

THE STORY OF LAYLI AND MAJNUN AND ITS NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Alireza Nabilu¹

¹Associate Professor & faculty member of the Department of Persian Literature, University of Qom

ABSTRACT

For the analysis in this article, I chose the story of Layli and Majnun. In this narration, all events occur around the three characters (Lover, beloved and their families), the lover loves the beloved but the girl's family refused to allow they married. The lover remained loyal to the beloved. Propositions of these stories include: proper noun (characters), verb (actions) and adjective (features and characteristics of persons).

Keywords: Narration, Layli and Majnun.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, the story of Layli and Majnun based on theory of Tzvetan Todorov who is one of the structuralistic narratologists has been analyzed. Todorov was born in 1939 and wrote different works about structuralistic narratology and reading the text. His most important work which studies structure of narration is the book "Decameron grammar" in which he has mentioned his desired narratological pattern. Todorov's theory has whole to part trend. He divides general aspect of narration text into three semantic, syntactical and verbal axes. Among them, he puts syntactic part in center of his narratological studies. In the next stage, he distinguishes between two fundamental units in narrative structure: proposition and sequence (Sojoodi, 2004). Proposition: is the smaller narrative unit which is similar to a three-part independent sentence. In other words, proposition is a basic narrative sentence and value of one sentence in grammar. Propositions are divided into constituent parts i.e. proper noun (characters), verb (actions) and adjective (features and characteristics of persons) (Todorov, 2006). Sequence: is the unit larger than proposition and usually includes one or more propositions. Any narration has at least one sequence (Toolan, 2007). Sequence is a general system of propositions which mention main plan of the narration. Todorov reduces each narration to a syntactic abstract for applying this view and performs analytical operations on the same abstract. In other words, he reduces each narration to propositions and units which have composed of at least one sentence and include the characters which are shown with proper noun and include adjective or verb (Tyson, 2008) which speaks about narrative features and actions. In this brief rule of narration, a proposition

comprises of a character and an action (which may include another element as object) or a feature. Character or proper noun is only an empty vitrine which should be filled with adjective (feature) or verb (action) (Schols, 2004). Characters are the noun, their characteristics are the adjective and their actions are verb. For this reason, he thinks that narration is reduced to a three-part sentence. According to him, adjectives express static condition and verbs express dynamic and variable condition. Propositions may act as adjective and refer to static condition of the affairs (being sovereign) or act dynamically as a verb and show violation of rule (Selden and Widdowson, 2005). He believes that propositions can be classified from another viewpoint: it means descriptive and criminal propositions. Adjectival propositions study characters and criminal propositions pay attention to rule and breaking law.

Summary of the Story of Layli and Majnun and the analyzing of its propositions based on Todorov's theory: The poem is based on the popular Arab legend of ill-starred lovers: Qays falls in love with Layla, but is prevented from marrying her by Layla's father. Layla's father forbids contact with Qays and Qays becomes obsessed and starts signing of his love for Layla in public. The obsession becomes so severe that he sees and evaluates everything in terms of Layla; hence his sobriquet "the possessed" (Majnun). Realizing that cannot obtain union even when other people intercede for him, he leaves society and roams naked in the desert among the beasts. However the image of Layla was so ingrained in him that he cannot eat or sleep. His only activity becomes composing poetry of longing for Layla. Meanwhile Layla is married against her will, but she guards her virginity by resisting the advances of her husband. Arranging a secret meeting with Majnun, they meet, but have no physical contact. Rather they recite poetry to each other from a distance. Layla's husband dies eventually which removes the legal obstacles to a licit union. However Majnun is so focused on the ideal picture of Layla in his mind that he had fled to the desert. Layla dies out of grief and is buried in her bridal dress. Hearing this news, Majnun rushes to her grave where he instantly dies. They are buried side by side and their grave becomes a site of pilgrimage.

Propositions of this story include:

Majnun is lover.

Layli is beloved.

Majnun loves Layli.

Conflict and resentment arise between their families.

The Layli's family prevents their Joiner.

They meet secretly.

Majnun is demented.

There are interface and Mediators between them.

Layli is forced to marry with someone else.

Their virginity is maintained.

Layli dies.

Majnun dies of her grief.

They can't marry.

Propositions of this narration are composed of three characters of **L** (Lover), **B** (Beloved) and **F** (Family). If we replace the special characters of the discussed narration with general cases, we will find their features better. In other words, different stories and narrations can be found by putting different propositions and persons in a single pattern, which follow a structural and grammatical rule. This is the common grammar of story on which Todorov and other structuralistic narratologists emphasize and believe that hidden and unknown relations or common structure of the narrations can be found in this way.

Common pattern of the above narration is as follows:

L is lover

B is beloved

L loves **B** → love (action - change)

Conflict and resentment arise between their families → Conflict and resentment (feature - situation)

The **B**'s family prevents their Joiner → preventing of joiner (action - Retribution)

They meet secretly → Secret meeting (action - infringement)

There are interface and Mediators between them → Mediation (Action - Change)

B is forced to marry with someone else → Forced Marriage (action - Retribution)

Their virginity is maintained → Keeping of virginity (feature - situation)

B dies → Die (Action - Change)

B is pretending to be dead → Pretending to death (Action - Change)

L dies of her grief → Die of grief (Action - Change)

They can't marry → Failure to marry (Action - Change)

As mentioned above, propositions are classified by Todorov into two descriptive and criminal classes. Descriptive propositions show balance of story and criminal propositions pay attention to the law and its breakage and study disruption of balance in story. Considering the above Table, propositions 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 12 are descriptive and propositions 4, 5, 8, 11 and 13 are criminal and this case is found almost in the narration discussed above.

The above narration can be analyzed in terms of narrative modes and modes of the propositions desired by Todorov: Most propositions are declarative and this mode is dominant on other modes and indicates certainty of narration. But other modes can be also found, subjunctive mode in these narrations focus on the family centrality law and absolute obedience to it, law of loyalty to family and private ownership and refusing to violate it and law of generosity and magnanimity.

2. CONCLUSION

This story has common main and sub propositions with titles of love, refusal, loyalty etc. In addition to propositions, actions of violation, change and punishment which are emphasized by Todorov are found in this story. The variable action dominates but main core of actions is loyalty of lover and beloved. The lover loves the beloved but the girl's family refused to allow they married. The lover remained loyal to the beloved. Propositions of the story include: proper noun (characters), verb (actions) and adjective (features and characteristics of persons). Modes of propositions are almost predicative and subjunctive mode prevails in story. Therefore, we see that the goal of the present research which was to show this narrative unity and agreement of Todorov with the above story has been fulfilled.

REFERENCES

- Schols, R., 2004. Structuralism in literature, an introduction, trans. Farzane Taheri, Tehran: Markaz.
- Selden, R. and P. Widdowson, 2005. A readers guide to contemporary literary theory. Tehran: Tarhe Now.
- Sojoodi, F., 2004. Applied semiotics. Tehran: Ghesse.
- Todorov, T., 2006. Theorie de la litterature, trans. Atefe Tahayi, Tehran: Akhtaran.
- Toolan, M., 2007. Narrative a critical linguistic introduction, trans. Fateme Alavi and Fateme Nemati, Tehran: Samt.
- Tyson, L., 2008. Cirthical theory a user..., Trans. Maziyare Hoseinzade and Fateme Hoseini, Tehran: Hekayate Ghalame Novin.

Views and opinions expressed in this article are the views and opinions of the author(s), Humanities and Social Sciences Letters shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability etc. caused in relation to/arising out of the use of the content.