

The Central Role of Majnun's Character Based on Greimas's Actantial Model

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Article Info(۲۵۵-۲۶۶)

ABSTRACT

Article type:

Research

Article

Article

history:

Received:

۲۵ April 2022

Accepted:

۱۷ August

۲۰۲۲

Keywords:

Narrative

Grimas

Khamasa of

Nizami

Majnun

Storytelling

Character

Each story consists of a strong link between the two elements of appearance and structure. In fact, the value of every story lies in its hidden beauty and the correct structure of a story can add to its beauty. Therefore, knowing the narrative structure and describing the characters of the story is one of the most important points in literary studies, and researchers also try to explain the relationship between the characters of the story through the use of semantics. One of the new methods of explaining the relationship between characters is the "Grimas' narrative theory" Based on the results of this study, which was carried out using a descriptive-analytical method and using library sources, it was determined that in the story of "Layla and Majnun", Majnun is one of the most prominent characters who has a narrative role, or in the words of Grimas, the narrator is recovered in this story, and sender/receiver/subject/target/helper/inhibitor are among the actions recovered in this story and sender/receiver/subject/target/helper and inhibitor are among the restored actions in this story. Based on the results of this study, which was carried out using a descriptive-analytical method and library sources, it was determined that in the story of "Layla and Majnun", the sender is love, the receivers are Layla and Majnun, the subject is Majnun, the goal is having a date, the helpers are Majnun's father and his relatives and Layla's father and Ibn Salam are the inhibitors. More than anyone and anything, Majnun has a prominent and active role. Majnun is in love, he is not afraid of his life and is so fascinated by his beloved that he goes to the desert and becomes the companion of the wilds. Majnun is the subject with a key role and his actions throughout the story show his active presence. In this study, an attempt has been made to briefly describe the relationship between Layla and Majnun as well as the character of Majnun.

Citation: Soleimanpour Mahvash (2022) The Central Role of Majnun's Character Based on Greimas's Actantial Model. Modern Literary Researches, 1(2) 255-266



Publisher: Association for the Promotion of Persian Language and Literature
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DOI: [20.1001.1.28211413.1401.1.2.9.8](https://doi.org/10.28211413.1401.1.2.9.8)

Introduction

Narrative structures in classical Persian literature represent complex semiotic networks wherein characters dynamically generate plot tension, thematic depth, and aesthetic meaning. Nezami Ganjavi's verse romance *Layli and Majnun* stands as a monumental masterpiece of lyrical narrative poetry (*adab-e ghenā'i*). While traditional scholarship has predominantly approached the romance through thematic, biographical, or mystic-allegorical lenses, analyzing its narrative grammar through modern structural semiotics provides fresh insights into how agency, desire, and narrative progression operate within the text.

Algirdas Julien Greimas expanded Vladimir Propp's morphological functions into a universal structural semiotic framework known as the **Actantial Model** (*Modèle Actantiel*). Greimas posits that narrative syntax is governed by six fundamental actants distributed across three binary axes:

۱. **Axis of Desire / Volition:** Subject (*Sujet*) ↔\leftrightharpoonleftrightarrow\rightleftharpoons Object (*Objet / Value-Object*)
۲. **Axis of Transmission / Communication:** Sender (*Destinateur*) ↔\leftrightharpoonleftrightarrow\rightleftharpoons Receiver (*Destinataire*)
۳. **Axis of Power / Auxiliary Support:** Helper (*Adjuvant*) ↔\leftrightharpoonleftrightarrow\rightleftharpoons Opponent (*Opposant*)

This study examines the narrative grammar of Nezami's *Layli and Majnun* by mapping its characters and abstract forces onto Greimas's actantial grid, focusing specifically on the central agency, psychological dynamics, and ontological transformations of Majnun.

Method

This study adopts a **qualitative descriptive-analytical method** grounded in structural semiotics and narrative syntax. Data were gathered through comprehensive library research and direct textual analysis of Nezami Ganjavi's *Layli and Majnun*.

The analytical procedure involves:

١. Deconstructing the core narrative into narrative programs and sequences (contractual, performance, and disjunctive phases).
٢. Classifying textual entities, human agents, social conventions, and abstract psychological impulses into Greimas's six actantial roles.
٣. Analyzing the functional mobility, dynamic evolution, and role shifts of the actants—specifically examining how the Subject's agency evolves as the nature of the Value-Object shifts from physical/earthly union (*'eshq-e majāzi*) to spiritual/transcendent realization (*'eshq-e haqiqi*).

Results

The semiotic configuration of *Layli and Majnun* reveals the following structural mapping and actantial dynamics:

١. **Sender (Destinateur):** Unlike narratives where the Sender is an external authority or monarch, the primary driving force is an internal, abstract, and sovereign entity: **Love ('Eshq)**. Operating as a domineering sovereign, Love initiates the quest during childhood in the maktab and relentlessly compels the Subject forward across all structural crises.
٢. **Receiver (Destinataire):** The ultimate beneficiaries are **Layli and Majnun**, with Majnun serving as the primary receptive vessel who absorbs, endures, and internalizes the existential states, trials, and ecstatic fruits of Love.
٣. **Subject (Sujet): Majnun (Qays)** functions as the primary, highly dynamic Subject. He actively drives the performance sequences—wandering the wilderness, befriending wild beasts, composing passionate poetry, and refusing social compromise. Although socio-cultural and tribal constraints force Layli into a physically passive role, she intermittently exercises parallel covert agency (writing letters, orchestrating secret rendezvous), thereby temporarily assuming the position of a co-Subject.
٤. **Object of Value (Objet):** Initially, the Object is earthly proximity and physical union (*vesāl*). As the narrative progresses through obstacles and separation, the Object undergoes an ontological transmutation, evolving into transcendent spiritual communion. Consequently, when worldly barriers fall, Majnun rejects physical

consummation, as his quest has transcended the physical dimension.

۵. **Helpers (Adjuvants):** Multiple auxiliary forces support the Subject throughout different narrative sequences, including Majnun's father (who proposes marriage), Nofal (who offers military intervention), the elderly messengers, and notably **Zayd**, the most faithful empathetic helper who facilitates communication between the lovers.
۶. **Opponents (Opposants):** The primary blocking forces stem from patriarchal tribal dogma and rigid societal conventions (*'asabiyyat-e qowmi*), personified concretely by **Layli's father** (who rejects the proposal due to societal scandal) and **Ibn Salam** (the rival suitor imposed through forced marriage).

Conclusion

Applying Greimas's Actantial Model to Nezami's *Layli and Majnun* demonstrates that the narrative's enduring aesthetic and dramatic power is rooted in a tightly organized structural syntax. Majnun is not merely a passive victim of destiny, but the central, dynamic **Subject-Actant** whose radical choices, absolute self-abnegation, and unwavering pursuit of the Value-Object propel the entire narrative machinery. Furthermore, the model effectively elucidates the poem's metaphysical transition: by transmuting the Value-Object from physical union into absolute spiritual love, the narrative elevates classical romance into a profound ontological and mystical quest.