


The Interaction of Pre-text and Text in the Manuscript of Layli and Majnun Maktabi (1232 AH) Preserved in the Razavi Collection, Based on Genetic Criticism

ISSN (P): 2980-7956

ISSN (E): 2821-2452

 10.22034/jivsa.2025.511819.1114

Mostafa Lal Shateri^{1*} , Hoda Loloie² 

Correspondin Author: Mostafa Lal Shateri

^{1*} Assistant Professor, Department of Archeology and History, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Neyshabur, Neyshabur, Iran.

² M.A in Graphic Design, Department, of Arts, Ferdows Institute of Higher Education, Mashhad, Iran.

Email: mostafa.lalshateri@neyshabur.ac.ir

Citation: Lal Shateri, M. & Loloie, H. (2025), "The Interaction of Pre-text and Text in the Manuscript of Layli and Majnun Maktabi (1232 AH) Preserved in the Razavi Collection, Based on Genetic Criticism", *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies of Visual Arts*, 2025, 3 (6), P. 237-240.

Received: 11 March 2025

Revised: 15 May 2025

Accepted: 10 July 2025

Published: 12 July 2025

Abstract

Among the illustrated manuscripts preserved in the Razavi Collection, the manuscript of Layli and Majnun by Maktabi, dated 1232 AH (Registration No. 4926), contains romantic-themed poetry and includes 10 narrative illustrations. In this context, developmental criticism in the analysis of illustrations, with a focus on the creative process, enables a deeper understanding of the pathway of idea formation, the artist's decision-making, and the influence of external factors. This approach, rather than providing a final judgment, emphasizes uncovering the pivotal moments of creativity and the rationale behind changes throughout the illustration production process. The present study, relying on a descriptive-analytical method, aims to answer the following question: Based on genetic criticism of this manuscript, to what extent do the images, as text, converge or diverge with the poems, as pre-text, and how has the interaction between pre-text and text manifested itself? According to the findings, the anonymous illustrator of this manuscript was well-versed in the visual principles of their era and utilized all the characteristics and nuances of the period in their illustrations. On the other hand, the text generally maintains a complementary relationship with the pre-text. In instances where the pre-text lacked detailed explanations—such as in depictions of clothing and environmental settings—the artist adopted an additive approach based on prevailing norms and personal beliefs, introducing elements into the text. This process resulted in a predominant trend of convergence, with occasional instances of divergence.

Keywords: Qajar period. Manuscript. Layli and Majnun Maktabi. Genetic criticism. Text and pre-text. Convergence and divergence

1. Introduction

Visual arts and literature each encompass a distinct world of emotions, thoughts, and symbols. Their interconnection, however, can profoundly influence the interpretation and reception of both literary texts and works of art. Illustrated literary manuscripts, where text and image coexist in a complementary manner, provide one of the most fascinating examples of this relationship. Owing to their cultural and historical significance, such works form a fertile ground for scholarly analysis, enabling a deeper understanding of both the literary and artistic worlds of their time. The illustrated manuscript of Layli and Majnun, produced in 1232 AH (1817–1818 CE) and currently preserved in the Central Library of Astan Quds Razavi, exemplifies these qualities. Its numerous and detailed illustrations make it a valuable source for analyzing the interaction between text and pre-text through the lens of genetic criticism. As a recognized approach in literary and artistic studies, genetic criticism offers an effective tool for examining how poetry (pre-text) shapes illustrations (text). The illustrator's interpretive choices, informed by the story's content, significantly affect the structure and meaning of the images. Omissions and additions within illustrations often reflect societal norms or, at times, the artist's personal aesthetic preferences. This study therefore investigates the interplay of text and image in the manuscript, showing how literary and visual components together provide a renewed analysis of central themes such as love, separation, and longing, thereby enriching our understanding of literary and artistic traditions.

2. Research Review

Over recent decades, illustrated manuscripts have attracted considerable scholarly attention, generating a wide range of articles and theses. Within this corpus, the story of Layli and Majnun has been the subject of particular focus. A review of prior scholarship indicates that most studies have concentrated on visual representations of Layli and Majnun within Nezami's narrative tradition, emphasizing iconographic and stylistic features. However, the Layli and Majnun of Maktabi, especially in terms of its stylistic and iconographic dimensions, has remained largely underexplored.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical method with a quantitative orientation, grounded in the principles of genetic criticism. It examines all illustrations in the 1232 AH Layli and Majnun manuscript in the Maktabi tradition, with the aim of reconstructing the creative process.

First, the poetic pre-text is compared with the final text to identify changes in imagery. Next, the broader historical, cultural, and artistic contexts of the Qajar period are analyzed as external factors influencing the text's evolution. This interdisciplinary approach, drawing on literary analysis, semiotics, and the sociology of art, provides a nuanced understanding of the dynamic interaction between pre-text and text. Ultimately, the methodology uncovers layers of creativity and cultural influence that extend beyond the finished manuscript.

4. Research Findings

Genetic criticism is one of the criticisms that emerged in the intellectual and artistic space of the second half of the 20th century. This period is known as the period of structuralism and its transition, and genetic criticism is in a way opposed to some of the principles of structuralism. Genetic criticism, as the process of the birth and birth of a work, can be likened to the embryology of the work. In fact, studying the work at the moment of its birth is the same as studying genetic criticism.

In this type of criticism, the critic tries to collect various types of texts that are somehow related to the final text and the creation of the work and examine them for study. By examining and studying the different stages of the creation of the work, Genetic criticism addresses important issues and analyzes how a work is created and created. This criticism also pays attention to the role of the pretext and the influence of the artist's imagination and mentality and the norms of society in this process. In other words, the creation of a work of art is by no means a single, simple process, but a series of different stages accompanied by changes and revisions.

Genetic criticism sees its main function in penetrating the unknown and unwritten realms of works of art. In this way, it helps critics to study the works directly. Before the formation of genetic criticism, issues related to the pretext were often considered as secondary topics for research. In other words, the pretext was always considered a minor aspect in the analysis of works of art, but genetic criticism chose precisely these issues for investigation and examination and made the pretext the main focus of its studies. For this reason, the scope of study of genetic criticism is wider than that of other criticisms. This criticism, on the one hand, studies the mechanisms of the artist's thinking during the creative process, and on the other hand, pays special attention to the process of creating the work and its complexities.

Genetic criticism mainly deals with the inner secrets of the text and, consequently, with the creator of the text. In other words, this type of criticism pays special attention to the area

before the emergence of the text and examines the flows and processes that lead to the creation of the work or text. In this way, genetic criticism removes the veils of the artist's mental and intellectual secrets one by one through the various developments and changes of the work and analyzes them.

In genetic criticism, one of the basic goals is to answer the question of how a work of art is created and what the process of its formation and creation is like. This process is generally divided into two stages: first, the pre-text, which includes from the beginning to the final text. Second, the final text, which is the result of the process of creating the work. In genetic criticism, the most important and main part of the study is the pretext. Most of the time, the pretext is similar in type to the final text, as it is in the early stages of its development.

The final text is created in the process of developing the pretext. Just as the final text has different aspects and parts, each of these parts may also have its own pretexts.

Pretexts may have different types according to the different stages they are in, such as distance and proximity to the final text, including initial pretext, basic pretext, and final pretext. Also, pretexts have different types according to different branches of art. In general, the pretext is the most important element for introducing the stages of development of a work of art. Pretexts help to better and more accurately understand the final text and provide valuable information to critics.

Other functions of the pretext include understanding the process of producing the work, discovering the artist's mentality, and using it to teach or examine the originality and characteristics of the work.

Finally, the pretext provides critics with useful information that helps them understand the final text more deeply and completely.

In this study, based on the capacity and importance of this type of criticism, the influence of the pretext on the text (the poems of each part of the story on the set of illustrations in the Leyli and Majnun Maktabi edition of 1232 AH) has been examined.

4. Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between text and pre-text in the 1232 AH manuscript of Layli and Majnun by Maktabi Shirazi, using genetic criticism as its framework. The findings underscore the complex and multilayered interaction between the two. The anonymous illustrator adhered to the dominant artistic conventions of the Qajar period but often diverged from the pre-text in critical ways. While the central theme of the story—spiritual love and the lover's passionate madness—is evident, the psychological and physical states of the characters are portrayed in limited and sometimes exaggerated forms. Majnun's madness and desert lamentation, for instance, are depicted in ways that prioritize aesthetic impact over textual fidelity.

Similarly, architectural and natural settings are rendered decoratively, reflecting artistic conventions rather than precise textual descriptions. Despite these divergences, the manuscript displays relative harmony in color selection and design. Bright and vivid hues such as lapis lazuli blue, red, and gold dominate the illustrations, reinforcing stylistic unity and generating strong emotional effects.

These choices also mirror cultural and social norms of Qajar society, as the illustrations reveal values and beliefs that subtly diverge from the spiritual emphasis of the poetic pre-text. The genetic criticism approach highlights that the illustrations result from both the influence of the pre-text and the illustrator's personal interpretations.

Modifications, omissions, and additions reflect not only imaginative choices but also technical constraints. The illustrations thus function as both visual interpretations of the pre-text and cultural artifacts shaped by societal expectations. Ultimately, the manuscript demonstrates how literary works and illustrations interact to create new meanings. While the poetic narrative emphasizes mystical love, separation, and longing, the

illustrations reinterpret these concepts through decorative aesthetics and social symbolism, thereby offering fresh insights into the cultural and artistic dynamics of the Qajar period.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed equally to the conceptualization and writing of this article. All authors approve the final version of the manuscript and agree on all aspects of the work.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully acknowledge all individuals who provided academic consultation for this study.