> Agâh Sırrı Levend, *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1973): 166-167.

Therefore, *mecmū* 'a literature holds an important position in enabling us to clarify the dynamic structure of the Ottoman literary-cultural field.

As can be seen in the works of the poets who organize *hezliyyât mecmū* 'as, components of praise and satire can also be encountered, as well as examples of wit, irony, and humor specific to the genre. *Hezl* can be defined as a literary genre containing pleasantries and entertainment in which serious ideas are expressed in humorous language.<sup>2</sup> It can be asserted that this humorous quality was a tool for criticizing the people, institutions, or state order of the period and thus structured a relatively free literary-cultural environment.<sup>3</sup> This literary environment was formed interculturally. The *hezl* is defined as immoral and ethic words in Persian literature which is the source of the *hezl* genre in Ottoman classical literature.<sup>4</sup> This definition positions the *hezl* genre in Ottoman classical literature as an intermediate genre between *latife* and *hiciv*. Thus, there is a literary production that can provide the various elements of the love potion concept, in which the lover is the innocent victim of the potion, including the sublimity of the relationship between the lover and the beloved, and the legitimization of the condition of being in love.<sup>5</sup>

It is also interesting that the love potion is presented in a way that is extremely similar to a culinary recipe, especially when considered in parallel with the understanding that food affects humors in Medieval Europe,<sup>6</sup> just as food is a human's basic need, so love ensures the continuity of life. In a similar context, Pfeffer mentions a love potion with the concepts of "lovendrin" and "lovendrant" in Bérout's *Roman de Tristan*, indicating that the resulting mixture will not only cure the illness but also be its source.<sup>7</sup> However, the point to be considered here is balance. The basis of the Hippocratic theory

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<sup>2</sup> İsmail Durmaz, "Hezl", *Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi Cilt 17*, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınevi, 1998): 304.

<sup>3</sup> Ağâh Sırrı Levend, *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 522.

<sup>4</sup> İskender Pala, *Ansiklopedik Divan Şiiri Sözlüğü Cilt I- II*, (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 1989): 484.

<sup>5</sup> Gertrude Schoepperle, "The Love-Potion in "Tristan and Isolt"", 296.

<sup>6</sup> Gunther Weitz, "Love and death in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*- an epic anticholinergic crisis", *BMJ*, 327, (2003): 1469.

<sup>7</sup> Wendy Pfeffer, "The Love Potion in Bérout's *Tristan*", *Medieval and Renaissance Monograph Series*, Editors Guy R. Mermier ve Edelgard E. DuBruck, Michigan: Marygrove College, Fifteenth-Century Symposium, (1984): 170.

of balance was the four humors, which covered the four bodily fluids.<sup>8</sup> The balance between them is a prerequisite for the continuity of life.

Similarly, a lover who falls into lovesickness has lost his/her vital balance and has isolated himself/herself from life, consciously or unconsciously. At this point, literary production offers a recipe to restore the lover's balance, but this recipe does not come from experts in the field of medicine. It comes from a narrator who knows, recognizes, and observes the disease of love and also belongs to the literary-cultural field. Based on this, it can be asserted that there is an ethnopharmacological aspect to the context of lovesickness in the Ottoman-Turkish literary-cultural field. As can be observed in the Ottoman-Turkish literary-cultural field, it can be argued that the lover suffers physically and mentally in the face of the lover's cruelty, and love stems from this pain. There are ten ingredients in the potion to cure the lover in distress, or, in other words, to secure his/her return to life, and the ingredients are listed in a balanced manner, without any difference in quantity. In addition, the stages involved in creating the potion consist of elements such as *cefā*, *vefā*, *şafā* and *şevk u muhabbet*. In other words, the main thing is to ensure that the lover can get rid of the ailment of love with a Neoplatonic understanding of balance.

## Transcription

*Benüm 'ināyetkārum efendüm 'aşk 'illeti bir ālāyişdür ki  
ibtidāsı gözden intihāsı yürekden bir nāzik gül [sic!] gibi şolub  
āhū gözlerüñ süzüb pek dertli olub meded başum  
ağrır cānum şıklır yüregim oynar ve beñzüm tiz tiz atar  
güyā āh vāh hevāsı çeke beñzi şararır yemez ve içmez  
elleri ve ayakları kāh āteş gibi yanar ve kāh demür gibi şovuk  
olur ol kimseye hekīmler 'ilāc idemez aña 'ilāc şağ*

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<sup>8</sup> Philip van der Eijk, "Medicine in Early and Classical Greece", *The Cambridge History of Science: Volume 1*, Editors: Jones A., Taub L., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (2018): 310.

yanı bāġ [u] bostān ve şol yanı gül [u] gülistān olub  
ba 'dehu bu ma 'cūn isti 'māl ideler ma 'cūn bu tertīb üzredür

nāz dirhem 1      şīve dirhem 2      cilve dirhem 3  
istiġnā dirhem 4      edā dirhem 5      leṭāfet dirhem 6  
firāset dirhem 7      şetāret dirhem 8      nezāket dirhem 9  
muḥabbet dirhem 10

bu mezkūr olan eczāları alub  
bir araya cem ' idüb içlerinden  
cefā çöplerini çıkarub  
vefā havānında saḥḥ idüb  
şafā tülbindinden geçürüb  
şevk u muḥabbet tenceresine koyub  
ḥasret 'aleviyle kaynadub  
kıvāma tamām geldükde  
vuşlat meblaġıyla  
şabāḥ aḥşām üçer meblaġ  
ta 'yīn ideler ammā içlerinden  
iḥtiyārlardan gāyet<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The text is left half finished in the manuscript.

## Translation

My benevolent master, the love ailment is an infection, it begins at the eye and ends at the heart. One fades like a delicate rose, looks through half-closed gazelle eyes, and one is very sorrowful.

Do help. My head aches, and I am in a low mood, and also, my heart flutters and my face grows glaringly pale. One grows pale, so to speak, as if breathing a sigh of pain, and does not eat or drink. One's hands and feet sometimes burn like fire and sometimes become as cold as iron. Physicians cannot cure that person. The remedy for that person is to let them be flanked by vineyards and orchards to their right and to their left by roses and rose gardens, and then use this elixir. The elixir is composed as follows:

1 dirhem of flirtation	2 <i>dirhem</i> of intonation	3 <i>dirhem</i> of coquetry
4 <i>dirhem</i> of reluctance	5 <i>dirhem</i> of affectation	6 <i>dirhem</i> of delicacy
7 <i>dirhem</i> of sagacity	8 <i>dirhem</i> of gratification	9 <i>dirhem</i> of courtesy
10 <i>dirhem</i> of love		

Take the drugs I mentioned, mix them together, and take out the dregs of long-suffering, pulverize them in the mortar of fidelity, sift them through the cheesecloth of pleasure, put them in the pot of enthusiasm and love and boil them with the flame of longing. When it comes to consistency, take it with the dose of union, three doses should be taken in the morning and evening. Among them, old people are immensely...



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