

Aesthetics and pathology of Hafez reception in Germany and the German-speaking countries: Range, depth, ups and downs

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Original Article Main Object: Interdisciplinary Scope: Iran & Germany</p> <p>Received: 14 May 2024 Revised: 11 June 2024 Accepted: 18 June 2024 Published online: 06 July 2024</p> <p>Keywords: aesthetics of Hafez reception, Hafez in German Literature, orientalist paradigms, pathology of Hafez reception, self-reflection.</p>	<p>The comparison of two literary geniuses, Hafez and Goethe, and the works inspired by them in the literature of German-speaking countries from a linguistic-cultural point of view has been the subject of numerous scientific-literary writings since the 19th century. But, beyond the unending praise of these writers, critical considerations in this regard are constantly hidden from view. The present analytic-qualitative library-based research intends, in the light of existing German translations of Hafez such as the researches based on Hafez studies in the mentioned linguistic areas, to take a critical-analytical and different look at the dimensions, ups and downs of the processes such as reception, reading and literary-scientific study of Hafez and its pathology in the German-speaking countries. Therefore, the starting point is the explanation of the whatness of Hafez's poetry, its conception and influences on the German-speaking readership at all times. This is then continued through the motives, depths, and persistence of the mentioned influences on different levels such as time, place, aesthetic problems, and is elucidated with reference to renowned German-speaking writers influenced by Hafez's poetry. The findings indicate the fluctuating trajectory of Hafez reception in German literature (from peak to decline), as a result of paradigm shifts of Orientalism. In the following, the reasons for these shifts will be discussed, as well as the interest of Persian speakers in continuing to reflect themselves from the Western perspective through multiple translations of works influenced by Hafez, which represents more or less the only achievement of contemporary German Hafez studies.</p>

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Extended Abstract

Background

Among the Persian-speaking poets, Hafez penetrated German literature the most; at least in a certain period, during the transition from tradition to European modernity (18th century to the beginning of the 19th century), to a great extent, he has influenced and inspired many German-speaking poets and even musicians from these countries. Furthermore, numerous translations of complete Hafez's *Divan* or its anthology (and secondly, other Persian-speaking poets) and countless later imitations by German-speaking poets and intellectuals of the form and structure of these poems (over the past two centuries), and in a word, the fever of Persian poetry in those countries and that time, it caused the creation respectively the transfer and spread of the poetic form of the *Ghazal* to German literature, which until then was limited to the imitation of Greek and Roman literature in a simpler form called sonnet. Therefore, it is not far from the mind that talking about Hafez and the influence of his poetry beyond the borders of Persian-speaking countries is always accompanied by cross-cultural and inter-linguistic inspirations and influences. However, the passage of time has not always been the same as in the past centuries, and the later turns of Orientalist discourses in the world (West) have spread to Hafez's poetry, reflecting and welcoming it in the current world.

Aims

While examining the historical process, we are faced with different periods of practical and scientific work, and ups and downs related to the reading and effectiveness of Hafez's poetry on literature (and other branches of knowledge, culture, and art) in different periods of German-speaking countries (and the world), which are important for the researchers and those interested in this field as well as for the current qualitative, analytical-critical, interdisciplinary research (as goals) in the following way: examining the background, whatness, the extent, the depth, the quality, and its examples in the mentioned countries and the reason for this peak and decline (perhaps not long-lasting), the pathology of the Hafez research in those countries according to the common oriental paradigms, and possibly its future perspective.

Methods

The comparison of two literary geniuses, Hafez and Goethe, and the works inspired by them in the literature of German-speaking countries from a linguistic-cultural point of view has been the subject of numerous scientific-literary writings since the 19th century.

Results

The most important hindrance and loss in the way of reading Hafez's poetry and research in this field, in Persian language and much more in a foreign language including German, is the impossibility of paying attention to the form and content of the poems at the same time, which is partly caused by historical and (inter)cultural misunderstanding, it is more evident in the translation of poems.

Other weaknesses of Hafez comparative study or translation of Hafez's poems into German are the abundance and (non-)identification of rhetorical figures (including ambivalences, metaphors, words and expressions, quotations, and allusions) specific to the Persian language and Iranian-Islamic culture in Hafez's poetry. For non-Persian speakers such as German speakers, they are hidden. Therefore, a foreign translator, in translating these poems, finds himself in the bottleneck of form and meaning at the highest level, and inevitably he has to sacrifice one for the other. Because the essence of Hafez's poetry can only be understood and studied with his own words and in his mother tongue. Most German translations of Hafez (except for Friedrich Rückert's selected and formal/semantically successful translation) have largely followed the path of free and semantic translation and have paid less attention to the external beauty and structure of Hafez's poetry. This poses an aesthetic challenge. In any case, a translation that is not so literal (slightly freer) and more rhyming will remove the possible repulsion of the non-Persian speaking audience to some extent. However, it will never bring to his mind the feeling of reading the original version (The *Divan* of Hafez). In such cases, the fall of the audience into the curve of the imaginary (aesthetic) *uncanny valley* is not far from the mind. Thus, although numerous German translations of Hafez's poems are re-edited, simplified, or written in prose with contemporary and post-modern tricks, they are less able to attract non-native audiences (except some educated people) and enchant them, except for the Persian speakers of German-speaking countries (also due to Westerners' disbelief in the beyond-time-and-place-transcendent and distance from the historical-cultural-discursive base of Hafez's poetry).

However, this partial lack of acceptance of Hafez by (Western and) contemporary German literature, despite being known nearly two centuries ago in the German-speaking world, may on the one hand due to translators of Hafez or the passage of time, but more than that, it is closely related to the changing paradigms respectively paradigm shifts of the Orientalism and Iranian studies that are influenced by more contemptuous view of the geographical-spiritual East than before Goethe's era, and reducing it to the only geographical East that is generally associated with primitiveness for the Westerner, as well as not inferring a spiritual or ontological East from it.

Conclusion

The reception of Hafez's poetry in German-speaking countries has not been sustained and enthusiastic over the years but has gone through a period of stagnation and (relative) silence under the influence of the paradigm shifts of humanities, especially from the middle of the 20th century until now. This has caused a critical view and alienation of the world and the postmodern society of the West (and Germany) with its past heritage and the heritage of foreigners in its literature and culture. Even compared to works such as Hafez's poems, which have long been immortalized in the German mind, language, and literature due to Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan*.

In any case, since the German-speaking countries are among the first admirers of Hafez, especially the West, in individual and collective dimensions, the model and analysis obtained from such analytical research, due to the proximity of the reasons for the beginning, rise, and the (approximate) decline of Hafez's poetry in translational literature (mainly in the West), will probably be true to a large extent for the literature of other countries as well.

Conflict of interest

The author declared no conflicts of interest.

Ethical considerations

The author has completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc.

Data availability

The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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