

A Study of the Use of Metaphor and Simile in the Lyric Setting of Nezami's Leyli va Majnun and Khosrow va Shirin

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Abstract: The lyric-narrative poems of Khosrow va Shirin and Leyli va Majnun express the vicissitudes of a romantic relationship in two different cultures and the entanglements of love with court customs and primitive ways of livings. In the masterful hands of Nezami, we have a lasting depiction of scenes, characters, and various settings. These poetic elements are used in relation to different rhetorical and hermeneutic tools in a vastly imaginative story world. These techniques and tools would certainly affect the emotions and imaginations of the reader. The mystical and fantastic aspects of the stories give an aura of sacredness to them. To analyze and explain the poetic power of Nezami, the authors of the present essay believe that what gives an especial status to Nezami's language is the effective utilization rhetorical figures, i.e. metaphor and simile, in descriptions and intuitive depictions. These figures move the poems from being a monologic setting to a dialogic, multidimensional, and fantastic setting.

Keywords: Nezami, Story, Setting, Khosrow va Shirin, Leyli va Majnun, Image

INTRODUCTION

Lyric literature essentially refers to the expression of personal feelings and emotions. Khosrow va Shirin and Leyli va Majnun are among the most prominent dramatic lyrics in world literature. Both of these poems are about historically real romantic relationships. However, it should be noted that the real historical figures situated as they were in Persia and Arabia are quite different from the way in which they are represented by Nezami and other poets.

Nezami is the true founder of lyric and pastoral storytelling. "Although storytelling in Persian literature did not begin with Nezami, he is the only poet who at the end of the twelfth century could make allegorical Persian poetry the best of its kind" (Safa, 1989:807).

Khosrow va Shirin is a Persian story which reflects Persian culture. The theme of love runs throughout the book, as for example:

No other word I can utter but love / no other leisure I have but love
The heavens have no dome but love / the world's dust has no water but love
Turn a slave, for it is the thought, a slave of love / all men's pursuit is but love
The world all glamour, except for love / it is all a player's role except for love
Had you been the soul of the world but for love / wherefore live in the world but for love
Lost is the one who has lost love / if brave with life he is dead without love
If it has no spell to love / it frees you from your own love (Nezami, 2009:11).

Leyli va Majnun is primarily an Arabic story, reflecting Arabic culture. Nezami decided to write Khosrow va Shirin on his own accord, however, it was the king's direction to have him write Leyli va Majnun. Despite certain similarities between these two poems, there are many differences because of historical contexts in which the lovers lived. Khosrow va Shirin is a description of the beautiful nature and landscape while Leyli va Majnun represents the hot and dry deserts of Saudi Arabia, lacking in glamour and beauty. Nezami's familiarity with geographical, social, political, and economic context of his time gave him accurate information in depicting the setting, landscape, and characters of Khosrow va Shirin, including for example the bathing of Khosrow and Shirin in the spring. On the

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contrary, Nezami's information about Leyli and Majnun is conventional and limited to literary traditions, for example, the story of Majnun's wandering in around the Najd mountain and other lands. In other words, the poet himself had no firsthand experience of such a setting himself. That is why he sometimes makes a mistake by talking about flowers, nightingales, and green springs in such a land (see Ghasemi, 2013:7-16).

The aim of the present study is to present an in-depth analysis of the formal structure, rhetorical content, and figurative language of the two great books by Nezami, and highlight most specifically the use of figurative language in expressing emotional content.

The present study intends to foreground those tools and techniques which are implicitly used in the two poems, i.e. Khosrow va Shirin and Leyli va Majnun. Accordingly, we have focused on the use of figurative language in lyric settings. We want to highlight the fact that this great master has used rhetorical and figurative tropes to depict the romantic setting in the two poems.

Nezami is unique among his contemporaries in creating fresh images and meanings, detailed pictures, accurate representations, and beautiful and effective similes and metaphors. One of the alleged deficiencies in his writings mentions that the high frequency of figurative tropes has given a banal tone to his poems, and the creation of new images and forms has made it difficult to understand them. It can be generally argued that the beauty and freshness of Nezami's language prevails over the problems in his writing (Nirani, 2013:5).

What is setting?

Setting or creating poetic space has some affinities with the science of meteorology: cold weather, warm weather, damp weather, quiet weather, stormy weather, etc. However, it should be noted that these adjectives have different functions on a story, that is, they take on new metaphorical meanings and connotations. For example, a damp weather might refer to a sad or mysterious setting. Thus, weather or atmosphere is the dominant element in a story which affects the meaning of the story and is an indispensable part of it (Mirsadeqi, 1997:105).

The concept of setting refers to the dominant atmosphere and ambiance in a story. Tone is the reflection of the consciousness of the author about the topic, events, and narration. Setting is the shadow superimposed onto the mind of the reader through a combination of narrative elements. Such a shadow is coherent in its constitution and texture. In fact, the other narrative elements are used in a natural relation to this element.

Setting in a story is the counterpart of emotion in poetry. "Emotion means the sadness, epic, or fantastic feeling which the poet experiences because of the events, and which the poet asks from the readers and listener to sympathize with (Shafie, 1993:24).

Imaginative tropes

Pournamdarian defines imaginative or figurative tropes as, "different manifestations of imagination including simile, metaphor, metonymy, irony, and different types of these figures (Pournamdarian, 1996:23).

The imaginative tropes distinguish poetry and prose, and similar to the sound of poetry, extend the horizons of affective language and expression (see Hasanli, 2009:58). Shafie-Kadkani considers imagination as one aspect of expressive and metaphoric set of elements (Kadkani, 2004:16).

Imagination gives the language a fresh perspective and also is a source of true knowledge and understanding. This can only be expressed and perceived in the language of poetry. Imagination is one of the important elements of poetry which creates a metaphysical dimension taking the reader to the threshold of the sacred and the mysterious (Pournamdarian, 1995: 63).

Literature review

Linguistic expression and imaginative figures are among the most important literary topic and are worthy of many literary studies. One of the important research topics in Persian literature is an analysis of expressive techniques and imaginative figures in a diachronic perspective within the works of different authors. There have been many books about Nezami and his works. However, most of them have only focused on the life of Nezami and the thematic aspects of his works. Some of these books include: Nezami: The Storytelling Poet (Aliakbar Shahabi), An Interpretation of Haft-Peykar (Moeen), Nezami (Nafisi) which discusses the life and poems of Nezami, The Old from Ganje in Search for Nowhere (Zarinkub) which is an introduction to the life and works of Nezami.

However, with regard to the present topic there has not been an independent book or thesis. There have been some articles and theses which touch upon the topic in passing, some of which are mentioned in the following:

Jalali Yazdi (1995), M.A thesis, titled "The Expressive Techniques of Nezami in Khosrow va Shirin and Leyli va Majnun." According to the author, in most cases it is difficult to know the life of the poet from his works

because a poet may have hidden his character throughout the poems, thus, it is hard to know his ideas. In some cases, the poet may present a counter image of himself in his poems. This is true in the case of Nezami's poems. In some of his poems, he is shown as someone who is paid by a patron to write poems while in certain other lines the same patron is satirized and even ridiculed.

Rezaei Ardani (2008), in an article titled "A Comparative-Analytical Study of Nezami's *Khosrow va Shirin* and *Leyli va Majnun*" has compared the two poems and notes that given the significance of *Khosrow va Shirin* and *Leyli va Majnun* in the history of Persian literature and culture, the author has tried to examine the role of Nezami in the evolution of Persian storytelling, and then analyze the use of figurative terms in the general framework of the stories in a comparative approach.

Dodangeh (2010), M.A thesis titled "A Study of Dialogue in Nezami's *Khamseh* with an Emphasis on *Khosrow va Shirin* and *Leyli va Majnun*". The author has analyzed the use of dialogue in the two poems and notes that dialogue in general, and dialogue in lyric literature (Nezami's works) in specific require further studies. The method of this study was to move from the general to the specific (deductive). To examine the use of dialogue in Nezami's stories, we first have discussed the nature and types of dialogue itself, then have analyzed different kinds of dialogue in Persian literature, and finally investigated the use of dialogue in fiction and play writing books.

Rostami (2010), M.A thesis, titled "A Sociological Study of Nezami's *Khosrow va Shirin* and *Leyli va Majnun*." It is argued that each literary work, despite its genre and form, is created in an especial social context and therefore reflects the social structure and the literary work, known as the sociology of literature. This study is a sociology examination of the two poems by Nezami, namely, *Khosrow va Shirin* and *Leyli va Majnun* from *Panj Ganj* (Five Treasures). Accordingly, the theoretical basis for the sociology of literature and literary criticism is first discussed in details.

Mokhtari (2011), M.A thesis, titled "A Study of Nezami's Works based on Techniques of Visual Art (*Haft-Peykr*, *Khosrow va Shirin*, *Leyli va Majnun*)." The author has examined the works of Nezami and notes that there has always been a close connection between literature and other arts, influencing one another and borrowing elements from each other. In this view, we have analyzed the relationship of literature and art in terms of 1. Visualizing concepts, 2. Expressing meanings, and 3. Highlighting aesthetic elements in relation to poetry.

Iranzadeh and Atashipur (2011), in an article titled "The Narrative Plot of *Khosrow va Shirin* and *Leyli va Majnun* with an Emphasis on Eastern Poetics," notes that at the end of the twelfth century, Nezami Ganjavi wrote lyric stories in the most artistic way. A structural analysis can shed light on artistic coherence and linguistic innovations used by Nezami. An examination of the narrative elements can help us better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the work. The present article has examined the narrative plot of the two lyric poems, *Khosrow va Shirin* and *Leyli va Majnun*. Then the narrative pattern of the two poems has been drawn and a new model for Eastern poetics has been presented. This study shows that despite some similarities between the two poems and Western stories (pyramid narrative structure), they have episodic and symmetric structures which reflect Eastern poetics. These two poems follow the narrative plot of "selection-journey-return and narration." Moreover, more than having a narrative structure they have a semantic one.

Behpur (2013), M.A thesis titled "A Study of Characterization in Nezami's *Khosrow va Shirin* and *Leyli va Majnun*." The author notes that a story connotes a set of meanings. This is mostly done through the characters of a narrative. The characters of a narrative express themselves through relations with other characters and also by their actions and dialogues.

DISCUSSION

The stories written by Nezami reflect a sense of mystery and surprise and foreground the use of simile. It should be noted that whenever these similes are combined with a description of nature, the effect of mystery is much stronger. It is interesting to point out that Nezami has used personification and exaggeration together to create a beautiful lyric setting. Imagination enables the poet to make use of objects and things, and allows him to appropriate natural elements for poetic creation. Therefore, the poet would be able to make up for the shortcomings, attribute emotions and feelings to the objects, and try to depict objects beyond the limits of language. Accordingly, a certain sympathy and emotional attachment is created between the artist and the external world, that is, the image becomes the means by which the emotions and feelings of the poet are expressed (Futuhi, 2010: 68).

Imaginative tropes in expressing emotions

Nezami has used imaginative tropes for expressing emotions. In most examples, the metaphors and similes used by Nezami are multi-faceted and take a symbolic meaning. He has used the metaphors to express his personal ideas and emotions. "When we say something is a symbol it means evokes setting and an especial feeling and emotion" (Mirsadeqi, 2012: 286). Nezami is a master in this technique. He makes use of metaphors, which he turns into symbols, to evoke the intended emotions in the reader.

When we refer to the concept of symbol, it means a word which in addition to its first meaning connotes a secondary sense. When Nezami describes a flower, the flower is pictured in the mind of the reader, and connotes love, youth, and beauty in the mind of the reader. Thus, a red flower is both a red flower and also symbolizes youth, love, and beauty. For example, "A face like a new blossoming red flower / the detours of face like an odorous day" (Nezami, 2009: 302).

Metaphors are used frequently in *Khosrow va Shirin* and *Leyli va Majnun*. Metaphors play the most important role in the poetic aspect of a text. In other words, the use of metaphors is the main distinction between the language of prose and the language of poetry. Out of 5049 lines in *Khosrow va Shirin*, 1048 lines have used metaphors.

Metaphors play a significant role in creating a link between emotion and imagination. If we consider poetry as "the interconnection between emotion and imagination expressed in a rhythmic language" (Shafie-Kadkani, 2004: 94), it becomes clear that Nezami Ganjavi has been able to bring together emotions and imagination.

The most beautiful section of *Khosrow va Shirin* which is expressed through a lot of metaphors and similes is the bathing of Shirin in a stream. This section can be considered one of the most lyric writings in the history of Persian literature. In this section, Nezami has used certain descriptions based on the use of affective and natural metaphors and similes in the most effective lyric way which can hardly be found elsewhere (Shamisa, 2011: 139).

In the dawn when light rose / darkness sung only the word of despair
A thousand narcissus fell from the wheel of fortune / for a yellow flower to rise
So hurried Shirin in pouring water / and then took a sigh of sorrow thereof
As beautiful as the heavenly glass there was a meadow field / streams of wild life oozing from the corners
For the shame of shining streams / the water of life hath turned to darkness
Tired she was from the toils of travel / from her toe to tip the dust covered her
As she got nigh to the stream the shining light / the heavens themselves wept in sorrow in the far
Her golden body floated upon the water / as the skin of a squirrel moving fast
Strange it is for a stream to wash a flower clean / wrong I was in thinking a flower grows in a stream (Nezami, 2009: 132).

As the examples show most of the metaphors used by Nezami are based on natural metaphors, designed to express the personal emotions of the lovers. However, it is clear that the following example does not show the excitements and strong emotions of *Khosrow* and *Shirin* seen elsewhere throughout the poem:

With here the faithful companions / like the loyal troops of the king (Nezami, 2009: 211).

In the above line, companions (Persian: *dadegan*) are likened to faithful and loyal troops.

She lived in that dome of torture / like a pearl in the heart of an oyster (ibid: 233).

In the above line, *Leyli* is compared to a pearl which is prisoned in an oyster.

You sat me at your table of blessing / but you made me fly away like a fly (ibid: 222).

In the above line, the image of a fly is a compound metaphor referring to *Shirin*, and repeated several times in the poem.

She wore black in mourning / like someone oppressed for justice (ibid: 254).

In the above line, the beloved's wearing black is compared to someone who stands for justice but is oppressed by those in power.

He is like a mad lover intoxicated with love / prisoned in the cells of sorrow (ibid: 228).

In the above line, intoxication is compared to a nightingale who is in fact the lover.

The images of night and nature in the two stories

Fazeli writes about imagery: "an image refers to something used by a poet or layman to create different and infinite expressions for evoking various affective experiences (Fazeli, 1997: 143).

There is a long section in the poem, *Khosrow va Shirin* about the description of night. Such a verbosity is useful for creating an effective setting and evoking a sense of sorrow and sadness. Nezami is not content with creating conventional or clichéd images. He even does not want to create new images which lack coherence. He has used imaginative figures and personification for the sun, moon, and sky to express images associated with darkness and lasting of night which have intensified the sense of sadness by *Shirin* (Shahrami et al., 2013: 24).

The word "night" is a symbol of "darkness" in Persian language. If we explore in details the history of Persian literature we see that night is associated with ominous and fateful life. A night which is doomed to accept its fate without any complaint. A fate which is repeated eternally and except for an everlasting regret has no other result. Even if the night is described as beautiful, its beauty is futile. Such an understanding of night is especially prominent in contemporary poetry, i.e. Nima Yushij (Purnamdarian, 2012: 29).

However, Nezami's descriptions of night is different in *Khosrow va Shirin*. A happy and mirthful atmosphere of celebration and wine drinking overshadows the sense of darkness of night. We have no more the image of night as dark and cold. In examining his beautiful images, what we clearly see is that behind each image lies a deep personal experience, perception, and understanding. In other words, the metaphors are created based on a strong feeling and perception. A metaphor becomes concretized and moves beyond the word and evokes a deep and lasting meaning in the mind of the reader. A romantic and mirthful setting in Khosrow's court is combined with military descriptions so much so that the reader becomes fascinated with the beauty and magic of the words:

This night is happier than the night of the new year / is there any night that kills sorrow more than this night

A nightly celebration in the court of the king / companions beautiful and pleasant

The books of wisdom have been opened / mirthful and humorous words prepared

Delicious fruits and strong wine / the fires burning in the hearth

In the garden different flowers blossoming / tulips and violets shooting here and there

The winter has turned into a beautiful flower / the flowers of the spring have defeated the winter

The wine cup ready like the notes of a bird / the birds of morning beginning their songs

In envy of that the golden song of the bird / like a coronet or like a dragon fire (Nezami, 2009: 142).

In general, lyric poetry makes use of descriptions of nature. The poet describes the nature in order to present a mimetic image of the state of the lover, and "a metaphor is the best tool for expressing mimesis, and verisimilitude of nature (Futuhi, 2006: 56).

Nezami has described the beauties of nature in different places and settings. "A look at the history of the literature shows that the poets have always seen the world differently and presented it in various ways. In the Romantic era, nature was considered the source of art and inspiration, reflecting the emotions of the poet in objects. In another view, the world is considered a shadow of a world of ideals. Another group has rebelled against the nature and its rules. Each of these attitudes in each age manifest different affective perspectives which dominated the spirit of the people in that specific age.

In the classic literature, the mystic would find a safe haven from the hustle and bustle of the day in the solitude and silence of the night, which is reflected in the poetry and prose of the time. They tried to find themselves behind the skin of the night. Accordingly, night usually connoted a separation from material possession and freedom of the senses from the everyday. In *Leyli va Majnun* and *Khosrow and Shirin*, Nezami creates scenes where the lovers are represented as praying to God in the dark of night to help them overcome the obstacles, for example:

A shining night as clear as the day / a newly born dawn like the green fields

A thousand kinds of stars in the night sky / the heaven showed on one throne

Majnun staring at the beauties of the world / deceiving the wheels of the fortunes

To Venus he turned to first / and said: my fortune is in your hands

We are all imprisoned creatures / except you we have no God

Do not leave me forgotten for I am miserable / I have not seen the mercy of the world

Bestow the God's kindness / and turn the night into dawn

Turn my day into a day of faith / free my fortune from the excuses of the world (Nezami, 2009: 252).

In fact, the problems on the path of love for Shirin begin to be solved when the long and dark night ends. Shirin has stayed awake the whole night and prayed to God.

Nezami has used other aspects of the nature to describe Shirin. In fact, the beauties of nature are used as metaphors to describe the beauty of Shirin. In literary rhetoric, it is often assumed that one of the reasons for using metaphors is exaggeration (Shamisa, 2008: 46). In fact, a metaphor has three main functions in a literary text: pleasure, brevity, exaggeration. In most works on rhetoric, the pleasure created by a metaphor is because of the ground of comparison. This of course depends on the art of the poet. Nezami has used accurate metaphors and similes to express romantic emotions. Shamisa notes that the description of Shirin by Nezami is similar to the description of a goddess (Shamisa, 2011: 136).

Nezami, who was an imaginative poet in the history of Persian literature, has used emotionally effective metaphors in his poems. The tools and techniques used by Nezami are similar to those used by other poets. However, Nezami was able to find new meanings and images in these tools and create new metaphors according

to them. In other words, the vehicle and ground of metaphor have not changed much but the reason of comparison has changed and has taken a new imaginative turn (Zanjani, 1991: 73).

In the following lines, Nezami has given a status of goddess to Shirin with the use of exaggerated metaphors:

A mermaid of a girl like a fish / beauty hidden under the hat
A bright light for the night like a young moon / the black eyes like the water of life
Tall as the golden palm / two slaves picking the dates
The memory of that love makes the lips / desire the sweetness of the dates
Teeth like the pearls shining in the light / the mouth like the oyster bright in the far
Two lips like the shining jewel / two strips of hair weaved together
The braided hair seducing the heart / those lining the green fields and flowers
The morning wind wearing new dress for her face / sometimes a cold rag sometimes a strong fort
Sent for each coyness a new cure / like apples and cranberries beautiful are they (Nezami, 2009: 136).

As seen, most of the metaphors used by Nezami are based on natural imagery. According to Shamisa, one of the motifs of lyric literature is the description of nature, which is always seen together with the main theme of lyric poetry (Shamisa, 2011: 139).

Accordingly, it is seen that the use of imaginative and illusive metaphors is limited in the poetry of Nezami. This is because of Nezami's emphasis on the nature, and the high frequency of affective metaphors.

Setting and ambiance are usually used for stories which are mainly based on description, especially a kind of description to evoke a specific feeling and emotion. Setting and color can be considered metaphors to express emotions and sense of the story while the other elements like plot, scene, character, style, symbol, and rhythm are the narrative aspect of the story. In this view, setting and color may be the result of the other elements of the story rather than independent elements. Thus, description and especially description of a scene can hardly be considered a basic element in the setting and color of a story (Mirsadeqi, 2012: 655).

Now, if we leave the celebratory and mirthful setting of Khosrow's court and enter the desert of Majnun's madness, we can see that Nezami Ganjavi has used dry and dark descriptions to evoke a sad sensation in the sorrowful story of Leyli and Majnun. The images used by Nezami are sometimes images which are hard to classify in any known imaginative tropes. Despite this, they remain images and are very effective in the setting. These images, in fact, are ways of indirect expression, especially with regard to Majnun's love, or in the case of images like weeping troop, monks (with black robes), a sea with wild waves, which all represent the sadness and sorrow of Majnun.

The sultan of the throne awake in the morning / the troops weeping all
The runaway of romance / the prisoner of love
The law of the singers in Baghdad / and the trade of the shouting salesmen
The drummer drumming on the iron drum / the monks of the church of regret
The hidden magic of the div is revealed / the rejected angel is mad with love
The King Khosrow leaving the throne / mad in love with no clothes
The ten troops of Muran / riding their horses
The heartbroken Majnun / like a sea never calm (Nezami, 2009: 209).

In the above line, Majnun is compared to a stormy sea which does not calm ever; this is a compound metaphor. Such metaphors can be seen in other lines too:

Leyli was combing her hair / Majnun was counting the drops of weeping (ibid: 224).
Living in that dark torture / like a jewel imprisoned in the heart of the stone (ibid: 233)

The moon and romantic poetic settings

In the history of Persian literature, the moon always represents the beloved. The settings under the moon create a romantic space in the story so much so that such settings has been the theme of many poems. Taslimi notes that, "had there been no moon the Iranian romanticism would have not existed" (Taslimi, 2004: 22). As seen, Nezami has used romantic images in the following poems:

Her eyes were like two stars around the moon / brighter than two moons in the dawn (ibid: 101).

In the above line, the two eyes are compared to two stars around the moon. The second part completes the first part.

The moon and the sun rising / rising from the corner like an eagle (Nezami, 105).

In the above line, the poet has compared the murderer of Khosrow to an eagle who comes from the corner. The moon and the sun in the second part refer to Khosrow and Shirin, which makes a compound image.

The following line shows the convention of comparing the beloved to the moon:

They answered that what kind of path is this / Leyli is like the image of the moon (ibid: 209).

CONCLUSION

These two romantic poems represent two different cultures and ideas. Khosrow va Shirin reflect the Iran before the rise of Islam with different images of the Sassanid customs and behaviors while Leyli va Majnun show the tribal forms of the primitive Arabs living in hot and dry lands. The end of both stories is sad. The theme of one is choice while the theme of the other is predetermination and fate.

The examination of metaphors in these two works show that Nezami has used many rhetorical metaphors in the. It can be said that in both of these works the use of metaphors has given a romantic setting to the story and has reflected the conflicts of love and the beauties of the experience.

In terms of the frequency, Nezami has used more metaphors in Khosrow va Shirin than in Leyli va Majnun. The results of the study show that Nezami has tried to make Khosrow va Shirin as beautiful and effective as possible. Thus, he has used more metaphors to evoke a more effective description in the reader's mind. Moreover, Nezami's metaphors are based on natural images than illusory ones. It is no exaggeration to consider Nezami the harbinger of the use of metaphors. He has used this figurative trope to express his intended meanings in the most effective possible way. Depicting multidimensional spaces and mysterious setting has made Nezami a great poem.

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