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The Historical Semiotics of Hafez's Poems

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Abstract

Semiotics is defined as the study of signs. It is a general field one branch of which is language. There are literary signs in literature, as part of language, that are encoded to provoke meaning. The signs or forms in Hafez's poems will be assessed here to discover what meaning he has meant to convey. Failure in relating the right meanings to the signs deprive us from the right interpretation of the poems. Semiotic achievements can help us to study meaning related to the form. Saussure's structural view and his overlooking context and cultural background and his proposed indissoluble link between form and meaning cannot in all cases provide us with the precise meanings of literary signs. Poststructuralists, on the other hand, postulate an unstable relationship between sign and meaning. According to them, under different circumstances different meanings can be attributed to signs. In the present research, the posed question was if taking cultural and historical background into account could shed light on providing us with the very meaning meant by the poet. Based on content analysis, the history of Hafez's age as one aspects of culture as well as the achievements of modern semiotics were studied and then numerous signs Hafez has encoded in his poems were randomly assessed. The theoretical basis of the research is Juri Lotman's cultural semiotics. His "semiosphere" refers to the whole semiotic signs within a culture. The Tartu School has had a tendency to cultural history and cultural anthropology. It was clarified that historical awareness of the age in which the poet has versified his poems can lead us to the precise meaning the poet has meant to convey.

Keywords: Historical semiotics, Cultural semiotics, Cultural signs, Hafez's poems, Tartu School.

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1. Introduction

The focus of semiotics is on assessing signs in general. This research aims at evaluating the literary signs in Hafez's poems. As Saussurean semiotic studies are structural and context-free, and overlook the cultural background, it is insufficient to deal with literary signs and it cannot provide us with the right interpretation of literary signs.

The signs in poems or "cultural signs" cannot be assessed without taking the cultural facts of that age into consideration. The question is that if taking cultural facts into consideration can lead to the precise interpretation of the signs. One cultural aspect is the historical background of any age. Historical awareness can lead to achieving the impeccable decoding of the signs. Cultural codes are signs that are outside the text and are related to the individual life and experience and such once tangible realities have been encoded in the text as signs. If so, we cannot separate the signs from their cultural bases like history.

Hafez versified his poems impressed by and under the influence of historical realities around him. The present research has been carried out through content analysis. The signs in some verses by Hafez have been randomly selected and they have been semiotically studied. The greatest achievement of this research is that familiarity with the history of any age can provide impetus to relate the most relevant meaning among the welter of possible meanings to each sign and this is the reply to the research question.

Here, first, we will deal with semiotics, then a brief history of Hafez's age will be provided. After that, some verses by Hafez will be semio-historically evaluated.

2. Semiotic Systems

There is a science whose aim is to study signs. According to Matthews, Saussure and the tradition following him call this science semiology; however, the same science in the Peircean tradition is called semiotics (2007:362). Semiotics is a general science of different sign systems of which linguistics is only one part (Ibid.). In other words, semiotics is concerned with systems of signs in general (Ibid, 355). Saussure saw linguistics as one branch of that larger science (Ibid.). Words and morphemes are signs, specifically linguistic signs (Ibid, 362). Saussure's concept of "linguistic sign" was formed by an indissoluble link between a phonetic "signifier" (form) and "the signified" (meaning) (Ibid, 355). A sign is neither form nor meaning, but simultaneously both: the intersection or relationship of form and meaning. A form without a meaning is not a sign, nor is a meaning without a form (Hudson, 2000: 1). In human communication, one presents the form of signs to others and so invokes their meanings. The relationship between the form of a sign and its meaning must be part of the

knowledge of its interpreter (Ibid, 2). A semiotician's concern is to demystify and discover the relationship of form and meaning (Nersisians, 1387: 17).

Saussure's study of signs was word-oriented. His structural approach overlooked context of situation. The application of Saussurean word-oriented approach to interpreting poetic signs in literature has shortcomings and cannot provide us with the precise meanings of literary and cultural signs, and we do get deprived of the right interpretation of poems.

Unlike Saussure and other structuralists following him who presupposed an indissoluble link between form and meaning, according to Chandler, poststructuralists benefit enormously from "deconstruction". Deconstruction focuses on the unstable relationship between signifier and the signified (Chandler, 1387: 338).

Text can say something totally different from what it seems to want to say (Azimifard, 1392: 211). Signs are meaning-carriers and semiotics has the capability of assessing the process of conveying meaning through signs in our daily lives (Nersisians, 1387: 121).

The indissoluble link between form and meaning is what is questioned in literature. In literature, different meanings, from the ones that are common, can be attributed to forms. The writer or the poet aims at these uncommon meanings. Attributing the right and related meanings to forms lead us to the right interpretation. Different cultural aspects like the historical circumstances under which such forms have been encoded can help us to come to the uncommon meanings encoded through forms.

Juri Lotman (1922-93) founded the Tartu School of semiotics. Lotman's activities were in formal structural tradition of semiotics; however, he also created cultural semiotics (Chandler, 1387: 347). All the related signs in the same field form a certain code (Ibid, 321). Lotman coined "Semiosphere" to refer to the whole semiotic signs within a culture (Ibid, 341). The Tartu School has had a tendency to cultural history and cultural anthropology (Azimifard, 1392: 176). Before proceeding with the discussion, we need to feel the contrast between "nature" and "culture".

Different kinds of arts and what human beings create fall into culture category. In fact, culture is the complicated system of "signification" that makes producing and receiving meaning possible. From the semiotic point of view, culture is a complicated Semiotic system and covers all meaningful behaviors of human communities and the codes that give meaning to behaviors. This complicated system has historical and sociological bases (Azimifard, 1392: 132).

Cultural codes are signs that are outside the text and are related to the individual life and experience and are reconstructed in artistic artworks (Ibid, 89). Cultural semiotics' concern is

to evaluate such signs which are rooted in individual life and experience and are encoded in the text (Nersisians, 1387: 83).

The Tartu School members embarked on historical studies regarding the semiotic systems of culture (Shahbazi, 1393: 28). Lotman believed that the meaning that the text conveys is not limited to the meanings of the components in the text. Related to the text, according to him, there are other meaning systems. The reader's expectations can also create meaning (ibid.). According to Lotman, semiotic systems are patterns that explain the world in which we live. Among these pattern-providing systems, language is the prime pattern-providing system. Other things like art, history, religion, and so on are secondary pattern-providing systems. Therefore, we need to study the latter because they cause us to understand the world in a certain way (Ibid, 29), According to Lotman, history and science are indissoluble (Sojudi, 1390: 387).

Lotman is not the only scholar who has historical concerns in his semiotic studies. Another scholar who takes historical concerns into consideration is Roland Barthes. According to Barthes in *Writing Degree Zero* (1953) and his 3-dimensional distinction, the language dimension is both sociological and historical (Cooley, 1376: 16). Another scholar called Linda Hutcheon is of the opinion that literary studies have been influenced by historiography and this influence is not limited to modern history but includes domains like semiotics that was once formally studied overlooking history (1998: 100). According to her, history is an entity that invokes meaning; furthermore, semiotically encoding and decoding meaning proves possible in a historical context. History is a culturally semiotic system (Ibid, 112). To understand the precise meanings of the signs that Hafez has encoded in his poems and to come to the right interpretations, we need to be aware of Hafez's historical age. This will be coped with in the next section.

3. A Brief Review of Historical Information and Background of Hafez's Age

AbuSaeed's unexpected death happened in 736 A.H. (Bayani, 1386: 358). The Muzaffarid dynasty became powerful after AbuSaeed's death. They captured Yazd, Kerman, Fars, Khozestan, and Isfahan respectively and created a pretty powerful government in the south and in parts of Persian Iraq (Mirjafaree, 1385: 6). Sharaf Al-Din Muzaffar was made governor of Maibud. He served Atabakan in Yazd. He was Mobarez Al-Din Mohammad's father, and paved the way so that Muzaffarids could gain power. This dynasty was ousted from power by Timur (Mazzoui, 1363: 4).

The age when Hafez lived was one of the gloomiest periods in the Iranian history (Farshidvard, 1376: 10 and 11). In exactly the same period when Hafez was achieving poetic puberty, a king called Sheikh Abu-Eshagh was ruling Fars. Although he had flaws (like being a drunkard), according to historical evidence, he had a liking for poetry and knowledge, and he was a benevolent and popular ruler (Yamini, 1394: 15). At the same time when Abu-Eshagh was ruling Fars, a headstrong, willing, and valiant man called Amir Mobarez Al-Din Mohammad who had been a drunkard and epicurean for a long time, and ruled Yazd and Kerman, repented of his sins. In fact, he was the Muhtasib of the city, and after repenting of his sins, he became so pious that nobody dared to practice any sort of corruption, play any musical instruments, or step in the taverns. On his orders, everybody was to be instructed how to perform religious affairs and to read the Kuran (Quran) (Ibid.). He invaded Shiraz and on Shawwal, the third 745 A.H. passed through the city gates. From then on, on his orders, everybody was to attend the mosque for congregational prayers and the clergymen were to talk to people about paradise and hell. Just the Kuran recital was supposed to be heard. It was then when hypocrisy began to become the order of the day (Ibid, 16).

This happened many times when Amir Mobarez Al-Din was reciting the Kuran, criminals were sent to him and he would put aside the Kuran and would behead the criminals. Then he would wash his hands and kept on reciting the Kuran, and to achieve spiritual progress he would claim other people's lives (Ibid, 17). He was Shah Shuja's father. Shah Shuja was clever and lucky, and his memory served him right through which he had succeeded in learning the Kuran by heart at the age of 9. At his father's request, Shah Shuja proceeded with his religious training under so many masters. Shah Shuja had a good handwriting. He was also interested in versifying poems. Contrary to all these merits, he was Mobarez Al-Din's son. On Thursday, Ramadan, the seventeenth 756 A.H., with the help of some other ones accompanying him, he tied up his father who was reading the Kuran in a room and ordered them to take his father chained to a fort. And at the 19th night of Ramadan, Shah Shuja ordered Sultan Hossein and a professional executioner to make his father blind and divided his father's territory heritage among his brothers and his cousin Shah Yahya. Of course, later on, Shah Mahmud, Shah Shuja's brother, made Shah Shuja blind likewise (Ibid, 17 and 18).

Sultan Zain Al-Abedin is Shah Shuja's son whom Hafez detested since he was ill-mannered (Ibid, 23). The hypocritical asceticism that Mobarez Al-Din fostered in that age among the people caused Hafez to be deeply pessimistic about asceticism (Ibid, 41). Related signs like Mohtaseb, Sheikh, Mufti, Sufi, Profligate (Rend), wine, reason (wisdom), tavern establish a "code" (a set of signs). To communicate with his addressee (the people who read the poems), the addressor (poet: Hafez) has arbitrarily attributed his desired meaning to each sign. Here,

the putative common contemporary meaning is not attributable to the applied form. The poet has symbolically considered an uncommon meaning for each form. To discover such submerged meaning, we need to scrutinize the cultural context in which Hafez has versified his poems. One cultural aspect is the historical background of his age. What was said about Hafez's age can shed light on the meaning of each form which he has manipulated.

4. The Historical Assessment of the Signs in Hafez's Poems

History made us aware of the fact that in Hafez's age a cruel man ruled Fars whose name was Amir Mobarez Al-Din. Hafez detested him and was fed up with his atrocities and misdeeds. There are many signs in his poems "the signified" of which is Mobarez Al-Din.

Mohtaseb became Sheikh and forgot his own sin.

Our tale is that which, at the head of every market, remained.

(Clarke, Part 2, 2001: 158)

The signs "Mohtaseb" and "Sheikh" signify Mobarez Al-Din who (as it was said) was epicurean and a drunkard and repented of his sins. First (in Yazd and Kerman) he was the Mohtaseb. A Mohtaseb's duty was to supervise people's moral affairs and religious duties. After his repentance, he became Sheikh as if he had been pious from the very beginning and he had never committed any sins. According to Hafez, only our tales (ordinary people's sins) stand out. In another verse, Hafez puts it:

Hafez! Drink wine; practice profligacy and be happy; but,

Like others, make not the Kuran the snare of deceit.

(Clarke, Part 1, 2001: 20)

"Others" signifies "Mobarez Al-Din" who practiced any sort of corruption, shed blood, was cruel to people, claimed many lives, and yet recited the Kuran to pretend that he had a firm belief to deceive people. Hafez pretends to drink wine (which according to Mobarez Al-Din is a crime), practice profligacy, but not to do the misdeeds that Mobarez Al-Din does.

The wine drinker in whom is neither the face nor hypocrisy,
Is better than an austerity-boaster, in whom is the face of hypocrisy.
(Clarke, Part 1, 2001: 42)

Mobarez Al-Din repented of drinking wine, but what he does is dishonest and he pretends that he is a true believer. His character suffers from hypocrisy and he has fostered hypocrisy in the society, too. So the sign “austerity-boaster” signifies Mobarez Al-Din. According to Hafez, it would be better for him to be a wine-drinker as before than to spread hypocrisy. In another verse, Hafez puts it in this way:

Drink wine. For the Shaikh, and Hafez and the Mufti and the Mohtaseb.
All when thou lookest well fraud make.
(Clarke, Part 2, 2001: 202)

“Wine” in Hafez’s poems is a sign. According to Bina, it is a mystical term that signifies “beauty and perfection aspects” a manifestation of which is kindness (1369: 33). Shaikh, Mufti, and Mohtaseb all signify Mobarez Al-din who was devoid of “kindness”, yet he pretended to be pure. One delicate point is that here, Hafez has included himself (For the Shaikh, and Hafez, and the Mufti and the Mohtaseb) among the ones who are wrongdoers and take advantage of others. This inclusion implies a cultural concept. According to Sajadi, Hafez is the practitioner of a cult called Malamatiyye. The practitioners of this cult do not just reproach others; they reproach themselves, too. In addition, they welcome other people's criticism (1387: 238). That is why Hafez has included himself in a malevolent circle (... the Shaikh, and Hafez and the Mufti and the Mohtaseb). The researchers are of the opinion that such sort of juxtaposition of signs can by itself provoke meaning. Hafez voices his readiness to be criticized and reproached because this does guarantee his spiritual maturity.

Realizing the historical secret that Hafez abominated the ruler of his age and why he did so enable us to understand the precise significance of the signs Hafez has employed. Such related signs (as it was said before) form a code in his semiosphere. The signs magians, sages, profligate (rend), hypocrisy, reason (wisdom), love, wine, tavern, sufi, Mohtaseb, Sheikh, ... establish a code. According to Azimifard, code is construed as a set of signs that makes communication between addressor (here the poet) and the addressee (the people who read his poems) possible. Codes are sociologically and historically based (1392: 87). Lack of such sort

of historical awareness does avert our understanding the precise meanings of the signs employed. Mobarez Al-Din's radical religious changes in the society and his brutal atrocities has led Hafez to employ signs whose common meanings may mislead us to other interpretations. Reformist Hafez has encoded his utopian views through utilizing signs that does seem sharply contrastive with his opposing cult. For instance, the sign "wine" whose common meaning is "a kind of alcoholic beverage that makes people drunk", has an uncommon meaning employed by Hafez and it is a cultural sign. Hafez cherishes the "forms" whose meanings are taboos to the opposite group. However, he uses the same forms with other meanings. By doing so, he wants to ascertain what his true beliefs are and to what beliefs and cult(s) he objects.

Or if Magian elder kindle the light,
Whose latern, pray, will blaze aflame and be bright?
(Arberry, 1974: 134)

The common meaning of the sign "magian" is zoroasterian who is considered "pagan" by the opposite cult. Hafez uses this sign to show the opposite cult that he adores, values, and respects the ones they have excommunicated. "Pagan" is the common and primary meaning of this sign. Its uncommon and secondary meaning is "mystic", and the secondary meaning of "fire" according to Bina is the "fire of love" which exists in mystic's heart (1369: 135). However, the common and primary meaning of "fire" is the fire that zoroasterians light in their fire temples.

In the cloister of magians, me dear they hold for the reason
That in our heart, a fire that dieth not ever is.
(Clarke, Part 1, 2001: 46)

Those who have blazing "fire" in their heart and move forward into the realm of theism are metaphorically called fire-worshippers. "Magian" is one who has moved forward in the realm of theism and intuitively known theism (Bina, 1369: 34 and 35).

Within the Magian tavern
The light of God I see;

In such a place, O wonder!

Shines out such radiacy.

(Arberry, 1974: 117)

The sign “tavern” has the primary meaning of “the place where we drink wine” and it is the place where we go to get drunk. “Magian tavern” has the primary meaning of “the tavern which belongs to the pagans”; however, its secondary and opposite meaning is “the mystics’ whereabouts”. In the surface and primary meaning, Hafez wishes to tell hypocrites that even in “the Magian tavern” the light of God can be seen, contrary to the hypocrites’ wrong presupposition that the light of God cannot be seen in such a place. In fact, profligates (rends) are the true and honest believers who avoid hypocrisy. However, we must take the secondary meaning of the sign “magian tavern” into consideration, as well. It is the whereabouts of true mystics who are the opposing pole of pseudo-mystics.

In addition, this piece of poem conveys the cultural concept of “pantheism” according to which God can be seen everywhere. Therefore, God’s boons are equally and benignly granted to everyone.

The Zahed had pride, took not the path to safety:

By the path of supplication, the Profligate to the House of Safety hath passed.

(Clark, Part 2, 2001: 170)

Pious people (Zaheds) get deprived of God’s boons because they are arrogant. Unlike the arrogant Zahed, the Profligate (rend) is modest, and meekly trusts God, so imploringly requests for God’s boons. The sign “supplication” signifies this imploring through which, the Profligate enters “the House of Safety”. The latter sign (House of Safety) signifies “paradise” in which the Profligate will have peace of mird.

Religious people who call themselves “sages” claim that “reason” (wisdom) and reason-based arguments guarantee knowing God and this is the seamless way to attain reality and that their way has a core value to know God; however, they are too far from reality and only "love" does Know how awry they have gone:

The sages are the center of the compass of existence; but

Love knoweth that, in this circle, they head-revolving are.

(Clarke, Part 2, 2001: 188)

From that torch, reason wished to kindle its lamp,

“Jealousy’s lightning” flashed; and in confusion, the world dashed.

(Ibid, 106)

With reason’s prohibition, affright us not; and bring wine:

In our Land, the work of the watchman, work is none.

(Ibid, Part 1, 2001: 146)

The signs sage, reason, torch, lightning, jealousy, and the discovery of their precise meanings can give us a more accurate interpretation of the verses. According to Moin, one of the meanings of “jealous” (in mysticism) is “someone who practices deportment”. (1387:711), so “jealousy” means “deportment”. “The lamp of reason” is in contrast with “jealousy’s lightning”. This proves how incompetent “reason” is. According to Hafez, somebody who practices magian deportment is more valued than the Zahed (sage) who is proud of “reason”. Reason-oriented sages are disvalued by Hafez. According to Hafez, the “watchman” of reason, in the realm of love, is good for nothing.

O Lord! The tavern’s closed but don’t permit,

That wide open remain, gate of the hypocrite.

(Aryanpur, 1344: 75)

Historical awareness of the fact that Mobarez Al-Din closed the taverns, makes the above verse easy to interpret. From then on, hypocrisy became the order of the day. Everybody was afraid of Mobarez Al-Din and they all pretended to be religious to stay safe. Hafez ridicules such sort of unreal piety. “Tavern” is detestable to pious people and they refrain from “wine” and “tavern”, but Hafez welcomes wine and tavern because these wipe out hypocrisy.

As we pointed out before “wine” is a sign whose secondary meaning is the manifestations of beauty and perfection ahead of a mystic.

Come; so that, in pure wine, time’s mystery, we may show:

On the condition that, to those crooked of disposition and blind of heart, thou show it not.

(Clarke, 1377: 273)

Hafez tells others where the right direction is. “Wine” is the source of perfection from which, according to Hafez, we can inspire.

So long as of wine and tavern is trace,
My head will be ransomed at Sage's pace.

(Aryanpur, 1344: 76)

That is why Hafez has found all sources of inspiration and perfection in wine and trusts wine and the Sage (elderly Magian). According to Yamini, austerity (piety) is one of the innate characteristics of “angels”. This feature does not exist in human nature, and equipping ourselves with this feature causes hypocrisy in human beings (1394: 41):

Hafez! Reproach not profligates. For in eternity without beginning,
Me, independent of austerity and of hypocrisy, God made.

(Clarke, Part 2, 2001: 68)

The sign “me” in the above verse signifies “human beings” who do not need to be austere and pious. According to Yamini, austerity is incompatible with human nature (1394: 42). Hafez is of the opinion that committing sins and lack of piety are the features of a perfect human being (1394: 42). That is why Hafez puts it as follows:

Lover, profligate, glance-keeper, I am; and it openly, I say:
That thou mayest know that, with so many excellences, adorned am I.

(Clarke, 1377: 299)

Being a human justifies being a lover, profligate, and glance-player. These features are natural attributes of human beings.

Never was I a shrinker
No hypocrite monk am I;
Let wine, the pure wine of the drinker
Be the talk men address me by.
Wine is the sole salvation,
Its worship and works sublime;
Be firm by determination,
Hafiz – be saved in time!
(Arberry, 1974: 122 and 123)

“Shrinker” is a sign which signifies “somebody who refrains from mundane pleasures”. Hafez tells us that he is not a shrinker and drinks wine and enjoys what is in harmony with human nature.

"Throwing away cloak", "setting Khirka on fire", "bartering a cleric's garments for wine", or "hypothecating a cleric's garments for wine" are all cultural concepts. According to Yamini, Hafez believes that the cleric's practice hypocrisy; therefore, their garments are corrupt and worthless and we must set them on fire, or sell them for wine. We are also supposed to tear or throw them away (1394: 115).

O Arif, holy traveler! When to the Khirka, thou settest fire,
An effort, make; and of the circle of profligates of the world, chief be.
(Clarke, 1377: 267)
I want to burn this smeared cloak of mine;
The Sage won't take it for a cup of wine.
(Aryanpur, 1344: 86)

“Smeared cloak” signifies what clerics wear. It was so worthless that the Sage did not take it for a cup of wine. By saying that their cloak is worthless, Hafez, in fact, wants to indicate that they themselves are worthless and good for nothing.

Hypocrisy crop of faith will set afire –
Hafiz! You woolly cloak you don't require.
(Ibid, 120)

When “woolly cloak” is not required, it must be thrown away. In another verse, Hafez puts emphasis on this worthlessness in this way:

If the young magians become acquainted with our ill-thought
After this, in pledge, the Sufi's Khirka they take not.
(Clarke, Part 2, 2001: 188)

O heart! Come; let us go to the shelter of God,
From whatever, the one, short of sleeve, long of hand, made.
(Ibid, 68)

Hafez abominates clerics and he wants to flee from them and put himself under the lee of God. The signs “short of sleeve” and “long of hand” by creating a part-whole relationship signify clerics. Their garments have short sleeves, but they themselves have long hands and try to meddle in all affairs. In addition, Hafez reproaches anybody who pretends to be religious:

Boast not, O king of pilgrims
The privilege of thee
Thou viewest God's own Temple;
God shews Himself to me.

(Arberry, 1974: 117)

“King of pilgrims” is the translation of “Malekolhaj” (a person who takes other people to visit God's House). Malekolhaj is an Arabic term. According to farshidvard, one of the features of Hafez's poetry is that he uses Arabic expressions in his poems (1375: 28 and 29). Malekolhaj has become arrogant thanks to his responsibility, and Hafez tells him that he can see only God's House. But God's attention is away from him.

Joseph will come back to Canaan again,
My house the fragrance of her rose-garden will regain.
(Aryanpur, 1344: 91)

In this verse, the signs "Joseph" and Canaan" have been allegorically used. "Joseph the prophet" and "the land where he was born" are respectively the surface meanings of these signs. We need historical awareness to demystify these two signs. Before Mobarez Al-Din, Sheikh Abu-eshagh was ruling Fars. Abu-eshagh's brother attacked Fars. Abu-eshagh was so generous that he left his power to his brother and left the city. His brother ruled Fars for a short time. But the people were dissatisfied with him and returned Abu-eshagh to power (Yamini, 1394: 14). This return has given Hafez euphoria. The cultural sign "Joseph" signifies Abu-eshagh and "Canaan" signifies Fars.

If like Hafez, a Mussulman you stay,
Woe to Mussulmans on resurrection day!
(Aryanpur, 1344: 131)

A group of radical Moslems of Fars considered the above verse as a sign to prove that Hafez was a pagan (Yamini, 1394: 21). A kind mystic advised Hafez to add another verse and indicate what he had versified as a quotation by somebody else that Hafez had quoted. This would prove that he was not a pagan, and by doing so, Hafez could flee from the death penalty by Shah Shuja (Ibid.):

How truly said the Sage at twilight Sharp,
At the tavern door with the flute and harp:
"If like Hafiz, a Mussulman you stay,
Woe to Mussulmans on resurrection day!"
(Aryanpur, 1344: 131)

Now Fars was not a safe place for Hafez to stay in. He decided to go to Yazd. The ruler of Yazd was Shah Yahya (Shah Shuja's cousin). Before starting to go there, Hafez versified the following to attract Yahya's attention and to gain his favor:

O breeze! From Us, to the dwellers of Yazd say:

The head of those not recognizing truths the Chaugan ball of yours.

(Clarke, 1377: 12)

O King of Kings, lofty of star! For God's sake, a blessing,

That, like the sky, I may kiss the dust of the court of yours.

(Ibid.)

The sign "king" here signifies "Yahya". But Yahya was mean and malevolent, and did not value the pacts he made. As soon as Hafez arrived in Yazd, he was heedlessly treated by Yahya. And the time he spent in Yazd was arduous and he suffered a lot. As Hafez puts it:

Blessed is the day when the ruined-home forsake,

With lifted soul, journey to my friend take,

(Aryanpur, 1344: 115)

Here, the sign "ruined-home" signifies "Yazd". Then Hafez continues:

I feel depressed in Alexander's jail

I'll pack up – to Solomon's realm I'll sail.

(Ibid)

The signs "Alexander's jail" and "Solomon's realm" respectively signify "Yazd" and "Fars". Hafez is fed up with Yazd and longs for returning to Fars.

These two signs act as "definite descriptions". According to Safavi definite description is a description of a proper noun (1384: 121). Furthermore, the place "Alexander's jail" does exist

in Yazd and its other name is Ziayeeye School. This monument was built in 631 A.H. and it was, in fact, a school. It seems as if it was used as a jail when Alexander attacked Iran.

Good news! Spring came and buds opened;

My pension on wine and flowers I'll spend.

(Aryanpur, 1344: 86)

A Huma like thee, lofty of rank, and greed for the bone how long?

Alas that shadow of fortune, that, on the mean, thou castest.

(Clarke, 1377: 423)

Ho! O Yusuf of Egypt, whom sovereignty kept engaged!

Ask the father, where went at last filial love?

(Ibid.)

In the first verse, the sign "pension" indicates That Hafez depended on a nominal amount of money that he received from the government, and he wants to spend it the way he likes. In the second verse, "Huma" signifies "Hafez" and "bone" signifies the pension he greedily receives from the government. Hafez reproaches himself. According to Moin, Huma was a bird and was considered as the symbol of happiness in the past. It was believed that anyone on whom the shadow of huma fell would attain happiness. So, this bird is graceful and has a high rank. However, Huma feeds on just "bone". By the same token, Hafez is respectful, but his dependence on the "bone" (pension) and especially receiving that from "the mean" low-rates him. "The mean" signifies "Zain Al-Abedin" (Shah Shuja's son) who was malevolent, mean, ill-mannered, and nasty. Hafez reproaches himself because the need for the bone causes him to kneel down and looks forward to receiving the bone from the mean. In the last verse, the sign "Yusuf" signifies "Zain Al-Abedin", too. Zain Al-Abedin has become proud. His father Shah Shuja was far better. If Zain al-Abedin valued filial love, he would try to be at least the same as his father.

5. Conclusion

The question posed was if assessing the signs in their related context and cultural background could provide us with the very meaning meant by the poet. A brief history of Hafiz's age as one aspect of the cultural background was presented. The presented historical information

gave us some sort of historical awareness. The signs in some verses were assessed under the umbrella of the historical awareness we had gained. The analysed data indicated that such sort of awareness had the capability of providing us with the right meanings of the signs and this answers the posed question. The historically decontextualized assessment of signs, on the other hand, leads to the preculsion of the right interpretation of signs and this is one of the insufficiencies of structural and context-free Saussurean studies of the signs. It is futile and insufficient to study literary signs in a separate manner and outside their related background and context.

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