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Interpreting Affection: A Comparative Analysis of Pedophilia Theme in Hafiz's Poetry Translated by Bicknell, Clarke, Smith, Bly, and Lewisohn

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Abstract: This paper examines the translations of Hafiz's poetry by Herman Bicknell, Henry Wilberforce Clarke, Paul Smith, Robert Bly, and Leonard Lewisohn, focusing on the portrayal of themes related to pedophilia. Through a comparative analysis of selected verses and a discussion of the translators' strategies, the study sheds light on the varying approaches to depicting the beloved within the context of Persian literature. Bicknell and Clarke's translations openly acknowledge pedophilic themes, explicitly identifying the beloved as male, while Smith's translation often avoids explicit gender attribution, opting for a more expansive vocabulary to circumvent gender-specific connotations. Conversely, Bly and Lewisohn predominantly attribute love to God in their mystical interpretation of Hafiz's poetry. However, in select instances, they portray the beloved as female.

Keywords: Pedophilia, Translation Studies, Hafiz, Bicknell, Clarke, Smith, Bly and Lewisohn.

INTRODUCTION

In Persian literature, love manifests in two distinct forms: human love and divine/mystical love. This duality is evident in the ghazals of Hafiz, where both aspects are represented.

Homosexual love holds a significant historical presence in global culture and literature, despite facing societal rejection, particularly when it involves physical intimacy. It is essential to understand that the tradition of addressing young boys in Persian poetry is deeply rooted in cultural norms and should not be misconstrued as evidence of sexual deviancy among poets (Zarrinkoob, 2003). In ancient Greek culture, discussions of homosexual love were not uncommon. However, it is crucial to contextualize this love within the moral framework of the time. Rather than being interpreted as immoral, it was often regarded as a form of praise for individuals of the same sex, devoid of sexual implications, known as platonic love. According to Plato, love is the quest to find one's other half. He illustrates this concept by likening humans to flat fish, each searching for their complementary side. In Plato's view, those who seek a male partner while being male themselves are considered the epitome of perfection, as they are fully complete in their masculinity. Consequently, Plato suggests that rulers should ideally be individuals who embody this completeness. However, Plato distinguishes between different forms of love, particularly when it comes to young boys. He vehemently opposes physical expressions of love towards young boys, likening it to engaging in sexual relationships with prostitutes. Instead, he advocates for a love that is spiritual and in accordance with societal norms and laws (Kenny et al, 1969). Plotinus and Neo-Platonists merged Plato's ideas with Eastern mysticism, shaping the concept of platonic love. They proposed that all beauty reflects the transcendent One, leading platonic lovers to see their beloved's physical beauty as a manifestation of divine beauty. This idea influenced Western literature, notably in medieval, Renaissance, and Romantic poetry, impacting depictions of love. Additionally, the evolution of

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platonic love has influenced contemporary discussions on topics like homosexual marriage, reflecting its ongoing relevance in shaping societal norms and perceptions of romantic relationships (Shamisa, 2002).

Scholars have proposed various interpretations of Hafiz's beloveds. Eslami Nadooshan delineates three categories: contemporaries who are objects of affection, a symbolic portrayal of an idealized human without specific traits, and the concept of mystical love. Hafiz suggests a connection between human and divine love, implying that human love facilitates a pathway to the divine realm (Khoramshahi, 1994).

Translation, as the transfer of meaning from one language to another, presents a formidable challenge. Among various types of translation, the translation of poetry stands out as particularly demanding. Poetry serves as a vessel for the poet's thoughts, emotions, and passion, expressed in a concise and evocative manner. Translating these intricate elements while preserving the brevity of the source language poses significant difficulties. Sapir underscores this complexity by likening language to the medium of literature, akin to the materials utilized by a sculptor. He asserts that each language possesses its unique characteristics, resulting in distinct formal limitations and possibilities within its literature. Therefore, the translator must navigate these inherent differences to effectively convey meaning across linguistic boundaries (Sapir, 2000). From Sapir's remark, it can be inferred that the translator must possess a comprehensive understanding of the unique characteristics of each language in order to effectively convey meaning from one language to another. Additionally, beyond linguistic nuances, the translation of poetry is further complicated by the challenge of cultural context. Literature inherently reflects the social, political, and cultural milieu from which it originates. Therefore, translators must diligently consider the cultural intricacies of both the source and target languages, striving to find suitable equivalents while acknowledging that perfect cultural parity may be unattainable. This dual consideration of linguistic and cultural elements underscores the complexity of poetry translation and highlights the inherent challenges it presents.

This paper delves into the translation of the theme of pedophilia in Hafiz's poetry across the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. Pedophilia, as a cultural and historical phenomenon, presents complex challenges for translators grappling with the nuances of its portrayal in Hafiz's verses. Specifically, the paper examines translations by Herman Bicknell, Henry Wilberforce Clark, Paul Smith, Robert Bly and Leonard Lewisohn aiming to assess whether the concept of pedophilia has been accurately conveyed. The investigation seeks to identify any discrepancies in translation and explore potential reasons behind them. The paper initially presents the translations of the selected verses by the translators, followed by a concise discussion of the translation strategies employed. Subsequently, the probable reasons behind these choices are examined.

DISCUSSION

In this section, the translation of some selected verses alluding to the issue of pedophilia is outlined. It is essential to note that these verses serve as examples, chosen based on specific criteria: explicit mention of the beloved's name as a boy or young man, or inclusion of singular third-person pronouns. Notably, in Persian, pronouns for both sexes are identical, whereas in English, gendered pronouns differ. The decision of translators to render the pronoun as "she" or "he" is worthy of attention. For the sake of brevity and to save space, it is noted that the original Persian text of Hafiz's poetry is sourced from Divan-e-Hafiz, edited by Khalil Khatibrahbar, published in 2023. The translations referenced in this discussion are derived from The Divan-I-Hafiz by Henry Wilberforce Clarke, published in 1998; Divan of Hafiz by Paul Smith, published in 1986; The Divan by Hafiz by Heman Bicknell published in 2004, and The Angels Knocking on the Tavern Door: Thirty Poems of Hafiz by Robert Bly and Leonard Lewisohn published in 2009. It is important to note that due to the method of access via Hafiznameh-Hafiz Encyclopedia PC software, specific page numbers for Bicknell, Clarke, and Smith's translations are unavailable. In the following ten examples, three different translations are referenced. However, the translation by Bly and Lewisohn is also included for the 9th and 10th examples. It is noteworthy that Bly and Lewisohn have translated only 30 ghazals of Hafiz; therefore, not all of the verses are translated by them; specifically, only the 9th and 10th examples are found in their translation.

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1	«ای نازنین پسر تو چه مذهب گرفته ای کت خون ما حلال تر از شیر مادر است» (57) *Ey nazanin pesar, to che mazhab gereftei?* *Ket khoon-e ma halal-tar az shir-e madar ast.*
	Herman Bicknell: Young charmer, tell me, prithee, what faith is held by thee, who deem'st my blood more lawful than mother's milk to be? **Henry Wilberforce Clarke:** O beloved youth! What religion hast thou adopted, wherein our blood is more lawful to thee than mother's milk? **Paul Smith:** O fair young beauty, what faith do you take for your religion, where our blood more legal than mothers milk in your design is?
2	«دل بدان رود گرامی چه کنم گر ندهم مادر دهر ندارد پسری بهتر از این» (550) *Del be dān roud-e gerāmi che konam gar nadaham* *Mādar-e dahr nadārad pesari behtar az in.*
	Herman Bicknell: If to that beautiful youth, my heart I give not, what shall I do? Time's mother hath not a youth better than this. **Henry Wilberforce Clarke:** If to that beautiful youth, my heart I give not, what shall I do? Time's mother hath not a youth better than this. **Paul Smith:** How can I lay my heart at such beautiful young feet? Time never birthed beauty on any day, more than this.
3	«پدر تجربه ای دل تویی آخر ز چه روی طمع مهر و وفا زین پسران می‌داری» (611) *Pedar-e tajrobe, ey del, toyi, ākhar ze che ruy* *Tama'e mehr o vafā zin pesarān mi dāri*
	Herman Bicknell: O heart, O wise Master, experienced in love why then seek love from apprentices and interns? **Henry Wilberforce Clarke**: O heart! The father of experience of the end, thou art. Wherefore, Desire for the love and fidelity of these youth thou keepest? **Paul Smith**: O you, searching for delight of unity in the coloured patchcoat, Hoping for help from the ignorant; amazing, but unfortunate.
4	«عمر بگذشت به بی حاصلی و بوالهوسی ای پسر جام میم ده که به پیری برسی» (619) *Omr bogzasht be bi-haseli o bo-lahavasi* *Ey pesar, jām-e meym deh ke be piri beresi.*
	Herman Bicknell: In fruitless and lustfulness, passed my life; O son! me, the cup of wine, give, so that to old age thou mayst reach. **Henry Wilberforce Clarke:** In fruitless and lustfulness, passed my life; O son! me, the cup of wine, give, so that to old age thou mayst reach. **Paul Smith:** Fruitless and full of desires, all of my life passed in vain: Son give to me a cup of wine, so old age you can attain.

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5	«لب لعل و خط مشکین چو آنش هست و اینش هست بنازم دلبر خود را که حسنش آن و این دارد» (163) *Lab-e la'l o khat-e moshkīn cho ānash hast o īnash hast* *Benāzam delbar-e khod rā ke hosnash ān o īn dārad.*
	Herman Bicknell: The ruby lip and the musky hair, when His is that and His is this, of my blood, I boast; because this and that, His beauty hath. **Henry Wilberforce Clarke:** The ruby lip and the musky hair, when His is that and His is this, of my heart-ravisher, I boast; because this and that his beauty hath. **Paul Smith:** The ruby hair and the musky hair, since You have this and also that, I boast about my heart's thief, whose beauty both in possession has.
6	«چشمم از آینه داران خط و خالش گشت لبم از بوسه ربایان بر و دوشش باد» (143) *Cheshmam az āyene dārān-e khat o khālash gasht* *Labam az buseh robāyān-e bar o doushesh bād.*
	Herman Bicknell: Of the number mirror-holders of his line and mole, my eye became: of the -number of the kiss-snatchers of his bosom and back, my lip. **Henry Wilberforce Clarke:** Of the number mirror-holders of his line and mole, my eye became: of the number of the kiss-snatchers of his bosom and back, my lip. **Paul Smith:** Eye became one of the holders of mirror of Your mole and down: lip, a snatcher of kisses of where neck and back sweetly meet, be!
7	«بتی دارم که گرد گل ز سنبل سایبان دارد بهار عارضش خطی به خون ارغوان دارد» (161) *Boti dāram ke gerd-e gol ze sonbol sāyebān dārad* *Bahār-e ārezash khati be khun-e arghavān dārad*
	Herman Bicknell: I have an idol that, the canopy of the hyacinth around the rosehath: a line in the blood of the cercis, the spring of his cheekhath. **Henry Wilberforce Clarke:** I have an idol that, the canopy of the hyacinth around the rose hath: a line in the blood of the Arghavan, the spring of his cheek hath. **Paul Smith:** I've a Beloved Who around the rose the hyacinths gathering has: A line written in arghavan's blood, Beloved's cheek's Spring has.
8	«افسوس که شد دلبر و در دیده‌ی گریان تحریر خیال خط او نقش بر آب است» (42) *Afsous ke shod delbar o dar dideye geryān* *Tahrir-e khiyāl-e khat-e u naqsh bar āb ast.*
	Herman Bicknell: Alas! The Heart-Ravisher oath departed; and in the weeping eye the picturing of the fancy of a letter from Him is the picture on water. **Henry Wilberforce Clarke:** Alas! The Heart-Ravisher oath departed; and in the weeping eye the picturing of the fancy of a letter from Him is the picture on water. **Paul Smith:** O no, Heartstealer has departed, and upon my weeping eye, idea of a letter from that One, an image on water to read is.

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9	«نرگسش عربده جوی و لبش افسوس کنان نیم شب دوش به بالین من آمد بنشست» «سر فراگوش من آورد به آواز حزین گفت ای عاشق دیرینه‌ی من خوابت هست؟» (78) *Nargesash arbadeh-juy o labash afsous konan* *Nim shab doush be bālin-e man āmad beneshast.*
	Herman Bicknell: Narcissuses which sought for mischief, lips which permitted sighs to fleet, My Loved one at the hour of midnight came to my pillow for a seat. I heard, for in my ear 'twas whispered, in accents tender with regret; "O lover! Thou who long hast loved me, hath slumber overcome thee yet?" **Henry Wilberforce Clarke**: Eye, contest-seeking; lip lamenting, Came, at midnight, last- night, to my pillow; sate. To my ear, He brought His head; in a low soft voice, Said: "O my distraught Lover! sleep is thin **Paul Smith**: That eye looking for battle and mocking lips mouthing "O no; "Last night at midnight You came to my pillow, sat by my side . To my ear You bent Your head and said in a sad soft whisper: My poor mad lover are you awake, or do you sleep?" You sighed. **Robert Bly & Leonard Lewisohn**: "Her eyes were looking for a drunken brawl, Her mouth full of jibes. She sat down Last night at midnight on my bed. She put her lips close to my ear and said In a mournful whisper these words: "What is this? Aren't you my old lover? Are you asleep?""
10	«در دل ندهم ره پس از این مهر بتان را مهر لب او بر در این خانه نهادیم» (884) *Dar del nadaham rah pas az in mehr-e botān rā* *Mohr-e lab-e u bar dar-e in khāneh nāhādim.*
	Herman Bicknell: After this to the love of idols, the path into our heart, we give not: On the door of this house, the seal of His lip we have placed. **Henry Wilberforce Clarke**: After this to the love of idols, the path into our heart, we give not: On the door of this house, the seal of His lip we have placed **Paul Smith**: From now on we will never again open our heart to the love of idols :We have placed the seal of Beloved's lip on this house's door, forever. **Robert Bly & Leonard Lewisohn**: From now on I will leave no doors in my heart open For the love of beautiful creatures; I have placed The signet seal of Her lips on the door of this house.

As discerned from the table, the translation of terms connoting endearment towards the beloved varies significantly among translators, with each employing distinct strategies. Primarily, Bicknell and Clarke exhibit notable parallels in their translations, whereas Smith diverges notably. Broadly speaking, Clarke and Bicknell's renditions emphasize and implicitly acknowledge the presence of pedophilic themes, explicitly identifying the beloved as male. Conversely, Smith's approach appears deliberate in its avoidance of translating the beloved with explicit male connotations wherever feasible. Evidently, Smith resorts to a more expansive vocabulary compared to the original text, ostensibly to depict the beloved in a manner that circumvents explicit gender attribution. Furthermore, Smith adopts lexicon that ambiguously alludes to the beloved's gender, allowing for interpretive fluidity. For instance, instead of employing "youth," Smith opts for "young," a choice that introduces ambiguity regarding the beloved's gender. Notably, Smith also modifies pronouns, transitioning from the third-person singular to the second-person singular. This shift is particularly notable due to the absence of distinct singular third-person pronouns in Persian, posing a translational challenge wherein translators must decide to represent the beloved as either male or female. This divergence is evident in the fifth and sixth verses, where Clarke

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and Bicknell employ "his," while Smith opts for "you." In the fifth verse, Hafiz delineates attributes of his beloved, reflecting the contemporary ideals of beloveds during that era. According to Najmabadi (2010), in pre-modern and early modern Persian male homoerotic culture, an amrad typically referred to a young male or adolescent, even extending to those in their early twenties who lacked a fully visible beard. Additionally, Najmabadi suggests that the presence of nascent facial hair in adolescents symbolized beauty, though it also marked the transition of the beloved from an object of desire to adulthood.

In the eighth verse, Clarke and Bicknell utilize "him" to reference the beloved, while Smith opts for the circumlocutory "that One," thereby avoiding explicit gender attribution. Notably, Smith deviates from this practice only in the fourth verse, where a boy is summoned to serve wine. It is noteworthy in Persian poetic tradition that wine bearers (Saqi) are often depicted as ghilman, young boys whom the poet holds in affectionate regard (Najmabadi, 2010). In two instances, specifically the 9th and 10th examples, the translations by Bly and Lewisohn depict Hafiz's beloved as female, using feminine pronouns. It is noteworthy that Leonard Lewisohn, a scholar renowned for his expertise in Persian Sufism, has authored numerous books on the subject. Collaborating with Bly, he translated 30 ghazals of Hafiz into English, infusing them with a mystical perspective that portrays Hafiz as a moral preacher. In their translations, the beloved is often depicted as a representation of the divine, akin to God (Anoosheh & Khalilijahromi, 2020). Consequently, when confronted with verses like the 9th and 10th, which explicitly reference earthly love, the translators maintain their mystical interpretation, opting to portray the beloved as a woman.

The suppression of open discourse surrounding sexuality began to take root in the 17th century, reaching its zenith during the Victorian era of the 19th century. Characterized by stringent codes of morality and behavior, Victorian society deemed discussions of sexuality as taboo, relegating them to the realm of private matters. Individuals with homosexual inclinations were stigmatized as deviants within this societal framework. However, a notable shift in attitudes towards homosexuality occurred towards the latter half of the 19th century, as articulated by Foucault:

"...the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized - Westphal's famous article of 1870 on 'contrary sexual sensations' can stand as its date of birth - less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself. Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species." (1978, p. 43)

This shift in societal perception facilitated the emergence of new literary perspectives on sexuality. Consequently, translators such as Bicknell and Clarke, whose works surfaced within 5-15 years after 1870, seized the newfound freedom to present Hafiz's beloved as a youthful male figure. Their translations reflect a departure from earlier taboos, even delving into themes of pedophilia, which were becoming more permissible in literary discourse. By contrast, the translation of Paul Smith, born in 1945, were published a century after those of Clarke and Bicknell. Smith's tendency to obscure the masculine attributes of Hafiz's beloved may stem not only from his personal decisions but also from the prevailing societal norms of his time. Smith's environment differed significantly from that of Bicknell and Clarke, potentially influencing his interpretation and translation choices. His translations often depart from the directness of Bicknell and Clarke, opting instead for restructured sentences and expanded descriptions that align more closely with the sensibilities of his contemporary audience. Additionally, Smith's unfamiliarity with Persian language (Sazegarnejad, 2002) likely contributed to his divergent interpretations, underscoring the importance of linguistic proficiency in the translation process.

In elucidating the divergent translation choices regarding the depiction of Hafiz's beloved, Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice offers valuable insights. Bourdieu posits that individuals are shaped by their social context, wherein cultural capital and habitus, the internalized dispositions, inform their actions and interpretations. Within the Victorian era's rigid moral framework, societal norms heavily influenced literary representations, particularly regarding taboo subjects such as sexuality. Translators, as cultural agents, operate within this field of social forces, negotiating between the constraints of tradition and the evolving discourses of their time.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus, the deeply ingrained, pre-reflective dispositions acquired through socialization, sheds light on the translators' decisions. Bicknell and Wilberforce, positioned in a milieu where attitudes towards homosexuality were shifting, likely possessed a habitus more conducive to embracing newfound freedoms in literary expression. Their translations, which openly depict Hafiz's beloved as a young boy, reflect a disposition attuned to the changing dynamics of Victorian society post-1870. Similarly, Bly and Lewisohn, drawing from their immersion in Sufi philosophy and spiritual practices, bring a unique habitus to their translation of Hafiz's poetry, infusing it with a mystical perspective that aligns with their understanding of Sufi spirituality. In contrast, Paul Smith's translation, emerging within a different socio-historical

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context, mirror a habitus shaped by later societal norms and expectations.

Moreover, Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital underscores the translators' differential access to symbolic resources and linguistic proficiency. Bicknell and Clarke, perhaps endowed with greater cultural capital regarding Persian literature and its nuances, were better positioned to render faithful translations that challenged conventional interpretations. Their works thus embody a form of cultural capital that enables them to navigate and disrupt established literary conventions. Conversely, Smith's translations, characterized by a lack of linguistic fluency and cultural familiarity with Persian poetry, reflect a deficiency in cultural capital that hinders his ability to accurately convey Hafiz's intentions.

Bourdieu's theory illuminates the complex interplay between social structures, individual dispositions, and cultural capital in shaping translation practices. By situating the translators within a broader socio-historical context, this theoretical framework elucidates the motivations behind their divergent approaches to depicting Hafiz's beloved. It underscores the role of habitus and cultural capital in mediating the relationship between translator and text, offering a nuanced understanding of how social forces shape literary interpretation.

Despite efforts to translate Hafiz's poetry faithfully, both linguistic and cultural challenges persist. Davis (2004) argues that while linguistic obstacles are often discussed, cultural nuances pose significant hurdles for translators, particularly in conveying Persian poetic concepts like "pedophilia." Such a concept deeply rooted in Persian tradition, lacks resonance in Western literature, complicating translation efforts. Even with modern Western acceptance of homosexuality, the nuances of medieval Persian homoeroticism remain elusive.

Even if translators address cultural challenges and nuances, as Shafiei Kadkani believes, medieval Persian poetry still presents a formidable task. He presents an intriguing perspective on poetry, likening it to verbal architecture. According to this view, when a translator endeavors to translate a poem, they are essentially relocating an architectural masterpiece. While this process may appear straightforward for ordinary structures, the intricate nature of artistic expression poses unique challenges. Indeed, the translator assumes the role of a secondary architect, tasked with reconstructing the poetic essence in a new linguistic landscape. For translations of works by eminent poets like Hafiz and Saadi, the success of the endeavor hinges upon the translator's artistic sensibility and creative prowess (Dorudian, 1979).

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the translations of Hafiz's poetry by Herman Bicknell, Henry Wilberforce Clarke, Paul Smith, Robert Bly, and Leonard Lewisohn, and contextualizing their choices within historical and sociocultural frameworks, it becomes evident that the depiction of themes related to pedophilia varies significantly among them. Bicknell and Clarke's translations align closely, openly acknowledging the presence of pedophilic themes and explicitly identifying the beloved as male. In contrast, Smith's translation diverges notably, often avoiding explicit gender attribution and resorting to a more expansive vocabulary to depict the beloved in a manner that circumvents gender-specific connotations. Furthermore, the translation by Bly and Lewisohn offers a mystical perspective, portraying the beloved as female in certain instances, consistent with their interpretation of Hafiz's poetry as embodying divine love.

The historical context surrounding Victorian attitudes towards sexuality, particularly the shifting perceptions of homosexuality in the latter half of the 19th century, provides valuable insight into the translators' choices. Bicknell and Clarke, working in a period where societal norms were evolving, embraced newfound freedoms in literary expression, while Smith's translations reflect a habitus shaped by later societal norms and expectations. Additionally, the translators' differential access to cultural capital, particularly their proficiency in Persian literature and language nuances, influences their ability to render faithful translations and challenge conventional interpretations.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice offers a theoretical framework to understand the complex interplay of social structures, individual dispositions, and cultural capital in shaping translation practices. By situating the translators within broader socio-historical contexts, this theoretical framework elucidates the motivations behind their divergent approaches to depicting Hafiz's beloved. It underscores the role of habitus and cultural capital in mediating the relationship between translator and text, providing an insightful understanding of how social forces shape literary interpretation.

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