

**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 Biragh<sup>1</sup>, Behzad Barekat<sup>2</sup>, Fateme Ranjbar<sup>3</sup>

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**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

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author, Associate Professor, Persian Language and Literature, Literature and Humanities, Semnan University *Email: [akbari@semnan.ac.ir](mailto:akbari@semnan.ac.ir)*

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Persian Language and Literature, Literature and Humanities, Gilan University *Email: [behzadbarekat@yahoo.com](mailto:behzadbarekat@yahoo.com)*

<sup>3</sup> Phd student, Persian Language and Literature, Literature and Humanities, Semnan University *Email: [fateme\\_ranjbar@semnan.ac.ir](mailto:fateme_ranjbar@semnan.ac.ir)*



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 "Serkhi 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.

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