THE IMAGES OF WOMEN IN WESTERN AND EASTERN EPIC LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS IN THREE MAJOR EPICS, THE SHAHNAMEH, THE ILIAD AND THE ODYSSEY

By

Akhtar Naraghi

Department of English

McGill University, Montreal

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ABSTRACT

The central thesis of this work is twofold: (1) contrary to the images perpetuated in works of criticism, there exists no sustained misogyny in the text of exemplar epics by Ferdowsi and Homer, or antagonism toward women rooted in the poets' attitude, and (2) using the principle of androcentric (rather than gynocentric) feminist literary theory we have tried to prove the existence of a "systematic inconsistency" in the roles and images assigned to the women of The Shahnameh, the Iliad, and Odyssey. We have identified the presence of a double structure concerning the question of women. Instead of endlessly praising the female characters, or fully condemning the portrayal of such figures, we have instead tried to turn the issues around and examined opposed aspects in female roles and images. We have examined the conflict of opposites and the systematic inconsistency within each text in which a double structure splits the female image in two directions: one force is represented by exalted, praiseworthy, and positive images endowing women with powerful characteristics such as prowess, courage, wisdom, insight, fearlessness, and a host of other attributes. Yet within the same text, the same woman, through another force, is not only relegated to a subservient role, but also finds imposed upon her the condition of not being taken seriously, severe handicaps regarding her full integration in the social fabric of the story, and not being allowed to use her considerable abilities. Within this paradoxical double structure, it is not that one structure eventually cancels out the other, rather the coexistence of both structures in the same work results in the readers' suspension between the conclusions each of them separately urges.

The dichotomy in the characterization of women in epic literature is not limited to a single culture; a consistent thread runs through the universal inconsistency in the make-up of women in epic. The thread runs across the border between the East and the West, wherever that border may be drawn on the map geographically, historically, or culturally.

RÉSUMÉ

L'argument central de la thèse est double: premièrement, contrairement à ce qu'avancent certaines études contemporaines, il ne semble y avoir aucune misogynie systématique dans les épopés d'Homer ou de Ferdowsi, ni aucune trace de méfiance dans les attitudes de ces poètes: deuxièmement, selon l'approche androcentrique de la théorie littéraire féministe qui est adopteé ici (plutôt que l'approche gynocentrique), il se dégage ce que j'ai appelé une "inconsistence systématique" dans la présentation des personnages féminins du Shahnameh, de l'Iliad et de l'Odysseé. Cette inconsistence provient d'une structure double dans ces oeuvres par laquelle la femme est representée d'une part par les images positives de noblesse, de pouvoir, de sagesse, de courage, mais, d'autre part, par des images d'inferiorité, de faiblesse, et d'impuissance vis-a-vis les évenements de l'histoire. Cette opposition n'est pas résolu dans le développement du texte, et cet effet esthétique place le lecteur entre deux conclusions contradictoires.

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Finally, with special love and devotion, I turn to my family. The encouragement, love, care, and constant moral support of my sister Afkham O'Donnell, my

brother Mohammad Naraghi, M.D., and my mother's selfless devotion and countless sacrifices have been a source of inspiration. Last but not the least I turn to the memory of my father, Sadr al-Din Naraghi, who was the first to inspire me toward the ideal of excellence in the pursuit of knowledge. He was my first teacher in literature.

TECHNICAL NOTES

1. I have followed the system adopted by the Library of Congress for transliteration of Arabic and Persian words. I have made a few minor adjustments, selecting more familiar and simpler forms for proper and famous names.

2. All Persian, Arabic and German translations are by this author except when mentioned.

3. Two different dates are used in this study: the Christian and the Islamic calendar, which began in 622 A.D. The Islamic calendar is used to introduce Persian and Arabic sources and the Christian calendar for Western works.

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CONCEPTUAL FRAMES OF REFERENCE

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an analysis of the roles and images of women as found in the texts of three major epics from the early literature of the East and West. The Eastern exemplar will be the Persian epic The Shahnameh (The Book of Kings), rooted in the ancient Indo-Iranian pagan and Zoroastrian traditions, an epic of approximately 60,000 couplets, rewritten in the tenth century A.D. in the form which has reached us today. The Western exemplars will be the two major Greek epics of Homer, the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Our analyses will address the philosophical significance of human awareness, both in Ferdowsi and Homer, of an unalterable cosmic framework in which human life must be lived with the awareness of death and fate in Hades or in the hereafter. But the emphasis of this work will be on epic components such as the fierce joy in life here and now in this world, the exultation of human achievement, the individuality of the characters and their struggles in the epic

world, the resourcefulness of the human mind, and the inevitable crises which arise from the human condition as portrayed in the epics.

One of the predominant themes in orientalist scholarship is that components such as the expression of the human condition, human crises, and irony are indispensable elements in Western culture and literature beginning with the Greeks. Concerning Islamic literature, however, orientalists have a different opinion. G. M. Wickens, Professor Emeritus of the University of Toronto, in a recent, provocative article entitled "To Seek: The Human Crises and the Trivial Round" (1991), elaborates on the topic in both Western and Eastern literature. Concerning Western literature, Wickens goes to the extent of saying that "My conclusion is that the West, intermittently before the Renaissance and steadily thereafter, has tended to regard these topics as the very stuff of which literature is made, while the Islamic tradition--with isolated exceptions--has not..." (271). In search of components such as the protagonists' individuality, ironic conditions, human crises, and the compassionate treatment of less-than-admirable characters in literature, Wickens's search within all of Islamdom leads him to comment that The Shahnameh is "a notable exception" (261). He adds:

> ...it is once again to the somewhat heterodox Shahname, the Persian national epic glorifying Pre-Islamic Iran, that one must turn for many unique and striking examples. Equally paradoxical: its greatest hero, Rustam, despite his technical flaws of lineage, gallantly and tragically serves royal masters who are his moral inferiors. (262-63)

Wickens's examples revolve around male characters. But observing the affinity between the literary qualities of The Shahnameh and similar works of literature within Western tradition, it is part of our thesis that the women of The Shahnameh as well as those of the Homeric epics share, in their own particular way, mutual characteristics outlined above, especially those of individuality and ironic conditions.

Indeed, the central thesis of this work is twofold. In the first place, it is our conviction that due to the Persian and Greek epic heritage and the poets' compassionate treatment of their characters, there exists no sustained misogyny in The Shahnameh, nor in the Iliad, and Odyssey, epics which are rooted in the earliest moments of the development of their culture. Rather, in both the Persian and Greek cultures which produced highly refined civilizations at

different historical periods, misogyny followed the periods of the epics, it did not precede them. The epics demonstrate no hatred or insincerity toward women; instead women are indispensable in these early epics and, more often than not, highly regarded by the heroes of the epics as well as their narrators.

In this respect the chief comparative observation concerning the women of The Shahnameh and those of the Homeric epics is somewhat different. The most influential observation on this subject, despite its extreme brevity, is presented within a general analysis of The Shahnameh by the twentieth-century, German scholar, Theodor Nöldeke, whose scholarship on The Shahnameh has dominated this field since 1920's. We can hardly find any major work of criticism on the epic, including several doctoral dissertations in English,[1] which eschew substantive reference to Nöldeke's work, Das Iranische Nationalepos, translated in 1930 into English by Leonid Bogdanov, as The Iranian National Epic of the Shahnameh, and reprinted in 1979. The work was also translated into Persian, and excerpts showed up in various critical anthologies--the latest in 1986 فردوسی، زن و تراژدی /Ferdowsi, Women, and Tragedy (ed. Hariri). This all points to the fact that much of Nöldeke's works and many of his opinions have been perpetuated, especialy his views on the women of

The Shahnameh, the Iliad, and the Odyssey, typical of which is the following statement translated from the original German:

> In The Shahnameh women do not play a very active role. They appear only as the object of desire or love.... Such figures as Penelope, Andromache, and Nausicaa, who in their pure womanhood are equal to men cannot be found in the Persian epic. (59)
> (See endnote 2 for Bogdanov's translation.)

Nöldeke's sweeping judgment contrasts, for example, with the more cautious analysis of the Anglo-Indian author, Bapsy Winchester:

> It is the emphasis on the individuality of the heroines that sets the work of Firdausi /the Persian epic poet/ apart from other epic tales. Homer and Virgil, with very few exceptions, portrayed a man's world in which the women played at best a subordinate role. Firdausi leads us into a society where women are not mere shadows or reflections, but proud and strong personalities exerting considerable influence in the world of their day. These living portraits of the heroines of ancient Iran are worthy of admiration throughout the ages, and the name of Firdausi lives on as one of the greatest bards that the world has produced. (104)

In terms of "feminist criticism" in this respect one of the many targets is to examine not only the images of women in the primary sources of literature (either by men or women writers), but also dominant

images which critics perpetuate in their works of criticism influenced by conflicting socio-political, cultural, and psychological forces. Nöldeke's image of woman in the epics, and to a lesser extent Winchester's less well-known work, fall into the latter category. Feminist literary criticism, therefore, deems a critical reorientation necessary (Guerin 245) in order to correct the situation in which the critic, rather than the author of the literary work of art, creates misogyny where there is none, or makes the work appear more misogynous than it really is (Munich 238). Adrienne Munich examines the damaging effects of such a critism in scholarship and pedagogy (238-259). A call, therefore, for the revision and the re-examination of the critic's opinion is a logical next step in feminist theory (Greene and Kahn 3); but to avoid producing a mere reactionary or apologetic work, the revision, we believe, must be carried out alongside creative contributions to the analysis of the primary sources--the text of the epics. We will attempt both in this study.

Our main point concerning Nöldeke's comparative observation is: Nöldeke has established a view of The Shahnameh which remains influential: that Ferdowsi's women characters are insipid as compared to those in Homer. This is hardly self-evident; neither poet

paints insipid characters but, rather, paradoxical characters who are women of personal substance limited by social constraints. To put it differently, while there exists no sustained misogyny in the texts of the epics, nor any evidence that the poets had such an attitude toward women, the characters are, nevertheless, in a paradoxical situation in which on the one hand, they possess resourcefulness of character, and on the other, they are ironically limited by social constraints inherent in the structure of each story.

The twofold thesis of this work is, therefore, this: (1) that contrary to the images perpetuated in works of criticism, there exist no sustained misogyny in the text of the epics or hatred and insincerity toward women rooted in the poets' attitude, and (2) we will therefore try to demonstrate the existence of a systematic inconsistency in the roles and images which are assigned to the women of these epics. We will examine in detail the presence of a double structure concerning the question of women. Instead of endlessly praising the female characters, or condemning the portrayal of such figures, we will try to turn the issues around and examine contradictory aspects in female roles and images. We will examine the conflict of opposites (i.e. the systematic inconsistency) within

a single literary text in which a double structure splits the female image in two opposite directions: one force is represented by exalted praiseworthy, and positive images which also endow the woman with powerful characteristics such as prowess, courage, beauty, wisdom, insight, fearlessness, and a host of other attributes. Yet within the same text, the same woman, through another force, is not only relegated to a subservient role, but also finds imposed upon her the condition of not being taken seriously, severely handicapped regarding her full integration into the social fabric of the story, and not being allowed to use her considerable abilities. The dictates of such a paradoxical literary vision pull the women of these epics in two directions. Within this paradoxical double structure, it is not that one structure eventually cancels out the other, rather the coexistence of both structures in the same work results in the readers' suspension between the conclusions each of them separately urges. The examination of such a conflict of opposites and a systematic inconsistency will, we believe, lead us to a better knowledge of the position of women in the epics.

The dichotomy in the characterization of women in early epic literature is not limited to a single culture. Whatever differences there may be in the

cultures of the East and the West, the examples selected in this dissertation indicate the existence of a common problem concerning the question of women in the early popular epic literature of two nations. In other words, there exists a consistent thread that runs through the universal inconsistency in the make-up of women in epic. The thread runs across the border between the East and the West, wherever that border may be drawn on the map geographically, historically, or culturally.

Both Homer and Ferdowsi wrestled with the material they inherited from their traditions. They retold old stories and did the best they could with the raw material, and, to borrow Wickens's terminology, treated even less-than-admirable characters compassionately; they crystallized prowess and wisdom in their ideal characters; they distanced themselves from misogyny; they reflected the most suitable images that they could handle in the characterization of their female personalities; but they left intact the paradoxes which existed before their time and after. Two universal poets, one from the East and one from the West, grappled with a universal problems which proved to be as deep-seated as the poets' unquestionable genius.

In our attempt to elaborate the thesis of the work we will use both feminist and non-feminist theoretical

approaches. The pluralistic vision we have in mind is articulated by Guerin:

> At any given moment in mature interpretation of a piece of literature the reader may be responding from one particular orientation--perhaps a biographical, historical, formalistic, or psychological approach. Ideally, however, the ultimate response should be multiple and eclectic. This is so because a work of literary art is the embodiment of a potential human experience; and because human experience is multidimensional, the reader needs a variety of ways to approach and realize ("make real") that experience.
> (Guerin and others 239)

Although this work deals with the issue of woman in literature, we do not feel compelled to limit the scope of our research to particular areas which feminist theories prescribe. The epics we are dealing with are too complex for any single feminist theory to explain. Feminist scholars who have limited themselves to woman-centered, feminist literary categories have missed much of the complexity of women in these epics, not to mention non-feminist issues in the epics which require broader horizons to understand. In this respect traditional approaches such as source studies, historical-biographical, moral-philosophical, textual, phenomenological, author intentionality, and a methodology as remote from feminism as Aristotelian

criticism (including the "Chicago School") can all be beneficial to the literary analysis of woman in epic literature.

Feminist criticism takes issue, for example, with the intentionality of the author, which allegedly imposes a limit on the text. Feminist criticism, it is said, can gain from a practice that does not privilege the author's intention which implies patriarchal methodolatry (Greene and Kahn 27, 55, 71). But the intention of the poets and their possible misogyny do make a difference in the presentation of women in the text of the epics. The use of this methodology, for example, also referred to as a phenomenological criticism of consciousness, can prove beneficial:

> Without denying that the work has, in some sense, a life of its own, the phenomenologist believes that the work cannot be cut off from the intentionality that made it or from the intentionality that experiences it after it is made. In stressing intention, the phenomenologist would therefore call us back to the consciousness of the author and the critic.... In pursuing a comprehension of the work, the phenomenologist must seek out in each work 'its own way of going.' The interpreter must "find this way and go along with it, experiencing the process of the work as process.' (Guerin 267-68)

To examine subjects as such, we will therefore utilize methodologies beyond feminism regardless of feminist

prescriptions, and refer to multidimensional approaches while presenting relevant issues in the chapters that follow.

With regard to feminist criticism, however, and its place in our analysis as well as the particular kind of feminist approach utilized in this work, the following classification will be considered. As Guerin says, There are three subdivisions in feminist criticism: (1) the analysis of the image of women nearly always as it appears in work by male authors; (2) the examination of existing writings and criticism of female authors, and (3) prescriptive criticism, prescriptive because it sets standards for literature that is good from a feminist viewpoint and is best defined in terms of the ways in which literature can serve the cause of liberation (Guerin 247-48). The first category in this classification is the focus of our study in this work. This kind of feminist study, however, has recently become problematic in feminist criticism. Adrienne Munich elaborates the tension:

> One of the first feminist projects was to examine portrayals of female characters in male-authored texts (de Beauvoir 1952; Ellmann 1968; Millett 1969). Finding abundant evidence of misogyny in these characters and in gender characterization in general, many feminist critics were persuaded that male authors could not speak truly about women. Consequently,

> they proposed that whatever one could consider as a female presence in a male-authored text would necessarily be filtered through the complex workings of male desire. To read male-authored texts, therefore, would be merely to encounter those stereotypes and those attitudes towards women that constitute a dreary record of women's oppression. As a second strategy, feminist criticism concentrated upon recovering works written by women, to set the record straight, to correct the imbalance, and to restore to critical attention authentic female voices. (242)

To encourage the analysis of the question of woman in woman-authored texts, however, is one thing, and it is quite another to prohibit the same subject in male-authored literary works. Elain Showalter, for example, does the latter: "She devalues or even prohibits women's writing about /male-authored/ literary tradition" (Munich 243). "This particular limitation," Munich rightfully challenges, "reinforces, however unwittingly, a primitive patriarchal taboo forbidding women to approach sacred objects" (243). According to Showalter's "gynocentric criticism" as opposed to "androcentric criticism" (Munich 243; Kaplan 53), we should therefore be advised not to proceed with our study because the epics were written by men. Again Munich rightfully challenges: "it would be mistaken for feminists to polarize criticism according to the

genitals of the author, or to attend only to 'women's writings'" (251). Moreover, this kind of prohibition would ironically marginalize the subject of woman in literature even further, a deficiency which feminists have been trying to overcome for some time. "A more fruitful enterprise," Munich adds, "would not limit scrutiny but would instead frame feminist questions appropriate to any cultural production" (252).

In conjunction with our work, Kaplan's and Showalter's further distinctions of the varieties of feminist criticism are illuminating. In Kaplan's words:

> For some of us, feminist criticism originated in a recognition of our love for women writers. In this we diverge from our sister critics whose awakening was hastened by their urge to reveal the diverse ways women have been oppressed, misinterpreted and trivialized by the dominant patriarchal tradition, and to show how these are reflected in the images of women in the works of male authors. (37)

Showalter labels these categories respectively "feminist criticism," which she upholds and "feminist critique," which she rejects. "Feminist criticism," in her opinion, is based on the study of social and economic conditions of women in conjunction with a genuinely woman-centered, independent, analysis of literary texts written and criticized by women (for

which she invents the term "gynocentric criticism"); "feminist critique," on the other hand, says Showalter, often redresses a grievance with regard to the images of women, a grievance (although not enough for woman-centered feminist critics such as Showalter and Kaplan) "still has the energy to unsettle and disturb a complacent reader" (Kaplan 53; also 37-38)). Our analysis of the images of women within the systematic inconsistency and the paradoxical portrayal of women in Homeric epics and The Shahnameh shares this aspect of, to use a Showalterian term, "feminist critique." Our purpose, however, is not to frustrate the reader(s) who might want to see the Eastern and/or Western literary traditions valorized; rather our intention is, in Alexander Pope's words:

> Learn then what morals critics ought to show,
> For 'tis but half a judge's task, to know.
> 'Tis not enough, taste, judgment, learning, join;
> In all you speak, let truth and candor shine....
> With mean complacence ne'er betray your trust,
> Nor be so civil as to prove unjust.
> Fear not the anger of the wise to raise;
> Those best can bear reproof, who merit praise.
> ("Essay on Criticism", Part 3, lines 560 & 580)

Further feminist conceptual frames of reference and their relations to our work include: a study of contradictions and ruptures rather than a homological portrayal of women (Gardiner 115) in the epics; an examination of the ways in which we can recognize women in the world of the epics, which is predominantly the

world of men; the essence of women's characters in relation to the heroes (Greene and Kahn 14) and women's relation to other women, if any (a subject in feminism which is an extension of Virginia Woolf's comment in A Room of One's Own that women are rarely portrayed in relation to each other in male-authored works); also, advantages such as the quest pattern for women and disadvantages such as the profound difference between what society allows women and what it makes possible for men (Kaplan 47); and apparent advantages which in the final analysis could mean disadvantages and losses for women(Greene and Kahn 18-19), as well as "growth patterns" for female characters in directions as such:

> Dinnerstein, Chodorow and Rich describe gender differences in terms that imply women are nicer than men. Empathy, responsibility, and interdependence seem preferable to defensive aggression, destructive rage against women and nature, and a compulsion for control. However, other feminists evaluate the same characteristics in terms of female disadvantage. For Jane Flax (1978) and Jessica Benjamin (1980), women's fluid ego boundaries are a weakness. (Gardiner 134-35)

One of the major points of departure in women's studies occurs when growth patterns for male characters, patterns such as the progressive achievement of independence, autonomous individual

identity, an assertive role in the social structure of the story, and tragic or heroic achievement of a more well-rounded character, are achieved at women's cost. A typical scene, for example, occurs in the Odyssey, where Telemachos is growing as a character and developing kingly manners, but at the same time insults his mother, ordering her into the house and telling her to mind her own business, the loom and the distaff, to give orders to the servants rather than involving herself with the serious affairs of the state (Odyssey I, 356; 21, 350). Traditional criticism upholds the value of growth for Telemachos in this scene (Kitto 1988, 21, 24-25); but feminist criticism finds fault with such a process in which Penelope suffers a setback. Josephine Donovan elaborates this idea in "Toward a Woman's Poetics":

> It is interesting to note that René Wellek rejected Madame de Stael's approach to literature as too personal. He wrote 'Her discussion of Greek literature is almost grotesque.... The main offense of the Greeks is the low status granted to women. Telemachus ordering Penelope to be silent must have conjured the vision of some man giving the same order to Madame de Stael.'.... Wellek would, of course, have critics be objective and unmoved by such adventitious matter as woman's status in society. A feminist critic is not only moved by such matters but makes them her point of departure. (Donovan 106)

Two different critical approaches, therefore, lie in the interpretations of scenes as such (of which there exist several examples in The Shahnameh as well): one approach reflects the world of the epic from the viewpoint of male characters (for example Kitto's, mentioned above); the other, namely feminist criticism, which makes such viewpoints its point of departure.

From the outset the emphasis in this thesis is on women; we will therefore use the idea of a feminist point of departure as a frame of reference in our study of women characters in Ferdowsi and Homer. Our feminist ideal is not an extreme woman-centered one but an androgynous standpoint, a position upheld by feminist critics such as Josephine Donovan (quoted above), Annis Pratt, Carolyn G. Heilbrun. The position is elaborated by Wilfred L. Guerin, and others, who uphold a pluralistic critical approach to literature:

> The notion that the new movement in feminist criticism will develop ultimately not a new vision (alone) but an androgynous vision may be one of the helpful correctives to come out of the movement. In its simplest form, the call for androgyny (not to be confused with homosexuality) is found in comments like that of Josephine Donovan, when she states that a 'feminine aesthetic will provide for the integration into the critical process of the experiences denoted as 'feminine' in our culture'.... In context, because her assumption

> is that our culture heretofore has been male-oriented; this would be a movement toward an integration of male and female aesthetics and sensibilities and, consequently, an enrichment of our culture, perhaps even its salvation. (248-49)

To sum up: we will try to apply a pluralistic critical approach which integrates an androgynous, feminist point of departure in conjunction with our attempt to elaborate the twofold thesis of our work as explained above. Also, the discussion is based on the notion that The Shahnameh and Homeric traditions equally and forcefully glorify individual dynamism, the exultation of human achievement, the characters' particular attraction and fascination for life, and a sense of literary irony. It is in such a literary world that we will examine the question of woman.

PART I

FERDOWSI AND HOMER, THEIR EPICS, AND MISOGYNY

CHAPTER I

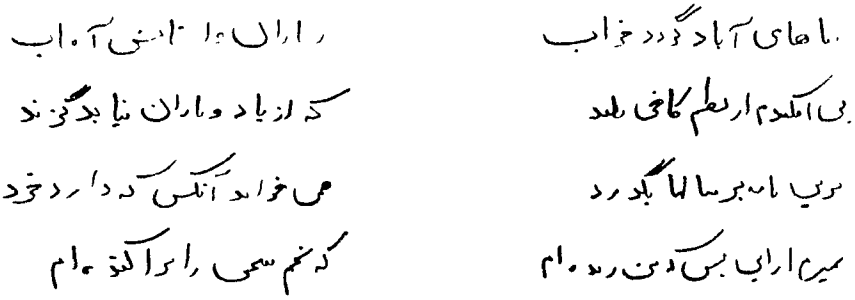
THE PERSIAN EPIC: THE SHAHNAMEH, FERDOWSI, AND MISOGYNY

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPIC:

The Shahnameh, the most significant epic in Persian literature, is the monumental work of the premier epic poet Ferdowsi. Accurate biographical information about the poet is nonexistent; all we know about him is based on the information extracted from the main text of the epic in which the poet gives certain dates and events of his life and his work. He was probably born about A.D. 920. He began the versification of The Shahnameh about A.D. 957-85, finished the first edition in 999, and completed the second edition in 1010. He died in his native town of Tus probably about 1020-25.[3]

We know that he was a Dihqan (landed gentry). He was not a rich person, but he was quite well off, and spent

over 30 years of his life compiling and completing the epic The Shahnameh. Toward the end of his life he experienced financial difficulties and died a very poor man. In one of his poems he mentions that he had some loaves of bread to eat and some wood to heat his home in the harsh winter of north western Iran. In spite of all this, he maintained his high spirits and died proud of his monumental work, The Shahnameh.



James Atkinson's translation of these lines in his The Shah Nameh of the Persian Poet Firdausi is as follows:

> My verse, a structure pointing to the skies;
> Whose solid strength destroying time defies.
> . . . . . .
> All best with learning, read, and read again,
> The sovereign smiles, and thus approves my strain:
> "Richer by far, Firdausi, than a mine
> Of previous gems, is this bright lay of thine."
> Centuries may pass away, but still my page
> Will be the boast of each succeeding age.
> (Atkinson 340).

Ferdowsi was one of the major poets of Persian Renaissance literature of the 10th and 11th centuries A.D. This Renaissance coincided with and followed a cultural/political movement called Shu'ūbīyeh which

affected Ferdowsi's thinking as he became associated with some of the views of this movement. Shu'ūbīyeh was a movement directed toward the claims of the Arabs who by the second and third centuries of the advent of Islam (9th and 10th centuries A.D.) argued, that they were a race superior to non-Arab Muslims. The central message of Islam originally advocated that all people, tribes, and nations are created equal and are the same in the eyes of God. But gradually the Arabs developed their own version of superiority to non-Arab Muslims. In opposition to this claim, Shu'ūbīyeh, based on a Qur'ānic verse that God has created all groups equal, challenged the new Arab attitude:

١٣- يَاأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ
مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ
وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا
وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ
إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ○
٤٩:١٣

'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī's widely accepted translation of the Qur'ān offers this English version:

O mankind! We created
You from a single (pair)
Of a male and a female,
And made you into
Nations and tribes, that
Ye may know each other

(Not that ye may despise
Each other). Verily
The most honoured of you
In the sight of God
Is (he who is) the most
Righteous of you.
And God has full Knowledge
And is Well acquainted
(With all things).

49:13

During the Shu'ūbī Movement Iran was under the political and cultural domination of the Arabs. Ferdowsi's thinking was heavily influenced by the Shu'ūbi thought. In The Encyclopedia of Islam D. B. Macdonald offers this explanation for the Shu'ubi religio-political movement:

> Therefore this passage /the above Qur'anic verse/ was used by those non-Arabs who objected to the pride of the Arabs towards them.... It was thus a more or less successful attempt on the part of the different subjected races to hold their own and to distinguish, at least between Arabism and Islam. In Persia this meant even the restoration of Persian as the language of literature and the limitation of the use of Arabic to the theological sciences. (395)

The Renaissance of Persian literature, in which Ferdowsi was a major figure, was a complex event deeply rooted in Iranian historical, philosophical, cultural and religious foundation. Ferdowsi's work, The Shahnameh, is the most significant epic among a number of epics in

Persian. Z. Ṣafā, emphasizes this point while providing his readers with information about numerous other epics written by Persian poets. In his حماسه سرائی در ایران (Epic Tradition in Iran) Ṣafā explains why The Shahnameh is a superior work of art compared to all other Persian epics combined. Other major critics of epic tradition in Iran expound more or less the same notion.

The Shahnameh is a work of approximately 60,000 couplets (equivalent to approximately 120,000 lines in English poetry). In comparison, the Iliad of Homer contains about 16,000 lines. Other epics such as Beowulf are very short compared to this work. Norma Goodrich observes that:

> Ferdousi has been compared to Homer, to Chaucer, to Layaman, and to the author of Beowulf epic. While all of these comparisons have some grain of truth, it seems rather that there is no work in the Western world of such length and completeness. Our epics are episodes by comparison. (109)

The title of the epic, the Shahnameh, which means The Book of Kings, is a New Persian term (compared to Middle and Old Persian Periods); however, not only the title, but the epic itself is rooted in Middle Persian and Old Persian periods. Old Persian is associated with the Achaemenian dynasty, which ruled Iran from B.C. 550 to B.C. 330; Middle Persian begins with the Sasanian period covering A.D. 226 to 652; and New Persian follows the

Arab invasion of Iran in A.D. 652 and the advent of Islam.[4] The final version of The Shahnameh is in Modern Persian and was written in the late 10th and early 11th century A.D.

The origin of the existing Shahnameh in Modern Persian goes back to Middle Persian, better known as the Pahlavi language. In Pahlavi the epic was called Khu'atai-Namak, which like the Shahnameh, meant the Book of Kings. Concerning this Pahlavi source, Theodor Nöldeke, a prominent German orientalist, whose book on The Shahnameh was translated into English by Leonid Th. Bogdanov has the following to say:

> The language of the book /the pre-Islamic source/ was Phalavi, the only written language in use among Persians at that time. Its title almost for certain was Khuatainamak, in later pronunciation Khodhai-nameh, i.e., 'The Book of Lords,' corresponding to the later Shah-nameh, 'The Book of Kings.' (24)

The origins of the epic go even farther than the Pahlavi tradition. Some of the stories of the epic and the names of some major characters existed in the old Persian era and are recorded in the holy book of the Zoroastrians, written in Avesta (one of the ancient Persian dialects). Concerning some dates about the first appearances of the Shahnameh heroes, Edward G. Browne mentions in his Literary History of Persia (4 vols.) that

Goshtasp (Wistasb) is a major figure in both the Shahnameh and the Avestan tradition. Browne traces the origins back to the period from 1000 B.C. to 1400 B.C. (vol. 1, 95-96). It is, however, generally believed that some of the stories actually came with the first Aryans, who came into Iran from the North. The exact dates of the early migrations are not known. However, the existence of Proto-Indo-European peoples are traced back to the third millennium B.C.[5] Norma Goodrich refers to more specific dates:

> The Shah Namah, or Book of Kings, of Firdausi covers the history of Persia over a total period of 3,784 years, or from 3223 B.C. to the Mohammedan conquest of Persia in A.D. 651. (106)

Regardless of specific dates (such as the above figures) in remote historical periods, we know for sure from reliable historical sources that The Shahnameh is deeply rooted in the Pre-Islamic Iranian era. Unfortunately the pre-Islamic texts of the epic are all irretrievably lost. We know, however, that the Pahlavi Khudai-Nameh was translated into Arabic by Ibn-i Muqaffa', in the early Islamic era. The translation into Arabic was also lost, but before it disappeared it was translated into Modern Persian prose. We also know that immediately before the time of Ferdowsi, there was almost a century of "Shahnameh Nevisi" (Shahnameh writing) when the epic was

rewritten and refined a number of times. These practices eventually produced a particular copy of the epic in Persian prose, known as Shahnameh Abumansuri. Ferdowsi had a copy of this prose epic, and spent 30 years of his life composing the national epic, refining it, and presenting the work in moving Persian verse.[6] Completed in the late 10th or the early 11th century A.D., the work was entitled The Shahnameh and to this date copies of the epic, along side the Holy Book, can be found in most Iranian homes.

The content of The Shahnameh, its indebtedness to the pre-Islamic era, and the innovations of the poet himself are matters of dispute among scholars. On the one hand, from Ferdowsi's own testimony in his verses we know that he had a written epic in his hand, a book which he copied faithfully. On the other, we know that Ferdowsi collected some stories and added them to the collection of the epic adventures, stories which had been celebrated from generation to generation but were not included in the written epics of his time. He added those stories to The Shahnameh. The debate of tradition vs. innovation revolves around the extent to which Ferdowsi followed the available texts, or fully integrated new dimensions of thought and feelings, in his version of the stories.

The problem of the Pre-Islamic historical originality of the epic on the one hand, and the independent

creativity of Ferdowsi based on the social tastes of his time on the other, has also been a matter of debate among scholars for some time.[7]

M. Furūghī, for example, places emphasis on the idea that Ferdowsi followed traditional sources of The Shahnameh in his rewriting of the epic. Furughi refers to terms such as origin, ancient, roots, national history, and a host of other words which, for the sake of convenience, we will call tradition. Furūghī states that in order for Ferdowsi to be loyal to tradition, he had to sacrifice some of his own creative powers: "It was a pity that Ferdowsi had to limit himself to the text of the original epic to such an extent" (102).

Z. Ṣafā also highlights the fact that Ferdowsi followed tradition. But he emphasizes the role of Ferdowsi's creative powers in the overall effect of the epic. Regarding the emphasis on tradition, Safa says, "Ferdowsi did not invent anything and followed the tradition" (196), but concerning changes in the epic he adds "Ferdowsi narrates more beautifully and provides more creative details than the original material" (232). Safa adds further that "sometimes Ferdowsi wrote his material without imitating any sources" (265).

Sh. Miskūb accepts the fact that Ferdowsi used the existing written material, but also adds that in re-narrating the stories Ferdowsi reflected the mood,

feelings, and conditions of his time, as well as his own experiences (183), while M. Mīnuvī judges that "the material which Ferdowsi read was different from that which he wrote" (62).

F.M. Javānshīr, whose interpretations are colored by Marxist views, places more emphasis on the effects of the conditions in Ferdowsi's own time on the formation of the epic. He mentions that Ferdowsi was writing about injustice, pain, and suffering in his own time when he wrote The Shahnameh. He admits that some texts and stories were available to Ferdowsi, but he argues that Ferdowsi would have chosen the most suitable version of the stories according to his taste and the condition of his time. Javānshīr proceeds with his argument that Ferdowsi would then remold the stories to speak about the real conditions of his own period. He concludes Ferdowsi should be considered the creator in a new sense of the epic in its entirety (44-51).

In this short survey of criticism concerning the historical originality of The Shahnameh or the newness of the work in the 11th century A.D., we have touched upon a continuing debate on the subject. Obviously, most judgments are no more than opinions. It is not our intention in this work to resolve this debate, especially in the absence of solid Pre-Islamic texts to be compared with The Shahnameh, or in the face of the haziness of

historical evidence which can provide tangible assistance. Actually, source studies which deal with the subject of the origins of the Shahnameh stories and their attempts to figure out how far back in history each story or each hero goes, eventually face the central problem of the scarcity of solid evidence. One such example is Marcia E. Maguire's work in which she tries very hard to come to a definitive answer in her analysis of the origins of some heroes in the epic. Facing the problems of the lack of solid textual evidence, she is forced to admit that "Owing to the lack of material on either the development of the Rustam legend, or the exact sources from which it was drawn, it is impossible to reach a conclusion" (72-73).

Concerning the subject of this thesis, the analysis of major women figures, we are facing a similar problem. Are we to consider the work as a precisely pre-Islamic entity, or should we be forced into the position that the epic is an entirely new creation of a later age in Iran? In the absence of solid scholarly evidence, we will avoid both of these extreme positions. Instead, we will consider The Shahnameh as an existing work of art which has incorporated in it the totality of what we may call the Shahnameh tradition. The tradition of celebrating the legacy of this epic existed in pre-Islamic Iran, it continued to Ferdowsi's own time, and has not only survived but also flourished in the 1000 years after the

poet's death. Our chief concern is the study of The Shahnameh as work of art from the viewpoint of, to use a German term, literaturwissenschaft: an analysis of a work which has reached us from the literature of the past and its relations to cultural values (Hohendahl 14-15), as well as phenomenological concern with the existential situation of the work itself, and actions involved in responding to the existing text (Guerin 264-65).

One more problem has to be addressed before we proceed with detailed character analysis and the images of women in this epic tradition. This problem has to do with the selection of a fully uncontaminated text of Ferdowsi's epic. Due to the fact that throughout the centuries a great number of irrelevant comments have entered the work through copyists, major editors have tried to establish a dependable authoritative text of Ferdowsi's work, a process which is still continuing.

Until recently the edition regarded as most reliable has been the nine-volume Moscow Edition, which was partially based on the British Museum Manuscript dating back to 1276 (675 H.).[8] However, in 1977 Angelo M. Piemontes discovered a manuscript in Florence which dates back to 1217 (614 H.). This manuscript is partially the basis for a new edition of The Shahnameh. The editor is Khāliqī-Muṭlaq, and has published only the first volume so far.[9] This edition is now regarded as a highly reliable

text. We will base the character analysis of our first figure on this edition. The text used as the basis of other characters will be the Moscow Print Edition.

Moreover, the Shahnameh readers in general , and Western readers in particular, will want to observe that this Persian epic has an unique characteristic. Most epic literature of all major cultures is associated with the subject of war, violence, conquest, and bloodshed. Epic literature celebrates the world of men and heroes, and glorifies the battles, and victories of its protagonists. In this respect The Shahnameh has a lot in common with Western epic literature, but it also includes extensive, beautiful love stories and romances. The Shahnameh, therefore, must be viewed not only as a war epic, but also as a book of romance and love stories.

The Shahnameh begins at the beginning of time in the name of the Lord of soul and wisdom; it follows the creation of universe and of the world, the creation of man, the sun and the moon; it follows the succession of the Persian kings and heroes through history and ends with the fall of the Persian empire to the Mus'em Arabs toward the middle of the seventh century A.D.

The Shahnameh is composed of three major parts in which appear approximately 60 women characters. Although these characters are found in all three sections of the epic: the mythological, the legendary, and the historical

part, the present detailed character analysis cannot possibly deal with all those women. Our study will center around major characters in the legendary part, in which the most important characters all appear. These are characters who reflect major view points about women in the world of the epic, illustrating not only ideal images in them, but also their limitations in their world. We will examine six major female characters as they appear in the text of The Shahnameh.

Before we deal with objective analyses of female characters, their images, their position, their strength, and their weaknesses in the world of the stories in which they appear, we will first address the issue of misogyny as it relates to the poet himself and his attitude towards women. We have already clarified our position in defense of the "criticism of intentionality"--also known as the "criticism of consciousness"--in the "Conceptual Frames of Reference".

FERDOWSI AND MISOGYNY:

Ferdowsi has often been accused of being a misogynist.[10] This accusation stems from harsh comments directly made toward women in the text of some copies of the epic that have been rewritten over the centuries. However, as we mentioned earlier these texts have been contaminated through the additions of

couplets and totally irrelevant comments which suited the tastes and the views of the copiers, some of whom were poets in their own rights and were able to assimilate their additions into the main text.

One such example, from among too many to list here, is found in "The Story of Zal and Rudabeh." The major female character of the story, Rudabeh, is presented most favorably and in the best possible manner that a character may be portrayed. However, within this story there exist two irrelevant couplets which infiltrated the text of the epic in later centuries. The couplets in this story, as well as their equivalents in other episodes of the epic, contributed to the misconception of Ferdowsi's misogyny. The lines in question are:

چه نیکو سخن گفت آن رای زن زنردان مکن یاد در پیش زن

دل زن همان دیو را هست جای زگفتار با سد جوید ه رای

دبیرسیاقی ج ا ص ۱۲۷ س ۷۵ م

> How well did the wise man say that one should not remind a woman of men. The heart of a woman is the abode of the devil; their desires overpower their wisdom.

Assuming that the couplets are Ferdowsi's, Dabīr-Sīyāqī, a major Shahnameh critic, says in his "چهره زن در شاهنامه" (The Portrait of Women in The Shahnameh) that "Ferdowsi is angry with women or

perhaps complains that they cannot control themselves in falling in love with men. The poet's comment is a counsel especially to young girls who are more vulnerable to the demon of temptation in their hearts because their desires overpower their wisdom" (53).

But the fact is that such comments are not the work of the poet himself and that they have been added to the text by copiers over the centuries. The example given above does not fit the context of the story which is filled with praise for Rudabeh. Apart from this obvious point, recent works of source studies[11] and the discovery of new texts of the epic indicate that the above lines have been added in later historical periods. For example the most authentic text of the epic to date published by Khāliqī-Mutlaq does not contain the lines in question. The point, therefore, is that a critical reading of the epic demands that the reader exclude these comments because they are unauthentic and corrupt the text. The view of Furūghī supports our point when he says in his مقالات فروغی (Furūghī's papers) "Negative comments have been written about women in The Shahnameh, but they have nothing to do with Firdowsi. Those who have been hurt by women have composed poems condemning women and have added them to The Shahnameh" (89).

Similar to the problem concerning Ferdowsi's

attitude toward women is the problem of his religious tendencies. His religious affiliation, too, has been the source of corrupting influences by the copiers. Muslem copiers of the Sunni Sect have invented and added to the epic lines of praise for Sunni Caliphs, thus giving the reader the impression that Ferdowsi had Sunni tendencies. Shī'ī copiers have done the same thing in elevating their own saints in the epic. For example, a long passage of contradictory comments appears at the beginning of the epic concerning the sectarian tendencies of the poet. Khāliqī-Muṭlaq's edition of The Shahnameh has purged this section of contaminating elements. Khaliqi-Mutlaq indicates in a separate article entitled "معرفی قطعات الحاقی شاهنامه" (Introducing Additional Pieces in The Shahnameh) that over the centuries the text of the epic became a battle ground for Shī'ī/Sunni controversies (28).

Therefore, it is not surprising that other unauthentic comments such as those on the subject of women should exist in the epic. Modern scholarship is purging the epic of these additions in an attempt to get as close as possible to the original text and to the poet himself, his world view, and, in our case, his attitude toward women. Here we have to add, however, that not all negative comments are irrelevant in the epic. For example there are comments in the story on

Sudabeh which fit the overall structure of the story and the demonic character of this woman as she is portrayed in the story. But negative comments about a single female character who, according to the value system of the epic, has unlawful desires for her stepson, does not make Ferdowsi a misogynist. Apart from such an exceptional case, Ferdowsi's view of women is positive and laudatory. Therefore, we can observe with full confidence that the attitude of the poet toward women is one of admiration, respect, honor, and praise.

The best example of Ferdowsi's courtesy toward women is his own friendship with his wife and his high regard for her. The source of this information is the poet's introduction to the "Story of Bizhan and Manizheh" in which he refers to his wife with high poetic admiration and respect. The text which we quote is self-explanatory:

بنا چون تو روی نسنه نفیر — نه بهرام بیدا نه گیو ان نه تیر
بیذهیم بیدانیت از راز — دلم تنگ شد زآن شب دیربار
بروتبدم و خواستم زو چراغ — بروت آن بت مهربام زباغ
براگفت برجیرو دل شاد دار — روان را زدرد و غم آزاد دار
جهان چون گذاری همی گذرد — خردمند مردم چرا غم خورد
بگفتم بیارای بت خوب چهر — بخوان داستان و بیفزای بهر

بس آنگه گفت عرض من شنوی بسرآری از دفتر پهلوی

بخواند آن بت مهربان داستان ز دفتر نوشته گه باستان

It was a night that might have been a ghost which had washed its face with pitch.... Nothing was visible, below or above, and my heart was clutched with dismay at the long quietude. In that mood of dismay I sprang from where I lay--I had a loving companion in the house.... /"Be happy," she told me, "and free your soul from pain and agony.... Life will pass, why should a wise man be unhappy?"/.... O moon-cheek, tell me the story tonight, and she replied, "When you hear this tale from me, set it out in verse from the Pahlavi book of legends." That beloved and beautiful friend recited the story to me out of that book written long ago.
(Levy 152-53)

Another significant consideration which can help us appreciate the views and attitude of Ferdowsi towards women is an examination of the sharply contrasting views predominant among contemporary philosophers and scholars writing shortly after Ferdowsi's death in 1020-25.

One of the most significant books of ethics in Persian literature is قابوس نامه by Kay Kā'ūs Ibn Iskandar for his son Gīlānshāh, composed in 1082-83, then 63 years of age. This work has been

translated into English by Levy entitled A Mirror for Princes. Regarding pleasure and women, the author advises his son in this fashion:

> As between women and youths, /slave boys/ do not confine your inclinations to either sex; thus you may find enjoyment from both kinds without either of the two becoming inimical to you. (Kay Kā'ūs Ibn Iskandar, trans. Levy 77; subsequent quotations from this work are Levy's translation.)

A few lines later the author adds "During the summer let your desires incline towards youths and during the winter towards women" (78). On the subject of marriage he says:

> Yet even if a women is affectionate, handsome and well-beloved, do not submit yourself entirely to her control nor be subservient to her command. Someone asked Alexander why he did not marry Darius's daughter, who was very beautiful. He replied, "It would be an ugly matter if we, who have become master of all men in the world, should have a woman as master over us". (117)

The author of _____ قابوس نامه continues that:

> And you must marry a virgin, so that there shall be no room in her heart for love of anyone but you, and, further, in order that she shall think all men alike, thus preventing her from conceiving a desire for any other man. (118)

Not only do such views reflect existing attitudes in the society, but also they perpetuate misogynist tendencies in literature and justify their existence.

Another major religious scholar, philosopher, mystic, and university chancellor of the 11th century is the famous Al-Ghazzālī, who was born and died in Khurasan, the same province where Ferdowsi lived all his life. Ghazzālī (1058-1111 A.D.) is one of the most well-known Islamic philosophers in the West. Although much credit may go to his scholarly works, his views on women stand in sharp contrast to Ferdowsi's. Ghazzālī's کیمای سعادت (The Alchemy of Happiness) is one of his major works which has been translated from Persian into many languages. An English translation has been published by Claud Field based on a Hindu version. Our translation of the Persian text reflects Ghazzali's views that "Truly women are slaves to men, and it is in the Tradition that if it were permissible to worship other than God, women should idolize men in prayer" (Ghazzālī 322). Ghazzālī's examplar woman is one who is completely separated from men not only in ordinary social contacts, but also in seeing men or in being seen by them. In his کیمای سعادت Ghazzālī says:

> Men should prevent all that may cause catastrophe. As

> much as possible men should not let their women out of doors, and prevent strangers from seeing them or being seen by them. Men should not let women look at strangers through holes or windows since all catastrophes begin with looking. The catastrophe does not originate in a house, but it does through holes, windows, and from roofs. (316)

Comments such as these made by a high ranking philosopher and a religious scholar could not have passed unnoticed in its own time as well as in the centuries that followed. From the beginning to the end the comments reflect misogynist views.

A third major scholar whose views were highly influential in the Islamic era of Iranian culture is Nasīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (1200 or 1210-1274). His book on ethics entitled اخلاق ناصری (The Nasirean Ethics) is one of the most famous works in Iranian cultural and literary studies. This work has been translated into English by G.M. Wickens. Regarding the subject of women, Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī follows Ghazālī's views in general. Wickens's translation is as follows:

> Thus, if a wife has no part in the arrangement of the household or the rearing of children or concern with the welfare of servants, she will confine her attention to matters inevitably bringing disorder into the household: she will busy herself with

> excursions, with decking herself out for excursions, with going to see the sights, and with looking at strange men.... Indeed, when she sees other men, she despises him /her husband/ and holds him of little account, and she is emboldened to embark on abominable courses, and even to provoke admirers to quest after her; so that in the long run, in addition to disorganization of daily life and loss of manhood and the acquisition of disgrace, destruction and misery supervene in both this world and the next. (163-64)

In his advice to men Tusi says "The husband should not consult the wife on affairs of universal importance, and certainly not inform her of his secrets. He should, moreover, keep hidden from her the amount of his property and his capital" (164). Tusi goes so far as saying that:

> There is a Tradition to the effect that women should be prevented from learning the Joseph Sura /the story of Jospeh in the Qur'ān/, in as much as listening to such narratives may cause them to deviate from the law of continence. (164)

Scholars whose views we reflected represent typical attitudes that existed in Ferdowsi's time and decades that followed. Compared to such views, Ferdowsi's are extraordinarily advanced. In sharp contrast to the methods with which women are restricted

from basic practices of day to day affairs as they are reflected in the views of major scholars, Ferdowsi goes to the extent of elevating women to such position that he claims the insight and wisdom of women can enlighten a society. This couplet is an example of such a view:

بدو گفت رای زنان خیره زن درخشان کند دود ۰ دانجمن

مسکو جلد چهارم ص ۴۰۳ س ۷۰

The image of women in Ferdowsi's work, therefore, is incomparably superior to those of the time Ferdowsi lived. Despite any imaginable restrictions that female characters may have in The Shahnameh, they surpass the acceptable images of women in the works of scholars mentioned above. All in all, Ferdowsi proves not to be a misogynist whether in comments related to his private life or in his representation of female characters in his epic.

CHAPTER II

HOMER, HIS AGE, HIS EPICS, AND MISOGYNY

Our interest in the analysis of Homer's works is to examine not only the images of women as they really are in Homer, but also to provide a basis for comparative observations with those in The Shahnameh.

In terms of comparison we have already noted Theodor Noldeke's misrepresentation of the Shahnameh's female characters and the claim in his comparative judgment that "In The Shahnameh women do not play a very active role. They appear only as the object of desire or love" (59). The opinion which Noldeke has perpetuated does not reflect Ferdowsi's attitude toward women. Neither does it represent the Shahnameh women as they really are; we will see in Part II whether such a sweeping judgment and a false coherence can, under close scrutiny, be sustained. His vision of Homeric women, however, is disparately positive: "Such figures as Penelope, Andromache, and Nausicaa, who in their pure womanhood are equal to men, cannot be found in the Persian epic" (59, emphasis mine). Implicitly, the

comment may point toward, but does not develop, the thesis or the conclusion that there exists no expression of misogyny in Homer, a subject which we will try to develop in this chapter. But we would add quickly that, Noldeke's over generalization of Homeric women misses much of the complexity of women's relations to men in the Iliad and the Odyssey, a complexity which Noldeke's forced coherence does not address.

Concerning the status of female characters in Homer's poetry, at least three major scholarly positions can be singled out:

1) the position that women in Homer's epics do not count whatsoever. Nowhere can we find a better example than in M. I. Finley's The World of Odysseus. In the foreword to this work Mark Van Doren confirms:

> What Mr. Finley hopes to save us from is the consequence of expecting Homer's heroes to behave exactly as we think we might behave in similar circumstances, or might have behaved had we been there. There are certain things about Homer's world.... It was a world exclusively, or almost exclusively, of warriors and kings, a world where few things counted except riches, prowess, and honor. It was a world primarily of men, not of women and children.

The overall effect Van Doren and Finley leave in their readers' mind is an entirely negative image of women in

Homer's works, and that not only Homer's female characters, but also those of all antiquity are inferior figures and have no active roles whatsoever. Finley is firm in his suggestion that:

> Be it as it may, there is no mistaking that Homer reveals what remained true for the whole of antiquity, that women were held to be naturally inferior and therefore limited in their function to the production of offspring and the performance of household duties, and that the meaningful social relationships and the strong personal attachments were sought and found among men. (1965, 138)

Concerning Helen, Finley says that she "was no innocent victim in all this, no unwilling captive of Paris-Alexander, but an adulteress in the most complete sense" (1965, 139). Andromache enjoys no better status in Finley's opinion. "Andromache could not protect her child, not even in her imagination, for women had no place at the feast. Not only was this a man's world, it was one in which the inferior status of women was neither concealed nor idealized" (1965,136). Penelope's position was not much better either. "Denied the right to a heroic way of life, to feats of prowess, competitive games, and leadership in organized activity of any kind, women worked regardless of class.... Her stratagem,...her labor was not exactly indispensable" (1965, 72). Finley goes to the extent

of claiming that the Greeks did not even have a word for "wife". He ridicules the translators who make Achilles ask "Do they then alone of mortal men love their wives?", suggesting that "The Greek does not say 'wives,' it says 'bed-mates'", and adds that even the translation of the verb "to love" is problematic (1965, 136-37). All in all Finley leaves very little for anybody to admire in the images of women, not only in Homer's epics, but in Greek literature as a whole.

2) On the other extreme there exists a sympathetic view which lends an exalted status to the women in Homeric literature. Helen P. Foley argues in terms of linguistics, attempting to prove the existence of heroic qualities in women by examining the use of particular similes in Homer's epics. Specifically, she draws attention to the use of "reversed male and female similes" whereby, for example, Odysseus is compared to a woman and Penelope to a lion.

> Penelope is compared to a beleaguered lion. Lion images are typically reserved for heroic men. In the disputed Ithaca of the early books of the Odyssey Penelope, far from being the passive figure of most Homeric criticism, has come remarkably close to enacting the role of a besieged warrior. (90)

The use of reversed male/female similes, Foley claims, is a sign of "likemindedness" between men and women in Homer's poetry, enabling the growth of "mutual

interdependence of husband and wife /the terms which Finley had questioned/ in the structure of Homeric society" (89). Of course, she admits that Homer's female characters are incapable of pushing their society in the direction of "change toward full growth," but she is quick to add that in order for men to accomplish that task, women must first exercise their indispensable lion-like capacity in maintaining the original cultural order. In that capacity women's heroic activities are similar to men's. "Circe, Calypso, the Sirens, Helen, and Penelope all have a special power to stop or transcend changes in the sphere under their control" (90). Proud of the heroic positions of Homer's female characters, she offers comparisons between Homeric and Shakespearean women. She even goes to the extent of claiming that "From Aristophanes's Lysistrata to Shakespeare's Rosalind women in literature have assumed men's roles to restore and redefine the institution of peace -- marriage and family -- and to provide an avenue for corrective criticism of the status quo" (88) emphasis mine.

3) A more comprehensive position suggests that it is possible, as Marylin B. Arthur explains, to observe the status of Homeric women as "an intelligible whole, and a picture which will not force us to choose whether women in ancient Greece were despised or revered, but

will enable us to understand how they could seem to be both simultaneously" (7). Arthur seeks the roots of the paradoxical components of contempt and reverence in the structures of two kinds of societies which she believes Homer was simultaneously reflecting in his works. This view encompasses on the one hand the theory that the Iliad and the Odyssey revolve around aristocratic social structure and values of pre-Homeric period. In this context it does not really matter to Arthur whether the roots go as far back as Mycenean Greece, a theory explicated by George Calhoun in "The Homeric Picture" A Companion to Homer, or whether the actions of the poems take place against the background of institutions of the Dark-Age, a theory which M. I. Finley offers in his Early Greece: The Bronze and Archaic Ages, and in The World of Odysseus. On the other hand, Arthur explains that the condition of women in Homer's poetry also reflects a second societal structure which belongs to the early formation of the Greek polis at about the same time as Homer; Victor Ehrenberg places it in the eighth century B.C.

Arthur argues further that each of the above societal structures had produced their own type of male heroic world view. In the first, the heroic code is better suited to the older bureaucratic state of

warrior military aristocracy. Most of the warriors of this class have "a wife and child, and a household to which they will return. However, with the exception of Hector, the private lives of the Homeric heroes, and the great affection which they may have felt for their wives and children, have no place in their code of warriors" (12). She adds that "at no point is any of the heroes other than Hector said either to fight for the sake of glory which would accrue to his family .... Booty, fame, and honor (geras and kleos and timé) are the only considerations which have a place in the heroic code" (12). In the second and newer heroic code, the hero fights for his native land and his small nuclear family. The sole example Arthur gives is, again, Hector. The recognition of this dichotomy is by no means Arthur's own and has been expounded by several scholars such as C. M. Bowra in his Landmarks in Greek Literature (35-36). But the interesting thesis which Arthur offers is that "The distinction which we have been delineating between the two types of warrior codes is obviously one of great consequence for the position of women" (12). The early heroic code belongs to a society "whose ideal was exclusively and uniquely male.... The family of such a community was ...a loose conglomeration of persons related to one another in various ways" (12). This paradigm is then to be found

both among the Greeks and the Trojans, "So, for example, Homer's portrayal of Priam's palace, which houses his fifty sons and their wives as well as his twelve daughters with their husbands, suggests the large, loosely-knit type of family associated with the Mycenean age" (10). In the evolving, newer heroic code "which Hector articulates, and which reflects the organization of society around small, nuclear families, the position of the wife is upgraded and the concubine fades or disappears" (12). This code is labled as a new type of humanism.

Concerning the status of women in either of the two worlds in Homer's poetry, Arthur explains that each world presents its own paradoxical combination of disdain and reverence. The first, because of its roots in an aristocratic system (23), idealizes women for their beauty and sexual appeal. But Arthur warns that such praise and "lack of any expression of misogyny, cannot legitimately be construed as either an indication of women's favorable position or of the aristocratic poet's favorable attitude toward them. For it is evident that women's social role was of no concern to these poets" (42). The example she gives in this context is Helen, who in both poems is notoriously free from disgrace, and although she regards herself as blameworthy, the Greek expedition is concerned only to

extract retribution from Alexandros, and to recover Helen and all her possessions, and not to punish her. Menelaius' hostility and his feelings of outrage are directed only at Alexandros (16-17).

Arthur's thesis claims further that in the second heroic code women suffer from a different kind of paradoxical treatment. Within the nuclear, organized family the woman was indispensable for providing an heir. This would make impossible the indifference or toleration shown to the adulteress as we see in Menelaus' attitude to Helen. But, on the other hand, given that society recognizes woman's new social role and her significance, such recognition should be accompanied by acquisition of rights. The ultimate paradox in the second pattern, Arthur shows, is that while society bestows new significance upon women it denies them the rewards. Here she sees the central flaw in the behavior of men in a rising middle class, men who acknowledge the role which women play, but deny them their rights (50).

Arthur believes that Homer was aware of the paradoxes in both heroic codes, but because he was not a misogynist, he highlighted the positive component in each paradigm and minimized each code's damaging effect on the images of his female characters. Nevertheless the stage was already set for misogynist views to

develop, and Homer had sensed it. The full development of misogyny in Greek literature was only a matter of time.

The images of female characters in Homer's poetry, much like those in The Shahnameh, benefit from opportunities that are made available for women, but also they suffer setbacks due to obstacles created in the poems. To deal with the Homeric case, it is essential that like Arthur we examine the conditions of women in conjunction with the family structures they find themselves in, as well as the effect of male value systems which determine resulting images for them. But our emphasis is different from that of Arthur, who draws two different pictures, one for those who, like Hector's father Priam, live within the old aristocratic family structure, and another for those who live within the evolving code of bourgeois humanism represented by the young Hector. Our method will be one which seeks to contrast the female images within two models: the Achilles model which, as Finley and other scholars have indicated, is characterized by the violence, exclusion, and egoism of a male heroic code ("aristeia" in Greek); and the model emphasizing affection, inclusion, and family represented by Hector. The relationships of Achilles, Hector, and Odysseus to Helen, Briseis, Hecuba, Andromache, Penelope, and Nausicaa will be

examined in light of these models, but since, of course, we do not always find Achilles as violent and self-centered, nor Hector always affectionate and self-sacrificing, their relations with women and the experiences of those women are complex and rich rather than simple.

Before we begin to deal with specific images of women in Homer and offer comparative observations with those of The Shahnameh, a few basic points have to be clarified. Unlike Ferdowsi, whose identity has never been questioned, Homer's identity has been debated, especially after the Renaissance. Ferdowsi's case is due partially to the fact that in various places throughout his epic, especially in between long episodes, which are themselves epics in their own right, the poet talks about himself, giving biographical information. Homer does not refer to his own life in his poetry. In the absence of this and other solid information about his era, Homer's identity has become questionable.

But beyond any question Homer is the earliest Greek poet whose works have reached us. According to legend Homer was a blind bard (singer-poet) from Ionia (Turkish coast) who lived probably in the tenth century B.C. The dates of 850 B.C. and the period between 750 to 650 B.C. are also associated with Homer's period.

Some scholars have raised questions as to whether Homer existed at all, not to mention when he lived, or what he thought and said. Kitto says "There are two Homeric questions. There is the one first asked by Lachmann and eagerly debated ever since: one Homer, or two, or a multitude? The other is: What are the poems about? How did Homer think?" (1988, 5). Answers differ ranging from the idea of the existence of a group of anonymous bards to whom the name of Homer was later applied, to that of Homer as a mythical name for a group of bards who composed the two poems over a period of 100 years. It has been suggested that Homer was a woman (more precisely, the suggestion that the Odyssey was written by a woman). Kitto replies that "We should not commit the folly of thinking that the poems were composed not by Homer, or two Homers, but by the Homeric age" (1988, 31). Finley is of the opinion that:

> Homer was a man's name, not the Greek equivalent of "Anonymous," and that is the one certain fact about him. Who he was, where he lived, when he composed, these are questions we cannot answer with assurance, any more than could the Greeks themselves. In truth, it is probable that the Iliad and the Odyssey which we read were the works of two men, not of one.... Modern students think that the Iliad surely and the Odyssey probably were not composed on the Greek mainland but on one of the

> islands in the Aegean Sea or still farther east on the peninsula of Asia Minor (now Turkey). And they think that the period between 750 and 650 B.C. was the century of this earliest literature. (1965, 4)

All in all, it is still the convention to refer to Homer as a man who lived, probably in the eighth century B.C., and single handedly composed both poems.

The sources of Homeric stories, the historicity of the war of Troy, Homer's borrowings from the tradition before him, and his own creative prowess have also been a subject of historical, archaeological, and literary studies. Concerning the existence of an earlier tradition, it is strongly suggested that the epics are based on actual historical events. Morford and Lenardon offer a concise discussion in their Classical Mythology concerning the historicity of the war of Troy, mentioning that the war must have taken place during the late bronze age, 1600-1100 B.C. After discussing the views of major writers on the location of the war they add:

> According to Blegen, however, Troy 6 /one of the sites assumed to be the original Troy/ was destroyed by an earthquake, and it is Troy 7 (Troy 7a, to be exact) that is Priam's city, since (among other things) signs of a siege and fire can be detected, indicative of the Trojan war. The historical date of the fall of Troy is placed around 1250, some years earlier than that of the most commonly accepted

tradition, that is, 1184. (21)

The assessment of exact dates and precise locations of the war may differ from the findings of one scholar to another. However, Lattimore is probably right when he says:

> This war may not have been much like what we hear about; it may not have been a ten years' war, it may not have been pan-Achaian in scale, it may not have been waged against Troy, and it may have been a defeat, not a victory. Personally, I think it was a Viking-raid, or several such combined into one. But it <u>was something</u> which justifiably or not, <u>generated</u> the story of Troy we know. From the event, the legend, and from the legend, Homer; but between the event and Homer, we see now, the legend had time to grow. (20)

Not only does Lattimore emphasize the fact that the stories had time to develop before Homer's time, but also he insists that "a basic story" in prose and poetry had reached Homer by word of mouth. Homer had opportunity to select within limits, as he in fact did when he made the story of Troy the story of Achilles. Lattimore adds:

> Homer could not make Achilleus take Troy any more than he could make Troy win the battle and survive. He could not save Achilleus, and he could not kill Odysseus. We have, therefore, the presumption of what we may call a basic story, which Homer knew.... He could emphasize or develop some parts, episodes, characters in the story, barely

> acknowledge others, omit others entirely. But he could not contradict the legends. (21)

There are, therefore, indications that, on the one hand, Homer inherited a strong tradition, but, on the other, he also added to it not only through the creativity of his own genius, but also, as Arthur suggests, through the reflection of issues contemporary to Homer's own era. The question of Homer's imitation of the tradition which he inherited and his own innovations has been debated in Homeric criticism, a debate which we do not intend to present. Rather our approach is, as it was in our analysis of The Shahnameh, to consider Homer's poetry as a work of art in its final shape, made by an individual, which was soon to become the corner stone of Greek history, culture, and literature, a work of art which not only reflected various aspects of the society--its attitudes, orientations, and world view of the early Greeks--but also contributed to its culture, providing it with values and models of behavior, persuading men to adapt themselves to the hero's example and women to learn what is expected of them.

Concerning the authenticity of or textual contamination in Homer's epics, one thing is clear: that the Greeks took their epic tradition seriously; even the assumption that Homer's works were transmitted

orally, does not suggest a tradition of loose recitation. Homer's poems were relatively safeguarded against later contamination, unlike The Shahnameh. Precisely because Homeric poems assumed a more central role within the cultural and religious domains of Greek antiquity, and were, in F. A. Wright's words, "in a very real sense the Greek Bible" (7), the poems were relatively immune. In Finley's words:

> One thing seems sure: there was no excessive tampering with substance.... Had they /Athenian editors/ attempted to do so, they could scarcely have succeeded. The poems were already too well known and too deeply enshrined in the minds of the Greeks, and in a sense in their religious emotions. (1965, 32)

The subject of misogyny can, therefore, be determined fairly reasonably in the texts which have reached us and which should permit the student "to work with his Iliad and his Odyssey, cautiously and always with suspicion, yet with a reasonable assurance that basically he is working with a fair approximation of eighth- and seventh- century poems" (Finley 1965, 33). Relying on these texts, a notion is now prevalent in Homeric studies that Homer was not a misogynist. This is the view that we, too, will share in this study.

Nevertheless, not all scholars agree with this

interpretation. Eva Cantarella in her famous book Pandora's Daughters: The Role and Status of Women in Greek and Roman Antiquity (1981 in Italian, and 1987 in English translation) presents an argument that Greek misogyny begins before (not after) Homer, and traces its roots up to the Mycenaean period, arguing that the Mycenaean women lived in a transitional situation between the Minoan period and Greek Dark Ages, which was Homer's time. Cantarella believes that "The Homeric woman is not only subordinate but also victim of a fundamentally misogynist ideology" (27). Cantarella's vision of Homeric woman is negative from beginning to end:

> The true female condition in Homer was this: total exclusion from political power and participation in public life; subordination to the head of the family and submission to his punishment; and finally, ideological segregation. Forbidden to think about anything but domestic matters, the woman cannot even talk about male matters. Faithless, weak, fickle, she was regarded with suspicion. The roots of Western misogyny go back to a more remote epoch than is usually thought--they are already well fixed in the oldest document in European literature. Nor is it possible that the poems express an individual position, the misogyny of a single poet (or two). (33)

Cantarella uses two methodologies to prove her point that not only Homer, but the whole epoch was

misogynist. The first method is that which she uses in the above quotation; her theoretical definition in this respect is that "The society described in the Iliad and the Odyssey is, in other words, a mirror of Greek society in the centuries between the end of Mycenaean civilization and the eighth century" (25). In other words, all the negative points that she mentions in Homeric "misogynist" texts are mirror-like reflections of a misogynist poet and his society. The question arises as to how she could explain certain obviously positive attributes of women in Homer. To this she responds somewhat illogically that the existence of positive attributes "can represent institutions that are the opposite of the real ones" (19, emphasis by Cantarella). For Cantarella Homer is to be blamed for mirroring Penelope as "weak, fickle, opportunistic, perhaps even incapable of lasting feelings. Her interests, her emotions, are bound up in this destiny. That is what woman is..." (28). But "quite the reverse" is true when the image of "admired, respected, powerful female figures often mentioned" (28); then she invokes the theory of reversal. She adds that "The bride of Odysseus has entered history by virtue of her fidelity, but her behavior casts doubts on her legendary virtue. Exaggerated fidelity, in fact, is only one of her cloaks: more than once she appears

quite eager to marry, and above all she behaves with reproachable coquetry" (29). To support this reversal theory, Cantarella uses theories of myth presented by M. Detienne, Eliade, G. S. Kirk, and others. While we have no qualms with these theories of simple mimesis and of reversal, for Cantarella arbitrarily to use each only when it suits her purpose, seems to suggest methodological fallacy. Readers may ask why they should not reverse Cantarella's interpretations, for example, taking all negative points as their opposites and the positive ones as the mirror reflections of true intentions or realities.

In contrast to Cantarella the majority of scholars see Homer more positively. Despite the low conditions of a number of women in the Iliad and Odyssey, these women have been treated by a poet "who understood and sympathised with women" (Wright 14). It is true that women are victimized, treated as pieces of property, given away as prizes, and sold into slavery, "yet nowhere in the Iliad or Odyssey do we find any disparaging remarks about women's role, nowhere do we encounter the expressions of misogyny which appear so frequently in later Greek literature" (Arthur 13). Whenever Homer has the chance to reflect on the wastefulness of war and the beauty of peace, we often find women associated with the latter rather than the

former. Although we will refer to detailed textual observations when we deal with character analysis, here a single example should help. In Book 22 of the Iliad, when Achilles is chasing Hector for the last time before he kills him, Homer draws a picture of joyous, peaceful times of the past, contrasting the current dread which his heroes experienced. In Richmond Lattimore's translation:[12]

> In this place, and close to them, are the washing-hollows / of stone and magnificent, where the wives of the Trojans and their lovely / daughters washed the clothes to shining, in old days / when there was peace, before the coming of the sons of the Achaians.
> (Iliad 21, 153).

The Medieval Islamic image of Homer was adapted rather differently. Two texts in particular contain important material on Homer: one by Ibn al-ghuftā, entitled اخبار العلماء باخبار الحكماء better known as تاريخ الحكماء (History of Philosophers), a seventh-century Islamic text (14th century Christian); another, contemporary with Ibn al-ghuftā's, introduced below, presents the same material more extensively.

This Islamic text, نزهة الارواح وروضة الافراح في تواريخ الحكماء والفلاسفة والمتأخرين is written in Arabic by Shams al-din Muhammad Ibn Mahmūd Shahrzūri (586-611, Islamic era). In 1011 (Islamic era) King Jahāngīr of India commanded a translation of

the text into Persian, then a prestigious language in India. The Persian text is an almost literal translation of its original Arabic, which attempts to give a comprehensive image of Homer. Here we are only interested in those sections which deal with Homer's attitude toward women. It should also be noted that the Muslim Arab scholar presents his version of Homer's opinions with a seal of approval and upholds the opinions as such:

> These are his /Homer's/ words; he said: .... Truly, a woman makes the life of a man shorter. If you do not have a wife, you live in the best possible way. The ornament of a woman is her silence and calm, so a good woman will keep home healthy.... He who marries will soon repent. A reasonable, just wife (adeleh) is healthy for a man's life. A beneficent wife is not easy /to find/. Better for a woman to be buried than married. Women by nature tend to waist expenditure /alimony/. Marry women, not their dowry. Truly men marry dowries, not wives. Nature does not bestow on women greatness. When you want to marry, look around among neighbors and friends. Women do not wear that which is wise. Fools laugh when there is nothing to laugh at. A woman has the power to learn from you. When you want to marry, seek a woman who can help you with your work.
> (in Sa'īd Nafīsī's translation of the Iliad into Persian, 755-58)

Obviously, imagination has got the better of these medieval writers who, despite their unquestionable

respect for Homer are nevertheles articulating their own thoughts, for nowhere in Homer can such sentiments be found.

Compared with Homer, Ferdowsi was in a more vulnerable position. His enthusiasts had the opportunity to alter Ferdowsi's image not only in commentaries on his work as they did with the Greek poet, but with access to the manuscripts of the work itself, they could easily integrate misogynist views into the poems and give authority to statements which Ferdowsi never made. Modern works of textual scholarship are cleansing the text of The Shahnameh, from contaminating material, thus allowing a better picture of Ferdowsi and a greater affinity between Ferdowsi's and Homer's attitudes toward women.

PART II

THE WOMEN OF THE SHAHNAMEH

Men and women in The Shahnameh are equally endowed with dynamism and a host of positive personal attributes. Indeed, the Shahnameh tradition celebrates the active and dynamic attributes of mankind beyond gender and glorifies vital, strenuous qualities in human life as a whole. The Shahnameh, which marks the Renaissance of Persian literature in the tenth and eleventh centuries A. D., and which revitalized Pre-Islamic Persian culture, shares, in its own right, the dynamic spirit which prevailed in the Western Renaissance after the fourteenth century (sixteenth century in English literature), and which revitalized Greco-Roman values. The Shahnameh represents a renaissance world view in which the representation of human condition, enthusiasm for life in this world, active confrontation with human crises, and the glorification of the dynamic, autonomous personality, together with ethical and moral considerations, are all indispensable components. Basically, therefore, The Shahnameh provides

a positive context for men and women, a context that lends strength, vitality, liveliness, and strenuousness to characters regardless of gender. Nonetheless, we should add immediately that with regard to women, despite positive individual attributes, the same context, from another point of view, has imposed societal limitations perhaps as strongly as it has endowed them with personal attributes. A detailed study of both aspects in The Shahnameh is the purpose of this part.

The Shahnameh is composed of three major parts in which appear approximately 60 women characters. Although these characters are found in all three sections of the epic: the mythological, the legendary, and the historical part, the present detailed character analysis cannot possibly deal with all those women. This study centers around major characters in the legendary part, in which the most important characters all appear. We will examine six major female characters as they appear in the text of the epic. They are placed in different narrative contexts and represent different types of characters; yet, regardless of the type of character they represent, a consistent structural thread runs through their make-up, and in the final analysis, the recurrent pattern says something about their womanhood.

Rudabeh, Tahmineh, Katayun, Gurdafarid, the Nameless Mother of Siyavush, and Sudabeh are specifically endowed

with dynamic individuality and powerful characteristics such as prowess, courage, beauty, wisdom, insight, fearlessness, autonomous individuality, and a host of other attributes which reflect the positive context of the epic, yet within the same text, the same woman is not only relegated to a subservient role, but also finds imposed upon her the status of not being taken seriously, severe handicaps regarding her full integration in the social fabric of the story, and not being allowed to use her considerable abilities. To put it differently, whereas men and women are endowed with the former paradigm (positive individual attributes), they differ sharply in the latter paradigm (the social structure within the epic). The underlying double structure, therefore, pulls the private and public lives of these women in two directions, a recurrent pattern from which women cannot escape in The Shahnameh.

A NOTE ON THE SYNOPSES:

The synopsis of each story in which our selected women characters appear is provided in the Appendix. The readers who are less familiar with the Shahnameh stories than those of the Homeric epics might want to consult the Appendix.

CHAPTER I

RUDABEH, TAHMINEH, AND KATAYUN: HAPPY GIRLS AND LAMENTING MOTHERS

These are three very important women who, despite the uniqueness and originality of their characters, have much in common in the narrative context of the epic: detailed similarity in their individual resourcefulness, specific limitations imposed upon them as women, similar roles assigned to them in the story, and their tragic/pathetic fate. We will begin with the paradigm of positive individual attributes.

INDIVIDUAL RESOURCEFULNESS: RUDABEH, TAHMINEH, AND KATAYUN

Rudabeh is a major character in the story of "Zal and Rudabeh," a popular love story which is often selected to represent Persian literature in some anthologies of world literature.[13] Also, this romance has appeared in

different genres of literature and in paintings.[14]

Examining the positive aspects of this major and dynamic character, we cannot but notice major components in her make-up, components which, contrary to Theodor Noldeke's assumptions about women in The Shahnameh, reflect the highly regarded position of Rudabeh in the gallery of female epic personalities. She possesses beauty, wisdom, courage, fearlessness, independence of character, dynamic individuality, and a well-rounded personality.

The element of beauty-as-character-strength plays a significant role in the context of the story, not only to establish the significance of Rudabeh, or her importance in the eyes of other characters,[15] but also as a narrative tool in establishing character relationships, and operates within the process of linguistic sign, signifier, and signified.

In the context of the story Rudabeh's amazing beauty is renowned in her father's kingdom and in the neighboring countries, a component which plays a central role in bringing Zal and Rudabeh together. Zal, hearing about her from one of his attendants, falls madly in love with her. The narrator adds that the description of Rudabeh's beauty wins the heart of the Iranian hero.

بر آور د هر زال را دل به جوش چنان شد که گفتی ورا نام و هوش
شب آمد برافروخته بفتمت زال به بالین بگشت بی خورد و هال

> The description set the heart of Zal fluttering with such eagerness that self-control and ease of mind forsake him. His mind was ablaze with desire, prudence was banished and passion became the only wisdom. (Levy 40)

In time Rudabeh, too, falls in love with Zal. However, the same beauty which has inspired the love affair, ironically works against her desire, because her girl-attendants tell her that she is too beautiful for a man like Zal. Of course, Rudabeh overcomes this obstacle while the poet, using this episode, consolidates the significance of her beauty. King Mehrab, Rudabeh's father, is told about the love affair between his daughter and Zal. Worried about the consequences, Mehrab is infuriated by this occurrence and says that he wishes he had followed his ancestral Arab tradition and had killed Rudabeh at birth, a custom which allowed the Arabs to kill a newly born baby if it was a girl.[16]

> When the daughter was born to me, I should have beheaded her at birth. I did not follow my tradition, and now face this problem.[17]

The poet is alluding to Mehrab's inhumane ancestral tradition and the ruthlessness of murdering a newly born

baby if it was a girl; Ferdowsi contrasts Mehrab's misogynist tradition and his initial, destructive anger with the resourcefulness of Rudabeh's elegance and charm, a resourcefulness which will eventually transform the father's attitude toward the daughter. Mehrab will call his daughter to his presence to express his fury. When the father sees her, his immediate reaction , despite his anger, is a deep feeling of admiration. The experience in his heart forces him to praise God for such an exceptional gift.

پدر چون ورا دید حیره بماند جهان آفرین را نهانی بخواند

خالقی ص ۲۲ س - ۸۲۴

The father became amazed at her sight and praised God in his heart.

The component functions as a positive attribute for the character both in an active event as such and in passive descriptions; it signifies the character's noteworthiness to other characters (and to the readers as well), and acts as an element in establishing character relations. The epic poet uses the element in many occasions in this story, describing her beauty with numerous adjectives. One critic lists 75 adjectives ending his list with "etc".[18]

This component is, however, one among a number which the poet uses in his strong presentation of this character; the description of Rudabeh's personality

begins, but does not end with the component of beauty. Ferdowsi depicts other virtues in Rudabeh's character to make her worthy of the role she plays in the story, that of mother of the great hero to be born.

Rudabeh is also a wise person. In order that a central hero is born from the line of the traditional Iranian hero, a worthy woman has to have the insight to see beyond the surface shortcomings of Zal and to have the ability to praise the deep-seated qualities of this young man. Rudaben has that insight. In this respect Rudabeh acts more wisely than other characters in Zal's life, characters who used Zal's unnatural white hair against him from the moment of his birth.

The reader remembers that when Zal was born with white hair, the erroneous interpretation was that he was born old and that it was a sign of evil in him. His father interpreted the occasion in this fashion:

همه همی تیره جانم ز شرم بخوندهمی در دلم خون گرم
ازاین بچه چون بچه اهرمن سپید یکسر و موی سر چون سمن
چو آید و پرسند گردنکشان چه گویم ازاین بچه بدنشان
چه گویم که این بچه دیو چیست بلنگ دو رنگ است گر بربریست

My blackened soul withers with shame, the blood surges hotly within my body because of this child, which, with his dark eyes and hair white as the spring, resembles a child of Ahriman. When proud noblemen come to make

inquiries of me they will see this ill-omened boy, and then what shall I say of this demon-child; that he is a parti-coloured leopard.... (Levy 36)

The father strays from the path of wisdom and orders the child to be abandoned in some remote place. It is the Simurgh, the legendary bird and the symbol of justice who saves the boy, nurtures him, and brings him up. Rudabeh does not make the kind of mistake which Zal's father had made. Moreover, the strangeness of Zal's appearance still continues to be used against him by other characters in the story. Rudabeh's girl-attendants keep warning her of Zal's problems:

که پرورده مرغ ماننده کوه همانی شده ، در میان گروه
کس از مادران پیر هرگز نزاد نه زان کس که راید ، باید نژاد

He is a creature that was reared by a bird in the mountains. In every company people point a finger at him and say that no human being was ever born out of his mother and that he cannot be rul of the stock of his begett . (Levy 40)

Rudabeh sees beyond these advisors too. Her response to such statements comes in anger and condemns them for their immaturity, shallowness and unwise thoughts.

چنین گفت کین جام گفتارتان شنودن نیارد نه نیگارتان
نه مغز و خرام نه قیر نه چهر نه رتاج داران ایران زمین
نه بالای سن پور سام سوار نه با یاره ی شیر و انبوه یال
گرش پیر خوانی همی یا جوان مرا او همانی که بود و روان

> 'Your arguments are crude', she retorted, 'and your words deserve no heed. My heart is torn for a star; how then should I be happy with the moon? I aim at no Caesar or any emperor of China, nor at anyone who wars the Iranian crowns. Zal son of Sam is suited to my measure; he has the forearm of a lion and the shoulders and chest of one. Let people call old man or young boy, he is the happiness of my heart and soul.' (Levy 41)

Rudabeh disregards the flawed judgment of others on Zal. The "crude argument" of others does not prevent her from making her own judgment and taking tangible steps toward creating the moral, loving, and caring atmosphere in which the future Rustam will be born and nurtured.

Rudabeh's beauty and insight, therefore, complement her boldness. She is an independent woman of action. Independent of her parents, she herself consults her girl-attendants about her feelings for Zal and convinces them that Zal is the right man for her. The girls are then dispatched to Zal's camp to inform him of Rudabeh's feelings and arrange that Zal should see Rudabeh in her palace. This is one of the first instances in which a female character takes the initiative in expressing her love to a man. The epic tradition and the poet respect female characters to the extent that they are allowed the freedom to express their desires. P.B. Vaccha notices this point when he says "she /Rudabeh/ is typical of the

active woman-lover who herself takes the initiative and plans a meeting between herself and her beloved. Her love is ardent, determined, full-blooded, self assertive, single-minded" (161).

Two obstacles stand in the way of the union of Rudabeh and Zal. The first conflict is related to the long lasting feud between the King of Iran and the King of Kabul. The King of Kabul, and consequently, Rudabeh are the descendants of the evil, snaked-shoulder, Arab King Zahhak. The Shah of Iran wanted no association with Zahhak's family whatsoever, remembering Zahhak's usurpation of Iran's throne, his atrocities and his crimes against the people of Iran.

Rudabeh's father, on the other hand, is worried that the persistence of his daughter in this affair will force the Shah of Iran to destroy Kabul in order to stop this "unholy" union. Rudabeh is aware of her father's concern and his decisive opposition to this marriage. In spite of the existing feud and the highly dangerous situation, Rudabeh prepares to host a visit with Zal secretly for the first time in her palace. Rudabeh is obviously a fearless character.

Ferdowsi's beautiful poetry prepares the scene for the first visit of the two lovers. When night falls and the door of the palace is locked up and the key hidden away, Zal comes to the foot of the palace tower. Rudabeh

calls out:

دو بیاد و گیتاد و آواز داد کشاد آمدی ای جوانمرد باز

درود جهان آفرین بر تو باد هم چرخ گردان رهی تو باد

'Welcome, son of a noble sire! The Creator's blessing be on you ! May Heaven's revolving dome be the ground you tread! (Levy 44)

Then Rudabeh "unloosened her tresses and from the height of the tower let drop her locks till the end reached the turret's base" (Levy 44). Rudabeh advises Zal to take hold of her black hair which would be as sufficient as a rope. Zal kisses her hair, but decides not to use it to climb up; he loops up a lasso to climb from the base to the summit.

There, sipping wine, the lovers kiss and embrace but stop short of anything that might offend the morals of the culture. Many critics have elaborated on this moral consideration.[19] Dabīr-Sīyāqī, for example, has this to say, "Their visit was warm, passionate and desirous, but they were also courteous, self-controlled, and ready for a long-lasting commitment to each other" (see above footnote).

Even during their first visit the old feud and the dangerous conflicts were on the minds of the lovers. Zal expresses his worry this way:

منوچهر چون شنود داستان | بماند بدین کار هم راستان
همان سام نیرم برآرد خروش | کف اندازد و برکند آبنوش
ولیکن سرمایه جان است وتن | همه خوار گیرم بپوشم کفن
بدیرفتم از دادگر داورم | که هرگز ز پیمان نگردم

When Manuchehr /the Shah of Iran/ hears the history of this he will be no party to it, and Sam will shout, and cast his arms about in rage against me. yet I swear before the Lord who is my judge that I will never depart from my oath to you. (Levy 45)

Rudabeh responds equally forcefully and devotedly:

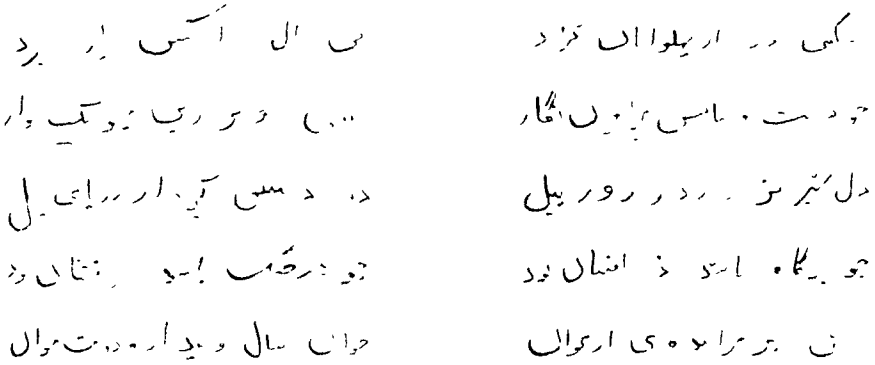
بدو گفت رودابه کی هجویی | بدیرفتم از داور مهرویی
که بر کس نباشد کسی پادشا | جهان آفرین بر همه پادشا
جز از پهلوان جهان زال زر | که با فرّ و شاخست و با برز و یال

'I too swear before the Lord of my religion and faith,' she answered, 'that no one shall be king over me but the world's hero Zal-Zar.' (Levy 45)

The nature of this conflict on the one hand, and the desire of the two lovers on the other, resemble the same elements in Shakespeare's masterpiece Romeo and Juliet. Shakespeare's work is, of course, a tragedy and the two lovers experience undeserved misfortune. Ferdowsi's "Zal and Rudabeh," however, is a romance in which the two lovers are eventually united in marriage overcoming obstacles.

Apart from the structural conflict of feud in the

story, the second obstacle is Zal's uncanny appearance. The whiteness of Zal's hair is as much used against him as the blackness of Othello. The apparent flaw in the heroes of both masterpieces has continuously worked against them, but the loving care and the views of the two women involved in these marriages surpass such shortcomings. Whatever the differences between Desdemona and Rudabeh, they both share courageous defiance of obstacles for the marriage. In Ferdowsi's work Rudabeh first hears about Zal when her mother inquires about the young man from Mehrab. Mehrab responds in this manner:



There does not exist in the whole world a warrior-hero who can follow where Zal leads. On the frescoes of the pillared hall you never saw anyone depicted with such arms as his, and for manipulation of the reins and for his seat in the saddle there never existed a horseman to equal him. He has the heart of a lion and an elephant's strength. For generosity he is as bounteous as the Nile. /He is the bestower of gold in court and deadly blows in war. He is young, bright, and of good fortune/.
(Levy 40)

In Shakespeare's work Desdemona hears the stories of Othello's adventures, when Othello describes them to Desdemona's father. Much in the same fashion as Rudabeh, Desdemona falls in love with Othello when she hears about Othello's battles, courage, and the dangers he had passed. In an ironic fashion and in response to the charges against him by Desdemona's father, Othello explains that this was the "witchcraft" which won the heart of Desdemona:

> Her father loved me, oft invited me;
> Still questioned me the story of my life
> From year to year--the /battles/, sieges,
> /fortunes/,
> That I have passed.
> I ran it through even from my boyish days
> .... These things to hear
> Would Desdemona seriously incline;
> .....
> She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she
> thank'd me
> And bade me, if I had a friend that lov'd her,
> I should but teach him how to tell my story,
> And that would woo her. Upon this hint I
> spoke:
> She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd,
> And I lov'd her that she did pity them.
> This only is the witch-craft I have us'd.
> Here comes the lady, let her witness it.
> (Riverside Shakespeare I, iii, 1127-170)

Both Zal and Othello were similar in heroic ventures possessing prowess and courage and each experienced joy and sorrow in their lives. Each possessed deep-seated moral qualities and suffered from an ironically insignificant external shortcoming--white hair in the case

of Zal, and black skin in Othello's case.

The two women are beautiful and possess tender, loving hearts. Our interest in comparing the two female characters (who all-in-all represent different personalities) is the way in which they fall in love. Each admires strength, big heartedness, and courage, in the face of battles. In Othello the process of the love affair is explained within the dialogue, but also we hear about Desdemona's defiance of her father; in "Rudabeh and Zal" the reader is carried through the experience directly, so that the fearlessness of Rudabeh within the context of character relationships becomes the center of attention in the story.

Rudabeh, who is the focus of our attention, is under extreme pressure to alter her decision, when she expresses her desire to marry Zal. After being threatened for her life, she is then persuaded by her mother that she must speak to Mehrab in a begging tone, so he might agree with the marriage. Rudabeh's response to her mother demonstrates a major characteristic of her fearless and autonomous personality when she boldly faces her mother and confirms her belief in her own preference, her independent choice, and her decision. She assures her mother that there is nothing to be ashamed of and reassures her mother that she will not conceal her feelings from her father:

روان را بود سام سست همت چرا آنرا نباید نهفت

طالقی ص ۲۲ ت - ۸۲۰

The son of Sam is the companion to my soul. The truth shall not be concealed.

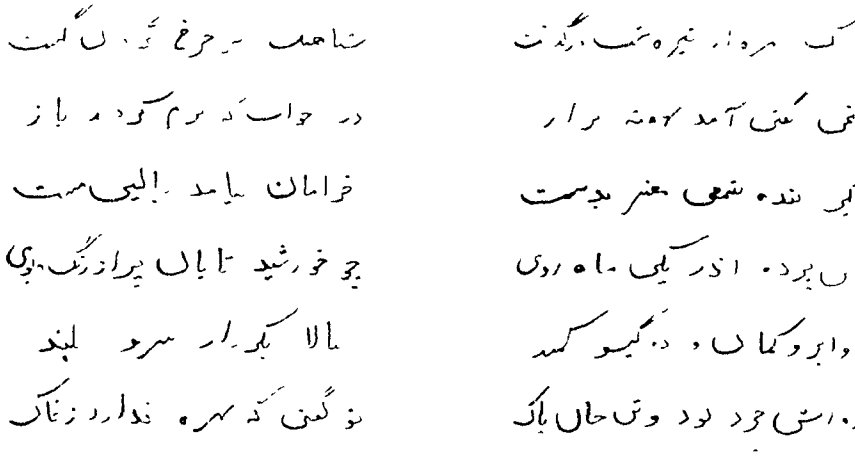
The autonomy of Rudabeh's personality is established in the epic. Throughout the story she preserves the integrity of her character and individuality. She represents a "dynamic character", who actively participates in the events of the story, and in her own right, she shapes its outcome. As an individual she does not represent a "static character," the sole purpose of whose existence would in that case be only acted upon so that the other dynamic character(s) of the story could develop. The views of E. M. Forster and some other critics in their distinction between these two kinds are illuminating.[20]

Rudabeh's strong, independent character and powerful personal attributes such as wisdom, insight, courage, fearlessness, autonomy, and well-rounded personality exemplify the boldness and attributes of two other great mothers: Tahmineh and Katayun, who will give birth to and bring up two central epic heroes, Sohrab and Esfandiyar.

TAHMINEH is the major female character in the tragedy of "Rustam and Sohrab." This tragedy has been introduced to the English readers by James Atkinson in

verse translations and by Matthew Arnold in one of his narrative poems entitled "Sohrab and Rustum."[21] Arnold was so enchanted with this story, and happy with his achievement, that he wrote in one of his letters," I have just gotten through a thing which pleases me more than anything I have done. . ." (letter to Clough, 1 May, 1853; see Arnold, The Letters...). Impressed by the nobility of this story, he wrote "all my spare time has been spent on a poem which I have just finished and which I think by far the best thing I have yet done... the story is a very noble and excellent one" (letter to his mother, May 1853). This story is truly a noble one and is one of the best known in The Shahnameh.

The best passive description of this woman in The Shahnameh is found when she is first introduced to the reader in the episode in which Rustam has fallen asleep after the festivity in Samangan. In that episode the epic poet uses the best of his poetic talent to describe Tahmineh, while she proceeds toward Rustam's bed chamber.



> When part of the dark night had passed, although the morning star had yet to appear on its revolving path, there took place some mysterious and secret conversation and then the door of the sleeping quarters was softly opened. Towards the unconscious warrior's pillow stepped a slave with a perfumed candle in her hand, while behind her came a creature lovely as the moon, radiant as the sun and fragrant in her beauty. The colour of her cheeks was that of corals of Yemen, her mouth small as the heart of a lover contracted with grief. Her soul was ripe wisdom, her body pure spirit uncontaminated by earthly elements.
> (Levy 66) Also see footnote 22 for Atkinson's verse translation./

These lines and the couplets which follow reveal several qualities in Tahmineh's character. Much in the same fashion as in Rudabeh, the subject of beauty-as-character-strength, which we will not develop any further, operates in two layers of description: the first layer being the more obvious description of Tahmineh's extraordinary physical beauty, charm, and attraction. The second layer deals with Tahmineh's spiritual beauty which goes beyond earthly limitations and has a kind of holy connotation. Rudabeh and Tahmineh have much in common in this respect.

Other than a combined physical and spiritual beauty in this character, the next immediate point is the explicit declaration that Tahmineh is wise. The element of wisdom is, of course, interwined with the two layers

of beauty, a combination which elevates Tahmineh from the calls of ordinary characters.

Perhaps the most significant element in The Shahnameh is wisdom (The Persian word for it is Khirad). Khirad is an indispensable term in The Shahnameh, a term the significance of which goes beyond the ordinary interpretation of wise thought or wise action. Ahūrāmazdā is the Zoroastrian "God of Goodness".[23] Khirad is one of the two main terms that are closely associated with the Lord in The Shahnameh. The epic begins with the praise of God in the following manner.[24]

به نام خداوند جان و خرد کزین برتر اندیشه برنگذرد

الف ص ۳۰ ب - ۱۷

In the name of the Lord of soul and of wisdom, /a description/ beyond which /human/ thought cannot soar higher.

Khirad is a gift from the Lord, which manifests itself in the existence of man here on earth. A wise person, one endowed with Khirad, is a woman or man gifted by God. Tahmineh occupies such a position in the world of the epic. Endowed with Khirad a person will want no more as the gift is the best among all else that God has generously bestowed upon man.

خرد بهر از هرچه ایزدت داد ستایش خرد را به از راه داد

خرد رهنمای و خرد دلگشای خرد دست گیرد بهردو سرای

> Wisdom is better than aught else which God has granted to you. Wisdom is the guide and is the hearts enlivener;. . . .(Levy 1)

The possession of physical charm, wisdom, and spirtual beauty enables Tahmineh to act confidently in her encounters with and relations to other charaters. She enjoys a kind of self confidence that is only typical of the highest ranking female characters in the epic, and no sooner is Tahmineh introduced in the epic than the reader observes this confidence, when she faces Rustam for the first time at her own will and when she replies to Rustam's inquiry as to who she is:

جنی داد پاسخ که تهمینه ام تو گوئی که از غم بدو نیم نیم
کنیں رخ ان را حمت نیست چو من زیر چرخ کبود اندکیست

> I am Tahmina. You would say that, I am rent in twain with longing.... On the earth I have no peer among persons of royal birth; indeed beneath the dome of heaven there rarely exists anyone like me. (Levy 66)

In the same fashion as Rudabeh, Tahmineh falls in love with Rustam based upon more or less the same principles and values. Like Rudabeh, Tahmineh acts bravely, her initiative step being associated with her genuine and pure love. Motivated by such feelings and verbally expressing her genuine love for Rustam,

Tahmineh approaches the warrier. A combination of several traits in this episode creates a literary moment in which Tahmineh performs flawlessly, courageously, and autonomously.

Concerning this courageous behavior and Tahmineh's expression of her love for Rustam, Javānshīr observes that Tahmineh's reply to Rustam's inquiry about her identity follows the pattern of heroic behavior in this epic. He adds that the method which Tahmineh uses in introducing herself is similar to the way heroes boastfully introduce themselves on the battlefield. Moreover, he adds that Tahmineh has no sense of shame in expressing her love to Rustam or in telling him about her desires to have a child by him (Javānshīr 321). Islamī Nudūshan's interpretation of this episode follows a rather different path. He emphasizes Tahmineh's heroic purity, straight-forwardness, and innocence. In addition, he places Tahmineh not only among the bravest, but also the most virtuous female characters in world literature. His emphasis is, however, on the grace with which Tahmineh behaves, adding that her brave expressions are accompanied by courtesy, grace, and pure love. This is the way in which Tahmineh acts when she approaches Rustam and expresses her love for him and her desire to have a child from the great hero Rustam (1348 H., 125).

The traditional methods of praising Tahmineh follow

more or less the above pattern. These critics are right in their interpretations as they find the basic ingredients for their observations in the story itself. In fact those ingredients reflect the good will and the best intentions of the early inventors of this story. Not only Ferdowsi's fascination, praise, and admiration for this female character, but also the taste of the readers of this story throughout the centuries has confirmed the goodwill in endowing Tahmineh with such noble traits. While we do understand and fully recognize Tahmineh's prestigious qualities, it is also part of our thesis that Tahmineh's role in the world of the story is too complex to lend itself to the character's private life only.

Katayun plays a major role in three consecutive stories: "The Reign of Luhrasp", "The Reign of Gushtasp", and "Rustam and Esfandiyar." These stories are closely connected, and they extend over 5000 couplets (approximately 10000 lines in English verse, in its own right an entire epic within the family of Shahnameh stories), culminating in the description of the tragic fate of Rustam, which in turn brings the whole legendary section of The Shahnameh to its end. The story of "Rustam and Esfandiyar" in which Katayun plays a major role, is not only highly praised now for

its literary qualities by a number of contemporary critics, but also in the past it was, especially at the end of the Sasanid period (A.D. 226-652) and the beginning of the Islamic era, a most popular story. A. Zarrīnkūb in his نه غربی نه شرقی انسانی (Neither Western nor Eastern, Humanistic) explains that according to a Tradition:

نضربن حارث وقتی به تحریک قریش برکنه ی خواست پیغمبر را آزارد برای آنکه مردم را از آیات قرآن و قصه های انبیاء که در قرآن بود باز دارد نضر می گفت من قصه های بهتر از محمد می گویم قصه رستم و اسفندیار

> Nasr ibn Haris, who was one of the enemies of Prophet Muhammad, would act under the influence of Quraysh Tribe and would disturb the Prophet by persuading his followers not to pay attention to the Qur'anic verses and the stories of prophets in the Qur'an. Nasr ibn Haris would tell the followers of the Prophet that he could tell them better stories; he would then tell them the story of "Rustam and Esfandiyar. (176)

This story marks the undeserved misfortune not only of Katayun's son, Esfandiyar, but also that of Rustam, thus ending the legendary heroic section of the epic. The story is filled with action, the rise and fall of heroes, achievements and failures, joy, pain, fear, pity, and, of course, intellect and wisdom. Katayun, who is the center of attention in this section, acts within the busy world of the story and shares the profound intellectual and emotional

dimensions in it.

A brief account of Katayun's role in the epic may be devided into two parts: Part I deals with Katayun's early life when, as the daughter of the Caesar of Rome, she lives in her father's palace; she meets and marries Gushtasp, the Prince of Iran. In Part II she is the Queen of Iran in Gushtasp's court and has given birth to Prince Esfandiyar (see Appendix for synopses).

The paradigm of Katayun's character is a combination of characteristics--both positive and negative--prevalent in the lives of Rudabeh and Tahmineh. Indeed, the lives of Rudabeh and Tahmineh foreshadow that of Katayun. In Part I she demonstrates independence of character; she displays courage in facing an angry father and is ready to accept the consequences of her decisions; she is unpretentious, prefers inward happiness to external glitter. As an autonomous, strong character she creates a life for herself and her husband despite difficulties, and proves to be a loyal wife. In Part II she is presented as an insightful woman, a wise, loving and caring mother, and above all a counselor who is also actively involved with unfolding events. Whereas Esfandiyar fails to observe flaws in his own character and fails to see through flaws in the world of the epic until it is too late, Katayun possesses the

vision to see through both shortcomings.

Katayun's positive traits are fully and closely intertwined with limitations imposed on her in the social structure of the epic, even more so than in the stories of Rudabeh and Tahmineh. For this reason we will provide detailed documentation of Katayun's positive traits in direct conjunction with social constraints imposed upon these women.

SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS: RUDABEH, TAHMINEH, KATAYUN:

Up to this point in our analysis we have been expounding the positive aspects of these three women. We have discussed the components of beauty-as-character- strength, wisdom, fearlessness, courage, the wholeness and autonomy of character, and their independent decision making. These characters are by no means insipid; if there is such an impression, it is what the critics (such as Noldeke) have created and perpetuated, not the poet, nor the text of the work of art itself. Rudabeh, Tahmineh, and Katayun are not hollow, but rather paradoxical characters whose personal substance is limited by social constraints. It is these constraints to which we now turn our attention.

Rudabeh, despite the strengths of her character, is constantly under the thumb of her father and has to fight

for every inch of victory. Her father had the right to exercise his ancestral Arab tradition to kill the daughter at birth. In the state of mind of Mehrab, Rudabeh is a commodity which could be kept if need be, or done away with if desired. Not only did the father have the choice to kill Rudabeh as a girl at her birth, but also he kept such an attitude for many years to come. In fact, the only persons whose lives are directly threatened in the world of the story are Sindukht and Rudabeh, the mother and the daughter who could lose their lives at Mehrab's will. Further when Manuchihr, the Shah of Iran, eventually attacks Mehrab's kingdom in order to prevent the possibility of a union between the Persian hero, Zal, and the descendants of the evil Zahhak, it is the lives of Rudabeh and her mother Sindukht which are threatened. Mehrab knows that his forces are no match for the might of Iran; so to solve the dilemma, he decides to kill Rudabeh, who is the source of the problems. In his state of mind he considers it his right to discard the mother and the daughter as two dangerous objects. He easily passes judgment when he addresses his wife:

کنم زار تان بر سر انجمن کزآرمت با دخت ناپاک تن

خالق ص ۲۳۶ س - ۱۰۹۰

> I will drag you and that unworthy daughter, and bitterly kill you in public.

Rudabeh's position and role in the social structure

of the epic are highly limited. These limitations can be examined by at least two methodological approaches: one that examines the many things Rudabeh is not, and a host of "why questions" pertaining to why she is not what she could have been and the reasons why she is denied societal opportunities and positions which she could readily and responsibly assume; in this case, the Shahnameh reader might wonder why Rudabeh, rather than Zal, should not be called upon in crucial episodes to contribute to the solution of destructive conflicts. The other theoretical position focuses on what the character really is in the text of the epic, rather than what she is not. In this theoretical conflict we are now dealing with a problem which is still being debated in feminist and non-feminist literary criticism: namely, the deconstructive-feminist attempt to make the silences speak, and the counter argument against this approach, that the critic must provide an analysis of the work of art as it really is, rather than what it is not, or what the critic wants it to have been. "Franco-feminist criticism," for example, "is to listen 'otherwise', to read between the lines for desires or states of mind that cannot be articulated in the social arena and the languages of phallocentrism. Such a method is sometimes likened to a psychoanalyst's attention to the gaps..." (Jones 99); to put it differently, the critic should be keen on "listening and

watching in art and literature," Adrienne Rich explains, "for the silences, the absences, the unspoken, the encoded /which the critic must decode/ --for there we will find the true knowledge of women" (245). With regard to this kind of attempt to make silences speak, to fill in the blank pages, omissions, and gaps, Greene and Kahn elaborate that "In this, feminist criticism is allied with the deconstructive criticism advocated by Barthes and Macherey..." (22). In our analysis of Rudabeh's limited roles we will try to focus only on the roles that exist in the text of the epic, rather than those which do not since the present study is mainly centered around textual analysis and cultural discourse, rather than socio-political discourse, economic, and class distinctions.

As a woman character, therefore, Rudabeh's exceptional traits and potentiality for growth in the structure of the story will, in the end, only lead her to a number of disappointing roles, upon the completion of which she will be cast aside. The functions may in themselves be noble; yet, for a human character to be used as a means to an end, as a mere tool, and then cast aside as a character is not the noblest condition in the social structure of the epic. Rudabeh is basically a means for the birth of the future hero, Rustam. Her main function is to go through the unbearable pain of carrying and

giving birth to an exceptional boy. The pain and suffering of Rudabeh is elaborated in these Persian lines:

چنین داد پاسخ که ای روزبت هم نگذایم به فریاد لب
هانا زمان آمده‌ستم فراز وزیب ار بیرون نیایم چراز

Norma Goodrich's summary of this episode explains that "The Creator has not made him like ordinary mortals. He is an elephant for size and a lion for courage" (128). Rudabeh endures the pains of carrying this unusual baby. To give birth to this unusual baby will not, of course, be a natural process. Even if it were a natural process, the task would not be less difficult than the heroic performance of Zal or the other heroes. Medea, the central character of Euripides Play Medea, addresses this issue. She says, "what they /men/ say of us is that we have a peaceful time living at home, while they do the fighting in war. How wrong they are! I would very much rather stand three times in the front of battle than bear one child (Lines 246-49). Medea was complaining about the pains of ordinary delivery. Rudabeh is pushed to the limits of this painful experience in order that the hero could be considered exceptional. They cut Rudabeh's side to take the huge baby out by cesarean. P.B. Vachha summarizes the delivery of the baby in this fashion:

> His /Rostam's/ size is so great that his birth is attended with utmost difficulty, and Rudabeh is

> safely delivered of this mighty baby only after the caesarean operation. She faints away through the pains of labor, and Zal in his distress seeks help from the Simurgh. That wise bird gives them hope and guidance; and under his direction the operation is performed and the heroic child safely delivered. (146)

The operation is successful, but Rudabeh will remember the pain of carrying this baby:

رستم گویا هم آمد سر بار بر سر ...

Mahmood K. Moghaddam elaborates on the Persian line that "when Rudabeh regains consciousness after giving birth, she cries out 'Rastam!' which means I am relieved from the pain, and so they call the baby Rustam"(21).

After the painful delivery, Rudabeh assumes the function of nurturing the boy, a process after which Rudaben's role will diminish in the epic. She meets the challenge of the physical nurturing of this ever-hungry boy. Apart from her own care, she will need the help of ten women to feed this baby.

Expectation from Rudabeh naturally goes beyond her duties to help Rustam grow. The value system of the epic demands that a great man should be born from a noble mother.

چو او زاید از مادر پرهنر سزد گر بخوانی ورا نر

> When he is born from a noble mother, he will grow like a fruitful tree.

In order for Rudabeh to fulfill her duties as a worthy mother for such a hero, she has to have strength of character, courage, wisdom, and a host of other good qualities. The world of the epic generously offers her these qualities, so that she can perform her major duty in the epic. These are positive qualities, but after she is used for the purpose, she is finished as a character in the epic. While male characters, such as Zal, will remain active and dynamic within the social structure of the epic (the reader notes that we mean the social structure within the literary work of art, rather than the socio-political conditions outside the work which may have influenced it) and will participate in crucial events which follow, Rudabeh is cast aside only to be brought back two more times in the later sections of the epic. She will be brought back for the task of lamentation at the funeral of Sohrab (her grandson) and Rustam (her own son).

This is the extent to which the potentiality of all her positive strengths is utilized. She will do nothing else. Her dynamism, fearlessness, insight, courage, wisdom, integrity of character will all remain idle within the social structure of the epic. The only expectation from her will be her readiness to die from the grief of her son's death. Culturally, this is a value system which

the tradition endorsed, the poet elaborated, and for which the readers praised Rudabeh for centuries.

Tahmineh suffers from the same problem which we encountered in Rudabeh. Obvious privileges for the major female character on the one hand, and severe contradictory limitations on the other, confront the critic with the difficult task of reconciling the opposing forces. The dichotomy of these opposing forces were examined in the previous story; here the problem is more serious and flaws in the treatment of the major female character more obvious. Having already discussed the positive aspects of Tahmineh's character and the extraordinary richness attributed to it, we now turn our attention to Tahmineh's role in the social structure of the story.

Tahmineh's limitations are in fact multidimensional. Tahmineh is a female character in a world which is dominated by male characters, a world in which the female characters are not given a chance to contribute to the outcome of events. In this story, the world is dominated by men who draw the outlines of events, make crucial decisions, act accordingly and execute their plans. In this world Tahmineh is married to Rustam, gives birth to a son and devotes her life to raising him. Rustam stays with her only the first night during which

time their marriage is consummated. The next morning he leaves to meet his own goals and performs his own heroic duties in other episodes of the epic. He never comes back to Samangan and never visits with Tahmineh, while on the contrary, Tahmineh always has deep desires for Rustam, and she wishes to be with him. But she has no control over Rustam's return. Tahmineh is, therefore, a woman who sleeps with her husband for one night and has to tolerate indefinite separation from the only man of her life while remaining faithful to him. Meantime, she is responsible for bearing the child and raising him. A hint for Tahmineh's discontent comes in a couplet toward the end of the story when she says:

دو چشمم بره بود گفتم مگر زفرزند و رستم بیارم خبر

سکوچ ۲ ص ۲۵۹ ب- ۱۲

> My eyes were fixed to the road,
> wishing that I would hear from /my/
> son and Rustam.

Moreover, despite her loneliness and single-handed support for Sohrab, she ends with Sohrab's threat for her very life. Tahmineh had withheld the identity of Sohrab's father all years long because she feared that Rustam's enemies would destroy the son because of their hatred of the father. When Sohrab specifically asks about his father, Tahmineh still refuses to reveal the father's identity, but she is shaken and scared when Sohrab threatens to kill her. The episode is quite rich.

On the one hand the reader has sympathy for Sohrab's demand, but on the other hand, the analysis of a male character's gain at the expense of a female character is the "feminist point of departure."[25]

The feminist point of departure demands that we pay attention to the humiliation and setback which Tahmineh suffers and specific conditions in male-female character relationship. Indeed, in the mother-son relationship in this episode an irony occurs. As a mother, Tahmineh has given Sohrab his life, but in a male dominated society the boy gives himself the right to kill Tahmineh for information withheld from him. Of course this catastrophe does not happen, but the point is that Tahmineh is living on the edge of such a calamity and that the threat is boldly made in the story.

چه گویم چو پرسد کسی از پدر ز نهم گیم و ز کدامین گهر
سیاهم ترا رنده اندر جهان گران برستی ازین بدنهان

Should friend or foe demand my father's name,
Let not my silence testify my shame!
If still concealed, your father, still delay,
A mother's blood shall wash the crime away.
(Atkinson 354)

Having in mind the standpoint of an "androgynous vision" in the "feminist point of departure", which, nonetheless, can disturb the complacent reader of the epic, and despite the radical position of "woman-centered, gynocentric feminism", such as

Showalter's opinion which labels this approach a mere "feminist critique" rather than "feminist criticism" and which in her opinion only redresses a grievance,[26] we will try to examine the male-female character relationship with regard to the process of gain and loss respectively for men and women in the world of the epic story. Since "Rustam and Sohrab" is basically a tragic story, we will examine the process of male gain at the expense of female loss (the central attention in androgynous feminist point of departure), within the context of a theoretical dichotomy in regard to tragedy and pathos--tragic gain assigned to men and pathetic loss to women.

Aristotle's famous definition of Tragedy in the Poetics is as follows:

> Tragedy then is a process of imitating an action which has serious implications, is complete, and possesses magnitude; by means of language which has been made sensuously attractive, with each of its varieties found separately in the parts; enacted by the persons themselves and not presented through narrative; through a course of pity and fear completing the purification /catharsis/ of tragic acts which have those emotional characteristics.
> (Trans. G.F. Else 25).

In the above definition the most significant terms for our purpose are pity, fear, and catharsis. These terms

are highly problematic as scholars do not fully agree with interpretations as to what exactly Aristotle meant by them. Concerning pity and fear Else explains in his introduction to the Poetics that:

> Plato had seen them /pity and fear/ as negative and menacing, an encouragement to indulgence in our natural passions. What Aristotle thinks about them is not entirely clear in the extant portion of the Poetics, but so much is clear that he considers them both natural and desirable emotional tendencies. (6)

Concerning Catharsis, the problem is more complicated as Else explains that it is "based somehow on pity and fear, but whose relationship to 'Catharsis' is left wholly obscure. The most that can be said with confidence. . .is that 'Catharsis' belongs in some way to Aristotle's defense of the emotional side of poetry against Plato" (6). Elaborating on Catharsis, Else continues that "the arousing of pity and fear. . .can be made beneficial rather than hurtful. In any case--and perhaps this is the most important thing in the long run--it is clear that Aristotle accepts, and insists on, an emotional as well as an intellectual side of poetry" (6-7).

What we are trying to establish through these quotations is that the ultimate outcome of a tragic act is gain rather than loss. This point is clear in Aristotle's six elements of tragedy (plot, character,

thought, diction, melody, and spectacle). Concerning plot , Aristotle requires that the elements of both pity and fear should be involved; moreover, there should be a shift from good fortune to bad fortune, which he calls peripety. Aristotle adds yet another component to the plot which he calls "anagnorisis" meaning recognition. "And recognition," Aristotle adds, "is, as indeed the name indicates, a shift from ignorance to awareness" (Aristotle 36). This element contains an intellectual gain which contributes to a movement in a positive direction despite suffering and loss. Aristotle adds:

> These then are two elements of plot: peripety and recognition; third is the pathos. Of these, peripety and recognition have been discussed; a pathos is a destructive or painful act, such as deaths on stage, paroxysms of pain, woundings, and all that sort of thing. (37)

Aristotle's definition of tragedy, therefore, contains the three elements of peripety, recognition, and pathos. In this formula tragedy contains not only pain and suffering, but also a gain through the act of tragedy. Pathos, nevertheless, by itself is an element of loss and pain.

In our analysis of Tahmineh's character we will explain that whereas both Sohrab and Rustam are involved with both aspects of tragic loss and gain, Tahmineh's share is only pathos in the above sense. Before we deal

with this aspect we will refer to a modernist theorist of tragedy, Arthur Miller ,who clearly distinguishes between pathos and tragedy in his "Tragedy and the Common Man."

> The possibility of victory must be there in tragedy. Where pathos rules, where pathos is finally derived, a character has fought a battle he could not possibly have won. The pathetic is achieved when the protagonist is, by virtue of his witlessness, his insensitivity or the very air he gives off, incapable of grappling with a much superior force.
> (In B.F. Dukore, Dramatic Theory... 896).

As tragic heroes, Sohrab and Rustam enjoy certain privileges which include freedom of choice, independent decision making, heroic actions, experiencing tragic moment of recognition, and the possibility of growth and character development.

The crux of the story of "Rustam and Sohrab" revolves around an experience between the father and the son. Sohrab makes a decision to find his father, and he also makes a decision as to how he will find him. He decides that he will attack the force of Kavus, the foolish king of Persia, and decides that his father should become the king of Persia instead.

Kaus himself, hurled from his ivory throne,
Shall yield to Rustam the Imperial Crown.
(Atkinson 355)

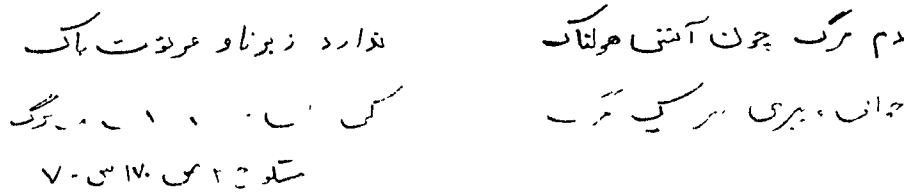
Sohrab's first task is to find his father. Sohrab anticipates that the best place where he might see his father is on the battlefield. Finally they meet in single combat while the process of recognizing each other fails. Every shred of evidence indicates to Sohrab that the warrior who has responded to his challenge is none other than his own father, but Rustam denies his identity and fierce battle will soon begin.

Rustam has his own problems. Facing the young warrier, Rustam, now in his old age, is frightened. In order to save his fame and pride he decides that he will fight the young hero as an unknown soldier. At the height of the battle, when Rustam sees that he is no match for the young warrior, he allows himself to degenerate into a lesser hero and tricks the boy, unheroically. The scene is set for an important tragic experience in the story. Rustam will experience his moment of recognition when he understands that the young man he has stabbed to death is none other than his own son, but further Rustam now has to face the consequences of his flawed judgment and hasty action. Rustam's erroneous thinking, his faulty decision, and his wrong action (although it is for the high goal of saving his country, his soldiers, and his own life) make Rustam a

suitable candidate for a traditional tragic hero.

Traditional theories of tragedy also tell us that apart from the element of flaw in the make up of the tragic hero, the main characters usually have an opportunity to grow into more well-rounded presons. This growth normally arises directly from the experience of tragic waste.

The notion of growth and tragic gain in the story of Sohrab is multidimensional. First of all Sohrab's tragic death contributes to the establishment of peace between the two feuding armies. Moreover, the theme of the apparently untimely death of Sohrab is used in the story so that the poet can enhance his philosophical interpretation of the nature of death, and advocate that death is like fire which burns indiscriminatley. The poet begins the story with this scheme:



Death is like a fire in the woods. When there is a fire, there will be no distinction between a sapling and an old tree.

In sum, the process of the two heroes' experience, their actions, and their fate are directly related to the intellectual themes and the tragic gains of the story. While the father and the son perform as fully dynamic

characters, they are placed in the midst of the currents of events in the story.

The image of Sohrab and Rustam as the heroes of the story is innately different from the image of Tahmineh, who is the major female character in the story. To make the distinction clearer, we quote again from Arthur Miller whose explanation of tragic heroes fits the male characters and that of pathos to Tahmineh. In the "Tragedy and the Common Man" Miller says:

> As a general rule, to which there may be exceptions unknown to me, I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing--his sense of personal dignity. From Orestes to Hamlet, Medea to Macbeth, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his "rightful" position in his society. (In Dukore, Dramatic Theory... 894)

Whereas this definition, as well as Aristotle's definition, applies to the male characters in this story, the image of Tahmineh as a major female character is, to borrow Miller's terms, a character "incapable of grappling with a much superior force" in the story. Tahmineh's insight, wisdom, her sense of dangerous situation, and precautions will not influence the outcome of events. The image of Tahmineh is a woman who has gathered in her own personal traits all that can be admired; nevertheless, the scope of her social capacity

in the story is highly limited. Ironically, however, when all has happened, when the damage is done, when Sohrab is killed, and when it is already too late for her to do anything whatsoever, she is thrown back into the story to perform the task of lamentation, to suffer uselessly, and to grieve herself to death. This was what the poet, and the readers alike, wanted in Tahmineh, and critics praised her for it.

To articulate the degree of Tahmineh's innocent suffering and the intensity of pathos on her side, we should remind ourselves that towards the end of the story Tahmineh is suddenly informed that her son is stabbed to death by Rustam. This part of the story is extremely powerful in creating the feeling of pity for the mother. Her painful experience at that moment is twofold; not only does she hear that her only son is dead, but also the fact that her own beloved Rustam has ignorantly killed her Sohrab. We quote the moving description of Tahmineh's experience from Vachna's translation of the episode in the story:

> She /Tahmineh/ cried oh my life! Where art thou now weltering in mud and blood? What did I know that this fell tidings that Rustam ripped open thy heart with his dagger would ever come to me! Did he not feel pity for that sweet face of thine, thy form and figure and arms? How fondly I had reared thy body during bright days and dreary nights! Now it is all

steeped in blood and covered by the shroud. Whom shall I now take into my arms? Who will be my comfort in grief and pain? Whom shall I call to me in thy stead? To whom can I tell all this pain and anguish of my heart? Alas and alas, oh my body and soul, light and life! thus lying now in the dust from thy palace and garden! Oh my martial boy! . . . ."(168)

The passage is indeed moving. Caught in a situation completely out of her control and a victim of events which have happened due to the foolish actions of other people, Tahmineh is left with nothing other than the feeling of absolute helplessness. Her suffering, her sorrow, her loneliness, and her sense of loss, will all intensify their effect on Tahmineh and will crush her character into slow death within a year of Sohrab's death.

سرانجام هم در غم او بمرد روانش بیکدم سوی خاک برد

Day after day she thus indulged her grief,
Night after night, disdaining all relief;
At length worn out from earthly anguish riven,
The mother's spirit joined her child in Heaven.
(Atkinson 412)

In fact Tahmineh is not alone in performing this task at Sohrab's death. As grandmother, Rudabeh too is brought back into the story to perform a similar task of lamentation, and appeals to the reader's emotions only to enhance the experience of pathos.

Rudabeh and Tahmineh face similar fates in their own

lives. Much as Tahmineh dies out of the grief caused by Sohrab's death, Rudabeh will lose her sanity and accept death when her own son, Rustam's life comes to its end in later episodes. Both mothers crumble under the burden of their sons' deaths. Their sons live their lives to their full heroic capacity and then die. These two women, despite their individual capacity and potential strength, are kept in the periphery to represent weakness, misery, sorrow, and waste. The strength of their individuality and the limitations of their social function in the story seem contradictory, but that is the way it is with female characters in the epic.

Tahmineh's character is without doubt multi-dimensional. In our opinion two major dimensions are dominant in her character: first is her individual and private traits, and second is her public life, social roles, and responsibilities. Within the former aspect she has gathered in herself the classical ideals of--in Matthew Arnold's words--"sweetness and light" (Arnold Selected Prose, 213). After all, she is the daughter of a king, the wife of the central hero of epic, and the mother of yet another hero who surpasses the former one.

Nevertheless, within the total world of the story, a world dominated by heroes such as Sohrab and Rustam, serious limitations and setbacks are imposed on Tahmineh. Here she is forced into a subservient position in which

she becomes irrelevant in the shaping of major events in the story--a woman of personal "sweetness and light", a woman who possesses beauty, prowess, wisdom, courage, independent will, autonomous character, fearlessness, and confidence, ends with weakness, misery, sorrow, and waste. In consequence, she is forced into the position of a character in passive pathos rather than one in active tragedy.

Existing works of criticism on Tahmineh are sharply divided. They are full of praise in every imaginable respect, or they are full of condemnation from the beginning to the end. The best example of the former is Islāmī-Nudūshan's major work زندگی و مرگ پهلوانان (The Life and Death of Heroes) (124-26). At the opposite extreme, we have Rizā Barahinī, for example, who totally ignores Tahmineh's positive attributes prevalent in the text of the epic and reduces her to a petty character, in fact even less than a character when he says in his book تاریخ مذکر (Masculin History) that "All in all Tahminen is a creature behind the scenes, and truly she is used as an object so that the masculine history of Iran is established" (127). The coherence of Tahmineh's character, despite opposing elements in her makeup, however, communicates to the reader more views than either of the above extreme positions and their one dimensional interpretations may offer.

Katayun has her own independent identity; nonetheless, she, too, in a broad sense falls into the category of paradoxes from which the women of The Shahnameh have suffered. She is another example of a dynamic, worthy woman who, once again, will be forced not only into a secondary, subservient role, but also she will not be taken seriously and will eventually be wasted despite her considerable abilities. We encountered this pattern in the characterization of Rudabeh and Tahmineh; in this story the opposed components of the paradigm are intertwined even more closely. We will provide only brief explanations in regard to the paradoxical situation.

Among several positive characteristics the independence of her character is evident in the first episode when she insists on her right to choose her own husband rather than selecting from among those whom her father has invited. One must note here that the society in which Katayun lives accords her the right to choose her own husband, i.e. the society is not repressive to the extent that it provides for certain autonomy; nevertheless, she is paradoxically threatened for her very life when her choice differs from her father's preference. The paradoxical situation is evident in this episode.

چنین داد پاسخ که دختر سیاد که از پرده غیب آمد برنژاد
اگر من سیاوش بدو دخترم بننگ اندرون پست گردد سرم
هم او را و آنرا که او برگزید بکاخ اندرون سر بباید برید

> Heaven forfend that my daughter should, coming from beyond the veil, bring dishonour on her birth. Were I to yield her to him, my head would descend with shame into the dust. It were better that her head and the head of the man she has chosen be cut off here in the palace. (Levy 187)

As we noticed in the synopsis Katayun is saved but she will have to face the consequences of her decision. She is, nevertheless, ready to live a modest life in sharp contrast to the comfort and glitter of life in the court. When Gushtasp, her future husband, specifically asks her why she is giving up the wealth and comfort of the court for her choice of a poor man like him and a difficult life ahead, Katayun answers:

چو من با تو خرسند باشم ببخت تو اشم چرا حوف و تاج و تخت

- ۱. جلد ۶ ص ۲۴ - س ۱۷۶

> Why should we worry about the crown and the throne when you and I can live a happy life.

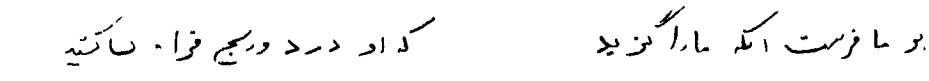
Clearly, the richness of her character allows her to prefer the richness of a happiness which two people can build together to the external wealth prevalent in her father's rich palace. This part of the story may remind the reader of numerous romances employing the same theme, such as Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra

in which Antony gives up the highest ranking military position of the Roman Empire and leaves behind all the wealth and prestige which he has earned, only to build an inwardly rich life with the person he loves. In this respect Katayun represents rich values, but also she is an active woman who is very ready to seek remedy for tangible problems in practical life, thus combining esoteric and exoteric qualities in her character.

شکوجلد ۶ ص ۲۴۰ ب ۲۷۶

She chose a gem from among her jewels, a gem no eye had seen before; the exchange helped them live happily as well as in tears.

She remains a loyal wife to Gushtasp all the while he lives with her in Rome or in his absence when he is summoned to war in later days. When Gushtasp finally wears the crown of Persia after his campaign against the forces of his own country, he sends a message back to Rome asking the Caesar:



شکوجلد ۶ ص ۲۶۲ ب ۸۶۷

Send to us she who chose us and suffered to a great extent.

The first phase of Katayun's life comes to an end in this fashion.

Whereas the source of Katayun's problem in Part I lay in her choice of Gushtasp as husband, Part II of

her life is filled with more immense problems that stem from her son's ambitions and her husband's greed. These problems will destroy the otherwise joyous moments of her life. As a victim of unfolding events, directly caused by her son and her husband, she will react helplessly and to no avail, ending up with a miserable life and constantly lamenting for a lost son. A fully dynamic character will be molded into a lamenting, passive one as the story closes.

Esfandiyar informs Katayun of his intention to request the crown from his father. In response Katayun says:

بدو گفت کای رنج دیده پسر — رگهتی چه جویی دل تاجور
تو داری برین بر فزون بخواه — شگرگنج و فرمان و رای و سپاه
یکی تاج دارد پدر بر سپر — تو داری دگر لشکر و بوم و بر
چرا او بگذرد تاج و تخت تراست — بزرگی و شاهی و بخت تراست
چه نیکوتر از نرّه شیر ژیان — به پیش پدر ریز کمر بر میان

My much afflicted son, what does a noble heart demand? You have everything--treasure, command and power of decision--which concerns the army. Seek for nothing further. Your father has the crown, my son, but you have all the troops, and the lands and country. What is better than a fierce male lion standing in his father's presence and girt for service? When he passes away, crown and throne will be yours; his greatness, majesty and good fortune will come to you. (Levy 194)

Esfandiyar's reaction to the mother's insight and endless care comes in an insult when he says:

که بیش زنان را هرگز مگوی چو گویی سخن باز یابی بکوی

سخن هیچ کاری بزمان زن که هرگز نبینی زن رای زن

> The wise axiom which told one never to utter secrets before women, hit the mark truly. Once you have spoken a word to her, you will find it in the street. In no matter ought you to listen to a woman's behest, for you will never find council to be wise. (Levy 195)

Katayun is caught in the midst of the greatest events that mark the end of heroic section in the epic. She is a woman who knows from the beginning the nature of the actions of all three powerful men of the story. Gushtasp is ready to sacrifice a son to save his crown. Esfandiyar, the young and ambitious son, is blind to the intentions of the greedy father, and allows his ambitions to carry him away to the extent that he dares to cnallenge Rustam. Katayun also knows that Rustam is a proud warrior who has lived through fierce battles; his life is filled with honor and pride and he is a hero who will not let a lifelong reputation be destroyed. She knows that Rustam's career cannot come to an end by being dragged through the streets of his city in chains. She uses all her skill to make the boy open his eyes and become aware of this: she enumerates

Rustam's heroic victories in wars and his defeats of the White Devil, the Shah of Hamavaran, the brave Sohrab, and all those who were held responsible for the death of Siyavush; she mentions the streams of blood that Rustam draws from his enemies when his fury arises. These Persian lines paraphrase her point.

سواری که باشد سنیروی پیل — رخون راند اندر زمین جوی نیل
بدرّد جگرگاه دیو سپید — زشمشیر اوگم کند راه شید
همان ماه هاماوران را کشت — بنازست گفتی کس او نکشت
هما جو سهراب دیگر سوار — نبودست جنگی گه کارزار
بچنگ پدر در بهنگام جنگ — بآورگه کشته شد بی درنگ
بکین سیاوش ز افراسیاب — زخون کرد گیتی چو دریای آب

شکوه جلد ۷ ص ۱۸۹

Katayun further advises Esfandiyar to distance himself from unnecessary bloodshed while she curses all murders and bloodshed that take place over the possession of a crown. The Persian line indicates the point:

که نفرین بریں تخت و این تاج باد — بریں تخت و شور و تاراج باد

شکوه جلد ۷ ص ۲۲۷ تا ۱۹۲

At this stage Katayun is one of the most mature characters of the epic who reflects the intellectual content of the story. She is the one who can see through the vanity of the crown which symbolizes this worldliness, especially when one has to sacrifice true inward happiness and the peace of his life in order to

gain it. But also she advises the young prince quite pragmatically that he does not have to endanger his life for the crown, since his father is an old man and he a young prince who will wear the crown one day:

مده ازپی تاج سر را بباد کزیا تاج شاهی نیامد بباد

پدر بیرگشت و برنا توی بزور و بمردی توانا توی

شکوهمندی ص ۲۱۷-ش ۱۶۳

Moreover, she appeals to Esfandiyar's emotions when she reminds him of the sad days of a mother who will lose a son:

مرا خاکسار دوگیتی مکن ازین مهربان سام تنزو سخن

شکوهمندی ص ۲۱۸-گا ۱۶۷

At this stage Katayun's statements not only indicate her helplessness in saving her son, but also they foreshadow the intensity of her own future grief.

Because Katayun is a woman, her superior insight is paradoxically looked down upon, her endeavor in the social structure of the story is dismissed, and her active struggle in preventing catastrophe and contributing to social growth not taken seriously. Removed from the center-stage of the story Katayun will be pushed to the periphery only to be brought back to perform the task of lamentation at Esfandiyar's death. Caught in his own ways Rustam will shoot the double pointed arrow into Esfandiyar's both eyes. Rustam saves his own honor as a warrior, but the death of Esfandiyar

will mark the end of Rustam's own career. He will live a short life filled with hardship and will face damnation in the hereafter.

Katayun will lament the death of the young warrior, while soon afterwards, in the unfolding events of the epic, Rudabeh will be brought back to lament for the sad end of the life of her son Rustam. The entire legendary section of The Shahnameh ends with two mothers lamenting the wasteful death of two sons.

Katayun is presented as an active, involved charater not only in her personal affairs but also in her involvement with the thematic and intellectual dimensions of the story. From the latter point of view, indeed Katayun leads other major characters such as Gushtasp or Esfandiyar in the process of unraveling the philosophical and moral contents of the story.

According to the value system of the epic, the most degrading and destructive element in human character is the term آز (Āz), which means excessive expectations. Anybody who allows this demonic element to carry him away, he will be punished for it. Katayun is a mature character who is involved with the philosophical core of the story. She is a fully developed character who has the capacity of addressing central issues in the story and in this respect, she goes beyond other female personalities in the epic.

Yet, in her relations with male characters and in the world of the epic in which she is a major figure she will not be taken seriously. Moreover, she herself will be the victim suffering from the consequences of the actions of other persons. She experiences the fate of Rudabeh and Tahmineh who are all left with one task to perform, which is the act of lamentation while their days are numbered until they soon join the dead sons in the hereafter. Once again we cannot but notice the recurrence of a broad pattern in the presentation of a female figure in The Shahnameh: a duality or a double structure which is based on a conflict of opposing forces in the make-up of women and leads us, once again, to the systematic inconsistency in female characterization in the epic.

CHAPTER II

GURDAFARID: THE WARRIOR WOMAN

Gurdafarid is a minor character in the story of "Rustam and Sohrab," a character who enters the story in a single episode and soon disappears; nevertheless, she is one of the most well-known female characters, if not the most famous, in the Shahnameh tradition. She is a highly popular figure among the Shahnameh readers and in the traditional coffee house story telling circles. She is associated with several virtues, the most important of which are her fearlessness, prowess, and above all patriotism.

The central effect of the episode is not only to point out that the women of Iran are fighters-- brave and courageous, but also to indicate that the enemies of Iran (Ironically Sohrab in this case) had better consider the strength of Iranian warriors when they see such prowess and bravery in its women. Also, this episode, among a number of other tools, serves to prepare the

stage for the battle between the two mighty men of the story, Sohrab and Rustam. In consequence the episode ends when the purposes are served. The episode also highlights the notion of waste in Sohrab's life when, ironically as a foreigner, he falls in love with Gurdafarid, a love affair that is one-sided and can bear no fruit. The characterization of Gurdafarid is, therefore, significant not only for the dynamism which she herself demonstrates, but also for her role in helping other characters to crystallize in the story. We begin with Gurdafarid's own individual dynamism.

As mentioned earlier Gurdafarid is a highly popular and a very well-known character, endowed with several widely admired qualities. She is a proud fighter; she has a strong sense of honor and ardour; she is ready to use cunningness against an enemy when it serves a good cause; and she possesses both beauty and insight. Above all, she is a fearless patriot.

Gurdafarid appears in the story immediately after Hujir is defeated by Sohrab. The moving couplets of the epic introduce the warrior girl as an experienced rider and a tested, outstanding warrior. She is "همیشه به جنگ اندرون نامدار" (always in battles renowned). Also, the reader is immediately informed that she is deeply disturbed at the news of Hujir's failure, feeling shame for such a defeat in the hands of an enemy. The episode

begins with these lines:

چو آگاه شد دخت گودرم — که سالار آن انجمن گشت کم
زبان بود برسان گردی سوار — همیشه بجنگ اندرون نامدار
کجا نام او بود گرد آفرید — زمانه زمادر چنین نادرید
چنان ننگش آمد ز کار هجیر — که شد لاله رنگش کبود از قیر

James Atkinson's translation is:

> When Gurd-afrid, a fearless warrior-dame,
> Heard of the conflict, and the hero's shame,
> Groans heaved her breast, and tears of anger flowed,
> Her tulip cheek with deeper crimson glowed;
> (36)

Dishonored, disgraced, and shameful (چنان ننگش آمد ز کار هجیر, so disgraced she felt at Hujir's defeat), she herself prepared to face the challenge of the enemy, trying to regain the lost honor and wipe out the disgrace inflicted on the warriors of the White Fortress. In sum, she is a proud warrior who is ready to meet a formidable enemy's challenge and is ready to risk her own life to defend a cause. The poet continues:

بپوشید درع سواران جنگ — نبود اندر آن کارجای درنگ
نهان کرد گیسو بزیر زره — نرد بر سر برگ رومی گره
بپیش سیاه اندر آمد چو گرد — چو رعد خروشان یکی ولوله کرد
که گردان گمانند و جنگ آوران — دلیران و کار آزموده سران

> Speedful, in arms magnificent arrayed,
> A foaming palfrey bore the martial maid;
> The burnished mail her tender limbs embraced,

Beneath her helm her clustering locks she placed;
Now, like a lion, from the fort she bends,
And 'midst the foe impetuously descends;
Fearless of soul, demands with haughty tone,
The bravest chief, for war-like valour known,
To try the chance of fight. (Atkinson 360)

The two warriors fight ferociously as they greet each other with arrows, javelins, and deadly blows. This aspect of Gurdafarid's performance has attracted much praise by Iranian critics who seem to be rather carried away in their comments about Gurdafarid. One such passage by A. Rāzānī in his article "زن در شاهنامه فردوسی" (Women in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh)" indicates:

> The swordmanship and bravery of Gurdafarid, who, depending on her amazing physical strength, faces in combat a historically renowned hero such as Sohrab, fighting with and challenging him for hours. Gurdafarid has earned an outstanding position in the ancient legends of our nation and she is a source of pride for all the women of Iran. (97)

This is a typical comment in Persian critical sources. Such comments aside, Sohrab does not know that his adversary is a woman dressed as a man. When Sohrab knocks the helmet off her head in the midst of the combat and sees her long hair fall, he realizes that the warrior is a woman. The poet adds that Sohrab, surprised at the strength of the women of Iran wonders about the prowess of Iran's renowned men.

چو آمد جرنشان بتنگ اندرش — بخمید و برداشت جوشن ز سر

رها شد زبند زره موی او — درخشان چو خورشید شد روی او

بدانست سهراب کو دختر است — سر موی او از در افسر است

شگفت آمدش گفت از ایران سپاه — چنین دختر آید به آورد گاه

سواران جنگی بروز نبرد — همانا بر اندر آرند گرد

But strong and fleet Sohrab arrests her speed:
Strikes off her helm and sees--a woman's face,
Radiant with blushes and commanding grace!
Thus undeceived, in admiration lost,
He cries, "A woman, from the Persian host!
"If Persian damsels thus in arms engage,
"Who shall repel their warrior's fierce rage?
(Atkinson 361)

Defeated in combat, Gurdafarid now tries to trick Sohrab when she offers a cunning argument combined with the use of her feminine charm. In her relations with Sohrab, our point is, she demonstrates considerable ability in argument and persuasion. On the one hand, Gurdafarid argues rationally that the morale of Sohrab's troops will be affected when they find out that Sohrab had such a tremendous difficulty in combat with an Iranian girl, and on the other, she suggests that they should abandon hostility and go to the fortress together, where both the fortress and its warrior will be his. The combination of prowess in battle, her scheming argument, and her feminine charm works on Sohrab.

This section of the episode has been the center of attention and praise in works of criticism. Even

Noldeke, whose overall opinion on the Shahnameh women is not high, admires Gurdafarid: "It is true, that the Gurdıyeh, borrowed from the romance of Bahram, is an amazon, but at the same time a schemer; she is little attractive for us. More graceful is the bold and cunning Gurdiferid. But..." (Bogdanov trans. 88).

Z. Ṣafā ınterprets Gurdafarid's cleverness ın thıs section in a positive context when he mentions "Thıs brave woman /Gurdafarıd/ amazed the hero of Iranian origin /Sohrab/ with her effective use of a remedy, prudence, and tact" (242). Within the context of positive interpretation, we can also observe comments ın the story itself ındicating the rightness of her actıons within the given circumstances. Her own father judges:

که هم رزم جستی هم افسون و رنگ بیامد ربکار دژ نزد رنگ

سکو جلد دوم ص ۱۸۸ ب ۲۵۵

> You fought, charmed, and tricked; no shame should be there in your deeds.

Havıng locked herself and other warriors ın the fortress and Sohrab out, Gurdafarid despises the deceıved Sohrab, insulting hım that no despised Turk should ever imagine marrying an Iranıan woman. In the text of the epic Gurdafarıd demonstrates her prıde in her ethnic orıgin and is praised for all that she did in her combat with Sohrab. Concerning her patriotism, Safa reflects this aspect of the text when he says "In loving Iran,

Gurdafarid is no less than any other heroes. She would not have accepted a Turk warrior even if he had no equal" (242).

The episode of Gurdafarid is also significant in other ways as it foreshadows the battle of Sohrab with Rustam in several important respects. Rustam, too, will fight and be defeated by Sohrab; he too will trick Sohrab by falsely arguing that the Iranian custom demands that a defeated warrior be given a second chance, only to prove that no accident is involved. The combined force of the argument and the charisma of the warrior works on Sohrab, as he makes his fatal mistake. Moreover, Gurdafarid is a foreshadowing of Rustam, when she, quite early in the story suspects that Sohrab could not be a Turk as he claims he is. In a manner foreshadowing Rustam's insight, Gurdafarid says:

صاناکه تو خود زترکان نه که جز افریز بزرگان نه

بدان زور بازو وآن کتف یال بداری کس از پهلوان همال

شاهنامه ج ۲ ص ۱۸۹ ب ۱۰۰۱

Indeed you do not belong to the Turks;
You cannot be but the descendent of great men.
That force, physic, and power such as yours,
Have no match among all warriors.

These are more or less the same words that Rustam utters later. Therefore, in thought and in deeds Gurdafarid acts heroically within the value system of the epic. Moreover, she foresees that Sohrab may not prove

to be a match to Rustam when the latter will come to sack Sohrab's camp. Demonstrating wisdom and insight in addition to ethnic pride, prowess and fearlessness, all of which the Shahnameh tradition has endowed her, Gurdafarid advises Sohrab that he is too good to be wasted that way, and it is in his own best interests that he should refrain from the pursuit of Iranian heroes.

ولیکن جو آگاهی آید بشاه که آورد گودی زره ان سپاه
بتهماسه و رستم سند زجای شما با تهمتن ندارید پای
بماید کس زنده از لشکرت ندانم چه آید زبد برسرت
دریغ آیدم کین چنین یال و بخت ص از بیگان نباید نهفت
ترا بهتر آید که فرمان کنی ره نامور سوی توران کنی

....."O'er Persia's fertile fields,
"The savage Turk in vain his falchion wields;
"When King Kaus this bold invasion hears,
"And mighty Rustem clad in arms appears!
"Destruction wide will glut the slippery plain,
"And not one man of all thy host remain.
"Alas! that bravery, high as thine, should meet,
"Amidst such promise, with a sure defeat,
"But not a gleam of hope remains for thee,
"Thy wondrous valour cannot keep thee free.
"Avert the fate which o'er thy head impends,
"Return, return, and save thy martial friends!"
(Atkinson 364)

Up to this point in our analysis of Gurdafarid's character we discussed her traits and positive elements in her make-up; however, we would like to add that while Gurdafarid forcefully demonstrates her patriotism,

prowess, fearlessness, cleverness, charm, and insight, she faces, nevertheless, certain limitations. The pattern of paradox in the images and status of women repeats once again. One such paradoxical limitation is that despite her courage, strength, etc., she has to fight as a man and dressed like a man. She knows that she would not have been taken seriously if she fought as a woman and as in herself she really was. The very fact that she disguises her female identity is a proof in this respect.

Moreover, Gurdafarid knows that the male oriented world in which she exists despises a warrior who degenerates to the point of fighting a woman in single combat. This is part of the reason why her scheme against Sohrab works, as she convinces Sohrab that it is in his best interest, that no one else finds out the truth in their combat. Sohrab is saved an embarrassment when he agrees to follow Gurdafarid to the White Fortres. With regard to women's limitations in the epic, the image is once again prevalent in Gurdafarid's episode that, despite the personal qualities and substance which the epic tradition has endowed women, they are, in the final analysis, not taken seriously in the societal structure of the world of the epic.

We will mention one more point before we close this section. We argued earlier that Gurdafarid is a dynamic

character in her own right, but it is also a fact that she is dropped out of the main story after the little episode comes to a premature end. We are not told what exactly happens to her; all we are told in the text is that a group of people in the fortress left through a tunnel before Sohrab sacked the fort the next day. This is usually the fate which static characters experience and are dropped out somewhere along the story never to be heard of again. The episode is inviting to the critics who might want to make silences speak in this story.

CHAPTER III

THE NAMELESS MOTHER OF SIYAVUSH: WOMAN AS SIGN

Discussion about Siyavush's mother is significant becuase it demonstrates one of those occasions in which the concept of woman as an individual person is at its lowest. Similar to Rudabeh, Tahmineh, and Katayun who exercise their individual will in the world of tneir stories, the nameless mother of Siyavush takes certain steps toward shaping her life, but soon she is overpowered by tremendous forces that surround her and ends with no ego, no individuality, and remains a full victim of forces upon which she has no control whatsoever. The paradigm of a female character who demonstrates activism at the beginning but ends with pure quiescence and pathos is at its peak in the Nameless Mother's story, leaving an image in the mind of the reader of a person who can be possessed as property, used as a sex object, and at best a woman to produce a baby and disappear immediately.

Her story is mentioned in passing in The Shahnameh

and quite briefly (44 couplets only). The first glimpse of this nameless character occurs at the beginning of "The Story of Siyavush." Two generals of the Shah of Iran find her in the woods, alone, scared, robbed and beaten. Then in a flash back she gives some information about her past. We read that she comes from an important family descended from King Fıraydun. We are told only that her father comes home late at night; drunk and angry he attempts to behead her without an apparent reason.

چنین داد پاسخ که مارا پدر برد دوش گذاشتم بوم وبر
شب تیره مست آمد از دشت سور همان چون مرا دید جوشان زدور
یکی خنجری آبگون برکشید همان خواست ازتن سرم را برید

> My father beat me yesterday night, so I forsake my land and home. In the darkness of the night he had returned in a drunken state from a wedding feast. When he saw me in the distance, in the confusion of his mind he drew a gleaming sword and would have hewn my head from my body. (Levy 82)

The nameless girl manages to escape her father's tyranny and rides into the woods until the horse drops exausted. The next horrible thing that happens to her is that she is robbed of her jewelry and beaten in the woods.

چنین داد پاسخ که اسبم بماند زسستی مرا برزمین برنشاند
ی اندازه زر و گهر داشتم بسر بر یکی تاج زر داشتم

بران روی بالا زمن بستند بام یکی تیغ برمن زدند

> My horse lingered behind, having in its exhaustion left me seated on the ground. I had money and jewels beyond counting and on my head a golden crown. Over there they took my led horse from me and someone beat me with the scabbard of sword. I ran away in fear and came into this forest weeping tears of blood. (Levy 82)

The next stage of her misery happens when the generals have fully heard her sad story. Beautiful and royal as she is, the generals quarrel with each other over possessing her for pleasure. The more the nameless girl looks helpless, the more each general desires to take her to himself.

Feminist psychoanalytic theories have examined the subject of male domination, the female submissive condition, and erotic excitement extensively. The writings of Jane Flax (1978), Jessica Benjamin (1980), and Judith K. Gardiner (1985) are illuminating. "Domination is not a nasty additive to eroticism but its essence, for, in patriarchies, domination and submission constitute erotic excitement" (Gardiner 135). The validity of the theory is beyond the scope of our discussion in this work; the theory, nonetheless, is applicable to this specific episode.

Finally the generals, being unable to agree which one will possess the girl for pleasure, agree that in

order to settle their problem they should kill the girl.

سخن شان بتندی بجایی رسید که این ماه را سر بباید برید

شکر جلد ۳ - ص ۸ - س ۴۸

The image of this woman as property and an object for pleasure is complete when the Shah of Iran is asked to intervene. The Shah is asked to settle the differences between the two claimants, but the moment the king sees the girl he smiles and holds his lips within his teeth and experiences a lustful need to possess her.

چو کاوس روی کنیزک بدید بخندید ولب را بدندان گزید

شکر جلد ۳ - ص ۹ - س ۵۲

The desire of the Shah for this shelterless girl is the ultimate proof that she is only a piece of property and an object for pleasure. Despite her fear, loneliness, suffering and pain no one cares or thinks about her as a human being. They act as if she were prey to be hunted.

The Shah soon dismisses the generals, telling them that valuable "game" should go to a higher ranking person, thus he, not mere generals, deserves the "hunted gazelle."

سپهبد چنین گفت شاه که کوتاه شد بر شما رنج راه

گوزنست اگر آهوی دلربست شکاری چنین از در مهتریست

The hardships of your /the generals'/ journey are now at an end. This is mountain-doe, truly a

> heartravishing gazelle; but game appropriate only to the highest. (Levy 83)

The nameless girl is added to the crowd of women who entertain the Shah in his harem. The next stage of using this girl is to make her produce a baby for the Shah and drop out of the story. The last time the reader hears about the nameless girl is when she gives birth to Siyavush; the reader never hears of her again, not knowing what became of her.

Character relationship in this episode is limited to the nameless girl's relationship with her mother, of whom she speaks highly in one couplet; her father, who beats her except when he is not drunk; the robbers who are apparently men, though it is not specified in the episode, and who not only take her jewelry but also beat her; the generals and the king, all three of whom are motivated in their relationship with her by only two components in her make-up: sexual attraction and aristocratic lineage, components which sum up the discourse between the nameless girl and the three powerful men who are interested in her as an upper-class sex object.

The discourse imposed upon male-female interaction in the encounter between the nameless girl, the generals, and the king deals with the effect of her words and the language of her flesh. As subject she is telling a tale

which must evoke the willingness of the generals and the king to help a girl who has become an innocent victim of unfortunate circumstances; as object, nonetheless, the language of her flesh allows a different discourse which she never intends. The nameless girl's

> female body as counter-text to her words does not speak her language. The tale presents woman's words estranged from woman's body, allowing interpretation to distinguish between discourse, between woman as object and woman as subject, between male desire and female consciousness. (Munich 247)

The nameless girl's words and her body become contradictory signs--her body contradicts (speaks against) her words. In consequence her life is in more jeopardy than ever before when the generals decide to kill her because they cannot agree who will possess the object. Feminist critique is keen on such contradiction.

Never has the image of woman in The Shahnameh been as low as the example we are dealing with. She is a person who has no name, no rights, no respect, no individuality, forced into the position of full quiescence, victimized, used, and dropped out, never to be heard again.

Also, while she is the mother of one of the most significant figures in the epic she is dealt with very briefly. Despite the brevity of the story and a lack of full descriptions of its events, the story is effective

enough to give an image of a woman of which perhaps the poet himself was not proud. Of course it is difficult to prove this; nevertheless, not only the poet himself passes too quickly over this story (which might be a sign of his uneasiness with what happens in it), but also many critics have chosen to mention her in passing or not to deal with her at all. One such critic who mentions the story is M. Rahīmī who has this to say in his دیدگاهها (View Points):

> We will skip the obvious reference to the position of women in this story as well as taunting judgment of Kavus /in settling of the problem of the generals/ and will concentrate instead, on the story of Siyavush. (87)

Regardless of the brief analyses of this woman's character in Shahnameh criticism for whatever reasons, it remains a fact that the nameless girl, who demonstrates activism in securing her life at the beginning of the story, ends in complete quiescence while she is victimized beyond belief. She is threatened, frightened, lonely, helpless, insulted, robbed, an object in the hands of the generals of a foreign land, and eventually a woman for the lustful pleasures of a Shah, a figure added to the list of the women in a harem, and moreover a mother who takes the pains of bearing, but is deprived of having her child when the Shah decides to give the boy to Rustam to bring him up as a hero. This is indeed an

unboastful and a sad image of a female figure who is a woman of personal substance but misunderstood and victimized in the world of the epic.

CHAPTER IV

SUDABEH: THE SHREWD WOMAN MORE SO IN MALE-AUTHORED CRITICISM THAN IN THE TEXT ITSELF

Sudabeh is the queen of King Kavus, the stepmother of Prince Siyavush, and a woman whose desires for the young Prince bring them both to a disastrous end. Sudaben is a major character in the famous "Story of Siyavush" in The Shahnameh. The pattern of the story as well as its motif is by no means unique to The Shahnameh. Its equivalent can, for example, be found in ancient Greek literature (Hippolytus by Euripides in the fifth century B.C.), in the Old Testament ("The Story of Joseph"), the Quranic tradition ("Sura Yusuf"), the Zoroastrian tradition (The ritual of Sūk-i Sīyāvush). The major motif in all these stories is alike and revolves around the cunningness of a woman whose unreleased desires cause catastrophe for a virtuous young man.

Regarding the notion of the origin of this story and its motif, one can seek an answer from among several categories of explanations. Otto Rank, for example,

offers a classification of three categories concerning the origins of mythic heroes: 1) the centrality of the human mind as the origin of the creation of heroic myths, 2) the theory that heroic myths are created in an original community, which later spread to descending cultures, and 3) the theory of migration of patterns and motifs through wars, trading and other contacts between nations (Rank 1-2). Concerning "The Story of Siyavush" contemporary source studies in Persian literary criticism mostly lean toward the third category. M. Bahār in his major work اساطیر ایران (Iranian Myths) divides the story into several sections and argues that the episode concerning Sudabeh's desires for Siyavusyh and her attempt to consummate her desire have entered the story under the influence of Sumerian and Semitic stories. He adds further that the episode does not originate from the Indo-European sources of Persian literature, but through an influence from Semitic and Mediterranean sources (51). Moreover, the source studies that Z. Ṣafā offers in his حماسه سرائی در ایران (Epic Tradition in Iran) indicates that there is no reference to Sudabeh's name in the synopsis of the story of Siyavush in Avesta, but the name emerges in Pahlavi (middle Persian) sources. He adds that the episode concerning Sudabeh's love for Siyavush must have evolved during the Pahlavi and early Islamic periods and was finally elaborated during the

years immediately before Ferdowsi, as well as by Ferdowsi himself (510-15). This study supports Bahar's theory that the episode of Sudabeh's love for Siyavush is not Iranian in its origin. We do not intend to defend or reject this position, as the scope is too broad for our narrow purpose. What we know for sure is that during the Pre-Islamic era of Iranian culture, there existed a cult called Sūk-i Sīyāvush (The Commemoration of Siyavush). References to the stories of this cult appears in the sources contemporary to Ferdowsi himself and in the immediate centuries before his era. Ṭabarī, the famous historian of the third century of the Islamic era, a scholar who was Iranian but wrote in Arabic, refers to the character of Sudabeh in his تاریخ الامم والملوک (The History of Ṭabarī). Here is the Arabic reference of Ṭabari followed by our translation.

كان كيقاوس تزوج فيما ذكر ابنة افراسياب ملك الترك وقيل
بل انها بنت ملك اليمن وكان يقال لها سوذابه وكانت ...
(طبری جلد دوم ص ۶۹۸)

> And Kavus married the daughter of Afrasiyab, the Turk King /of Turan/. And it was said that she was the daughter of the king of Yaman. It was said that her name was Suzabeh. She was a witch.

Bal'amī's fourth- century free translation of Tabari's Arabic text into Persian also refers to the story in this fashion:

چون سیاوش بلخ آمد یکروز جامه های پادشاهانه پوشید بود سیلام
مادر رفت دختر افراسیاب که زن پدرش بود برو عاشق شد و او را
بوسیدن خواست و او سیاوش فرمان او نکرد و گفت
با این پدر سوگند نکنم آنرن برو حیلتها کرد و دروغها گفت
ترجمه تاریخ طبری ص ۴۷

> When Siyavush came to Balkh, one day he dressed up as a prince and went to greet his mother. The daughter of Afrasiyab who was his stepmother fell in love with him and offered him her body. Siyavush rejected her, saying he would not betray his father. That woman acted cunningly and told lies....

Compared with this kind of milder reference to Sudabeh's character, Ferdowsi's overemphasis on the wickedness of Sudabeh is an interesting point. We will deal with the details of Sudabeh's character in The Shahnameh below, but we immediately add that the consolidation of Sudabeh's character by Ferdowsi became the standard reference to this character since Ferdowsi's time, while all other versions (whether less wicked or equally so) disappeared from the folk epic tradition. Sudabeh has represented evil ever since Ferdowsi's time.

The critics of The Shahnameh have followed the same path in their analysis of this character. To my knowledge all major critics have referred to Sudabeh while using a host of negative adjectives in Persian. Dabīr Sīyāqī, who is thoroughly disgusted with Sudabeh, explains in Persian that "Sudabeh hears about the qualities of Siyavush, and secretly this demon-natured

woman falls in love with him" (59). Following the same line of thought, M. Rahīmī interprets in Persian words to the effect that "Sudabeh is the symbol of sensuality, lust, and wild instinct. She has no role in the story except continuously scheming new tricks as to win the body of Siyavush. From the beginning to the end her character is limited to this affair"(79). Moreover, Rāzānī, believes that "The demon of lust had dominated her /Sudabeh's/ existence. Instead of behaving as a mother, she had a desire for him /Siyavush/" (100). Furthermore, Islami-Nudushan adds that "In the legendary section of the epic, except Sudabeh, there is no other Shrew.... The woman who has disgraced (the image of) women in The Shahnameh is Sudabeh" (1348 H. 119-20). One last quotation may include Sh. Miskūb's opinion that "Her /Sudabeh's/ love for Siyavush is opportunistic and wealth seeking (138). In sum, Sudabeh is portrayed as a source of evil both in the epic itself and in the works of almost all critics.

Our approach will not involve a radical departure from the tradition of criticism on this character; however, while keeping in view the grave vices in the character of this young woman, we will also try to widen the scope of our investigation of Sudabeh's character to see whether the fictional world of which she is a part, that is, the literary context, does not provide some

motivation and explanation for her behavior. In feminist criticism the attempt is defined as "compensatory".

The first part of the story portrays Sudabeh as a woman who has a winning character. She is lovable, insightful, independent-minded, brave and a loyal woman to her husband. Nevertheless, critics have created and perpetuated misogynous images corresponding to nothing in the text of the epic.

While perpetuating misogynous images, critics (not the poet) perhaps in anticipation of Sudabeh's moral failings in the second part, and despite textual evidence as to the heavenly charms of this character (see Atkinson 112), reread Sudabeh's virtues as vices and describe her as lustful, merely physical and basely stimulating rather than one who might attract love and inspire virtue in the lover. In their judgment, Sudabeh is damned no matter what qualities she may or may not possess. Thus Sudabeh's character is constructed against the text and in accordance with the values of the critic. Islāmī-Nudūshan, for example, observes in his جام جان بین (The Crystal Ball) a comparison of Racine's Phaedra whom he admires and Sudabeh whom he despises in highly ornamented Persian vocabulary:

> Through Racine's words we can see a Phaedra who is pale and thin; her beauty is pallid, sickly looking, and majestic for a queen; the desire which it stimulates in a man

> is delicate, noble rather than sexually inviting. On the contrary, Sudabeh looks vital, fresh, and healthy; she gets easily pregnant and delivers without losing any freshness. Her beauty is hot, inviting, and ready; it is not love inspiring. (1355 H. 89)

Dr. Islāmī-Nudushan's preference of "palid, sickly looking" image of a woman is indeed the feminist critic's target to destroy; preferences as such are "apparent advantages" which are indeed "disadvantages" (see Greene and Kahn 17-18, for apparent advantages which conceal disadvantages). Dr. Islāmī-Nudūshan's personal preference is clear, but his description of Sudabeh is not fully accurate. The text of The Shahnameh, in any event, offers the terms of "graceful," "Charms of Heaven," and similar descriptions to that effect.

In the text of the epic Suddabeh inspires human relationship and love; separation from her causes grief and longing. In one episode it is her father, the king of Hamavaran, who feels sad to lose her, not because she is "hot, inviting, and ready", but we must assume because of her inherent worth and filial devotion. He says to Kavus' messenger, "that he has only one daughter in the world and that she is to him sweeter than his very own life."

برادر جهان این یکی دختر ست که از جان شیرین گرامی تر است

سکر جلد ۲ ص ۱۳۰-ن ۹۲

Under these circumstances the Shah of Iran demands the King of Hamavaran not only to pay him booty, but also to give him his daughter; this is how the father reacts:

برایشت گوی بد از خواسته	بفرزند بودم دل آراسته
من زین کیس جان نشاندهی	وگرشاه ایران ستاندهی

شکو جلد ۲ ص ۱۳۲-س ۶ ۱۰

> ...observing to the messenger, that he had but two things in life valuable to him, and those were his daughter and his property; one was his solace and delight, and the other his support. (Atkinson 112)

Apart from being lovable, Sudabeh is also independent-minded. For example she makes up her own mind in her acceptance of Kavus' proposal, and despite her father's reluctance, she decides to marry Kavus and go to Iran with him.

بدوگفت سودابه زین چاره نیست	ازاو بهتر امروز همخواره نیست
بداست سالار ماماوران	که سودابه را آن نیامدگران

> Sudabeh advises her father that there is no other way; besides who could be better than the Shah of Iran. The King of Hamavaran then knew that Sudabeh had her mind in this matter.

Sudabeh is also presented as insightful. In that context it is not the foolish Kavus, but the insightful Sudabeh who sees through the plot and warns Kavus of the possible trick that her father may be planning. It is characteristic of Kavus, not only in this story, but in

all other places, not to listen to reason. Sudabeh's warning is disregarded and Kavus gets himself into trouble, again depending on Rustam to come to his rescue when the damage is already done. The above paraphrase is summarized in these lines in Persian:

بدانست سودابه رای پدر — که با سور پرخاش دارد بسر
بکاوس کی گفت کین رای نیست — ترا خود بهاماوران جای نیست
ترا بی بهانه بجنگ آورند — نباید که با سور جنگ آورند
ز سودابه گفتار او کژ کرد — اندر ربیثان سیر ابرد
ببند با دلیران و گندآوران — بهان شاه ماهاوران

شکو جلد ۲ ـ ص ۱۲۵

Moreover, Sudabeh is a courageous and loyal person, a devoted wife who refuses to leave her husband at a difficult time. Given a choice of either being welcomed at her father's palace, honored and respected by all courtiers, or joining her husband in the dungeon to face an uncertain, dangerous future, She chooses the grimmer but more virtuous option.

فرستاد گانرا سخن کرد نام — همی گفت خوابه بر گل بدام
جدائی نخواهم زکاوس گفت — وگرچه لحد باشد اورا بهشت

شکو جلد ۲ ـ ص ۱۲۷ ـ س ۱۷

> She insulted the messengers of her father. While crying she said she would never depart from Kavus even if she had to die for it.

An interesting attempt to explain this act of devotion is found in Gh. Yūsufī's reading: "In the

entire story of Sudabeh there exists only one place where she emerges as a devoted wife. That is mainly at the beginning of her marriage when the innocence of virginity has not left Sudabeh altogether" (91). But this is of course, not to explain, but to explain away. Were such a theory to be taken seriously, we would have to assume that only virgins are capable of courage and loyalty. Another critic turns Sudabeh's sense of devotion in this episode against her by interpreting the scene in an entirely different manner. Sh. Miskūb turns the episode upside down, resting it on its head, when he says, "No sooner has Sudabeh fallen in love with the Shah /Kavus/ than she breaks all ties with any other person /her father/ and /in consequence/ ends up in a dungeon" (138). Instead of praising Sudabeh for wifely devotion to her husband, this critic portrays as a girl disloyal to her father. The text is less cruel and certainly less arbitrary. It presents a far more complex character who possesses both virtues and vices and whose ultimate moral failure attains a certain tragic dimension. How do we explain such a strange resistance to the text by critics devoted to explaining it? Is it possible that the condemnation of Sudabeh, the reading backwards of the description of her character, is motivated by the peculiarly masculine courage that she exhibits and by the fact that she proposes a serious critique of masculine

ability to live up to its ideals? Let us listen to the taunting language which the text has her employ in denouncing the cowardice of her father:

بدیشان چنین گفت کین کار کرد ستوده ندارند مردان مرد
چرا روز جنگش نکردند بند که جایش زره بود و تخش سمند
شاهنامه، دفتر دوم، ص ۱۴۷، س ۱۶۹

> Sudabeh told them that this trick is not becoming of courageous fighters. Why did you not take him into custody in battle, in armor, and on his horse?

Is this the language of a villain whose only dimensions are sensuality and self gratification?

Thus, the first half of Sudabeh's story begins with the dialogue about Sudabeh's loving character and ends with her freedom from her father's dungeon, successfully returning to Iran with her husband, Kavus, the Shah. All in all in our opinion this section of Sudabeh's story presents her as a protagonist who is dynamic in her own right. She is involved in the main currents of all actions in the story; her decisions make a difference in the outcome of events; and she upholds honest, straightforward, brave actions, while condemning cowardice and unheroic behavior.

We now turn our attention to that part of Sudabeh's life which appears in "The Story of Siyavush." In this part we meet a Sudabeh who is radically different from the one we have known up to this point in the epic. Due

to the unlawful and unethical love of Sudabeh for her stepson, she is presented as a liar, scheming, dishonest, shrewd cruel, ready to sacrifice others when it serves her interests, and egoistical. Concerning Sudabeh's character in this section not only the poet himself but almost all critics have seriously condemned Sudabeh for such obvious flaws. However, the possible explanation for Sudabeh's behavior has been neglected. We will try to deal with both aspects.

Textual basis for the condemnation of Sudabeh's passion is found when the poet says "چنان دوستی نزیبد" (This friendship is unholy). But the poet is also emphatic in saying that Sudabeh's feelings for Siyavush are genuine. Repeatedly the poet refers to the authenticity of Sudabeh's love and her agony while she is living with an old man.

برآمد بوی نیر کیب روزگار — چنان بد که سودابه پرگار

زاگاه روی بیابان بدید — بر اندیشه گشت و دلش بردمید

چنان شد که گفتی طراز نخ است — وگرچشمی آتش نهاده بیخ است

The fire of love consumed her breast,
The thoughts of him denied her rest.
For him alone she sought relief....
(Atkinson 145)

The real problem begins when Sudabeh decides to approach Siyavush. Mildly and gently on two occasions, Sudabeh reaches out to Siyavush, but Siyavush who is

quick to understand that Sudabeh's attention to him is getting more than motherly (as Shakespeare calls it "a little more than kin and less than kind" in Hamlet I, ii, 65), he frees himself from the burden of a definitive answer, choosing to go rather around the problem rather than confronting it. But Sudabeh's third attempt is crucial as she demands an answer while telling him she has loved him for seven years.

که تا ترا دیدهام بردهام — خروشان و جوشان و آزردهام

همی روز روشن سیه بنگرد — بر آنم که خورشید شد لاجورد

کنون هفت سالست تا مهرتن — همی خون چکاند بدین چهرتن

I cannot now dissemble; since I saw thee
I seem to be as dead--my heart all withered.
Seven years have passed in unrequited love--
Seven long, long years. (Atkinson 147)

Concerning the genuineness of Sudaben's feelings, its evidence exists in the story beyond any doubt; nevertheless, critics have gone too far in labeling Sudabeh for opportunistic behavior, a label carried too far at the cost of any hint that Sudabeh could have been a woman genuinely in love. Perhaps the unlawfulness of the love affair has influenced the views of the critics in neglecting the opportunity to elaborate on anything genuine in this character. For example, Sh. Miskub mentions Sudabeh's love for Siyavush, interpreting that "The love is opportunisticand wealth seeking" (138).

Obviously the critic ignores the fact that Sudabeh is already a wealthy woman. She is the daughter of one king and the queen of another. She needed neither wealth nor position when she fell in love with Siyavush. On the other hand, however, the genuineness of Sudabeh's feelings is not legitimate enough to persuade Siyavush, who rightfully rejects Sudabeh on the grounds that he cannot betray his father.

چنین با پدر بی وفائی کنم　　زمردی و داش جدائی کنم
تو بانوی شاهی و خورشید گاه　　سزد گر تو ایدر بدینسان گناه

> How could I behave so disloyally towards my father and break with all honour sense? You are the king's wife and sun of his palace. (Levy 86)

Sudabeh does not expect such a reply from Siyavush. Surprised and worried, she now says:

بدو گفت کی راز دل پیش تو　　نگفتم نهانی از اندیش تو
ترا چیره خواهی که رسوا کنی　　بپیش خردمند رسوا کنی

> I told you the secret of my heart, while you concealed your evil thoughts. In vain you think to disgrace me and pretend before the wise that I am a trivial person. (Levy 81)

Rejected by Siyavush, Sudabeh is obviously frightened at the possible loss of her reputation if not her life (which is, indeed, threatened later in the

story). She worries that Siyavush may let this secret out; but in her attempt to stop that possible outcome, she now goes to such an extreme as to accuse Siyavush of having suggested an affair. To pretend that she has defended her chastity she begins to scream, tear her clothes, and slash her face.

بزد دست و جامه بدرید پاک خراش دو رخ را همی کرد چاک
برآمد خروش از نشیبان اوی همانش ز ایوان برآمد کوی

> Stretching out her hands she tore her garments and with her fingernails slashed her cheeks. Turmoil broke out in the apartment and the rumour of it issued from the palace into the open street. (Levy 87)

This episode is indeed a turning point in Sudabeh's characterization, a turning point after which Sudabeh is a different woman. Because she is rejected by Siyavush , despite her genuine feelings for him, because she feels deeply insulted by such rejection, and because she is scared not only for her reputation, but her very life lest the angry Kavus should kill her, Sudabeh now panics into hasty, scheming, and dishonest manners. This spontaneous, but unwise reaction becomes a spider's web for Sudabeh. From now on even every subtle move will create a more serious catastrophic result. From now on the game has its own dynamic, and Sudabeh is constantly moved by events. Instead of being in control as a strong

character, she allows herself to degenerate into weaker dimensions of base behavior. As events unfold, from this point on she appears as a liar, falsifier, schemer, and cruel.

Regarding these lies, detailed evidence in the epic include: After the rejection scene (as we discussed above) Sudabeh begins to holler in the palace, attracting attention to her torn clothes, slashed face, etc. When Kavus hurriedly comes to her rescue, Sudabeh cries out:

چنین گفت کاوس سیاوش بخست برآراست چنگ و برآویخت سخت

شاهنامه ج ۳ ص ۲۵ س ۲۴۲

> Siyavush came up on to the dais,
> stretched out his hand against me
> and embraced me savagely. (Levy 87)

More lies, falsehood, scheming actions, and dishonest manners follow.[27] On top of all this, Sudabeh is also portrayed as cruel. The story develops in the line that the Shah of Iran cannot resolve the matter in his mind and demands that according to the tradition both Sudabeh and Siyavush must pass through fire. If they are innocent they will emerge from the fire alive, and whoever is guilty will burn to death. Persuasively, Sudabeh argues her own case and says that she has already provided the king with adequate evidence, and refuses to go through the test. She persuades the Shah that the only one who remains to prove anything is none other than

Siyavush. Having succeeded in persuading the foolish king, she then stands on her balcony watching Siyavush go through the fire, and wishes sincerely that Siyavush may never come out of the fire alive. By this stage all of her previous love for Siyavush has turned to complete hatred.

The dark side of her character is complete. More events follow until Siyavush is martyred in a foreign land, and the news of his death comes to Iran. Rustam is summoned to take revenge of Siyavush's innocent death, and begins the long process of the revenge by first slashing Sudabeh with his sword, cutting her into two halves at the waist.

Sudabeh dies a cruel death, leaving behind some questions in the mind of the reader as to how a character could have had such contradictory dimensions. The incoherence of the character is unresolved in the epic. In one way, as we remember, she is portrayed as insightful, courageous, loving, and a devoted wife. In another she is portrayed as a woman, capable of lying, scheming, of cruel intentions and deeds, a creature completely overtaken by darkness, and hatred. The contradictions, are obvious. We certainly have no intention of resolving the contradictions on behalf of the poet. Neither do we intend to over emphasize one aspect at the expense of the other; however, we would

like to add a few points of observation regarding the world of the story from the view point of Sudabeh.

Sudabeh is a young girl who has married Kavus, has stayed with him in a dungeon, has left her own family behind, and has no chance to return. Naturally, she hopes that she will have a happy life with Kavus, a dream which does not come true. Kavus is not only an old man, but he is foolish as well. A long list of his foolish actions, his stubbornness in taking advice, the constant problems that he creates unnecessarily, and, above all, losing the Farr Īzadī (divine grace) are all the elements of Kavus' character. The poet refers to Kavus as a mad man in numerous places. In sum, he is an old and a foolish king who also has a harem for his entertainment. Sudabeh is living with this man. Siyavush, on the other hand, is a young, handsome, charming prince who possesses the Farr-Īzadī (divine grace). We read in the epic that the women and the girls of the Harem could not look at him without deep feelings and desires. Any man or woman who sees Siyavush is filled with feelings of admiration and praise. When this young man returns to his father's palace from Rustam's abode, where he grew up and was trained, the sight of him transforms Sudabeh's inner peace. Her heart is stirred and her whole life is affected. Living within the conditions that Kavus had created for her, on the one hand, and the sudden

appearance of Siyavush on the other, are the contexts within which Sudabeh acts. While the context does not justify the nature of the unlawful desire, it can show the ways in which Sudabeh fell. Moreover, Sudabeh is not the kind of character who would let her desires carry her away. She did try to tolerate the agony of love and controlled herself for a period of seven years. It is important to notice that she did her best while the overall context in which she was living continued, if not worsening, as Kavus grew older. Sudabeh tolerated the burden to her utmost capacity, but eventually failed when the burden proved to be more than she had the capacity to sustain.

Sudabeh is treated too harshly in the story as she is punished for everything that has gone. The central catastrophe in the story is, of course, the death of Siyavush. It is true that Sudabeh is part of the problem from which Siyavush tries to escape by volunteering to go to war. But Kavus is not innocent either. He should have known better. Kavus himself is finally responsible in his foolish demands when Siyavush had managed to sign an advantageous peace treaty for Iran.

Siyavush had succeeded in his mission, but it was Kavus, because of his obstinate and foolish character, who threw to the wind all that Siyavush had gained in the compaign. Having disobeyed his father, Siyavush destroys

the bridge behind him and cannot return to Iran, taking refuge in the enemy's land. Furthermore, Siyavush is killed in the foreign land because of several other reasons, none of which is related to Sudabeh. Yet when the news of Siyavush's death comes, it is Sudabeh whose name is on top of the list to be savagely slashed into two pieces by Rustam in the presence of the courtiers. In comparison the foolish king, who is one of the direct causes in Siyavush's death, escapes with some criticism only.

A more sympathetic poet could have done better for Sudabeh. Without doubt Ferdowsi is not that poet in this story. He is an angry poet who has lost his favorite saint hero in the epic, and he is furious at all those who are repsonsible for this hero's death. But whereas the king is given a chance to express his remorse by lowering his head and weeping, Sudabeh is given absolutely no opportunity to say or do anything. We are only told that Rustam finds and kills her. The first and the most available person to take the punishment is Sudabeh, for whom there exists absolutely no sympathy. The poet still seems not satisfied with the punishment.

سیاوش گفتار زن شد تباه خجسته زنی کو نیامد ز راه

The words of a woman destroyed Siyavush. Happy is the woman who is not born into this world.

This is uncharacteristic of Ferdowsi. Indeed, not

all manuscripts of the epic contain this couplet, and it remains to be proven if the couplet is original. As we have seen earlier his views of women are very high, but assuming that Ferdowsi did say so, one cannot but observe that both the poet and the traditional readers of the epic are carried away by not only Sudabeh's own unlawful sexual desires, dishonesty, and hatefulness, but also under the powerful influence of Siyavush's martyrdom and the mighty ritual which the story had generated. The sainthood, purity, innocence, and martyrdom of Siyavush on the one hand, and the theme of womanly desires, and unlawful expectations of Sudabeh on the other, confront both the poet and the traditional readers of the epic. Caught in the midst of extreme opposing forces in the world of a powerful ritualistic story, Sudabeh goes down as a demon and remains as such for generations to come.

* * *

Rudabeh, Tahmineh, Katayun, Gurdafarid, Nameless Mother, Sudabeh, and a host of other female characters in the legendary section of The Shahnameh are unique figures. They have their own individual identity, characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses; each has to be understood within the context of the stories in which she appears, thus offering us a polysemous vision of the image of woman. In this context it should not be difficult to distinguish between the Nameless Mother

and Gurdafarid, and her from Katayun, and other characters from one another. On the other hand, one cannot but notice that there is a recurrence of a broad pattern in the presentation of female figures in the epic. Once more we would like to re-emphasize the frame of reference in our analysis: that there exists a duality or a double structure in the make up of women in The Shahnameh, a double structure which is based on a conflict of opposing forces. The conflict of opposites leads to a paradoxical literary vision in which the image of the same woman in the same text is pulled in two directions.

As points of **correspondence**, the two forces are indeed contradictory; nevertheless, within the **coherence** of the text they are forced to coexist in the very make up of the same female characters. Thus, within the paradoxical double structure, it is not that one structure cancels out the other, rather the coexistence of both structures in the same work results in a paradoxical literary vision with regard to the women of The Shahnameh.

PART III

THE WOMEN OF THE ILIAD AND THE ODYSSEY

The gallery of Homeric characters is quite rich, comprising not only characters of human kind, but also those of the gods. Our interest will be primarily in human characters. But because our selection of human characters rather than the goddesses in the epics touches the core of philosophical and religious components regarding the relationship between mankind (male or female), and the divine (the gods or goddesses), we will first address the implications of the subject and the rationale for our selection.

Bruno Snell's core argument in his The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought is that Homeric man believed in an external agency, a divine apparatus of the gods, and a higher life which endows existence with meaning. It is the gods who, with the slightest nod steer the various enterprises on which men set their hearts to their ends. Snell believes that for Homeric man it is only the designs of

divinity which bring men's enterprises to fruition; the gods know the beginning and end of everything. The Homeric mind had not yet developed to the point of the fifth century Greek mind. In his words:

> Homer's man does not yet regard himself as the source of his own decision; that development is reserved for tragedy.... Homer lacks a knowledge of the spontaneity of the human mind; he does not realize the decisions of the will, or any impulses or emotions, have their origins in man himself. What is true of the events in the epic holds also for the feelings, the thoughts and the wishes of the characters. (31)

Through their existence, Snell explains, the gods bestow meaning to all that is great and vital in this world. They are both the source of a purposeful cosmos and the source of vitality. In such a capacity the gods and goddesses come on the epic stage:

> Among the ladies of Mount Olympus Hera, Athena, Artemis and Aphrodite are supreme. We might divide them into two groups: Hera and Aphrodite representing woman in her capacity as mother and loved one; Artemis and Athena typifying the virgin, one lonely and close to nature, the other intellectual and active in the community. It may fairly be said that these four women signalize the four aspects of all womanhood. The four goddesses help to bring out the spiritual peculiarities of the female sex.... The Greek goddesses, in spite of their one-sidedness, are faultless and attractive creatures. With no effort at all they possess the

> noble simplicity and quiet grandeur which Winckelmann regarded as the essence of the classical spirit. (40-41)

This capacity will disappear in the centuries that follow, but Snell's important point is that they are there in Homer's time.

C. M. Bowra, too, explains that man in Homer is forbidden "to see himself as the center of the universe. Behind and around and above him are the gods" (1966, 17). But with a subtle difference from Snell, Bowra adds that "Unlike some characteristically Christian literature, it is *not* other-worldly in the sense that it is more concerned with a supernatural 'beyond' than with the here and now. Even when it deals mainly with the gods, their actions are often on earth" (1966, 17). On the one hand, therefore, he stresses the fact that in Homer the spotlight is on mankind (1966, 12), but, on the other, he adds that mankind and the gods together populate the epics, each performing their own tasks.

Finally, as to whether Homer's epics should be considered the story of mankind or the gods, R. Lattimore has this to say:

> We simply do not know how seriously Homer took his Olympian gods, to what extent they are his divinities, or those of his tradition, or those of his audience. For narrative, they are

> enormously useful...; and in the end, despite all divine interferences, the Iliad is a story of people. (54)

The point we are trying to establish is the rationale for our selection of female characters in the Iliad and the Odyssey. Our preference lies in human characters, but this is not to suggest that the gods/goddesses are insignificant in these epics. Nonetheless, it also remains a fact that the spotlight in these epics is on mankind. We have selected for analysis the stories and the characters of Helen, Briseis, Andromache, Hekuba, Penelope, and Nausikaa, all of whom are human beings rather than goddesses. Also part of the rationale lies in the nature of our comparative analysis between Homeric female characters and those in The Shahnameh. Ferdowsi does not deal with gods and goddesses; his major characters are all mankind.

CHAPTER I

FEMALE CHARACTERS AND HEROIC PARADIGMS IN THE ILIAD

No sustained misogyny in terms of hatred toward women exists in the Iliad. Nor is there any evidence in the epic that Homeric women are insipid characters. Similar to the case in The Shahnameh, they are rather paradoxical characters who are women of personal substance limited by social constraints. Just as the Persian epic tradition endows women high quality, individual characteristic, Homeric tradition generously portrays worthy women of extraordinary personal qualities. Indeed, such qualities are universally bestowed on women in Indo-European epic literature, in which the Shahnameh tradition and Homeric literature are major exemplars; obvious examples can be found in Indian epics, Beowulf, and several other Indo-European epics the detailed analysis of which is beyond the scope of this work. But the quality is there, and no sustained misogyny can be traced in the portrayal of

the epic woman who is generously endowed with worthy personal qualities. The problem is not sustained misogyny in terms of hateful presentation of women's personality; rather the problem is the paradox for human characters as to the intensity of their positive, personal qualities on the one hand and, on the other, severe social constraints imposed on them to limit their otherwise unquestionable capabilities. Homeric epic is not an exception. The intensity of the paradox in the Iliad, however, depends on distinct heroic paradigms in this epic. With regard to these heroic paradigms, unlike The Shahnameh where the quests of "good heroes" such as Zal, Rustam, and Sohrab are somewhat similar in nature, the Iliad offers two distinct types of "good heroes" whose relations with women influence the intensity of constraints imposed on them, which in turn highlight the systematic inconsistency in the characterization of women in this epic.

Two obvious paradigms exist in the Iliad. The first is the absolute hero, a self-centered warrior who fights from the beginning to the end for his personal glory, though he may have attached himself to a cause. This hero, despite his emotions, remains solitary and self-sufficient; he is tied to his goal of personal glory and is ready to die for it. In this paradigm,

the most formidable representive is Achilles. Such a hero leaves very little space, if any, for female characters.

The other paradigm is that of a deeply considerate hero who possesses a touchingly human side and is willing to give to others rather than to seek only to receive. The representative of this paradigm is Hector, a family man who values a genuine bond with wife, children, mother, and others.[28] The role and images of women in the Hector paradigm are consequently more ample.

Which one of the two paradigms represents the dominant force in the Iliad? Beyond any doubt Homer treats both paradigms sympathetically. Both Achilles and Hector are indeed Homeric heroes. Never does Homer treat either of them negatively anywhere in the epic. Yet, the dominant force which eventually shapes the events of the epic is obviously the paradigm of the "natural hero," an Achilles who responds forcefully to his inner and individual aristeia[29], a hero who is great but also someone who, in Lattimore's words, "lacks the chivalry of Roland, Lancelot, or Beowulf..., /a quality/ which has no certain place in the gallery of Homeric virtues" (48). Moreover, Achilles is the ultimate hero of Greek forces fighting against the Trojans. Also, "The Iliad was composed for a Hellenic

audience of the upper class, among which many claimed to trace their ancestry back to the heroes of the Trojan War. The pro-Hellenic bias is plain" (Lattimore 31).

In the world of the epic which is dominated by male heroic aristeia, it is not strange to witness energies other than dominant male aristeia to go to waste, especially those of female characters.[30] In other words, when a formidable man's aristeia demands recognition in a destructive war in the world of the epic, nothing but misery will be left for women no matter how virtuous or intelligent they may be; the paradigm of Achilles remains the dominant force in the epic.

Hector, of course, confronts Achilles' aggression, and Homer demonstrates his sympathy for Hector, but when the dust of war settles, one sees that not much ground has been gained. Hector's achievements in the epic look grand, but they are ultimately ephemeral.[31] Hector is a weaker force in the Iliad. Also, with regard to women Hector's personal aristeia, although modified, plays a part in the working out of things, a feature which spells doom for his mother, wife, and child. Women are treated more humanely in this paradigm, but they are not left completely unvictimized and free from social constraints.

BRISEIS AND THE PARADIGM OF ACHILLES:

The more self-centered the hero is and the more dominant his aristeia, the more miserable, victimized, and constrained are the women related to him. The reverse relations between positive gains for the hero in the course of the epic events and constant losses for women is the subject of our analysis in this part. Such an analysis will cut across a "grievance" in "feminist critique" (see Conceptual Frames of Reference), a grievance which has the capacity to disturb the complacent reader of the epic. The purpose, however, is not to disturb an epic enthusiast, nor is it to wish the epic to have been other than it really is; rather the ethics is based on the androgynous feminists' attempt to raise consciousness toward women's suffering, constraints, apparent advantages that are indeed disadvantages, and pathetic losses despite the individual woman's strength of character, prowess, intelligence and a host of positive personal attributes.

The narrative structure of the Iliad revolves around seizing and capturing women; the story is built on two structural events: The first is based on the Greeks' attempt to rescue Helen from the Trojans; the

second, actually a story within a story, revolves around a series of events culminating in the feud between Achilles and Agamemnon over the possession of Briseis, once a princess in her home but now reduced to a commodity in the hands of Greek heroes. In E. C. Rieu's words the main story is about King Agamemnon, who "has, with his brother Menelaus of Sparta, induced the princes who owe him allegiance to join forces with him against King Priam of Troy, because Paris, one of Priam's sons, has run away with Menelaus' wife, the beautiful Helen of Argos" (viii). Rieu summarizes the second plot:

> The Achaean forces have for nine years been encamped beside their ships on the shore near Troy, but without bringing the matter to a conclusion, though they have captured and looted a number of towns in Trojan territory.... The success of these raiding parties leads to a feud between Achilles and his Commander-in-Chief. Agamemnon has been allotted the girl Chryseis as his prize, and he refuses to give her up to her father, a local priest of Apollo, when he comes to the camp with ransom for her release. The priest prays to his god; a plague ensues; and Agamemnon is forced to give up the girl and so propitiate the angry god. But he recoups himself by confiscating one of Achilles' own prizes, a girl named Briseis. (viii)

Briseis is entangled in the feud between Achilles and Agamemnon. The cause of Achilles' wrath is not

simply the loss of Briseis who is merely one of several possessions; it lies in the core of the Greek heroic value system and an orientation which is represented by Achilles himself, and which, as we will see shortly, degrades women. Achilles is:

> ...the embodiment of heroic arete (virtue). Important in the concept of arete is one's standing in the eyes of others, which is gained not by words and deeds, but also by gifts and spoils relative to those of others. Therefore Achilles' honor was slighted when Agamemnon took away Briseis, and he had good cause to withdraw from the fighting, even though the Greeks suffered terribly as a result. (Morford & Lenardon 342)

The manner in which the Briseis episode is handled cuts through the ultimate heroic mentality and attitude toward women in the paradigm of Achilles. In this world Briseis, who was once a woman of personal substance, becomes a means to motivate the heroes in their actions and reactions against each other. Achilles' anger is directed toward Agamemnon, but he will not quarrel with him for a woman. "With my hand," Achilles says, "I will not fight for the girl's sake, neither / with you nor any other man, since you take away who gave her" (Iliad 1, 298). To make the matter worse he places higher priority on "the other things" which he owns, warning Agamemnon "But of all the other things that are mine beside my fast black / ship, you

shall take nothing away against my pleasure. / Come, then, only try it, that these others may see also; / instantly your own black blood will stain my spear point." (Iliad 1, 303). Gilbert Highet is probably right when he says in The Classical Tradition that "The Iliad is not about the siege of Troy.... For primitive man the stimulus to action and to poetry is single: an insult, a woman, a monster, or a treasure" (27). This, then, is the place of woman in the Achilles paradigm. In the Iliad it is primarily the insult these men feel in losing a woman to another man. Even the war against the Trojans is not so much to recuperate Helen as it is for the question of whether they should "... thus leave to Priam and to the Trojans Helen / of Argos, to glory over..." (Iliad 2, 176). To avenge this indignation Nestor says "Therefore let no man be urgent to take the way homeward / until he has lain in bed with the wife of a Trojan" (Iliad 2, 355). This side of the paradigm regarding women is, indeed, dark. Briseis is not an isolated example, but a part of an all encompassing attitude which runs across the epic. Achilles boasts that in his raids he "took the day of liberty away from their women / and led them as spoil" (Iliad 20, 193). He imagines his father "who now, I think, in Phthia somewhere lets fall a soft tear / for bereavement of such a son, for me, who now in a strange land /

make/s/ war upon the Trojans for the sake of accursed Helen" (Iliad 19, 325, emphasis mine). In a world in which "Food and drink," as Achilles says, "mean nothing to my heart / but blood does, and slaughter, and the groaning of men in the hard work" (Iliad 19, 213), even other men, not to mention subservient women, cannot be saved from the destructive nature of Achilles' exclusivism. On the dark side of this paradigm there is no place either for women, nor for men of peaceful nature who "... as if they were young children or widowed women / they cry out and complain to each other about going homeward" (Iliad 2, 289). It is in this world that Briseis could have been none other than the spoils of war, a comodity, a thing.

There exists, however, a somewhat paradoxically brighter side in this paradigm concerning the heroes' attitude toward women. In the episode of Chryseis/Briseis, for example, Agamemnon's attention goes beyond "the fair cheeks" of Chryseis: "I like her better than Klytaimestra my own wife, for in truth she is no way inferior, neither in build nor stature nor wit, not in accomplishment" (Iliad 1, 113). Achilles, too, sometimes expresses tender feelings and respect toward women. There are occasions in the epic when the self-centered hero demonstrates his awareness of and desire for giving and bestowing to others in a selfless

manner. In such a case he sometimes uses feminine metaphors:

> A man dies still if he has done nothing, as one who has done much. / Nothing is won for me, now that my heart has gone through its afflictions / in for ever setting my life on the hazard of battle. / For as to her unwinged young ones the mother bird brings back / morsels, wherever she can find them, but as for herself it is suffering, / such was I, as I lay through all the many nights unsleeping, / such as I wore through the bloody days of the fighting, / striving with the warriors for the sake of these men's women. (Iliad 9, 320)

The suggestion is that the women of his fellow warriors need their men, and by helping these men Achilles is indeed helping those women.

The brighter side of his relationship with Briseis contains remarks that he has loved his prize, though he is quick to add that he won her as spoils of war.

> Are the sons of Atreus alone among mortal men the ones / who love their wives? since any who is a good man and careful, / loves her who is his own and cares for her, even as I now / loved this one from my heart, though it was my spear that won her. (Iliad 9, 340)

C. H. Whitman defends the authenticity of Achilles-Briseis relationship, arguing that it was no mere master-slave affair but that of a hero's relationship with his wife (186). C. M. Bowra emphasizes that "The

facts of sex are frankly stated, and there is no glorification of purity or self-abnegation.... But love plays a small part in the story, and though this may be due partly to the exigencies of camp life, it is due much more to heroic standards of conduct" (1930, 241). Nevertheless, even taking Achilles' word at face value, no sooner has he made the comment than he confirms that it is not so much for the loss of a loved one but for his own injured pride that he withdraws from the battle. "Yet still the heart in me swells up in anger, when I remember / the disgrace that he wrought upon me before the Argives, / the son of Atreus as if I were some dishonoured vagabond" (Iliad 9, 646). The episode is therefore complex.

To see the essence of man-woman relationship less from the point of view of the heroes than from the viewpoint of the female characters themselves indeed reveals a sadder story; and this, the reader remembers, is a feminist point of departure in literary criticism. Who, or rather what, is Briseis? She is a once-princess now reduced to a thing and often referred to as "it". The pronoun "it" is, of course, an English translation, and the original pronoun reference in Greek is tricky, but as we will notice below the classification of Briseis with things in the text of the epic is obvious. As a character so central to the

structure of the epic she is only a name without any voice or action except toward the end when she is suddenly thrown back into the epic to perform the traditional task of lamentation. Her home destroyed, her relatives killed, her fortune diminished, her freedom taken away, she finds herself objectified as a prize disputed by two high ranking warriors. She is not unlike the miserable, nameless mother of Siyavush in The Shahnameh, a woman over whose possession two Persian generals quarreled. The case of Briseis is even more pathetic, because, completely victimized in a more powerful heroic paradigm and male aristeia (the equivalent of Achilles is nonexistent in The Shannameh), she lacks the nameless mother's fearlessness to try to escape a miserable condition.

Briseis is constantly referred to in conjunction with matter--things, gifts, ships, horses, and similar items of exchange. Achilles explains "We went against Thebes the sacred city of Eetion, / and the city we sacked, and carried everything back to this place" (Iliad 1, 366). That "everything" includes Chryseis and Briseis whose humanity is incidental. When Briseis is taken away Achilles complains that Agamemnon "has taken away my prize and keeps it" (Iliad 1, 356). Or when Achilles protests that "There is no great store of things lying about I know of. / But what we took from

the cities by storm has been distributed; / it is unbecoming for the people to call back things once given" (Iliad 62). Although Briseis seems to be happy with her position as "thing" and her status as "it", her desire to remain in Achilles' ship is totally disregarded, "and the woman all unwillingly went with them still" (Iliad 1, 348). No better position is awaiting her when she reaches Agamemnon. He, too, thinks of her as his rightful possession and prize (Iliad 1, 135). Briseis has no choice; on the one hand Agamemnon desires the prize, and it is his desire that counts, and on the other, he fears that he would be despised by others if he were the only one without a battle prize. His pride comes first. Briseis will not be able to beat either of the odds, not to mention both combined.

But when the course of events changes beyond Briseis' control and she has to be given back to Achilles, this is how she is accounted for:

> But since I was mad, in the persuasion of my heart's evil, / I am willing to make all good, and give back gifts in abundance.... / Seven unfired tripods; ten talents' weight of gold; twenty / shining cauldrons; and twelve horses.... / I will give him seven women of Lesbos.... / I will give him these, and with them shall go the one I took from him, / the daughter of Briseus. And to all this I will swear a great oath / that I never

> entered into her bed and never lay with her as is natural for human people, between men and women. (Iliad 9, 119)

The dynamics of the paradigm of Achilles are between men; women are outside observers of their own fate. The quarrel between the two Greek heroes was disaster for Briseis; their reconciliation is seen as more important even than her life:

> Son of Atreus, was this after all the better way for / both, for you and me, that we, for all our hearts' sorrow, quarreled together for the sake of a girl in soul-perishing hatred? / I wish Artemis had killed her beside the ships with an arrow / on that day when I destroyed Lyrnessos and took her. (Iliad 19,56)

Briseis will not be so discarded. After her long absence in the epic, she will be brought back to perform one more miserable task before the epic ends. C. M. Bowra justifies, "Yet later, when the dead body of Patroclus has been laid out in the tent of Achilles, she comes back and finds it there and bursts into bitter grief as she recalls his gentleness to her" (1966, 29). Once more the reader can observe the recurrence of a familiar pattern for women, that is, to cry shrilly, tearing at their breasts, throats, and foreheads. Both Ferdowsi and Homer make good use of this pattern. We will see more Homeric characters later.

As for Briseis, it is in Book nineteen that she reenters the story:

> They brought back seven tripods from the shelter, those Agamemnon / had promised, and twenty shining cauldrons, twelve horses. they brought back / immediately the seven women the work of whose hands was / blameless, and the eighth of them was Briseis of the fair cheeks. (Iliad 19, 244)

Agamemnon swears, "that I have never laid a hand on the girl Briseis / on pretext to go to bed with her" (Iliad 19, 261). Briseis, who had done nothing whatsoever to this point in the epic is suddenly placed in a miserable situation. Patroclus is dead, Achilles is deeply sorrowful and furious:

> And now, in the likeness of golden Aphrodite, Briseis / when she saw Patroklos lying torn with sharp bronze, folding / him in her arms cried shrilly above him and with her hands tore / at her breasts and her soft throat and her beautiful forehead. (Iliad 19, 283)

Under these circumstances she is given a chance to speak for the first time, a speech indicating the complete pathos of her life, a life that has been a waste from the beginning to the end:

> So evil in my life take over from evil for ever. / The husband on whom my father and honoured mother bestowed me / I saw before my city lying torn with the sharp bronze, / and my three brothers, whom a single mother bore with me / and who were close to me, all went on

> one day to destruction. / And yet you would not let me, when swift Achilleus had cut down / my husband, and sacked the city of godlike Mynes, you would not / let me sorrow, but said you would make me godlike Achilleus' / wedded lawful wife, that you would take me back in the ships / to Phthia, and formalize my marriage among Myrmidons. / Therefore I weep your death without ceasing. You were kind always. (Iliad 19, 290)

The experience of pathos and the waste of Briseis' life, her miseries, her hardships, and lack of gain or development of any kind are all part of the episode. Such loss and suffering, of course, could have been directed toward some kind of tragic gain, but in the absence of evidence as such we must take the episode as it is--pathos.

Once again we meet the same paradoxical situation, many examples of which we had encountered in The Shahnameh. Here in the paradigm of Achilles the case is much more severe compared to those in the Shahnameh tradition or those in the paradigm of Hector in the Iliad: a worthy individual woman, completely denied, totally deprived of opportunities, thoroughly wasted, invaded, insulted, degraded, dealt with as lifeless commodity, and driven to the very essence of misery. When Briseis weeps for Patroclus, indeed she weeps for her own sake and for her own miseries. Homer himself was sensitive enough to recognize it: "So she spoke,

lamenting , and the women sorrowed around her / grieving openly for Patroklos, but for her own sorrows / each" (Iliad 19, 301).

HECUBA, ANDROMACHE, AND THE PARADIGM OF HECTOR

The war of Troy is about an encounter between the Greek forces represented by Achilles and the Trojan power represented by Hector, an encounter in which the former attacks and the latter defends the city of Troy. The nature of the campaigns has an impact on the warriors' attitude toward war, as well as the place of family, city, and civilization in the two paradigms. M. W. Knox explains:

> The great champion of the Trojans, Hektor, fights bravely, but reluctantly; war for him is a necessary evil, and he thinks nostalgically of the peaceful past, though he has little hope of peace to come. His pre-eminence in peace is emphasized by the tenderness of his relations with his wife and child and also by his kindness to Helen, the cause of the war which he knows in his heart will bring his city to destruction. We see Hektor always against the background of the patterns of civilized life--the rich city with its temples and palaces, the continuity of the family.
> (in The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces, vol. 1, 9-10)

Hector knows that nothing will stand against the

violence of Achilles, yet he upholds the principle of defending the city, the children, and its women no matter what the cost. He who dies in this war, says Hector, "has no dishonour when he dies defending / his country, for then his wife shall be saved and his children afterwards, and his house and property shall not be damaged" (Iliad 15, 496). In numerous passages Hector refers to the theme of the necessity of saving from the aggressors innocent children, parents, wives, and the city. Over the dead body of Patroclus he says, "Patroklos, you thought perhaps of devastating our city, / of stripping from the Trojan women the day of their liberty and dragging them off in ships to the beloved land of your fathers. / Fool! ... (Iliad 16, 830); and again he addresses his soldiers "that man by man I gathered you to come here from your cities, / but so that you might have good will to defend the innocent / children of the Trojans, and their wives, from the fighting Achaians" (Iliad 17, 222); and later: "the fight will be for the sake of our city and women" (Iliad 18, 265). He even warns Achilles himself:

> You must have hoped within your heart, oh shining Achilleus, / on this day to storm the city of the proud Trojans. / You fool! There is much hard suffering to be done for its winning, / since there are many of us inside, and men who are fighters, / who will stand before our beloved parents, our wives and

> our children, / to defend Ilion....
> (Iliad 21, 583)

Hector is not the only hero who feels as such. Priam, his father, who advises Hector not to fight Achilles alone is worried not only for his son, but also equally for the city, the women, and children.

> Come then inside the wall, my child, so that you can rescue / the Trojans and the women of Troy .... Oh, take pity on me, the unfortunate still alive, still sentient / but ill-starred,... I have looked upon evils / and seen my sons destroyed and my daughters dragged away captive / and the chambers of marriage wrecked and the innocent children taken / and dashed to the ground in the hatefulness of war, and the wives / of my sons dragged off by the accursed hands of the Achaians. (Iliad 22, 56)

In the Hector paradigm the emphasis on women, a need to protect them and preserve marriages, homes, and families are all significant components. Nowhere in the Iliad can we find more emphasis as such than in the paradigm of Hector, a paradigm which, as Bowra has indicated, was itself a sign of an evolving Greek culture:

> He /Hector/ has his touchingly human side, when he confronts his wife or plays with his small boy; he is deeply considerate to his old mother and courteous to Helen.... Homer shows how well aware he is of the changes in Greek life between Mycenaean times and his own. Mycenae itself and other places

> like it were not strictly cities but fortresses, the homes of soldier-kings and their armies, but by the eighth century the city-state had come into existence and claimed the loyalty that in the old days a man would give to his own pride. Almost unconsciously Homer presents this momentous change in the contrasted figures of Achilles and Hector.
> (1966, 35-36)

The reader may also recall Arthur's theory in "The Origins of the Western Attitude towards Women". Generally speaking, the point is that women have a more central place in the Hector paradigm, and that the "new heroism" places heightened importance on women. But this being said, let us add that the paradigm of Hector is not free from its own contradictions. Despite the protection of and respect for women, female characters suffer from not only the devastating might of the attacking Achilles but also from the contradictions that exist within the value system of the Hector paradigm itself.

Hector's dedication to family, city, and peace on the one hand, and his pursuit of individual glory in war, the ideal of <u>aristeia</u>, on the other, are part of a larger paradox made of the contradictions which Homer did not intend to resolve.

> Homer knows that there is an irreconcilable conflict between the glory of war and the price which has to be paid for it, and he makes

> no attempt to reconcile them. The highest excitement known to man is won at the expense of the blackest misery. (Bowra 1966, 43)

Before getting into the heart of the paradox in the Hector paradigm, we will first draw attention to broad similarities and differences in the images of women in both paradigms. Hector and Achilles themselves demonstrate differences and share similarities in their heroic models, and so do the women who are associated with them. The image of woman as weakling is present in both paradigms and in both opponents are scolded by being compared to women; indeed, the label of a woman is thrown at a warrior like mud for the express purpose of belittling him (for example, Iliad 7, 96; Iliad 8, 163; Iliad 11, 389). Moreover, in both paradigms women are always domestic creatures in subservient roles devoted to taking care of men; they serve them food, take their arms when they come from the battle field, draw hot baths for them, wash the filthy blood stains from their body (Iliad 14, 5); Zeus, in fact, pities Hector because Andromache will not be able to do such things for him any longer. Not the least important is the task of lamentation which is skillfully and effectively performed by women in both armies. Our point is not that the act of

weeping and lamenting is degrading; Achilles himself weeps for Patroclus; Rustam is devastated in his mourning for Sohrab. But these characters as well as numerous other tragic figures initiate a process, make mistakes, cause losses, experience sorrows, and emerge out of the situation as better or more well-rounded characters despite significant losses. But it is one thing to be directly involved in a process and experience its sorrow when the loss occurs, and completely another when certain characters are kept in reserve merely to be suddenly thrown into the midst of a funeral to scream, scratch their faces with their nails, and faint. Examples may include the maidens of Achilles and Patraclus, whose first actions in the epic are to be crying out aloud, running out of doors, beating their chests with their hands. The images of Hecuba and Andromache in the Hector paradigm as well as Rudabeh and Tahmineh in The Shahnameh bear similarities with those in the Achilles paradigm.

But on the other hand there are also differences in women's situation depending whether they are involved with the Greek or Trojan heroic models. Whereas in Achilles' camp women are denied roles other than lying with men, being praised for their beauty, serving their food, washing their blood stains, and crying for their dead, the paradigm of Hector allows

several kinds of opportunities to participate in activities related to the fate of the city, the life and death of warriors, and family. Often women join hands with the older men of the city (wise counselors) in praying to the gods to assist Trojan heroes and to gain divine favors without which no hero could have won in their belief structure. The religious minded Hector assigns his mother Hecuba to assemble the highborn women of the city to pray to Athene to assist him in the war which will save the city, women, etc. (Iliad 6, 114; Iliad 6, 269; Iliad 6, 293). In another scene Hector appeals to Helen to persuade Paris to stand up to expectations of him (Iliad 6, 363). Unlike the minor task of bathing a man, this assigns to a female character a task of strategic importance. To borrow Arthur's thesis, the overall difference in the status of women in the Hector and Achilles paradigms has to do with the difference between the two main heroes themselves; the heroic natures of Achilles and Hector are bound to make a difference in the roles and images of women. As for the women themselves, their higher caliber participation in the central activities of the episodes indicates strength.

In sum, women in the Hector paradigm enjoy a sort of social status which is altogether nonexistent for women in the former one. Nevertheless, the critic must

be careful not to overemphasize the concept. Mary R. Lefkowitz is perhaps doing precisely that in her admiration of female characters such as Andromache. Lefkowitz inverts the limitations of female passivity, transforming it into a heroic model not only for the women themselves but also for men: "Women's passive heroism sets the model for a man" in Greek literature (11). According to Lefkowitz who suggests further that women's passive heroism, their indirect involvement in the core structure of the story, and their distant observation are superior as a heroic model than its opposite, active one:

> Women are dependent upon men for their status in life and the mode of their existence; they are unable to take action on their own. But their helplessness gives them another kind of independence: as outsiders, they comment as observers on what is happening around them, since they are on the walls of Troy or in the Greek camp and not on the battlefield. Andromache, for instance, understands more completely than Hector what the outcome of the war will be. He says in Iliad 6 that he knows there will come a day when Troy will perish, but he urges Andromache not to mourn: 'No man will hurl me to Hades unless it is fated.' He tells her to go back to the house and do her work and let the men tend to the fighting. But Andromache returns and rouses the other women in the house to a formal lamentation for the dead: "So they mourned him in the house while he was still living. (2-3)

To praise Andromache for her wise observations, her insight, and her timely statements is one thing, and quite another to place the source of wise heroic activities in female characters who, in turn, are supposed to have set the example for wise actions for men. The latter component of Lefkowitz's thesis is unconvincing.

Andromache is a highly worthy character in the Iliad; she possesses a rich personality full of compassion, dedication, love, sacrifice, insight, courage, and fearlessness. Nowhere can we find a better description of Andromache's character than in Homer's own words in Book 6 of the Iliad, where Homer calls Andromache Hector's "perfect wife" (Iliad 6, 374).

In this scene, where Hector has left the battle field to come home and persuade Paris to live up to expectations of him, and after Hector has rejected Helen's advice not to go back to war lest he will be killed, Hector seeks his beautiful, "white armed" wife at home. Not seeing her there, he wonders whether she has joined other women in prayer for the success of the Trojan army. But he learns from "the hard-working housekeeper" who reluctantly tells him:

> Hektor, since you have urged me to
> tell you the truth, she is not /

> with any of the sisters of her lord /Hector/ or the wives of his brothers, / nor has she gone to the house of Athene, where all the other / lovely-haired women of Troy propitiate the grim goddess, / but she has gone to the great bastion of Ilion, because she heard that / the Trojans were losing, and great grew the strength of the Achaians. / Therefore she has gone in speed to the wall, like a woman / gone mad, and a nurse attending her carries the baby. (Iliad 6, 382)

She is a caring, fearless woman who prefers to face the reality out there than stay at home to participate in the fate of the war passively in prayer. When Hector is back on his way to "the Skaian gates, whereby he would issue into the plain, there / at last his own generous wife came running to meet him" (Iliad 6, 393). Hector is happy to see his wife and his son. "Hector smiled in silence as he looked on his son, but she, / Andromache, stood close beside him, letting her tears fall" (Iliad 6, 404). Loving, caring, and thoughtful, she "clung to his hand and called him by name and spoke to him: 'Dearest, / your own great strength will be your death, and you have no pity / on your little son, nor on me, ill-starred, who soon must be your widow...'" (Iliad 6, 406). She has independently observed the battle field from the top of the wall. Examining the situation in the light of her own past experience and having witnessed the murder of her own

family members at Achilles' hands, she has much advice to offer to Hector:

> presently the Achaians, gathering together, / will set upon you and kill you, and for me it would be far better / to sink into the earth when I have lost you, for there is no other / consolation for me after you have gone to your destiny- / only grief; since I have no father, no honoured mother. / It was brilliant Achilleus who slew my father, Eetion.... / And they who were my seven brothers in the great house all went upon a single day down into the house of the death god, for swift-footed brilliant Achilleus slaughtered all of them. (Iliad 6, 409)

She reminds Hector of the sad story of her queen mother, how Achilles led her in captivity, accepted "ransom beyond count" to release her, but only for Artemis to strike her down by showering arrows. The powerful pathos of Andromache's episode, her sincere expression of her feelings, and the rejected depth of her practical insight are reflected in these famous lines:

> Hektor, thus you are father to me, and my honoured mother, / you are my brother, and you it is who are my young husband. / Please take pity on me then, stay here on the rampart, / that you may not leave your child an orphan, your wife a widow, / but draw your people up by the fig tree, there where the city / is openest to attack, and where the wall may be mounted.... (Iliad 6, 429)

But the always-caring Hector will paradoxically pursue his own aristeia and will want to meet Achilles face to face to meet the challenge of possessing individual heroic glory. He orders her to "Go therefore back to our house, and take up your own work, / the loom and the distaff, and see to it that your handmaidens / ply their work also; but the men must see to the fighting" (Iliad 6, 490).

The helplessness of Andromache and the pathos of the episode in the early part of the epic are eventually summarized not by words but by Andromache's most sincere and, in the last analysis, inexplicable gaze: "So glorious Hektor spoke and again took up the helmet / with its crest of horse-hair, while his beloved wife went homeward, / turning to look back on the way, letting the live tears fail" (Iliad 6, 494 emphasis mine). It is after this scene that Andromache mourns for Hector's death while he is still living.

The episode speaks as loudly as any story can. The pathos is effective in ways not unlike the pathos of the stories of The Shahnameh; the wasted insight and the suffering of Tahmineh, Rustam's wife and the mother of Sohrab, and Katayun, the queen of Gushtasp and the mother of Prince Esfandiyar, follow the same pattern. The stories both in Homeric literature and in the Shahnameh tradition, are masterpieces of their kind;

but also one cannot ignore the fact that they fall short of meeting the requirements of tragic experience. Therefore, it is important to notice that while the figure of Andromache is powerful, she is limited to the pathetic, while only male characters can aspire to the tragic.

We should clarify a point concerning our use of tragedy as a term. By tragedy we certainly do not mean tragedy as a genre. Obviously epic literature is not tragedy as drama. But it is perfectly all right to address the experience of tragedy in a work of literature. Genres other than drama, such as novel and epic, have the capacity to illustrate the experience of tragedy, although the best vehicle still remains to be drama. Aristotle was perhaps the first scholar to address the issue in the Poetics. Speaking of "epic and tragedy" Aristotle wrote:

> The constituent elements are partly identical and partly limited to tragedy. Hence anybody who knows about good and bad tragedy knows about epic also; for the elements that the epic possess appertain to tragedy as well, but those of tragedy are not all found in the epic. (25)

Gerald F. Else explains in the endnotes of his translation of the Poetics that "An important part of Aristotle's theory of the origins of the dramatic genres, tragedy and comedy, is that their "forms" or

essences were grasped and foreshadowed by Homer before they actually came into being as genres" (86-87). Among modern scholars several writers have associated the Iliad with tragedy calling Achilles a tragic hero. Cedric H. Whitman calls Achilles "the first tragic hero" (220). Lattimore discusses the character of Achilles: "As a hero of tragedy, he is great, but human and imperfect. His tragedy is an effect of free choice by a will that falls short of omniscience and is disturbed by anger" (46). Therefore, we are not too far off to discuss the subject of tragedy in the Iliad. Our point, however, is that the experience of tragedy and its rewards are reserved for men rather than women in both traditions of the Shahnameh and Homeric epics. Whereas men are given the opportunity to be involved with tragedy, and in Lattimore's words with the effect of free choice, Women are entangled with pathos and circumstances that are imposed upon them and lamentations that follow. Andromache and other female figures mentioned above fit this pattern.

Mary R. Lefkowitz, who upholds the helplessness of women as a heroic model in itself, defends a thesis that the story of Andromache is a tragedy, feminine style.

She argues that two kinds of tragedies exist in the Iliad, one for the active involvement of men and

another for the passive observations of women:

> Since tragedy concerns the acquisition of knowledge through suffering, I would like to suggest that Homer offered the tragic poets two basic modes of acquiring knowledge: (1) the male pattern of acquiring it actively as the result of causing someone's death like Achilles with Patroclus; (2) the essentially female pattern of acquiring it passively, through observation and through loss. Christian ethics might encourage us to prefer the second, but the Iliad and the Odyssey seem to suggest that both modes are necessary at once. Women are so often the central figures of tragedy because they are by nature victims of traditional values of society.... (4)

A close examination of Lefkowitz' own statements indicates that her formula of female tragedy is actually what others have called pathos. On the one hand she says women are passive observers, and on the other, victims of external elements. Putting together the two components of her formula, we reach a perfect pattern for pathos, regardless of the protagonist's gender. The classification of tragedy based on gender is indeed a problematic one. A different way of looking at the situation is to observe that both men and women could be involved with both patterns of experiences in pathos and tragedy, but the fact is that more often than not the image of woman is involved with the former than the latter.

The paradox in the figure of Andromache is that while being a worthy woman, rich in virtues, and playing a role of greater importance in the story's structure, she is ultimately not taken seriously, relegated to a subservient role, advised not to interfere with important matters, and sent home to mind her own domestic business. There lies the paradox for Andromache, a paradox directly connected to the paradoxical nature of Hector himself as a domestic hero and, at the same time, a pursuer of male individualistic aristeia of which Achilles is the ultimate example.

Andromache's character, is much more dynamic than Lefkowitz assumes. We noted her behavior in seeking Hector out in the open field instead of sitting at home. Also, she is more than a passive observer limited to learning from the loss of a father, a mother, seven brothers, a husband, and a child. She is a dynamic character who acts to save her family. We do not intend to say that she is willing to take up arms and defeat Achilles or be killed by him; nor do we say that physically she should have been made that kind of a character in order to share an honorable position in the social fabric of the story. Rather she is a dynamic partner and shares with Hector her observations concerning the dangerous situation which surrounds her

family; moreover, as a dynamic, involved character she even goes to the extent of using her insight offering Hector a strategy different from and perhaps more pragmatic than that which Hector's aristeia urges him. In sum, Andromache is not a simple passive observer. Yet, this dynamic character will in her own way sense the sorrows of the doom for the Trojans, a doom which she senses but is not in a position to influence, partly because as a woman she has to mind her own business at home. It is indeed a double sorrow that she ends with: on the one hand sorrow for a still living but already a dead man, a humiliated but beloved husband as well as fellow country man, and on the other sorrow for her own miserable future--sorrow wrapped within sorrow and double suffering with no relief in sight; nor is there a possibility for tragic reemergence and rise after the heavy price is paid.

Andromache is not the only woman caught in such a miserable situation. In addition to Homeric literature, the Shahnameh tradition offers an abundance of such examples. As we have seen, in "the Story of Sohrab" Tahmineh, through her observations and insight, senses existing dangers much more effectively than her son Sohrab does, giving him more than adequate warning and advice, but, of course, just like Andromache, to no avail. In "the Story of Esfandiyar" Katayun had

foreseen through experience, participation, observation, intuition, and insight the doom which was awaiting her son Esfandiyar. But in exactly the same way that Andromache was warned not to meddle with serious matters, the otherwise highly regarded Katayun was in the end relegated to a subservient role because she was a woman and not taken seriously in the social fabric of the story.

This is Homer's "perfect wife" in the paradigm of Hector. Gifted with generous qualities and a more favorable position than the women of the paradigm of Achilles, Andromache joins the gallery of dynamic female characters who, in the end, are paradoxically pushed into the periphery. There exists a structural pattern in the development of these characters in Homer and Ferdowsi: the characters' actions mirror the process in the narrative where they begin as strategically important participants in the action, but end inevitably as suitable for the role of lamentation.

Hecuba is another example; she is less active and more resigned than Andromache, but regardless of the intensity of participation, the paradoxical formula applies again:

> Hector's mother, Hecuba, is an old woman, who, after losing many of her sons in the war, has an old woman's fears and furies. She begs Hector not to fight Achilles, and

> her husband Priam not to take the risk of ransoming her son's body, but in her frailty she yields on both points, and, though in her hatred of Achilles she wishes to drink his blood, she ends by accepting her doom with resignation, as if she could not fight against it. (Bowra 1966, 29)

A highly regarded woman, who is a center of attention in the paradigm of Hector joins the ranks of suffering mothers. The image is far too familiar to need further explanations. "When Hecuba bares her breast and entreats his pity, Hector will stand firm. But he will run at last, and his enemy will pursue him" (Sheppard 58). Hecuba will surely be there to witness it and observe, on top of the former murder of her many sons, the brutal killing of her most beloved one--and all this in order to fulfill the ancient role of pathos, a role of much cast and little return. Hecuba, Andromache, Rudabeh, Tahmineh, Katayun are pathetic suffering mothers grieving for painful and wasteful losses.

HELEN BETWIXT TWO PARADIGMS:

Helen is another controversial figure who occupies a significant role in the entire war of Troy. She is, of course, much more important a figure in the myth about the war than in Homer's epic the Iliad. Despite her insignificance in the epic, however, she still remains the cause of the Trojan war. In the Iliad she is a character involved in both paradigms, that of Achilles and of Hector. In the light of our discussions concerning paradoxical attitudes toward women in each of the two paradigms, it is not strange that Helen's character, which belongs to both paradigms, should be doubly paradoxical and at best an amalgam of attitudes toward her. Not being in the center of attention and dragged along various episodes throughout the epic her character becomes too diffuse, too rambling to fit a cohesive vision, and too inconsistent to reflect a particular attitude toward women in the epic.

But apart from inconsistencies in Helen's make up as well as systematic and structural tensions in terms of contradictory components in her character, there is apparently a philosophical consideration about her

existence in Greek literature.

In conjunction with Helen and the philosophical significance of her beauty H. D. F. Kitto explains in The Greeks that the Greeks had two sets of awareness, which he labels "intellectualism and humanity". By the former he means human awareness of an unalterable cosmic framework in which human life must be lived, a framework in which the gods are not necessarily benevolent while man should look forward to a dim shadowy life in Hades. Kitto adds that the vision by itself would have developed resigned and hopeless fatalism among the Greeks, but the awareness, Kitto argues, was combined with the almost fierce joy in life and the exultation in human achievement. While Kitto labels the former awareness "intellectualism," he calls the latter "humanity" which advocates passionate delight in life here and now and in this world. The Greeks being aware of both forces, Kitto explains, had a particular attraction and fascination for life, for its beauty, its joy, and glory. This can remind us of our earlier discussion on The Shahnameh and Wickens's observations on the Persian epic in regard to the expression of the human condition, a sense of irony, etc. With regard to Helen, in Kitto's words, "Typical of the limitations, even the contradictions of life, is the fact that what is worth having can often be had

only at the peril of life itself" (1957, 62). Helen symbolizes that kind of beauty and joy in life, beauty that can also have danger and death as its neighbor for the heroes if they decide to possess it, but a price worth paying. Kitto quotes from the Iliad in which Homer upholds Priam's superior vision in protecting Helen as against the vision of lesser princes who want Helen to leave Troy and take away with her the dangers which she has caused (1957, 62). Equating beauty with glory, he adds:

> Beauty, like glory, must be sought though the price be tears and destruction. Is it not this thought at the very center of the whole legend of the Trojan war? For its hero Achilles, the very perfection of Greek chivalry, was given precisely this choice by the gods. They offered him a long life with mediocrity, or glory with an early death. Whoever first made this myth expressed in it the essence not only of Greek thought but also of Greek history.
> (1957, 62)

In a broad sense, therefore, Helen occupies a significant position in the epic and her universal value is recognized by all parties in the Iliad, valued by the narrator and the heroes of both paradigms. Nonetheless, despite this recognition, whether explicit or implicit, the attitude toward Helen is paradoxical and especially it differs radically in the paradigm of Achilles from that in the Hector paradigm.

In the Achilles paradigm rarely do we encounter genuine concerns about Helen herself; rather we are constantly reminded of the humiliation the warriors experience because of having lost Helen to other men. "Will you all hurl yourselves into your benched ships / and take flight homeward to the beloved land of your fathers, / and would you thus leave to Priam and to the Trojans Helen / of Argos , to glory over..." (Iliad 2, 174)? And to compensate for the humiliation inflicted upon them, we can remember that they are forcefully advised "Therefore let no man be urgent to take the way homeward / until after he has lain in bed with the wife of a Trojan" (Iliad 2, 354). The conflict is obviously between men over not only the possession of a woman, but also over possessing her wealth. The point is clear when both sides decide to minimize the damage of the full scale war between the two armies; they announce:

> Warlike Menelaos and Alexandros /Paris/ are to fight / with long spears against each other for the sake of the woman. / Let the woman go to the winner, and all the possessions. (Iliad 3, 253)

Helen is being treated as less than human, as if the two male protagonists were fighting over territory. This Greek episode may also remind us of a somewhat similar Shahnameh story where the two generals of King

Kavus were quarreling over the possession of The-Nameless-Mother, who was soon to be saved from the aggression of the generals, only to be reserved for the lustful purposes of the king himself. The mighty Helen of Troy and the nameless mother of the martyred saint, Prince Siyavush, have indeed been reduced to sheer commodities and violated as human being. In this sense, the attitude toward women as autonomous human beings is reductive. The struggle over a woman may have positive connotations for heroic achievement, but from a feminist point of view (both gynocentric and androcentric) it is degrading. Emphasis on female humiliation, rather than male heroic gain is, the reader recalls, a feminist point of departure.

Moreover, within the paradigm of Achilles, Helen can remind us of Chryseis/Briseis whose loss was the cause of humiliation for their masters. Helen is evidently a larger figure than Chryseis or Briseis in the structure of the epic. But the same self-regarding concern that drove Achilles to fury when he lost Breseis, and Agamemnon when he lost Chryseies, is attributable to Menelaos's reaction to his loss of Helen. For Menelaos and his entire troop what matters most is the restoration of their own damaged masculine pride and the possession of Helen's possessions.

As to the attitude of Achilles himself, nowhere

can we find a better example than in Book Nineteen of the epic when Achilles curses Helen and says that his father must be weeping "for breavement of such a son, for / me, who now in a strange land / make/s/ war upon the Trojans for the sake of accursed Helen" (Iliad 19, 324). Nowhere does Hector curse Helen despite the hardship he experiences and the devastation inflicted upon his family and the entire Troy.

We have already discussed paradigm differences as well as shared values in Achilles and Hector paradigms. Leslie Collins in her Cornell Ph.D. thesis, now published as Studies in Characterization in the Iliad discusses the subject, but also tries to explain how two different value systems can exist in the same epic. Her representative examples are not Achilles and Hector, which is our point of emphasis, but Achilles and Agamemnon, who are closer to each other in the first place, thus easier to reconcile- which is Collins' intention; she upholds the existence of a unified king-warrior heroic ideal in the Iliad. Her discussion touches the question of woman, though from a non-feminist point of view.

Collins develops three sets of characterizations by which, she believes, the heroic ideal is established in the Iliad: the characterization of Agamemnon as king, Achilles as warrior, and nonwarriors such as "the

old, the very young, the female, the fallen hero, /who/ do have a place, albeit an ambivalent one" (24). How can individualistic interests in the warrior paradigm, the "primacy" and "supremacy" of which Collins does not deny in the Iliad (103), be reconciled to the king paradigm which contains a commitment to the community? Her thesis revolves around three basic points: 1) Agamemnon, although a "king", and thus committed to the community, is not as bad a "warrior" as Achilles says he is; 2) Achilles, who is self-centered and a "violent, merciless warrior, slayer of supliants..." also has a capacity as a "royal convener of assemblies and guardian of its values..." (102); the third tool is the use of nonwarrior characters such as Briseis and Helen who play a significant role in the narrative progress of the epic and facilitate the establishment of the thematic ideal in the Iliad. The women, Helen and Briseis, who are respectively the cause of the war and the quarrel, Collins explains, are endowed positive characteristic to legitimize heroism in the epic on the one hand and, on the other, a source to be blamed if the war goes less well (24-25). This is the mechanism which provides the hero with a tool to act according to the narrative need. Thus, it is possible for example, Collins explains, to go to great lengths in the epic to base Achilles' wrath and withdrawal on his warrior

values,

> yet although the poem narrates the disastrous consequences of his move..., Achilles' regret focuses not merely on his misperception of the relation of his personal heroic career to the welfare of his people, but on his misestimation of Briseis as a worthy reflection of the value for which he still maintains he stands. Briseis... who stood for Achilles' standing as warrior (I 343, 334; B 688-91; II 56ff.) is in light of the death of Patroclus... sooner to have died than became the cause of quarrel (T 56-64)..., just as Helen will be seen to be both.... (24)

She draws a parallel between Helen and Briseis. "In other words," Collins adds, "one or other side of the essential ambivalency of nonwarriors vis a vis warriors can be intensified according as the narrative finds it convenient" (24). Thus the narrative makes it possible for Achilles to fight over regaining Helen from the Trojans, because she is valuable, or withdraw from the war for Briseis' sake, again because she is worthy, and curse both of them for their role in the social structure of the epic when the war goes less well. The narrative progress, Collins asserts, makes it possible for women such as Helen and Briseis to be both praised and blamed "according as the narrative finds it convenient" so that a cohesive warrior-king value system can be established in the Iliad (41-67).

The essence of the androcentric feminist point of

departure, which Collins does not address, lies in the very process of analysis as such. It is true that the hero and the king, both of whom are men, gain in the course of the epic, a concept against which we have no qualms; but what about women? Why should they be placed in an "ambivalent" position as such? What kind of a value system does the epic represent from the perspective of a feminist point of departure? The "peculiar position" of women, to use Finley's term once again, can be justified in the Iliad under the pretext of various sorts of higher goals and heroic ideals; but when the spotlight of analysis is the question of woman, the subject of victimization can by no means be ignored. The "peculiar position" in the narrative structure of the epic says, in the last analysis, something about the womanness of characters such as Briseis and Helen. The paradoxical situation and the systematic inconsistency intertwines with their makeup.

In the paradigm of Achilles the contradiction imposed on Helen weighs more heavily on the negative; in the Hector paradigm her position is more positive. It is true that Hector himself brushes Helen aside in the same paradoxical context when he dismisses the thoughtful advice of both Helen and Andromache in his too proud a plan to face Achilles alone. But it is also true that Hector treats Helen kindly. In Helen's

own words:

> Hektor, of all my lord's brothers dearest by far to my spirit: / ...here now is the twentieth year upon me since I came / from the place where I was, foresaking the land of my fathers. In this time / I never heard a harsh saying from you, nor an insult. / No, but when another, one of my lord's brothers or sisters, a fair-robed / wife of some brother, would say a harsh word to me in the palace, / or my lord's mother--but his father was gentle always, a father / indeed-then you would speak and put them off and restrain them by your own gentleness of heart and your gentle words.... There was no other in the wide Troad / who was kind to me, and my friend; all others shrank when they saw me.
> (Iliad 24, 762)

Unlike Menelaos, explained above, Paris in the Hector Paradigm is happy with and shows more signs of loving Helen, not willing to give her up: "But of the possessions I carried away to our house from Argos / I am willing to give all back, and to add to these from my own goods" (Iliad 7, 363). Priam, too, treats Helen kindly and respects her desire to stay in Troy with Paris although her presence has brought devastation and destruction for Troy. Priam's warriors on the tower say:

> Surely there is no blame on Trojans and strong-greaved Achaians / if for long time they suffer hardship for a woman like this one. Terrible is the likeness of her face to immortal goddesses. /

> still, though she be such, let her go away in the ships, lest / she be left behind, a grief to us and our children. (Iliad 3, 156)

Implicit in these words is that Helen is not fully welcomed to stay in regards to the disaster in Troy, but there is no word of disrespect against Helen either. Moreover, Priam acts even more gently:

> Come over where I am, dear child, and sit down beside me, / to look at your husband of past, your friends and your people. / I am not blaming you: to me the gods are blameworthy / who drove upon me this sorrowful war against the Achaians. (Iliad 3, 162)

The reason for the overall difference as such in the paradigms of Achilles and Hector as to their attitude toward women and paradoxical issues within each paradigm have already been discussed. As to the cohesiveness of Helen's character, the uniformity of comments about her by the narrator, the opinion of other characters and their treatment of Helen, there exists no comprehensive vision or attitude toward this character in the epic. There are contradictions within contradictions from the beginning to the end of the epic. In a different way and a different context Finley, too, raises questions with regards to the peculiarity of Helen's character:

> The two characters in the poems who are not fully resolved are both women,...and Helen, who is a very

> peculiar figure. Helen, daughter of Zeus and Leda, was Aphrodite's favorite, and thanks to the gifts of the goddess she succeeded in embroiling Greeks and Trojans in a gigantic struggle that cost both sides dearly. Helen was no innocent victim in all this, no unwilling captive of Paris-Alexander, but an adulterous in the most complete sense. (1965, 139)

We do not intend to present the problem of Helen's guilt/innocence and defend one or the other; both elements exists in Helen's characterization. On the one hand she is shown to be the victim of forces beyond her control, but also there are indications that she herself liked to leave her husband behind to go with Paris. Finley's position in his interpretations about women in Homer is extreme. He is right, though, that Helen is a "peculiar figure." More specifically, we may emphasize, she reflects contradictory elements, an amalgam of paradoxical and opposing characteristics which shape the coherence of her character. Characterized in two models of heroic paradigms and caught in their combined paradoxes, Helen's character and the attitude toward her are too defuse, too rambling. She is often forced into positions that are opposites: helplessly obedient but also willful, right and wrong thinking and actions, treated with love but also hate, sympathetic and hostile attitudes, voice of

reason and uncontrollable passions.

Finally, despite all that glitters in Helen's life, self blame dominates this character in the epic (Iliad 3, 173; 3, 242; 3, 410; 6, 345, etc.). In other words she is forced to live horrible life of self blame while there existed too little that she could have done from the beginning or remains to be done in the world of the epic to correct the situation. Helen, a woman of personal substance and the symbol of beauty and glory in this world--we may remember Kitto's argument above--is dominated by the pathos and the uselessness of death wish:

> ... 'Brother / by marriage to me, who am a nasty bitch evil-intriguing, / how I wish that on that day when my mother first bore me / the foul wirlwind of the storm had caught me away and swept me / to the mountain, or into the wash of the sea deep-thundering / where the waves would have swept me away before all these things had happened....' (Iliad 6, 343)

CHAPTER II

PENELOPE AND NAUSICAA OF THE ODYSSEY

The Iliad is the story of destroying a homeland, devastating families, and enslaving women; the Odyssey is about restoring an invaded homeland, rebuilding a family, and liberating a brave besieged, woman. Women in the Iliad are almost always on the periphery of the story's social structure, hence more often than not they are helpless persons; in the Odyssey they play a relatively more central role, thus they appear more powerful, more dynamic, and more authoritative. If Briseis and Andromache can best represent the agony of women characters in the Iliad, the "wise and beautiful" Penelope of the Odyssey represents woman in the center stage of the Homeric epic world. Therefore, due to the central theme of the epic of restoration of home and family, Penelope plays a more vital and dynamic role.

The Odyssey provides us in the first place with an obvious example which is free of misogyny, a view which

we defended earlier both in the case of the Iliad as well as that of the Shahnameh tradition. Nevertheless, the Odyssey is also an example of paradoxical treatment of women in Homeric literature. In this respect the stories of women in the Persian epic as well as in Homer (both paradigms of the Iliad and that of tne Odyssey) have a common thread.

In the Odyssey Homer's sensitivity toward the theme of survival of the hero, the restoration of family, and the centrality of woman is obvious and has long been observed in scholarship. The author's own maturity might have been a factor in his emphasis on the theme of survival, thus a more central role for women in this epic. The view of Longinus, the ancient philosopher, that a more mature Homer in his older age wrote the Odyssey, and a younger, passionate Homer wrote the Iliad tells us much about the emphasis. Longinus elaborates in his On the Sublime that "It was, I imagine, for the same reason that, writing the Iliad in the heyday of his genius he /Homer/ made the whole piece lively with dramatic action, whereas in the Odyssey narrative predominates, the characteristic of old age. So in the Odyssey one may liken Homer to the setting sun..." (Norton Critical Edition of the Odyssey, 398). Also, the view of Samuel Butler, that the Odyssey was written by a woman, may justify the

emphasis on themes as such in the Odyssey. Samuel Butler expresses his views in his The Authoress of the Odyssey: Where and When she Wrote, Who she Was, the Use she Made of the Iliad, & How the Poem Grew under her Hands. Regardless of opinions in regards to the age and gender of the poet, the themes of survival and the restoration of family, we believe, have resulted in the centrality of woman in the Odyssey.

Penelope is in the center stage of the epic. She is presented as dignified and graceful in appearance, words, and action. The imagery used in the characterization of Penelope recalls the grace and dignity of Tahmineh, Rustam's wife, who first appeared in the "Story of Sohrab and Rustam," when guided by a girl attendant she was entering Rustam's bed chamber. The text of the Odyssey offers this description for Penelope in Albert Cook's Norton Critical Edition translation.[32]

> The daughter of Icarios, prudent Penelope, / From her upper chamber hearkened to the divine song. / She descended the lofty stairway from her dwelling. / Not alone, but two servants followed along with her / And when the godly woman had come to the suitors, / She stood by the pillar of the stoutly fashioned roof, / Holding the glistening headbands before her cheeks.
> (Odyssey 1. 328)

Similar imagery also occurs in Odyssey 16, 414; 18,

207; and in 21, 63.

The most significant component in Penelope's character is its moral dimension. Indeed Penelope has the moral character expected of women in the world of the epic. Although we do not know if any epic character functioned as role models, nor whether epics had such a didactic function, we cannot ignore the fact that stories in folktale traditions as well as popular literature enjoyed in high culture have power to influence. Literature has the power to refine and shape the attitudes of those who read it. In this respect we might refer to inspiring theories by major literary figures in English literature: Sir Philip Sidney's defense of literature's creative power and the presentation of an ideal world which stimulates us to endeavor to copy it in our own behavior;[33] Matthew Arnold's faith in literature as an educative force;[34] Joseph Conrad's conviction in regards to the effect of literature which endures for ever.[35]

Thus, Penelope being one of the most mature women in Homeric epics could have had an impact on so many women who listened to their poets, thereby acquiring the sort of moral behavior which was expected of them in their society and which was approved by the value system of the epic. Her very name, according to the Oxford Dictionary, means "a chaste wife." This moral

dimension is in effect her most important role and, in essence, she is superior to other characters such as Clytemnestra not only because she is a faithful wife but also since she does not commit regicide. In Finley's words "Penelope became a moral heroine for later generations, the embodiment of goodness and chastity, to be contrasted with the faithless, murdering Clytaemnestra, Agamemnon's wife" (1965, 25).

On the subject of moral component J. W. Mackail observes that "Penelope is a believable moral heroine who cannot escape the cultural restrictions on her sex, but whose ingenuity and enduring spirit make her a model of the 'good wife'" (43).

Evident in Mackail's statement, however, is that opposing forces exist in Penelope's make-up, forces from which not a single significant woman has been able to escape either in the Shahnameh tradition or in Homeric epics; it is again this tension which we will try to illustrate in Penelope's character, after we have shown the strengths of "wise and beautiful" Penelope.

Penelope enjoys the widely recognized classical heroic ideal described in Latin as sapientia et fortitudo (wisdom and prowess). The formula applies first and foremost to ideal male protagonists in classical Greek and Persian traditions as well as in

Beowulf. But noble female personalities, too, are endowed with these qualities. In terms of sapientia et fortitudo Penelope's counterparts in the Shahnameh tradition were Rudabeh, Tahmineh, and Katayun, and in Beowulf, Wealhtheow and Hildeburgh.

The "wise and beautiful" Penelope is a carefully crafted character whose beauty is described effectively and whose wisdom is revealed through dialogue in the epic and through deeds. In appearance she is compared with the goddesses Artemis and Aphrodite, the ultimate compliment in Greek culture. Besides her beauty, however, the most common adjectives used to describe her are "exceedingly wise" and "self-controled" (Mackail 44). Her actions and words support such praise.

In terms of "sapientia" she is most remembered for her thoughtful actions, strategic tactics, and for the web she wove to postpone her suitors' advances. Also she demonstrates a degree of like-mindedness with wise Odysseus. Not yielding to Odysseus himself except on her own terms, she tricks him into exposing the secret of their marriage bed. Her strategic tactics can also be compared with her husband's in his struggle for survival and in his tireless attempts to reach home and regain all that belongs to him.

Fortitudo is another major component for women in

the Odyssey in general and for Penelope in particular. Compared to the women in the Iliad the women of the Odyssey demonstrate a higher degree of prowess both in substance and intensity:

> Women in the Odyssey are never degraded as they are in many of the later passages of the Iliad.... Women indeed pull the strings in the Odyssey: the godess Athena, the nymphs, Calypso and Circe, and the mortals, Penelope and Nausica, are the principal actors in the drama. (Wright 8-9)

Not only women in the Odyssey represent a much stronger image compared to the situation in Homer's earlier epic, but also the image is different from those reflected in the later centuries of Greek culture. The Odyssey, therefore, occupies a unique status from the viewpoint of women characters in literature. Bowra's generous comments on Homeric women applies especially to the women in the Odyssey:

> The heroic age honoured its women and gave them power. So Homer was saved from making them too womanly, as Euripides sometimes did, or from raising them to that sublime selflessness to which Sophocles raised Antigone. Still less has Homer any sympathy with those waves of self-denial and puritanism which occasionally swept over later Greece. (1930, 241)

Prowess ("fortitudo") has several dimensions in Penelope. The most central dimension is Penelope's strength in maintaining the survival of Odysseus'

household through means and methods that are available to her. Her handling of the suitors is one example:

> The Achaian suitors are not guilty toward you /Telemachos/. / No, it is your dear mother, who knows advantages well. / It is the third year already, and will soon be a fourth, / since she has slighted the spirit in the Achaians' hearts. / She gives hope to all, and she promises every man, / Sending out messages. But her thought wishes otherwise. (Odyssey 2, 87)

It is strength of character to be able to keep the household and the kingdom from falling apart, to make the suitors wait until, in Helene P. Foley's words, she "has turned her guests into swine, into unmanly banqueters, lovers of dance and song rather than war, who are shown, in their failure to string the bow, to be no match for Odysseus" (1988, 90). Penelope has the strength to stop undesirable change; she demonstrates a capacity to contain the situation and "maintains his /Odysseus/ authority intact during a period of twenty years" (Wright 9). All this and more is a part of the fullness and dynamism of Penelope's character.

She is, moreover, self assured, authoritative, and courageous. She has the capacity to speak from a position of strength. Her encounter with Antinoos is one example:

> She rebuked Antinoos and spoke right out directly: / "Antinoos, for all your pride and evil

> devices, they say / You are the best of your peers in the land of Ithaca / For advice and speeches. But you are not really so. / You madman, why do you devise murder and death / For Telemachos.... (Odyssey 16, 417)

Also part of "fortitudo" in Penelope is her caution, patience, and self control. She waits for evidence and proof before she acts. The scene of Odysseus recognition demonstrates that capability in Penelope:

> Telemachos rebuked her and spoke out to her directly: / "My mother, cruel mother, you have a heart that is harsh! / Why do you turn from my father...? No other woman, indeed, with a resisting heart / would so stand off from the husband who had suffered many ills / And come back for her in the twentieth year to his fatherland...." / And then the prudent Penlope spoke to him: / "My child, the heart within my breast is amazed, / And I am not at all able to speak a word or to ask / Or to look him in the face directly. If really / He is Odysseus and he has arrived home, we two / shall know one another, and more fully. There are signs / For us that the two of us know, hidden from others."/ So she said and, godly Odysseus, who had endured much, smiled. / "Telemachos, permit your mother to test me out / Within the halls.... (Odyssey 23, 96)

Penelope's dynamic, multi-dimensional character contrasts with some of the stereotypical characters of the Iliad; she struggles in her own way within the conditions in which she finds herself. She reminds us

of the divine beauty and wisdom ("Khirad") of Tahmineh and Katayun; like them Penelope preserves the autonomy of her character and like them she is self assured, self confident, but also a devoted mother. All three are distressed at the departure of their sons, although these same sons, each in his own way, treat them harshly for being women. Moreover, all three have pragmatic wisdom and prowess. They are involved with the central problems of their worlds in a consistent manner and do the best they can to influence the worlds of the epics, each attempting to shape and save her household in her own way. Obviously, all three women are endowed with admirable qualities consistent with the value systems underpinning these epics.

All these characters have limitations, as well, not only as individuals, which is normal for any character, but also as women generally, crippled by systematic limitations related to their gender. We should immediately add that the systematic limitations cannot be interpreted as misogyny, since there is no evidence in the text of the epics which might indicate the feeling of hatred toward women; rather it is a part of paradoxical portrayal of women which feeds on a tension between opposing forces. It is these limitations in Penelope which we now address.

Helene P. Foley summarizes Penelope's strengths in

terms of "her Athena-like intelligence, her weaving, and her power to order the household" (1988, 90), but she also adds that:

> For all her intelligence in maintaining the material conditions for the survival of Odysseus's household, and thus for his kingship, and even in performing such kingly functions as mediating the quarrels of the restless young, Penelope, because she lacks physical force, can only stop change on Ithaca. She cannot restore it to full social growth. (1988, 91)

One cannot but notice several issues in Foley's observations. At least three points should be highlighted: Penelope's maintaining Odysseus' household and stopping change, the lack of her physical force, and her inability to restore full social growth. The effectiveness she displays in stopping change is due to trickery, not always a good thing in Homer especially when it is due to female cunning. It adds up to "the essential view of the female as untrustworthy, because a creature of transitory and uncertain alliance, /a concept which/ is present throughout the poem" (Collins 63-64). But "Penelope", Collins adds, "of all the Odyssey's cunning females, ought to escape the suspicion due a Helen, Clytemnestra, or Circe, because she uses her cunning to serve the interests of Odysseus" (64). Penelope can escape suspicion in the Odyssey because

> cunning is the trait for which Odysseus is celebrated..., yet cunning in the Odyssey is not always good, and female cunning typically results in the destruction of men. Clytemnestra kills her husband by means of trickery; Helen... sends many heroes to Hades...; Circe's beautiful singing as she sits at the loom... ensnares the companions; Penelope's weaving helps to set the stage for the slaughter of the suitors. (64,f.)

Cunning as a means, which is associated with the notion of women's untrustworthiness, works for Penelope. The effect of the episode is that the end should justify the means.

Foley is right in her observation that Penelope stops change in Ithaca; Foley is also right that because Penelope lacks physical strength, she is denied the opportunity to restore the household to full social growth. The question of physical strength and women's natural inferiority in this respect is an important subject. Foley mentions it in her criticism of the Odyssey, but the subject has deeper implications. This issue has been discussed in feminist criticism, particularly in feminist criticism on Beowulf, the Anglo-Saxon epic. Bernice W. Kliman argues in "Women in Early English Literature, 'Beowulf' to the 'Ancrene Wisse'" that:

> Under the heroic scheme where obviously valor or prowess are the

> most valued traits, women are naturally inferior. There can be little argument about it because it is clear from experience, although perhaps natural selection and training play a part, too. This inferiority in strength is not important in peaceful times, but the notion that she is inferior--in general--maintains its hold on the masculine imagination (and the feminine imagination, too, certainly). Since away from the battleground it is man's mind, his ability to reason and to distinguish right from wrong, rather than valor, which makes him worthy, the idea of woman's inferiority--derived ultimately from her inferior physical strength--needs doctrinal shoring up. (39)

In other words a weakness that begins with physical strength stretches to other areas in which the female character has no inferiority whatsoever. Limitations will, therefore, be impcsed on her paradoxically despite her individual qualities, which should otherwise entitle her to social opportunities. This supports part of our thesis that limitations are not innate in the epic women we have studied thusfar; rather constraints are imposed on them externally in the social structure of the work. This can also explain Foley's observation even further as to why Penelope is denied to restore the kingdom to full social growth. Penelope is indeed denied the opportunity because she is a woman.

Nowhere can we find a better example of the essence of that limitation than in her own son's remarks, which clearly distinguish between a man and a woman within the value system of the epic:

> 'Well, come into the house, and apply yourself to work, / To the loom and the distaff, and give orders to your servants / To set at the work. This talk will concern all the men, / But me especially. For the power in the house is mine.' She was amazed at him, and back into the house she went. / The sound-minded speech of her son she took to heart. (Odyssey 1, 356)

The same concept and phraseology reappear again toward the end of the epic, confirming once more Telemachos' superiority as a man in handling a serious situation.

> But go into the house and attend to your own tasks, / The loom and the distaff, and give orders to your servants / To set at the work. The bow shall concern all the men / But me especially. For the power in the house is mine. / She was amazed at him, and back into the house she went. / The sound-minded speech of her son she took to heart. (Odyssey 21, 350)

Despite all her intelligence and prowess, Penelope accepts "the sound-minded speech" and accepts her subservient role in the overall structure of the epic. The above passage has been at the center of critical controversy and debate for some time. There are, of course, attempts by critics to justify Telemachos' behavior, but also others have tried to crystallize the

limited and inferior position of women. Here lie two different critical approaches: one that reflects the world of the epic from the viewpoint of male characters; the other, namely feminist criticism, makes such viewpoints its point of departure.

Kitto is one of those who justifies Telemachos' actions in terms of his growth into kingly behavior:

> He /Telemachos/ spoke to Penelope with a new authority that took her aback (1.356ff.).... We moderns know that a young gentleman should not speak like this to his mother, but how did Homer's audiences respond? With the reflection, I suspect, that under Athena's guidance Telemachus is becoming quite kingly. (1988, 21)

Kitto continues to defend Telemachos in the name of culture, order, religion, philosophy, and science (1988, 24-25). Of course, Kitto's explanations say something about the gains of Telemachos, but they should not justify the degradation of Penelope. To put it differently, we have no qualms against men's gains; that path would make the critic end up with hating men, or perhaps it is the result rather than the cause of the hatred, which is, in our opinion, as bad as misogyny. We would have liked to see Telemachos, as a man, to grow to the very point of perfection, but we cannot possibly justify a positive gain or growth for a

man at a woman's cost, and this keeps happening over and over again both in the Shahnameh tradition and in Homer's works. The following is a typical argument trying to shed some light on a feminist approach as a turning point:

> It is interesting to note that René Wellek rejected Madame de Stael's approach to literature as too personal. He wrote 'Her discussion of Greek literature is almost grotesque.... The main offense of the Greeks is the low status granted to women. Telemachus ordering Penelope to be silent must have conjured the vision of some man giving the same order to Madame de Stael.'.... Wellek would, of course, have critics be objective and unmoved by such adventitious matter as woman's status in society. A feminist critic is not only moved by such matters but makes them her point of departure. (Donovan 106)

Penelope's limitations, as a woman, are several. Finley explains the patriarchal social and political system in the World of Odysseus. He goes rather to an extreme and rules out any genuine qualities whatsoever in Penelope, either in her private attributes or her social status in which she has no solid decision making authority. He, nevertheless has a point in saying that Penelope, as a woman, could not possibly have become ruler; "Penelope could not rule, being a woman" (Finley 1965, 47); or another comment by Finley:

> There was nothing about the woman

> Penelope, either in beauty or wisdom or spirit, that could have won her this unprecedented and unwanted right of decision as a purely personal triumph. Institutionally, furthermore, this was a solidly patriarchal society, in which even a Telemachus could bid his mother leave the banquet hall and retire to her proper, womanly tasks. (1965, 91)

Still concerning the social status of Penelope, Lefkowitz has an interesting observation, explaining that "One could regard Penlope as yet another example of a woman who is important only while her husband is absent, since the moment he returns, she disappears from view" (1).

Apart from the social and political points of view, in which Penelope, as a woman, has no choice but to settle for a subservient role, other limitations also, like natural garments, are cut for Penelope to wear; like other women she is treated as a commodity. She is constantly linked to commodity, and still in an older age, it is suggested that in order to get married she should go back to her father's home and bring dowry. Of course the question of dowry is a complicated one having economic implications and social arrangements. But whatever those implications may be, one aspect of the arrangement reduces a woman to the status of a commodity in the process of getting married.

> I shall advise Telemachos myself in the presence of all: / Let him bid his mother go back to her father's house. / They will work out a marriage and array many gifts, / As many as should go along with a dear daughtr.
> (Odyssey 2, 194)

Moreover, men practiced polygamy, having access to women other than their own wives, while women were expected to remain monogamous. Odysseus himself had relations with other women, but it was Penelope, who had to remain chaste, so did all other attending girls in Odysseus' household.

> So he said and the sun went down, and darkness came on. / The two of them went into a nook of the hollow cave / And took pleasure of love, abiding with one another. / And when the early-born, rosy-fingered dawn appeared, / Then Odysseus at once put on his cloak and his tunic, / And the nymph herself put on a great shining mantle / Finely made and pleasing, and a lovely gold sash / Around her waist, and a veil upon her head above.
> (Odyssey 5, 225)

Or in another occasion:

> And when she had sworn the oath and completed it, / I went up to the bed of the beautiful Circe.
> (Odyssey 10, 346)

The women of the Odyssey must not have liked the kind of arrangement in which their husbands could have had affairs with as many women as they wished. There are occasions in which we are told women were available for

a man, but he did not sleep with them to avoid the anger of his wife (Odyssey 1, 431). It clearly shows that the wives did not like such actions. The wife's wrath could have forced a man to let go of his lawful opportunity, but her wishes could not have influenced the social custom nor moral standards. Penelope, too, was a woman and had to live with the double standard. This argument has also been made in favor of those individual women whose fury has stopped the husband from practicing his lawful rights. But it remains a fact that the strengths of few individual women had no influence on the systematic limitation imposed on women in the polygamy/monogamy value system in the world of the epic. Penelope, at any rate, had the strength to do neither of the above--to influence an individual husband or social conditions as a whole.

Penelope, like all other prominent female characters we have studied thusfar, exists within a space between two sets of characteristics: positive qualities which are mostly personal and individualistic, and negative qualities rooted in custom, social systems, and institutional limitations, where a woman eventually finds little opportunity for full development.

Apart from Penelope, there are other prominent female characters in the Odyssey. We will only briefly

mention a few of them. Clytemnestra, a character designed as the opposite of Penelope in chastity, is associated with images of instability, deceit, adultery, and murder--a wily bitch-faced woman (quotations below). Her closest counterpart in The Shanameh is Sudabeh in the second half of her story, a character who represented the dark side of female gender in the Persian epic. "I wandered thereabouts getting a great livelihood / While another man killed my brother unawares, / Secretly through the cunning of his accursed wife" (Odyssey 4, 90). Agamemnon's ghost explains the details of his horrible murder through the collaboration of his "accursed", "bitch-faced" wife who "Poured shame upon herself and upon womankind to come / Hereafter, even on one who might do good deeds" (Odyssey 11, 433). Further, When Odysseus responds to the grievance adding "Many men perished because of Helen; / Clytemnestra made a plot against you while you were far away" (Odyssey 11, 438), Agamemnon in return concludes with a piece of advice. The advice addressed to Odysseus carries a particular image of woman in the epic. "So never be mild yourself, henceforth, even to your wife. / Reveal to her no entire story that you know well, / But tell a part of it and let the rest be concealed" (Odyssey 11, 441). In sum, do not trust women.

Another prominent and praise-worthy woman in the epic is Nausicaa. She demonstrates unusual strength of character and is not at all frightened or shy when she meets a barely clad stranger, Odysseus, in the woods (Odyssey 4, 139). Nausicaa, like Penelope, possesses all the traits of "sapientia" (Odyssey 7, 292), a thoughtfulness which enables her, for example, to advise Odysseus to approach Arete (her mother) rather than the king (Odyssey 6, 310). Also, her encounter with Odysseus contributes to the theme of the hero's survival on his way to his homeland. She is moreover a person of grace and beauty, thus being unconsciously a rival to the "wise and beautiful" Penelope. In addition, like Penelope, she possesses the combined strengths of wisdom and prowess, thus fitting the familiar formula of the ideal "sapientia et fortitudo," which the majority of prominent female characters enjoy in The Shahnameh and in Homeric epics. But on the other hand, within the structure of the epic as a whole, Odysseus' interest is in his own family and the restoration of his own kingdom and his own individual honor and gains, a process which leaves the entire episode of Nausicaa on the periphery. Nausicaa is an able woman, but also is an auxiliary character, on the periphery, and a tool for the progress of Odysseus.

Another prominent character is Odysseus' mother,

who dies due to her prolonged agony for her son, thus fitting the familiar pattern of pathos.

> And so I myself have perished and have met my fate. / And the far sighted one who shoots arrows did not / Visit me in the hall and slay me with her gentle shafts, / Nor did sickness come on me, such as especially / With grim wasting away takes the spirit from the limbs. / But longing for you and your counsel, noble Odysseus, / And your kindness, reft my honey-sweet spirit away. (Odyssey 11, 197)

The experience is that of pathos and enough has been said about it thusfar, leaving the character simply one of many in its kind.

* * * *

Female personalities characterized in Homer as well as those in Ferdowsi indicate that the poets grappled with the material they had inherited from their tradition. They did the best they could with the raw material, they crystallized prowess and wisdom in their ideal characters, they distanced themselves from misogyny, they reflected the most suitable images that they could handle in the characterization of their female personalities, but they left intact the paradoxes which existed before their time and which continued to exist long after they were gone, if not worsening to the point of disaster. Two universal poets, one from the East and one from the West,

grappled tirelessly with a universal problem which proved to be at least as deep-seated as the poets' unquestionable genius.

GENERAL REMARKS

We have examined three major epics, one from the East and two from the West with regards to the question of woman and her images in early epic literature. The epics were selected from the literature of two cultures, both of which, in different historical periods produced the most advanced civilizations of their time. The Persian epic, The Shahnameh (the Book of Kings) was rooted in the ancient Indo-Iranian pagan as well as Zoroastrian traditions, an epic of approximately 60,000 couplets rewritten in the tenth century A. D. in the final, completed form which has reached us today. The Greek exemplars were the Iliad and the Odyssey of Homer, epics with which Greek literature begins and widely influences not only the later periods of Greek literature but also the entire Western literature; these epics are also widely known in the East.

Central to our study of The Shahnameh and Homeric epics were the themes of dynamism, the individuality of characters and their struggles in the epic world, the

resourcefulness of the human mind ascribed to them, the subject of human crises, and irony, all of which are deep-seated components marking the central literary qualities of these epics. Orientalist scholarship, which never had a problem in associating these attributes with Western literature, is now beginning to establish the notion that they exist in the protagonists' make up in The Shahnameh as well. In this respect the contribution of G. M. Wickens is a positive step in Shahnameh analyses in orientalist studies, an approach which also considers this epic an exceptional work, differentiating it from the rest of literature in Islamdom.

With regard to the question of women as has already been pointed out, the dominant thesis in comparative studies is Nöldeke's theory that Ferdowsi's women characters are insipid as compared to those in Homer, reducing the women of The Shahnameh only to objects of desire or love, a thesis which denies their dynamism, individuality, struggles, resourcefulness of human mind, and a host of positive attributes we elaborated in this work. Feminist criticism, we have explained, is keen on this kind of reductionism which perpetuates only negative images for women, images which as we hope to have shown are the creation not of the poet, but of the critic's own conflicting

sociopolitical, cultural, and psychological views.

Our discussion shows that neither Homer nor Ferdowsi portrays the female character as insipid, but rather creates paradoxical characters who are women of personal substance limited by social constraints.

Our argument has been twofold. In the first place it is our conviction that there exists no misogyny in the exemplar epics and we hope that substantive argument has been provided both in the case of The Shahnameh and in the Iliad as well as the Odyssey to support that view. Women are indispensable in the early epics of both traditions and more often than not highly regarded by epic heroes in general and the narrators of the stories in particular.

In the second place, however, we have demonstrated the existence of a systematic inconsistency in the roles and images which are assigned to the women of these works. We have examined the presence of a double structure in the make up of women in the poems. In both Eastern and Western exemplars the double structure splits the female image in two opposite directions: one force is represented by exalted, praiseworthy, and positive images which also endow the women of The Shahnameh and the Homeric poems with powerful characteristics. Yet within the same text, the same woman, through another force, is not only relegated to

a subservient role, but also finds imposed upon her the status of not being taken seriously, severe handicaps regarding her full integration and full contribution in the social fabric of the story, and not being allowed to use her considerable abilities. Within this paradoxical double structure, one structure does not eventually cancel out the other, rather the coexistence of both structures in the same work results in the reader's suspension between the conclusions each of them separately urges.

Such splits in the characterization of women in early epic literature is not limited either to Eastern or to Western culture. Whatever differences there may be in the cultures of the East and the West, the examples selected in this dissertation indicate the existence of a mutual problem concerning the question of women; a consistent thread runs through the universal inconsistency in the make-up of women in epic. The thread runs across the border between East and West, wherever that border may be drawn geographically, historically, or culturally.

APPENDIX

SYNOPSES OF THE SHAHNAMEH STORIES

Rudabeh:

The story revolves around the two major characters of Zal and Rudabeh, and prepares the stage for the birth of the bulwark hero of the epic, the great Rustam. Rudabeh is the daughter of King Mehrab of Kabul, a young and beautiful girl who falls in love with Zal, the Iranian wise and white-headed hero, and marries Zal despite her father's severe disapproval of and emotional reaction to the marriage. Zal's apparent shortcoming is that he was born with white hair, a misinterpretation at his birth that he was born old, thus an evil person. As a baby he was abandoned on a mountain to perish; however, the legendary bird Simurgh, who is a symbol of justice in the epic, picks up the baby and nurtures him to his heroic age. In time his father, Sam, realizes his mistake and welcomes home the young hero. Zal becomes an emissary of Iran and travels abroad to uphold the cause of Iran in peace and at war. This is when Rudabeh becomes aware of Zal's presence in her state, which is adjacent to Iran, and the love affair between the two begins. Rudabeh's

father, however, still holds Zal's white hair at birth against him. Moreover, the Shah of Iran does not favor this marriage because he does not want Zal, the son of Sam, the hero of Iran, to marry with the daughter of Mehrab, a descendant of the evil, snake-shouldered Arab King Zahhak who had usurped the throne of Iran in earlier periods. Despite major difficulties the story ends happily and the stage is set for the birth of the bulwark hero, Rustam.

* * * *

Tahmineh

The story begins when Rustam is hunting in a remote prairie near the border of Iran and Turan. He falls asleep; his beloved horse, Rakhsh, is stolen away; he follows the horse's foot steps which lead Rustam into Samangan. The King of Samangan welcomes the hero and promises to find Rakhsh the next morning while the king offers to host Rustam in his palace that night. After the festivities for Rustam as a royal guest of honor, Rustam prepares to rest for the night, and intoxicated he falls asleep in his bed chamber. In a manner which we will explain below, Rustam meets and marries the King's daughter Tahmineh. The next day Rustam returns to Iran

and never knows about the son who is born from that marriage. Sohrab is born and grows unusually fast. At the age of ten Sohrab has the strength of heroes; he learns the identity of his father, and searching for Rustam whom he has never seen before, Sohrab joins the Tartar army to attack Persia, hoping that he would find his father Rustam on the battle field. His ultimate quest is to overthrow Kavus (the foolish king of the epic) and to make his father Rustam the king and , in some texts, his mother Tahmineh the queen of Iran. When Sohrab and Rustam face each other in battle and, unaware of their relationship, fight as enemies, the moment of recognition materializes, but , as in other tragedies, it comes too late; Rustam has stabbed Sohrab and mortally wounded him.

* * * *

Gurdafarid:

The episode of Gurdafarid occurs toward the middle of "Rustam and Sohrab." Sohrab is already in Iran and has defeated the great Hujir, chief defender of the White Fortress on the border of Iran and Turan. Sohrab has now camped outside the White Fortress, while its gates are closed against him and his troops. Hujir, who had responded to Sohrab's challenge and had come out of the fort to fight with Sohrab is now in Sohrab's custody.

Those who are inside the fort are worried as they have seen their brave heroes fall in front of Sohrab out there in the open field. Finally Gurdafarid courageously volunteers to respond to Sohrab's challenge in single combat preferring heroic danger out there to humiliating quiescence within the safe walls of the fort. Gurdafarid, who is Hujir's sister (in some texts, his daughter), dresses up as a man, wearing proper armor and hiding her hair in the helmet. Despite a brave and skilled performance, she is defeated by Sohrab, her long hair drops into full view when the helmet is knocked off, and her identity is revealed. Noticing that Sohrab is fascinated with her, Gurdafarid cleverly charms him. She invites Sohrab toward the White Fortress, but closes the gate to Sohrab as soon as she herself enters the fort. We will explain more details in this episode, but first let us see the overall function of the episode in the story.

* * * *

Sudabeh:

The story of Sudabeh's life appears in two different sections of the epic. At first we meet her in the stories related to the wars that the Shah of Iran wages against his neighbors. The episode of Sudabeh begins in one of those campaigns. We do not hear about Sudabeh again until much later in the epic in the "The Story of

Siyavush", in which she once again plays a major role.

In the first half the Shah of Iran, Kavus, hears that the King of Hamavaran has a beautiful daughter and he falls in love with her. He sends a suitor to Sudabeh's father, proposing marriage. The father does not want his daughter to leave him, to marry Kavus, and it is only through Sudabeh's insistence that he finally agrees to the marriage. Even then, he is gravely unhappy. After a week he invites Kavus and Sudabeh to his court, arrests Kavus, and throws him into a dungeon.

The father then asks Sudabeh to return to his own palace and live with him. Sudabeh prefers to stay with her husband in prison. Soon Rustam, who has saved the Shah in several other occasions, frees the king and his young wife, returning both of them to their own palace in Iran. The early part of Sudabeh's life ends here.

Then comes "The Story of Siyavush," which begins with the episode of Siyavush's mother. The nameless mother first appears in a hunting field, where two generals are arguing over who should possess the lonely girl. The Shah ends their argument by taking the girl for himself. Siyavush is born from that marriage, a handsome boy who surpasses all others in dignity and manners. Kavus then asks Rustam to train Siyavush and bring him up like his own son. The central story begins with Siyavush, as an adult prince who returns to his

father's palace where Sudabeh, who is his stepmother in this episode, falls in love with him and makes advances.

Problems continue to the point that Siyavush, who wishes to escape the situation, joins a battle against Afrasiyab, the arch enemy of Iran, who has now invaded Iran. Against all odds Siyavush manages to help establish peace, but when he finds out that his father does not favor peace and expects needless bloodshed to continue, and especially when he remembers the situation at his father's court, he leaves Iran and chooses to live in Turan, the realm of Afrasiyab, the arch enemy of Iran. Afrasiyab is fond of Siyavush and treats him like a son and gives him his daughter as wife. Due to the jealousy of other characters, Siyavush falls from the King's favor and is killed. Rustam, reenters the story, sharply criticizes the king, and holding Sudabeh responsible for Siyavush's death he kills her in the king's presence. In the epic the feud over the blood of Siyavush continues between Iran and Turan for many long years to come.

Fiction and reality join in the later Zorastrian era in Iran to create a religious cult in which Iranians commemorated the martyrdom of Siyavush every year, a ritual which continued until the advent of Islam.

* * * *

Katayun:

Part I begins with a ceremony in which, according to Roman tradition, the Caesar has summoned the noble men to gather so that his daughter Katayun might choose her future husband. But Katayun has dreamed of a particular young man whom she does not see among the invited guests, but rather in the crowd of onlookers that has gathered. Katayun recognizes the unknown young man and announces him as her choice for marriage. The Caesar is outraged and orders the death of the couple. The minister interferes and reminds the Caesar of the unlawfulness of his demand, adding that their tradition gives Katayun the right to choose her husband. Having no other choice, the Caesar expels the couple from the palace while depriving Katayun from wealth. Katayun sells a piece of jewelry so that they can begin a modest life as husband and wife. Gushtasp keeps his origin a secret, but Katayun listening to his words uttered in sleep, figures out that he is a high ranking person. After many events the Caesar too realizes that Gushtasp is a noble man, and invites the couple back into his palace. Gushtasp helps the Caesar in his wars with other countries including his war against Iran. When the Shah of Iran realizes that his son is leading the Caesar's army, he himself offers the son his crown. Gushtasp becomes the king of Iran and

makes Katayun his queen.

Part II of Katayun's life continues in Iran as the Queen, bearing the king two sons, the older of whom becomes the Crown Prince. This younger prince is Esfandiyar, who passes the seven heroic tests and who is invulnerable except in his eyes. Esfandiyar comes of age and requests the crown from his father Gushtasp. Each time Esfandiyar repeats his request the king sends him on a difficult mission, finally demanding that Esfandiyar should bring Rustam in his custody with his feet and hands in chain. The king claims that only then Esfandiyar would have proven that he is worthy of the crown. Katayun sees through the old father's scheming plans and warns the young prince that he will not come back from that mission. Rejecting the mother's advice, Esfandiyar decides to fight with Rustam, thus forcing Rustam into a paradoxical situation. Rustam will have to choose between personal humiliation that Esfandiyar demands and offending the gods by shoot the good and divinely favored Esfandiyar in the eye, the only vulnerable spots in his body. Rustam is warned that if he makes the latter choice he will experience hardship in his remaining short life and will be damned when he dies. Rustam makes the latter choice. Katayun, who had forseen the consequences of her son's rash decisions now suffers

the loss of her son. She continues to live in a state of utmost sadness and misery as the story closes.

* * * *

NOTES

1. Notable examples are:

   Mahmood K. Moghaddam, "The Evolution of the Hero Concept in Iranian Epic and Dramatic Literature," diss., Florida State University, 1982.

   Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, "The Shahnameh of Firdawsi in France and England 1770-1860: A Study of the European Response to the Persian Epic of Kings," diss., Rutgers University, 1979.

   Marcia E. Maguire, "Rustam and Isfandiyar in the Shahnameh," diss., Princeton University, 1973.

2. "Women do not play in the Shahnameh any overactive part. They practically appear only as a subject of love.... Such personalities like Penelope, Andromache, Nausikaa, who in their pure womanhood are equal to men, cannot be found in the Persian epic." See, Theodor Nöldeke, The Iranian National Epic or the Shahnamah, trans. Leonid Th. Bogdanov, (1930; rpt. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Porcupine Press, Inc., 1979) 88-89.

3. Detailed dates about Ferdowsi's birth and death as well as other dates are problematic. For further information concerning these dates see Edward Browne, Literary History of Persia, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902-24) vol.2, 141. Also see Theodor Nöldeke, The Iranian National Epic or the Shahnameh, trans. Bogdanov, 39. See also Shapur Shahbazi, Ferdowsi: A Critical Biography, (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1991).

4. For further information about the development of Persian language see Edward Browne, Literary History of Persia, vol. I, 3-8. See also Cambridge History of Iran, vols 3 and 4.

5. See Calvert Watkins, "Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans," The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, (Boston/New York: American

Heritage Publishing Co.,Inc., 1969) 1496-1502. Also see p.XIX in the above dictionary.

6. For this and other information above see Ẓabī Allāh Ṣafā, حماسه سرائی در ایران از قدیم ترین عهد تاریخی تا قرن چهاردهم هجری/Epic Tradition In Iran: From the Earliest Period of the Iranian History to the 14th Century Hijri /A.D. 20th/ (Tehran: Piruz, 1333 H. /1954/).

7. A brief list of the scholars who have commented on this subject may include: M. Furūghī, Z. Ṣafā, Sh. Miskūb, M. Mīnuvī, F. M. Javānshīr.

8. The Moscow Edition was based on a comprehensive project by the USSR Academy in the 1950's to produce a reliable text of The Shahnameh. E.E. Bertels led a group of experts on the subject and after his death in 1957 ʿAbdulhusdyn Nūshīn continued the work. The nine volumes were printed between the years 1960-71.

9. Volume 1 was published in 1988 in New York, edited by Djalāl Khāliqī-Muṭlaq with an introduction by Ehsān Yārshāter. A brief history of manuscript studies on The Shahnameh during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is provided in the introduction by Yarshater.

10. Rizā Barāhinī, تاریخ مذکر، فرهنگ حاکم و فرهنگ محکوم /Masculine History: The Culture of the Oppressed and Oppressor/ (Tehran: Āzar, 1366). Particularly the first ten chapters of this book revolve around its author's assumption that the masculine, oppressive history of Iran reduced women to a subhuman status, a culture in which literary heroes, not unlike historical figures, are self-centered maniacs who use women only to protect "crowned cannibals". The Shahnameh, Barahini argues, reflects this "masculine history". See in particular pp. 17-35, 125-49.

Ahmad Shāmlū, "سفرهای در دار شکاف. برکلی دوازده ۱۹۹۰"/Berkeley Lecture of November 1990/ Sīmurgh 21(April 1991): 10-19.

ʿAlī Akbar Dihkhudā, امثال و حکم /Maxims/, vol. 2 (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1363 H.) 919. 4 vols.

11. Muhammad ʿAlī Furūghī, مقالات فروغی /Furughi's Papers, ed. Habīb Yaghmā'ī (Tehran: Chāp-ı Bahman, 1351 H.) 89.

12. All quotations from Homer's Iliad are from: Homer, The Iliad, trans. and introd. Richmond Latimore (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951).

13. For example, the folk tales of over forty nations are represented in F.H. Lee, Folk Tales of All Nations (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1946). In its selections on Persia (pp. 807-816) the story of Rudebeh and the story of Sohrab have been selected from The Shahnameh as the two most absorbing ones.

14. Dorothy Coit explains how stories from The Shahnameh were used at the children's school of acting and design in New York to produce plays, drawings, designs, and the retelling of stories. She mentions the play of Kai Khosru and drawings from "Zal and Rudabeh". For the retelling of major Shahnameh stories see Dorothy Coit, The Ivory Throne of Persia (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1929). The story of "Zal and Rudabeh" appears on pp. 47-59.

15. In James Atkinson, The Shahnameh of the Persian Poet Firdowsi (London and New York: Frederick Warner and Co., 1932 and 1986) 54:

> From head to foot her lovely form is fair
> As polished ivory like the spring, her cheek
> presents a radiant bloom, - in stature tall,
> And o'er her silvery brightness, richly flow,
> Dark musky ringlets clustering to her feet.
> She blushes like the rich pomegrante flower;
> Her eyes are soft and sweet as the narcissus,
> Her lashes from the raven's Jetty Plume
> Have stolen their blackness and her brows are bent
> Like archer's bow. Ask ye to see the moon?
> Look at her face, seek ye for musky fragrance?
> She is all sweetness. Her long fingers seem
> Pencils of silver, and so beautiful
> Her presence, that she breathes of Heaven and love.

16. There existed a tradition in Pre-Islamic Arab culture which allowed newly born baby girls to be buried alive, as to avoid the feeling of shame and contempt for raising a girl. Islam opposed this tradition and forbad the practice. Several verses in the Qur'an refer to this action:

When news is brought
To one of them, of (the birth
Of) a female (child), his face
Darkens, and he is filled
With inward grief!
16:58

With shame does he hide
Himself from his people,
Because of the bad news
He has had!
Shall he retain it
On (sufferance and) contempt,
Or bury it in the dust?
Ah! what an evil (choice)
They decide on?
16:59

When the female (infant)
Buried alive, is questioned
81:8

For what crime
She was killed;
81:9

Above verses are quoted from The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary 2 vols. trans. 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Masri, 1934).

17. Here and everywhere, except where otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

18. In fact some critics have been so carried away by their description of Rudabeh's beauty that they offer no analysis of a different nature about Rudabeh other than the element of beauty. See M. Dabīr Sīyāqī, "چهره زن در شاهنامه"/The Portray of Woman in the Shahnameh/, فردوسی زن و تراژدی/Ferdowsi, Woman, and Tragedy/, ed. Nāsir Harīrī, (Bābul: Kitāb Sarā, 1365) 51-52.

19. The notion that Rudabeh does not violate moral codes has been explained and defended by some critics in their major works:

M. Dabīr Sīyāqī, "چهره زن در شاهنامه"/The Portray of Woman in the Shahnameh/, فردوسی زن و تراژدی /Ferdowsi, Woman and Tragedy/, ed. Nāsir Harīrī (Bābul: Kitab Sara, 1365) 53-54.

M. A. Islāmī- Nudūshan, زندگی و مرگ پهلوانان/The

Life and Death of Heroes/ (Tehran: Yazdān, 1393) 124-25.

20. Many works of criticism offer ways of distinguishing between round and flat characters; the following is a short list:

E. M. Foster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: A Harvest Book, 1927) 67-73.

Robert Diyanni, Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and the Essay (New York: Random House, 1986) 30-36.

Joseph K. Davis, et al. Literature: Fiction, Poetry, Drama (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foreman and Company, 1977) 45-71.

William A. Heffernan, et al. Literature: Art and Artifact (San Diego: H. B. J., 1987) 51-81.

21. In his poem "Sohrab and Rustum" Matthew Arnold offers his reader a different version of the story. In this version Tahmineh hides Sohrab's identity from Rusutam and writes to him that his child is a girl. In the original story Rustam knows that his child is a boy, but cannot believe that he might have grown that fast. This error results in Rustam's stabbing Sohrab to death. Arnold's version takes some burden off Rustam's shoulder at the cost of Tahmineh's integrity and trustworthiness.

22. When forth Tahmineh came,--a damsel held
And amber taper, which the gloom dispelled,
And near his pillow stood; in beauty bright,
The monarch's daughter struck his wondering sight.
Clear as the moon, in glowing charms arrayed,
Her winning eyes the light of heaven displayed;
Her cypress form entrenched the gazer's view,
Her waving curls, the heart, resistless, drew,
Her eye-brows like the Archer's bended bow;
Her ringlets, snares; her cheek, the rose's glow,
Mixed with the lily,--from her ear-tips hung
Rings rich and glittering, star-like; and her tongue
And lips, all sugared sweetness--pearls the while
Sparkled within a mouth formed to beguile.
Her presence dimmed the stars, and breathing round
Fragrance and joy, she scarcely touched the ground,
So light her step, so graceful--every part

Perfect, and suited to her spotless heart. (Atkinson 349)

23. The Oxford Companion to English Literature, 3rd ed. offers this explanation for Ormazd (Ahura Mazda): "Ormazd or Ormuzd (Ahura Mazda) in the Avesta or Zoroastrian religion, /is/ the god of goodness and light, in perpetual conflict with Ahriman, the spirit of evil" (575).

24. Levy's translation of this couplet is the following: "In the name of the Lord of the soul and wisdom, than Whom thought can conceive nothing higher" (Levy 1). The translation might give the illusion that thought can conceive the Lord but nothing higher.

    Atkinson's translation does not employ equivalent terms, but reveals the spirit of the couplet more effectively: "Thee I invoke, the Lord of Life and light! / Beyond imagination pure and bright" (Atkinson, 339).

    Professor Ahmad 'Ali Rajā'ī Bukhārā'ī describes the couplet in his "متافیزیک پیش از کانت • دفتر اول پیش از کانت" /Metaphysics before Kant/, شاهنامه فردوسی حماسه جهانی: مجموعه سخنرانیهای جشن طوس /The Shahnameh of Ferdowsi: A World epic.../, (Mashhad: Surūsh, 2536 Shahanshahi) 26. Rajā'ī's interpretation is that "The Shahnameh begins with a unique description of God, attributing to God the best of God's creation, that is the soul and wisdom, not just mountains, seas, and clouds. And this is a description of God beyond which human thought has no power to soar."

25. We have explained this point extensively in the Conceptual Frames of Reference. Also see Josephine Donovan, "Toward a Women's Poetics," Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship, ed. Shari Benstock (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987) 98-109.

26. See Conceptual Frames of Reference, Donovan 106, Guerin 248-49, and Kaplan 53.

27. The next lie occurs after the episode where Kavus asks Siyavush for his explanation, and where Siyavush denies all charges. Sudabeh now carries her rudeness to such an extent that she accuses Siyavush for lying. While she lies about Siyavush's lying, she adds even more lies:

چنین گفت سودابه کین نیست راست که او از نهان جز تو را نخواست

همه هرچ شاه جهان بدو داد خواست آشکار و نهان

ز فرزند و ز تاج و ز خواسته ز دینار و ز گنج آراسته

مرا گفت با خواسته کار نیست بدختر مرا راه دیدار نیست

ترا بایدم زین میان گفت بس نگفتم که بایست بی تو کس

> That is not the truth, 'exclaimed Sudabeh.' Of all the women here he chose out none but me. I told him what the king of the world desired to give him; I explained the inwardness and outwardness of it all, telling him what I would add to it and the goodly things I would give to my daughter. He replied that he had no concern with wealth and no desire to see my daughter. He said that I alone was needful to him there and that without me no treasure and no person was of value to him. (Levy 87)

To make matters worse Sudabeh falsely announces that she is pregnant by the king, and that Siyavush's savage grabbing of her may have put the life of the baby in jeopardy.

بدستی عنان می مرا بر کشید بکند و خراشید • تنم روی من

کمی کرد [illegible] [illegible]

نکردم بدو نیز فرمان نکس جهان بس بمن تنگ و تاریک بود

> I did not obey his behest and he therefore tore my hair and my face was cut. Lord of the World, I have within my body a child of your seed and, because of my suffering, it was near to being killed. The whole world became straitened and dark to me. (Levy 87)

Apart from being a liar, Sudabeh is also portrayed as

a schemer . When later in the story Sudabeh suspects that her lies do not influence the Shah anymore, she schemes for deceiving new events. She finds a pregnant woman who is not happy with her pregnancy, takes her into her confidence, and asks her to abort her child while under an oath of secrecy. Sudabeh gives her some potion to miscarry the baby, an action which results in the miscarriage of a twin. "It was composed of two identical demon-conceived twins.... Sudabeh brought out a golden tray, and, not telling her attendant what was a foot, she placed upon it the devil-begotten pair. The mother she concealed and then laid herself down"(Levy 88). Obviously, she then cries out, calling the servants and others in the palace for help.

> There they saw two babies dead on the tray.... Kavus was aroused from his sleep by the clamour that issued from the hall.... Sudabeh poured forth tears from her eyes. 'Behold all in clear sunshine,' she exclaimed. 'I told you what wickedness he had performed, yet it was his word that you so rashly believed.' (Levy 88-89)

The Persian lines contain the paraphrase:

چو داست سودابه گفتت روا — جان سرد شد بردل شهریار

یکی چاره جست اندرآن کار زشت — ترکنه دختی ببوئی بلشت

رخ لود ازو سیرد دروں — پر از خامی بود کاں:ں

بر اں لود واندر شکم بچه داشت — همی از گزاں نیی کاشت

بپوشت تیره شد داروی خوردں — که نهاد رو بچه اهرمن

یکی طشت زرّیں بیاورید پیش — گفت آں سخی اپرتاروش

نهاد اندران بچّه اهرمن — خروشید و بگشاد برخامه تن

دو کودک بپیوند مرده بطشت — ازایوان گیواں همان برگذشت

همی گفت بگر چه کرد ازبدی — گرفتار او چیره ایمن نشدی

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28. For a concise description of these two heroic orientations see C. M. Bowra, Landmarks in Greek Literature (New York: Meridian Books, 1966) 35-36.

29. For a discussion on aristeia see Richmond Lattimore, Introduction, The Iliad, by Homer (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1951) 33-37.

30. See M. I. Finley's The World of Odysseus for the general concept that women's activities are useless attempts in the poems.

31. Lattimore has this to say about Hector's small gains: "Plainly, the reputation of Hektor continually surpasses his achievements. These are great. He is the heart and soul of the Trojan defence, and when he falls the Trojans feel their chances are gone. He kills many. But his only really great victim is Patroklos; and from Patroklos he runs, and must be rallied to fight him; and Apollo stuns and disarms Patroklos, and Euphorbos spears him in the back, befor Hektor runs up to dispatch a helpless man. and boast that he has beaten him. Much of what he does is by divine favour. Apollo picks him up when he is down, and Zeus is behind his charges. He runs in panic from Achilleus, until Athene, disguised as Deiphobos, brings him to stand and fight. He is beaten by Aias and repulsed by Diomedes. Agamemnon and Odysseus he does not meet, so that his only advantage against a major Achaian warrior is the tainted triumph over Patroklos. His moment of highest grandeur comes when he smashes in the gate: 'no man could have stopped him then', but Aias stands in his path to be shamed." See Richmond Latimore, Introduction, The Iliad, by Homer (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1954) 35-36.

32. All quotations from the Odyssey are from: Homer The Odyssey, ed. and trans. Albert Cook, A Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1974).

33. Sir Philip Sidney, "The Defense of Poesy," The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Gen. ed. M. H. Abrams, vol. 1., 5th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986) 504-26. 2 vols.

34. Matthew Arnold, Selected Prose, ed. and introd. P. J. Keating (New York: Penguin Books, 1970) 31.

35. Joseph Conrad, "Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'" The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Gen. ed. M. H. Abrams, vol. 2., 5th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986) 1810-13.

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