

Introduction

One of the few examples of epic poetry composed by a woman in modern Persian literature is Afsar al-Moluk Ameli's *Kourosh-nameh*. The poem is situated at the intersection of literature, historiography, and gendered representation, as it rewrites Achaemenid history through a moral, religious, and antiquarian narrative framework. The text was born in a political and intellectual environment in which Iranian antiquarianism, particularly during the Constitutional period and more systematically under the Pahlavi state, served as a significant discourse for the purpose of legitimizing the monarchy and reconstructing national identity (Ashraf, 2016; Vakili, 2016). *Kourosh-nameh* not only contributes to the veneration of ancient Iran within this framework, but she also poses a critical inquiry: how does a female poet intervene in a male-dominated epic and royal-historical genre?

The primary objective of this article is to investigate the extent to which the revision of history in *Kourosh-nameh* can be traced to female subjectivity and how this intervention can be interpreted in relation to the author's gendered position. The theoretical framework is based on Susan S. Lanser's concept of women's narrative authority (Lanser, 1992) and Joan Wallach Scott's concept of gender as "a useful category of historical analysis" (Scott, 1988). This investigation regards female subjectivity as a narrative intervention in the organization of meaning, the evaluation of events, and the redefinition of the logic of historical narration, rather than as an essential or fixed property of women's writing. The article contends that the moral orientation of *Kourosh-nameh* cannot be interpreted as evidence of a "feminine" text in isolation, as this characteristic is also influenced by Pahlavi antiquarianism, Persian didactic tradition, and religious ethics. However, the poem's narrative pauses, reduced representation of violence, evaluative narrative voice, rearticulation of political legitimacy, and selective silencing of female voices reveal a limited, negotiated, and internally contradictory mode of intervention that may be interpreted in relation to the author's gendered position.

Methodology

A qualitative, interpretive, and text-centered approach is implemented in this investigation, which is founded on discourse-oriented reading and narrative analysis. The *Kourosh-nameh* (1967) of Afsar al-Moluk Ameli serves as the primary corpus, while Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* (2020 edition) serves as a restricted comparative case that represents a canonical male-centered epic narrative. The analysis is predicated on textual evidence that pertains to the representation of power, violence, narrative pacing, the presence or absence of women, and moral judgment. The analytical framework integrates Lanser's theory of narrative authority and Scott's theory of gender as an analytical category in historiography. The poem is analyzed on three interrelated levels: the narrator's place as a source of interpretive authority, the structural and temporal organization of the narrative, and the linguistic and evaluative features. This methodology enables the examination of the relationship between gendered authorship and historical reconstruction without reducing textual difference to essentialist assumptions about femininity.

Results

The results indicate that *Kourosh-nameh* reconstructs the past as a morally charged and meaning-producing narrative, rather than merely as a sequence of historical events. Initially, the poem diverges from the traditional approach to epic heroization. Kings and historical actors are not consistently depicted as mythic or superhuman figures; rather, they are depicted as morally accountable, fallible, and evaluable subjects. The poem's political legitimacy is based on justice, piety, kindness, and responsibility toward subjects, rather than military conquest, heroic grandeur, or royal charisma.

Secondly, the distribution of narrative time and interruptions indicates a substantial departure from the epic temporality that is centered on battle. Graphic depictions of bloodshed are minimized, and scenes of combat, particularly bodily violence, are compressed. In contrast, the narrative focuses on ethical instruction, political prudence, and judgments regarding the behavior of rulers. This reorganization of

narrative emphasis shifts the text's focal point from war and domination to virtue, governance, and moral order. In this regard, the poem moralizes history by means of its narrative structure.

Third, the text's central tension is the relative absence or marginalization of women. Achaemenid history omits or mutes numerous gender-related aspects, including polygamy, harem structures, sexual violence, and ethically troubling domestic arrangements, and female figures rarely appear as independent voices. This implies that the poem generates a morally elevated and purified version of the past. The exclusions in question should not be interpreted as feminist interventions; rather, they are indicative of the limitations that a female author faces when writing within the prevalent patriarchal, antiquarian, and ethical discourses. Simultaneously, the narrator's persistent moral framing and potent evaluative presence indicate an active role in the organization of historical significance. The primary distinction between feminine and masculine writing is not an essential opposition, but rather the distinct narrative strategies that are employed to construct legitimacy, violence, and kingship. This is further supported by a brief comparison with the *Shahnameh*.

Conclusion

The research concludes that *Kourosh-nameh* should not be interpreted as a feminine narrative in any fundamental or fixed sense. The moral orientation, emphasis on humane kingship, and reduced violence of the work are not solely attributed to the author's gender; they are also influenced by Persian didactic tradition, religious ethics, and Pahlavi antiquarianism. Although the poem does disclose a particular method of female narrative intervention, it is contradictory, restricted, and negotiated. Ameli's participation in the reconstruction of the past from within a genre historically dominated by male authority is achieved through the ethical evaluation of power, the selective reshaping of historical material, and the redistribution of narrative pauses.

As a result, female subjectivity in *Kourosh-nameh* is not an explicit or emancipated female voice, but rather a mediated form of agency that operates within the constraints of dominant discourse. This conclusion is in accordance with the theoretical insights of Scott and Lanser, as it illustrates that gender is most effectively addressed as an analytical category rather than an essence. Consequently, the article recommends that future research should investigate additional historical and literary works by Persian women writers in order to more comprehensively illustrate the diverse forms, possibilities, and constraints of women's involvement in historical narration.

Conflict of Interest

The author does not disclose any conflicts of interest.

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