

Examining the Relationship between Power, Body, and the Social Construction of Gender in the Novels "Sorkhi-Ye To Az Man (Your Redness be Mine)" and "Az Sheytan Amookht Va Soozand (He / She Learned From Satan and Burned)"

Hasan Akbari Biragh¹, Behzad Barekat², Fateme Ranjbar³

Received: 4/2/2021

Accepted: 28/2/2022

Abstract

Relying on the theory of social constructionism and emphasizing Foucault's theory of power, this study aims to examine the relationship between the social constructions of gender and embodiment in two novels of 2000's titled "Sorkhi-Ye To Az Man (Your Redness be Mine)" by Sepideh Shamlou and "Az Sheytan Amookht Va Soozand (He Learned From the Devil and Burned)" by Farkhondeh Aghaei. The study sees the atmosphere of the novel as a possibility of living. So, it considers the practice of the novel both as a product and as a tool for discovering human existence in various representations of the construction of gender. The findings mention examples of gender construction that are categorized under titles such as feminization and suffocation with emphasis on the concept of women's inferiority and normative conflict as a sign of the evolving gender. According to the results, the female gender is inferior to the male gender in the novel "Sorkhi-Ye To Az Man based on the discourse atmosphere that governs the story. On the other hand, in contrast to the dominant discourse of the gendered society, the narrator has distanced herself from the imposed subjectivity of the inferior female gender, takes the initiative of

¹ Corresponding author, Associate Professor, Persian Language and Literature, Literature and Humanities, Semnan University *Email: akbari@semnan.ac.ir*

² Associate Professor, Persian Language and Literature, Literature and Humanities, Gilan University *Email: behzadbarekat@yahoo.com*

³ Phd student, Persian Language and Literature, Literature and Humanities, Semnan University *Email: fateme_ranjbar@semnan.ac.ir*



Copyright© 2024, the Authors | Publishing Rights, ASPI. This open-access article is published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution- NonCommercial 4.0 International License which permits Share (copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format) and Adapt (remix, transform, and build upon the material) under the Attribution-NonCommercial terms

constructing her gender, and provides a freer perception of the identity and female gender in the novel *Az Sheytan Amookht Va Soozand*.

Keywords: *The theory of social construction of gender, Analysis of the novel "Serghi To Az Man", Analysis of the novel "Az Sheytan Amookht Va Soozand " The relationship between body and power in today's novel.*

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Since social constructionism is an approach that examines and analyzes all aspects of social human life, the literary text, specifically the literary form of the novel, cannot be exempted from the rules of constructionist studies due to its wide range of dimensions. The analysis of literary works to analyze the social construction of gender goes back to feminist approaches with questions such as how women are represented in men's literary works and what is the relationship between it and the male world. Feminists argue that literature, especially the novel, provides a favorable ground for the representation or construction of gender repeatedly. The reflection of many literary and sociological theories can be seen in the realm of fiction, especially the novels of the 2000s. Accordingly, two novels from among the novels of this decade are selected for review in this study. The novels are *Sorkhi-Ye To Az Man* (2006) by Sepideh Shamlou and *Az Sheytan Amookht Va Soozand* (2007) by Farkhondeh Aghaei. The rapid and widespread popularity of these two novels and the scope of their narratives indicate that they reflect very real conflicts and issues in the lives of women. These novels are chosen due to the different actions of the female characters in the story towards gender and their different views. Apart from the historical proximity of their emergence, both novels have significant female characters, placing femininity in the central part of their plot and themes.

Research Question(s)

This study seeks to answer the questions as follows:

1. What are the representations of the construction of gender and their relationship with embodiment and power in these novels?
2. What is the discursive difference between the two novels in terms of the construction of female gender concerning power and body?

2. Literature Review

Body, Subject, and Power

The theory of social construction of gender suggests that women's complete selfhood is denied and they are strangers to their subjectivity in the process of gendering, but instead of resisting such an attitude, women submit to men's view of them as "other", consider the power imbalance between women and men to be absolute, and institutionalize the position and structures of inferiority in themselves. Foucault argues that the focus of this discussion lies in the social and political history of gender, which has been linked to power (Foucault, 1988:16). According to Foucault, power emphasizes the normalization and molding of society in a specific and so-called "normalized" form in different ways. In this regard, the power structure always defines the normal person in front of the abnormal person and forces the subject to regulate itself according to established laws and keep itself in harmony with these laws. The power structures cannot tolerate another kind of "being" and a different kind of "subjective self" (Shawver, 2006: 5). However, the subject identifies, rejects, and eliminates the normative forms of subjectivity imposed on it by power in a process called "normative conflict".

3. Methodology

This study is conducted with a descriptive-analytical method because of its subject matter and proportionality of the method.

4. Results

The results indicate that the discourses of power related to gender contribute significantly to the construction of the female mentality as an inferior mentality in the novel *Sorkhi-Ye To Az Man*. The presence of the woman in this story in the inferior and the other position of the man explains the ways she perceives the facts. Most of the female characters in this story have a feminine mentality. In this novel, images, descriptions, and dialogues are seen that often fundamentally reinforce gender beliefs about the construction of femininity as an inferior gender. By presenting the economic and social issues of women, the author has given a more realistic and tangible picture of women's lives in the novel *Az Sheytan Amookht Va Soozand*. The main character of the story is a woman with a libertarian, critical, and reckless spirit who enters the social arena, trying to tell the unsaid of the women's world. The shift of a woman's position from an object to a subject brings her from the margins to the text and plays an effective role in explaining

the discourse of power and gender in the private space and body. The discourse in the novel creates a reciprocal action against the rational, human, and normative gaps in power and gender relations, focusing on the private space and revealing the unhealthy and one-sided power relations in the traditional and patriarchal culture, and criticizes and highlights false normative concepts and propositions in such a way that their coherence, uniformity, normativity, and predetermined rationality are seriously questioned.

References

- Abazari, Yusef; (2008), Hamidi, Nafiseh, *Sociology of Body and Theoretical Arguments*, *Woman in Development & Politics*, 6(4), pp. 127-160.
- Aghaei, Farkhondeh, (2019) *Az Sheytan Amookht Va Soozand*, 4th Ed., Tehran, Nashr-e Ney.
- Ball, Terence; (2011) *Dagger, Richard, Ideals and Ideologies*, translated by Ahmad Sabouri Kashani, 2nd Ed., Tehran, Ame Publishing House.
- Barry, Smart, (2006) *Michel Foucault*, translated by Hassan Chavoshian and Leila Joafshani, Tehran, Ame Publishing House.
- Burr, Vivien, (2015) *Social Constructionism*, translated by Ashkan Salehi, 2nd Ed., Tehran, Nashr-e Ney.
- Butler, Judith, (2006) *Gender Trouble*, translated by Mohammad Joudi, *Shi'r Magazine*, info.PoetryMag.www.
- Cahill, A, (2000) *Foucault, Rape and the Cansteuction of the Feminian body*. *Hypatia*, 15(1), 43-63.
- Cahill, A, Foucault, (2000) *Rape and the Cansteuction of the Feminian body*. *Hypatia*, 15(1), 43-63.
- Counihan, Carole M, (1999) *the Anthropology of food&Body: Gender, meaning and Power*, London New york: Routledge.
- Counihan, Carole M, (1999) *the Anthropology of food&Body: Gender, meaning and Power*, London New york: Routledge.
- Danovan, Josephine, (2018) *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions*, translated by Farzaneh Raji, 2nd Ed., Tehran, Cheshmeh Publication.
- De Beauvoir, Simone, (2003) *The Second Sex*, translated by Ghasem Sanaavi, 5th Ed., Tehran, Toos Publication.
- Foucault, Michel, (1982) "The Subject and Power, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4.
- Foucault, Michel, (1982) "The Subject and Power, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4.

- Foucault, Michel, (2011a). *Discourse and Truth: History of Truth-Making and Freedom of Expression in the West*, translated by Ali Ferdowsi, Tehran, Dibacheh Publishing.
- Foucault, Michel, (2017). *Lectures on the Will to Know*, translated by Nikoo Sarkhosh and Afshin Jahandideh, 12th Ed., Tehran, Nashr-e Ney.
- Foucault, Michel., (1988) *Technologies of the self*, Luther H.Huck Gutman and Patrick H.Hutton(eds),university of Massachsets Press.
- Foucault, Michel., (1988) *Technologies of the self*, Luther H.Huck Gutman and Patrick H.Hutton(eds),university of Massachsets Press.
- Giddens, Anthony, (2015) *Modernity and Self-Identity; Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, translated by Nasser Movafaghian, 10th Ed., Tehran, Nashr-e Ney.
- Hakim, Catherine, (2012), *Erotic Capital and its Role in Power Relations in Society*, translated by Zhila Sarabi, 1st Ed. London, Penguin Books.
- Heremustin T.Richard, (1990) *Marecek,jeane, Making Difference: Psychology and the construction of Gender*.Haven,London. Yale University Press.
- Heremustin T.Richard, (1990) *Marecek,jeane, Making Difference: Psychology and the construction of Gender*.Haven,London. Yale University Press.
- Kimmel, Michael, (2011) [2000] *The gendered society* (4th ed). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kimmel, Michael, (2011) [2000] *The gendered society* (4th ed). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Le Breton, David, (2019) *la sociologie du corps*, translated by Nasser Fakouhi, 4th Ed., Tehran, Sales Publications.
- Lopez, Jose; (2018) *Scott, John, Social Structure*, translated by Hossein Ghazian, second Ed., Tehran, Nashr-e Ney.
- Lorber, Judith; (1991) Susan A Farrell, ” *Social Construction of Gender*” Newbury Park, Calif:sage Pablication.
- Lorber, Judith; (1991) Susan A Farrell, ” *Social Construction of Gender*” Newbury Park, Calif:sage Pablication.
- Mills, Sara, (2013) *Michel Foucault*, translated by Morteza Nouri, Tehran, Nashre Markaz.
- Ritzer, George, (2000) *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, translated by Mohsen Salasi, 10th Ed., Tehran, Elmi Publications.
- Shamlou, Sepideh, (2006)*Sorkhi-Ye To Az Man*, 12th Ed., Tehran, Nashre Markaz.

- Shawver, Lois, (2006) Dictionary for the Study of the Works of Michel Foucault, <http://users.california.com/~rathbone/foucau10.htm> Page 10 of 10.
- Shawver, Lois, (2006) Dictionary for the Study of the Works of Michel Foucault, <http://users.california.com/~rathbone/foucau10.htm> Page 10 of 10.
- showalter, Elain, (Winter, 1981) *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Writing and Sexual Difference pp179-205, Published by: The University of Chicago Press.
- showalter, Elain, (Winter, 1981) *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Writing and Sexual Difference pp179-205, Published by: The University of Chicago Press.
- Stones, Rob, (2000) *Key Sociological Thinkers*, translated by Mehrdad Mirdamadi, 1st Ed., Tehran, Nashre Markaz.
- Tong, Rosemarie, (2017) *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, translated by Manijeh Najm Araqi, 6th Ed., Tehran, Nashr-e Ney.
- Van Wichelen, S, (2012) The body and the veil. In B. S. Turner (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of body studies* (pp. 206-216). London, England: Routledge.
- Van Wichelen, S, (2012) The body and the veil. In B. S. Turner (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of body studies* (pp. 206-216). London, England: Routledge.
- Zamiran, Mohammad, (2020) *Michel Foucault: Knowledge and Power*, 10th Ed., Tehran, Hermes Publications.
- Zarkani, Seyyed Mehdi; (2010) Agha Babaei Khozani, Zahra; Izanloy, Omid; Jahanpour, Fatemeh; Khademi, Hamid; Sharafaei, Mohsen; Farokhfar, Farzaneh, *History of the Body in Literature*, Tehran, Sokhan Publications.