

Silent Voices in Discursive Conflicts in Sa'di's *Golestan*

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Abstract

Adopting a new historicist methodological approach, this paper examines the representation of the various classes in 7th-century Iranian society in Sa'di's *Golestan* against the background of contemporary conflicting discourses about social class. It connects the disruption of contemporary notions concerning social order, as well as the attribution of new meanings to existing signifiers, with the displacement of the center of power in the 7th century AH. The paper also suggests that *Golestan's* resistance to certain discourses and groups indicates the emergence of new centers of power and new discourses in society. On the other hand, in line with the principles of new historicism, the paper shows how the lower strata and silenced minorities in society appear in *Golestan* and rise from objecthood to subject status and sometimes actually use the same ideology that places them at the bottom of the social ladder to resist their leaders. Due to the intertextual approach in this article, other texts are also used for comparison and analysis. The method adopted is, moreover, based on Foucault's theory of power and resistance.

Keywords: Discourse, Power, Resistance, New Historicism, *Golestan*

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Based on the historicity of texts, the present study examines the representation of various classes and discourses in the power network

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of the 7th-century Iranian society. Disruption in notions concerning social order and the emergence of new signifieds for previous signifiers occur following changes in power, resulting in changes in prevalent discourses. The resistance detectable in *Golestan* against some discourses and powerful groups suggests the emergence of new powers and discourses. The present paper shows that the marginalized, silenced minorities of the society find a way to be heard. This study focuses on *Golestan*, but, the intertextual method can be employed to examine other contemporary texts as well.

2. Theoretical Framework

In the present study, a great work of Persian literature is examined in its social, political, historical and cultural context. In this paper, the dominant discourses, anti-discourses, and silenced voices in the field of power relations in Sa'di's *Golestan* have been studied.

3. Methodology

The paper mainly draws upon new historicism, which is influenced by Foucault's theory of power. For the reading of the text in question in this study, critical discourse analysis and rhetorical techniques have been utilized.

4. Discussion and Analysis

Golestan was written at the time of transition of power, which led to changes in values, discourses and classes. *Golestan* resists some discourses in an attempt to develop an anti-discourse. One discourse Sa'di resists in his book through ideological and rhetorical devices is the discourse developed by the state. He frequently challenges the decisions made by the king, offers his political position against the Mongols, and supports the masses. He also criticizes the discourse developed by Sufis by writing about issues the Sufis and their followers strongly disagreed with.

5. Conclusion

The main centers of power in the 7th century in Iran were the rulers and the Sufis. Sufis eliminated silenced voices of different religions, genders and classes through their ideological power and, thus, strengthened the

hegemony of the rulers. Using the discourse analysis and the Foucauldian approaches to explain the relationship between the dominant discourse and the subjugated discourse, it is concluded that a new account of history can be identified in works of literature. The suppressed voices of the marginalized groups can be heard and these micro-narratives can even stand against macro-narratives. In such an analysis the boundaries between historical and literary text are eliminated, resulting in a better understanding of both.

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