



Aesthetic Analysis of Moral Conflicts in Romantic Epics from Kant's Perspective (Case Study: Khosrow and Shirin, Helen and Paris)

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ABSTRACT

Romantic epics in world literature often serve as arenas for the representation of conflicts between love, duty, and morality. Beyond their narrative dimensions, these conflicts are also amenable to analysis from the perspective of moral philosophy. One of the most significant theoretical frameworks for examining such tensions is the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant, which emphasizes the primacy of practical reason and the principle of duty. The present study, employing a descriptive-analytical method with a comparative approach and relying on library-based research, draws upon Kant's theory of ethics and aesthetics to investigate moral conflicts in two prominent examples of romantic epics in world literature: the story of Khosrow and Shirin in Persian literature and the narrative of Paris and Helen in the Iliad. The central question is how the conflict between moral imperatives and the aesthetic allure of love can be explained in these two narratives. The findings indicate that in both narratives, love as an aesthetic and emotional force stands in opposition to moral and social obligations; however, the manner in which characters confront this conflict differs. In the epic of Khosrow and Shirin, the characters ultimately approach a kind of equilibrium between love and morality, whereas in the narrative of Paris and Helen, the predominance of personal desire over moral duty leads to tragic consequences. This difference reflects the cultural and moral distinctions between the two literary traditions, which can be elucidated from the perspective of comparative literature.

Introduction

Love, as one of the most fundamental concepts in lyric and epic literature, has always been the site of tension between two distinct realms: on the one hand, beauty, which evokes immediate and delightful pleasure; on the other, morality, which, through its imperatives, demands adherence to duty, responsibility, and commitment to individual and social laws. This duality poses a fundamental question for scholars of literature and philosophy: "Can love be both beautiful and moral, or is there always a kind of conflict and tension between the beauty of love and moral obligation?" This question constitutes the central core of the present study.

Despite previous research on love in Persian and Greek literature, no comparative study has yet conducted, drawing upon Kant's aesthetic and moral concepts, to examine and compare the two female

protagonists, Shirin and Helen. The necessity of this research lies in the fact that the opposition between the "pleasure of love" and "moral responsibility" is reflected in many romantic narratives, and its significance lies in leading to a deeper understanding of the differences between two cultural traditions (Islamic-Iranian and Greco-Classical) in their encounter with love and morality. The two narratives share commonalities in several respects: the placement of the female protagonist in a conflictual situation between pleasure and responsibility; the presence of a love accompanied by social challenge; and the entanglement of the fate of love with the collective destiny. However, the points of divergence manifest in the manner of confronting this conflict: Shirin, through adherence to chastity, organizes her love along a moral path; whereas Helen, by abandoning her husband and eloping with Paris, prioritizes love over moral

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responsibility, the consequence of which becomes a decade-long war. The aim of this study is to analyze the conflict between the "pleasure of love" and "moral responsibility" in the two narratives of "Khosrow and Shirin" and "Paris and Helen" by drawing upon key Kantian concepts (disinterestedness, categorical imperative, free/dependent beauty, autonomy, and the role of the "other"), and to answer the question of what relationship exists between the "beauty of love" and "moral obligation" in these two cultural traditions.

Literature Review

The conflict between love and duty is among the most fundamental narrative elements in classical literature. In this regard, numerous studies have been conducted, including comparisons of the status of women in literature. Abbasi and Ghobadi [1], in their article "A Comparison of the Status of Women in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh with Homer's Iliad and Odyssey," demonstrated that in the Shahnameh, women are active, wise, and destiny-shaping characters, whereas in the Iliad, women are often objects of pleasure and subjects of male rivalries. According to them, in the Shahnameh, women such as Rudabeh, Tahmineh, Farangis, Jarireh, Manijeh, Gordafarid, Katayoun, Gordieh, and Shirin both inspire love and command respect, possessing both outer beauty and inner beauty. In contrast, in the Iliad, women do not play active roles and only appear when desire or love is involved. In the domain of the characterization of women in Nizami's epic, Yaghmaei, Sadeghzadeh, and Heydarnia [2], in "The Reciprocal Relationship between Love and Morality in the Female Characters of Nizami's Khosrow and Shirin," concluded that the relationship between love and morality in Khosrow and Shirin is bidirectional. Nizami, by omitting and reducing the exclusively sensual and physical aspect of love, depicts a love that begins with lust and impurity and culminates in chastity, spiritual development, and marital love. They also enumerate Shirin's virtues as including "courage, chastity and piety, loyalty, patience in hardship, humility, modesty, receptiveness to counsel, respect for the wisdom of elders, foresight, theism, wisdom and sagacity, self-respect, counsel-giving, pursuit of knowledge, fairness and justice in governance, and appreciation and love of the arts." In the domain of the relationship between beauty and morality in Kant's thought, Salmani [3], in "The Relationship between Beauty and Morality in Kant's Aesthetics," clarified that beauty and morality can be indirectly related, and that engagement with beauty whether artistic or natural provides a tangible image of freedom, reason, intellectual concepts, and moral ideas, and this beautiful image makes man interested in and hopeful for attaining the supreme good (which is the goal of morality). Mahoozi [4], in the article "The Place of the 'Other' in Kant's

Aesthetic Theory," explicates the role of the "other" in validating aesthetic and moral judgments, demonstrating that a valid aesthetic feeling derives its validity from the participation of others in this feeling and consequently its confirmation by them, and that the beautiful and the judgment of taste constitute a socially negotiable truth. Despite these studies, no research has yet applied Kant's key concepts from the Critique of Judgment and the Critique of Practical Reason (disinterestedness, categorical imperative, free/dependent beauty, autonomy, and the role of the "other") to a comparative analysis of two romantic epics from two different cultural traditions (Persian and Greek). The present study employs these key concepts of Kant's aesthetics and ethics in a comparative analysis of two romantic epics from distinct cultural traditions, thereby providing a theoretical model for evaluating the "moral-aesthetic structure" of love narratives across different cultural traditions. Furthermore, this study demonstrates how abstract philosophical concepts (disinterestedness, categorical imperative, autonomy) can be applied to the analysis of concrete literary texts.

Research Methodology

The present study has been conducted using a descriptive-analytical method with a comparative approach. Data have been collected through library-based research and rely exclusively on the primary texts of the two epics (Nizami's Khosrow and Shirin and Homer's Iliad) and Kant's views as articulated in the Critique of Judgment, the Critique of Practical Reason, and the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. The analysis is carried out in four steps: (1) explication of Kant's key concepts in relation to the analysis of love; (2) analysis of the narrative of Khosrow and Shirin; (3) analysis of the narrative of "Paris and Helen" in the Iliad; and (4) comparative synthesis of the results and final inference. This study seeks to conduct a comparative analysis of two romantic narratives by employing Kant's aesthetic and moral concepts. It will offer a Kantian reading of these two narratives as a model for assessing the relationship between "freedom," "duty," and "beauty" in love stories, and will demonstrate how "freedom," "duty," and "beauty" acquire meaning and validity in relation to the "other."

Theoretical Foundations: Ethics and Aesthetics in Kant's Philosophy

In the Critique of Judgment, Kant identifies the first characteristic of the judgment of taste as "disinterestedness." In his analysis of the beautiful in terms of quality, he distinguishes among three types of pleasure: pleasure in the agreeable (which depends on physical inclinations), pleasure in the good or moral (which depends on the concept of an end), and pleasure in the beautiful (which is disinterested and independent of both). Kant states:

"The judgment of taste, accompanied by the consciousness of its separation from all interest, must lay claim to universal validity for everyone" [3]. In encountering beauty, man experiences a kind of harmony and free play between the faculties of imagination and understanding a feeling devoid of any determinate rational concept or material interest [4]. For this reason, Kant establishes a precise distinction between the agreeable, which belongs to the senses; the good, which is oriented toward the law of practical reason; and the beautiful, which constitutes the independent domain of taste. Yousefi and Shayganfar [5], in their interpretation of this concept, emphasize that in judgments of taste, no concept whether of the understanding or of reason can be involved. From Kant's perspective, aesthetic pleasure is neither for the satisfaction of physical inclinations (the agreeable) nor for achieving a moral end (the good); rather, it arises solely from the "free play of the faculties of imagination and understanding" [3]. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant presents three formulations of the categorical imperative. The first formulation (universal law): "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" [6]. The second formulation (humanity as an end): "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end and never merely as a means" [6]. The third formulation (autonomy): "Act in such a way that your will could regard itself as at the same time giving universal law through its maxim" [6]. On the other hand, in Kant's moral philosophy, the concept of the "categorical imperative" is of paramount importance, according to which human behavior is morally worthy only when it is performed solely from good will and out of duty [7]. According to Kantian ethics, man must always act according to a maxim that he can will to become a universal law [8]. In this philosophical system, human beings are always ends in themselves, and reducing individuals to a means for the satisfaction of inclinations or political interests is considered a complete departure from the moral domain [6]. This firm connection between individual autonomy and universal law ultimately introduces beauty as a symbol of morality [3]. In Kant's philosophy, ethics is grounded in the principle of the "categorical imperative" a principle stating that one should act in such a way that the maxim of one's action could become a universal law. Within this framework, the moral value of an action depends not on its consequences but on the intention and moral motivation of the agent [9]. Kant distinguishes between inclination and duty: from his perspective, an action performed solely on the basis of inclination or feeling, even if it has positive consequences, is not necessarily considered moral. In contrast, an action performed from duty

and respect for the moral law possesses moral worth [10]. In the domain of aesthetics as well, Kant refers to the role of the faculty of judgment and the experience of beauty. In his view, the experience of beauty is a combination of feeling and rational judgment and can establish a connection between the realms of nature and morality. From this perspective, literary works can serve as scenes for the representation of tensions between human emotions and moral principles [11]. In Kant's aesthetic theory, a valid aesthetic feeling derives its validity from the participation of others in this feeling and consequently its confirmation by them. This point also holds true for the analysis of morality: moral judgments, to be valid, must be capable of being universalized, and this necessitates "taking the other into consideration" [4].

The Place of Romantic Epics in Comparative Literature:

Comparative literature studies the relationships, similarities, and differences among literary works across different cultures, enabling a deeper understanding of the shared and distinctive characteristics of literary traditions [12]. Scholars believe that many literary themes such as love, heroism, and morality recur across various cultures, but the manner of their representation differs [13]. Romantic epics in various cultures often constitute a combination of mythical, historical, and emotional elements. In these works, characters find themselves in situations where they must choose between love and social or moral responsibilities. These situations often lead to the creation of narrative and moral tensions [14].

Analysis of Moral Conflicts in Romantic Epics:

One of the most fundamental narrative components in romantic epics is the formation of conflict between individual desire and moral and social obligations. This conflict, which in Kant's moral philosophy is explicated through the distinction between "action in accordance with inclination" and "action based on duty," provides a theoretical framework for understanding the dramatic structure of the works under study. From Kant's perspective, moral action is morally worthy only when it is performed on the basis of the principle of duty and the universal rational law, rather than on personal inclinations or emotional consequences [15]. This conceptual framework enables a comparative analysis of the two narratives of Khosrow and Shirin and Paris and Helen.

Moral and Aesthetic Analysis of the Story of Khosrow and Shirin:

Nizami's epic Khosrow and Shirin is among the most significant romantic works of Persian literature, depicting the relationship between love, power, and morality in a complex manner. The story

of the love between Khosrow Parviz and Shirin is not merely the narrative of a romantic relationship, but also reflects the moral and social values of its historical period [16]. Shirin is a non-Muslim Armenian character; Nizami, cognizant of the exigencies of Islamic culture and his understanding of his own society, knew that to present a romantic narrative, he needed to employ the device of the non-Muslim status of the characters. For this reason, he chooses the example of Shirin, which serves as an escape from her being a model for emulation [2]. In this story, the character of Khosrow initially acts largely under the influence of personal desire and wishes. He encounters various obstacles on the path to achieving his love for Shirin, and throughout the narrative undergoes a transformation of character. This transformation can be analyzed from the perspective of Kantian ethics as a movement from inclination toward responsibility and commitment [17]. On the other hand, the character of Shirin symbolizes a balance between love and morality. In many instances, she emphasizes her moral principles

and human dignity and resists Khosrow's immature behaviors. The moral role of Shirin's character in shaping the course of the story is highly significant. Shirin is not devoid of sensual temptations, and within her, a struggle between good and evil, love and lust, flows; however, the outward manifestation of this struggle is good and love [2]. From Kant's perspective, Shirin's steadfastness against the despotic demands of the king is a complete manifestation of preferring the good and acting on the basis of moral duty, elevating the subject from the level of a passive object to the status of an end in itself [11].

"To defame two well-named ones? / Better that we be ashamed of ourselves / By this shame, we fear God" [2].

The scene of Shirin bathing and Khosrow observing from afar symbolizes a love that, despite its intensity, possesses Kantian "disinterestedness"; Khosrow gazes upon Shirin, not for the sake of gratification, but for the attainment of legitimate union (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Miniature from Nizami's Khamseh. Sultan Mohammad, Tabriz, between 1539 and 1543. British Library. Source: (commons.wikimedia.org)

From the perspective of Kantian disinterestedness, Shirin's love for Khosrow, despite the intensity of feeling, is never mingled with an "interest" in exploitation or mere gratification. Kant, in describing "disinterestedness," states: "We must have no prejudice in favor of the existence of objects, but must be completely indifferent in this regard in order to play the role of judge in matters of taste" [3]. Kant distinguishes between "free beauty" and "dependent beauty." Kant maintains that dependent beauty, due to the consideration of a purpose in the process of judgment, can be connected with morality [3]. Shirin's love can be considered a form of "dependent beauty," for this love carries a moral purpose (chastity, fidelity,

humanity) and is harmonized with its aesthetic form. Engagement with beauty whether artistic or natural provides a tangible image of freedom, reason, intellectual concepts, and moral ideas, and this beautiful image makes man interested in and hopeful for attaining the supreme good (which is the goal of morality). Shirin's love precisely offers such an image of love: a love that is both beautiful and leads man toward moral perfection [3]. An examination of the emotional roles in this epic demonstrates that Nizami, employing emotional and psychological elements, has depicted the inner transformations of the characters in a gradual and believable manner. Within this framework, love at the beginning of the story appears largely as an emotional and individual

force, but later becomes intertwined with moral and social values [18]. Furthermore, structural analyses indicate that the interaction among the three main characters Khosrow, Shirin, and Farhad creates a space of emotional and moral competition that leads to the deepening of the themes of love and responsibility [17]. Khosrow's words signify power... and Farhad's response signifies familiarity with the special world of the heart and the lover, from which Khosrow is deprived [19]. Nizami, in describing Farhad's love, says:

"The first time he said to her: whence, are you? She said: from there where sorrow is bought and life is sold...

She said: from there where love-play is and a soul, that if a soul is sold to a hundred friends" [2].

This distinction demonstrates that in Nizami's epic, love is of the nature of "freedom" and "autonomy," whereas power is of the nature of "natural causality" and "heteronomy." From Kant's perspective, the love of Shirin and Farhad is of the "good will" kind a will that is "not good because of what it effects or accomplishes, or because of its fitness to attain some proposed end, but is good in itself" [3]. Farhad never attains union, but this "non-attainment" does not diminish the value of his action; on the contrary, it purifies his love from any "union-oriented" interest. In sum, the narrative of Khosrow and Shirin demonstrates that although love is a powerful force, it attains perfection only when accompanied by moral principles and social responsibility.

Analysis of the Story of Paris and Helen in the Iliad:

The story of Paris's attachment to Helen in Homer's epic Iliad is the point of departure for a colossal

catastrophe that transforms the moral and civic orders of the ancient world. By abducting Helen, the Queen of Sparta, and stealing the royal treasures, Paris violates the sacred law of hospitality a fundamental violation of universal moral principles [20]. From Kant's perspective, the pleasure that Helen pursues in accompanying Paris is not "free beauty" but the "agreeable"; for it is entirely bound up with personal interests and physical pleasure. Kant, in the Critique of Judgment, describes the pleasure of the agreeable as follows: "The pleasure in the agreeable is accompanied by an interest. The agreeable is pleasing not only to humans but even to unreasoning animals. Such pleasure has no claim to universality" [3]. This behavioral choice is a complete instance of the predominance of sensory inclinations and the absolute preference of the agreeable over the good in Kant's aesthetic balance. Paris and Helen prioritize their own partial and personal pleasure over the universal laws and rational imperatives of society [1]. Homer, through the voice of Helen, writes:

"O brother! This ill-fated woman who, by her own audacious deeds, has plunged you into misfortune, deserves only your hatred. Would that on the day my mother bore me, a raging whirlwind had carried us to a mountain peak or a turbulent sea, and that before I witnessed these outrages, a wave had engulfed me!... Alas! Zeus has willed that we should suffer a grievous fate" [21].

The Neoclassical painting by Jacques-Louis David depicts the "agreeable" love that is bound up with personal interest and hedonism, rather than respect for the moral law (Figure 2).

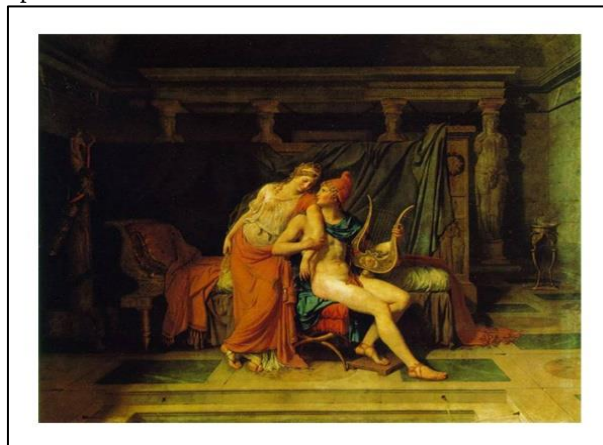


Figure 2. Paris and Helen by Jacques-Louis David, 1788. Louvre Museum, Paris. Source: (commons.wikimedia.org)

One of the fundamental differences between the worldview governing the Iliad and Kant's worldview is the role of "fate" and "divine will" in determining human destiny. In the Iliad, the Greek gods constantly intervene in human affairs and direct human will. In the Iliad, it is in fact the female goddesses who, both throughout the story and at its

end, assert themselves and sometimes achieve their desires; whereas mortal women all meet with ill-fated ends [1]. Helen, at the conclusion of her speech, places the blame on "Zeus and the grievous fate he has ordained" [21]. From Kant's perspective, such a justification is unjustifiable. "Autonomy" in Kant's philosophy means that the will gives law to

itself and does not receive law from outside. Kant terms a will that is subject to external laws (of nature, society, or gods) as "heteronomous" and considers it devoid of moral worth. Freedom manifests itself when we ask ourselves: what ought we to do? Such a question posed by any being indicates the power of choice, and this power cannot arise from the direct flow of natural causal relations as a stimulus might move us; for in that case the "I" is merely passive [11]. Engagement with natural beauty (as opposed to artistic) is always a sign of a person's goodness of soul. But in the Iliad, Helen's beauty is not of the nature of nature but of deception and seduction, and for this reason cannot be a sign of goodness of soul [3]. In the Iliad, except for a few instances where women are given the opportunity to appear (such as the mourning of Andromache and Hecuba over Hector's death), women are characters lacking distinction and independence, and are treated as commodities or war spoils [1]. "Helen," due to the role she played in great events, remains in memory and sees herself as a historical figure, but this historical awareness cannot free her from being entangled in moral conflict [20].

According to Kant's theory of the categorical imperative, Paris's behavior lacks moral value and universalizability, for breach of covenant and violation of another's sanctity can never become a universal human law [8]. Helen, in this context, although experiencing remorse and deep internal conflict, lacks the capacity to transcend natural necessities and achieve the freedom of the moral subject [20]. This moral collapse within the context of Homer's epic leads to the destruction of civilization and death, and confronts the audience not with harmonious beauty, but with the tragic and terrifying sublime arising from the awe of the boundlessness of fate [5]. From the perspective of comparative literary criticism, this unresolved conflict between individual desire and collective order forms the basis of the tragic structure of the narrative. In the Greek epic tradition, heroes are often caught in the rupture between individual will and the imperatives of fate or political order, and this rupture leads to disorder and destruction. In the story of Paris and Helen, not only is there no reconciliation between love and morality, but individual desire directly leads to war and collective ruin [12].

Comparative Analysis of the Two Narratives

Comparison of the two narratives demonstrates that both are constructed around the conflict between love and moral and social duty, but the trajectory and outcome of this conflict are markedly different. In Khosrow and Shirin, love gradually aligns with

moral and political responsibilities, leading the character toward a kind of maturity and balance. In contrast, in the narrative of Paris and Helen, personal desire, instead of converging with duty, violates it, escalating the conflict between the individual and the collective to the level of tragic crisis [16;21].

From a Kantian perspective, it can be said that in Nizami's epic, desire ultimately becomes integrated within the framework of the "categorical imperative" and universal moral law; that is, Khosrow's amorous action, in the end, serves values that are capable of universalizability and general acceptance, such as fidelity, justice, and the preservation of social order. But in Homer's epic, Paris's action is an instance of the failure to transcend the level of desire to the level of duty, and this is precisely what gives the narrative a tragic and crisis-laden structure [15;12]. A comparison of Helen and Shirin both princesses and lovers show that one abandons her husband and child for the sake of gratification with Paris, while the other, leaving her own royal family, supports her beloved husband to the point of death and provides the means for his deliverance [20]. Kant, in the Critique of Judgment, speaks of the "intellectual interest in the beautiful" and emphasizes that "immediate interest in the beauty of nature is always a sign of a good soul" [3]. In a Kantian reading of the two narratives, it can be said that the character of Shirin (and likewise Farhad) has been able to experience love in such a way that it is both "beautiful" (insofar as it is based on disinterestedness and the free play of the faculties) and "good" (insofar as it is accompanied by respect for the moral law) [3]. In contrast, Helen is trapped in an "incomplete aesthetic dialectic": on the one hand, she feels the attraction of love (as the agreeable), and on the other, she cannot free herself from moral imperatives; consequently, she falls into an unresolved contradiction. "The subject, in the moment of objectification, the process of appropriation and construction that is, the cognitive play possesses a kind of cognitive self-consciousness" [11]. Shirin and Farhad, in this "cognitive play," attain high degrees of self-consciousness and for this reason are able to maintain their moral agency [3]. A comparison of the two narratives shows that both stories are formed around love and moral conflicts; but the manner of resolving these conflicts differs. In Khosrow and Shirin, love is ultimately accompanied by a kind of moral maturity; whereas in the story of Paris and Helen, love becomes a factor in the emergence of tragedy and war. Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of the two narratives from the perspective of Kant's key concepts.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of the Two Narratives from the Perspective of Kant's Key Concepts

Criterion for Comparison	Khosrow and Shirin (Nizami)	Paris and Helen (Homer)
Type of love from Kant's perspective	Love of the type "dependent beauty" (carrying a moral purpose)	Love of the type "agreeable" (dependent on personal interests)
Attitude toward moral duty	Adherence to the "categorical imperative" (shame, chastity, fidelity)	Subject to "conditional rules" (pleasure, desire, fear of fate)
View of the human being	Human being as an end (dignity)	Human being as a means (instrument of pleasure)
Source of moral validity	"Transcendent other" (God, the beloved, collective conscience)	"Deceptive other" (Greek gods, fate)
Autonomy and freedom	Autonomous will based on internal law	Heteronomous will dependent on gods and fate
Role of woman in the story	Active, wise, destiny-shaping	Passive, instrument of pleasure, object of rivalry
Relationship between love and morality	Reciprocal and complementary relationship	Conflicting and unresolved relationship
Outcome of love	Chastity and spiritual perfection	War, destruction, and remorse
Language and narrative	Emotional and literary language	Epic and descriptive language
Disinterestedness in love	Love without exploitative interest; Farhad even without hope of union	Love with interest in hedonism and flight from duty
Attitude toward fate	Fate is answered by free action	Fate negates moral responsibility

Conclusion

The findings of this research demonstrate that Kant's aesthetic and moral concepts provide a powerful tool for analyzing moral conflicts in romantic epics. In the story of Khosrow and Shirin, Shirin has been able to live love in such a way that it is not only not in conflict with morality, but is situated on the path toward the supreme good. This is possible because of her love: Shirin desires Khosrow as an end in himself, not as a means. In contrast, Helen in the Iliad is trapped in love as the agreeable a pleasure bound up with personal interests and external purposes, and for this reason cannot be elevated to the beauty of freedom or autonomous morality. From Kant's perspective, Nizami's epic Khosrow and Shirin presents a model of dependent beauty in which the moral purpose (chastity, fidelity, humanity) is harmonized with the

aesthetic form of love. Homer's Iliad, on the other hand, depicts the drama of the conflict between natural inclination and moral law without a Kantian resolution. This finding demonstrates that a Kantian reading of romantic epics can provide a basis for evaluating the "moral-aesthetic structure" of love narratives across different cultural traditions, and can show us how freedom, duty, and beauty acquire meaning and validity in relation to the other. On this basis, through the re-reading and analysis of reference texts, the fundamental difference between the two works in the representation of moral conflicts from Kant's perspective becomes apparent. These comparative findings systematically organized in Table 2 to enable precise reference to the aesthetic and moral components.

Table 2. Comparative Analysis of Kantian Aesthetic and Moral Components in the Two Works

Analytical Component from Kant's Perspective	Khosrow and Shirin (Nizami)	Paris and Helen (Homer)
Approach to pleasure and the eternal object	Gradual transition from the agreeable to the good; pleasure conditioned by moral commitment [2]	Stagnation at the level of the agreeable; preference for immediate pleasure at the cost of violating major social covenants [1]
Moral agency of the female character	Shirin possesses full agency, self-founded wisdom, and steadfastness in the principles of duty [11]	Helen passively surrenders to sensory instincts and the will of mythological gods [20]
Formal and aesthetic manifestation of the work	The beautiful as a symbol of the moral; harmony of lyrical form with spiritual ascent [3]	Manifestation of the terrifying and tragic sublime arising from the destructive consequences of moral transgression [5]
Status of the human being as an end	Shirin regards her identity as an end in itself and does not become a tool of power [6]	Helen is reduced to an instrument for the satisfaction of Paris's instinctual desires and a spoil of war [1]

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Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed to data analysis, drafting, and revising of the paper and agreed to be responsible for all the aspects of this work.

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