

*М.А. Иброхимова (Худжанд, Республика Таджикистан)*

### **Анализ научных интерпретаций любви и безумия Меджнуна в «Лейли и Меджнун» Низами Гянджеви**

*Аннотация:* Статья посвящена анализу научных интерпретаций любви и безумия Меджнуна в «Лейли и Меджнун» Низами Гянджеви в западной и восточной литературной критике. Целью исследования является выявление областей расхождения и сближения в этих интерпретациях. Примененный в исследовании сравнительный методологический подход, объединяющий различные точки зрения, способствует более тонкому пониманию непреходящего значения поэмы. В исследовании используется научный анализ критических работ.

*Ключевые слова:* поэма «Лейли и Меджнун» Низами Гянджеви, западное и восточное литературоведение, особый стиль Низами, персидские культурные ценности, сравнительный методологический подход

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*М.А. Ibrohimova (Khujand, Republic of Tajikistan)*

### **The Analysis of Scholarly Interpretations of Majnun's Love and Madness in "Leyli and Majnun" by Nizami Ganjavi**

*Abstract:* The article dwells on the analysis of scholarly interpretations of Majnun's love and madness in "Leyli and Majnun" by Nizami Ganjavi in Western and Oriental literary criticism. The aim of the research is to identify areas of divergence and convergence in these interpretations, highlighting the advantages of a comparative methodological approach that integrates diverse perspectives to achieve a more nuanced understanding of the poem's enduring significance. The study utilizes scholarly analysis of critical works.

*Key words:* poem of "Leyli and Majnun" by Nizami Ganjavi, Western and Oriental literary criticism, Nizami's distinctive style, Persian cultural values, comparative methodological approach

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The transcultural dissemination of folklore and literary motifs from Indian, Persian, and Arabic traditions across geographical boundaries is a well-documented phenomenon. Narratives originating in these regions were transmitted via mercantile networks, itinerant performers, and pilgrimage routes, undergoing significant transformations and

accretions in the process. Notably, medieval European reception of these “Oriental” narratives was characterized by a paucity of accurate information and a corresponding prevalence of fantastical elements. The original cultural contexts of these works were often obscured as the narratives were adapted and recontextualized with new details, effectively Europeanizing them for Western audiences. Nizami Ganjavi’s oeuvre is distinguished by its multifaceted nature, encompassing literary, philosophical, and scientific dimensions that continue to yield new insights. The enduring significance and uniqueness of Nizami’s work is primarily attributable to the synergistic integration of his profound philosophical thought, his innate poetic talent, his exceptional intellectual capacity, and his remarkably accessible linguistic style.

Nizami’s poetry is characterized by a notable degree of emotional and intellectual restraint, coupled with an unparalleled originality. A key feature of Nizami’s poetic style is his consistent avoidance of subjective biases and emotional excess in his descriptive passages, maintaining instead a rational perspective, composure, and tolerance [Ochilova 2023].

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The oeuvre of Nizami Ganjavi has been the subject of extensive and detailed scholarly research across various eras and countries. His unique personality, life, creative work, poetry, and philosophical worldview consistently attract the attention of numerous scholars, who uncover new facets of his personal portrait and the poetic palette he created in a unique form. It is appropriate to cite A. Tamimdari’s assessment of Nizami’s work: “...he dedicated the main part of his creative work to the creation of masnavi poems, and he was so successful in this that few Persian poets could boast of such an enthusiastic reception from the reading public. He is, first and foremost, a storyteller who used the language of verse to create magnificent rhymed narratives. His language is highly figurative and illustrative, perfectly conveying the full flight of the poet’s imagination” [Tamimdari 2007].

Nizami Ganjavi’s five epic poems, collected in a volume entitled “Khamsa” (“Quintet”), a title that became a common noun in literature in subsequent centuries, achieved the status of a unique phenomenon in Persian-Tajik literature. The poetic beauty and appeal of “Khamsa” were so immense that it influenced many poets who composed nazirehs (response poems) and imitations of Nizami Ganjavi’s poems, starting as early as the thirteenth century. According to researchers, the first followers of Nizami created complete nazirehs to his poems. These include the Uzbek poet Navoi, the Indian poet Amir Khusrau Dehlavi, and the Herati lyricist Abdurrahman Jami. Subsequent poets followed his traditions partially or reworked the plot of one of the poems [Sofronova, Vladimirova 2016; Ochilova, 2011].

According to V.M. Zhirmunsky, “Such love stories as ‘Leyli and Majnun’, ‘Khosrow and Shirin’ (later ‘Farhad and Shirin’), ‘Yusuf and Zuleikha’ were known from the 12<sup>th</sup> century up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (i. e., until the beginning of literary ‘Europeanization’, which replaced the centuries-old feudal tradition). At the same time, poetic models in the ‘Farsi’ language played the same role in the East as French chivalric romances did in the West. Numerous Persian and Tajik adaptations were followed by creative translations into the languages of the Turkic peoples (Alisher Navoi in Central Asia, Fuzuli in Azerbaijan, and many others): a circumstance that once again testifies to the historical-typological regularity of this phenomenon for the literature of feudal society” [Zhirmunsky 1971].

### 3. MAIN RESULTS

The main results of the corpus of our study presents the findings of the comparative analysis, organized thematically. The following subsections provide detailed examples of scholarly interpretations, though a comprehensive treatment would necessitate a more extensive analysis.

#### 3.1. THE NATURE OF MAJNUN'S LOVE AND MADNESS: DIVERGENT AND CONVERGENT INTERPRETATIONS

The analysis of scholarly interpretations of Majnun's love and madness in "Leyli and Majnun" by Nizami Ganjavi reveals a persistent, though not absolute, divergence between Orientalist and Western perspectives. This divergence reflects differing cultural and intellectual frameworks, although areas of convergence are also discernible.

##### *3.1.1. Orientalist Interpretations: Emphasis on Sufi Allegory and Spiritual Transformation*

Contemporary Orientalist scholarship continues to emphasize the Sufi allegorical dimensions of Majnun's love and madness, interpreting his experiences within the framework of Sufi mystical concepts and practices.

– Safavi (2016): Argues that Majnun's love for Leyli is a "manifestation of Divine Love" (p. 85), and his madness represents the state of "fana" (annihilation of the ego) in the pursuit of union with the Divine. Safavi connects Majnun's actions (e. g., wilderness wandering, rejection of material possessions) to the practices of Sufi mystics.

– Taheri (2018): Interprets Majnun's madness as a form of "spiritual intoxication" (p. 122), an ecstatic state of love that transcends rational understanding.

These interpretations frequently draw upon classical Sufi commentaries on "Leyli and Majnun" emphasizing the poem's allegorical significance and its relevance to Sufi spiritual teachings.

##### *3.1.2. Western Interpretations: Psychological and Emotional Dimensions*

Western scholarship, while acknowledging the potential for Sufi interpretations, often prioritizes the psychological and emotional aspects of Majnun's love and madness, employing frameworks derived from modern psychology and literary theory.

– Rubanovich (2011): to dwell on the "psychopathology of love" (p. 67) in "Leyli and Majnun" analyzing Majnun's behavior through the lens of modern psychological concepts such as obsessive-compulsive disorder and depression. However, Rubanovich also acknowledges the limitations of applying contemporary diagnostic categories to a medieval text and emphasizes the importance of cultural context.

– van Ruymbeke (2015): to focuses on the theme of "impossible love" (p. 101), exploring the universal human experience of unrequited passion and its psychological consequences.

These Western interpretations tend to emphasize the human and emotional dimensions of Majnun's experience, often drawing on psychological theories to understand his behavior and motivations.

##### *3.1.3. Comparative Analysis: Bridging the Divide*

The divergence in interpretations highlights the influence of distinct cultural and intellectual frameworks on understandings of love and madness. Orientalist scholarship, drawing on Sufi traditions, tends to spiritualize Majnun's experiences, interpreting them within a metaphysical framework. Western scholarship, in contrast, often focuses

on the psychological and emotional dimensions, employing modern psychological concepts and theories.

However, the dichotomy is not absolute. Some scholars from both traditions acknowledge the complexity of Majnun's character and the limitations of any single interpretive framework. There is a growing recognition of the need for nuanced interpretations that consider both the potential spiritual significance and the psychological and emotional realities of Majnun's experience. The character's internal world and external representation may interact; the external world might influence the character's inner world.

### 3.2. THE SYMBOLISM OF LEYLI: DIVERGENT AND CONVERGENT INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORKS

The analysis of the symbolic representation of Leyli in the corpus of our study highlights a notable divergence between Orientalist and Western scholarly interpretations, although recent scholarship exhibits a trend towards integrative approaches.

#### 3.2.1. *Orientalist Interpretations: Leyli as the Divine Beloved*

Orientalist scholarship, particularly that influenced by Sufi mystical traditions, frequently interprets Leyli as a symbolic representation of the Divine Beloved. This interpretation is grounded in the Sufi concept of "jamal" (divine beauty) and the soul's yearning for union with the Divine.

– Seyed-Gohrab (2019): Argues that Leyli embodies the "hidden beauty of God" (p. 45), serving as the catalyst for the soul's (represented by Majnun) aspiration for divine union. This interpretation explicitly links Leyli's physical beauty to the Sufi concept of "jamal".

– Kamali (2017): to emphasize Leyli's role as a catalyst for Majnun's spiritual transformation. While acknowledging the ostensibly earthly nature of Majnun's love for Leyli, Kamali argues that this love ultimately elevates him to a higher spiritual plane.

Within this framework, Leyli's earthly existence and attributes are understood as allegorical representations of divine qualities and the soul's relationship with the Divine.

#### 3.2.2. *Western Interpretations: Feminist and Socio-Cultural Perspectives*

Western scholarship, in contrast, increasingly analyzes Leyli's character through a feminist lens, focusing on her social and gendered context within the poem's narrative world.

– Gould (2012): Examines Leyli's "constrained agency" (p. 92) within the patriarchal societal structures depicted in the poem. Gould analyzes the suppression of Leyli's voice and desires, and her subjection to the control of male figures (father and husband).

– Spencer-Hall (2021): Explores the complexities of Leyli's internal world, highlighting her emotional struggles and her attempts to navigate the limitations imposed upon her by the prevailing social norms.

These Western interpretations prioritize Leyli's experiences as a woman within a specific socio-cultural context, emphasizing the power dynamics and gender inequalities that shape her life and agency.

#### 3.2.3. *Comparative Analysis and Emerging Synthesis*

The contrasting interpretations of Leyli's symbolism reveal a significant divergence between Orientalist and Western scholarly traditions. Orientalist interpretations tend to prioritize Leyli's spiritual significance within a Sufi allegorical framework, while

Western interpretations emphasize her social and gendered context, often employing feminist critical perspectives.

However, recent scholarship demonstrates a growing trend towards bridging this divide. Some scholars are attempting to synthesize these perspectives, acknowledging both Leyli's symbolic role within the Sufi allegorical framework and her experiences as a woman within a patriarchal social structure. This integrative approach recognizes the multi-layered nature of Nizami's text and the potential for multiple, non-mutually exclusive interpretations. The character's internal world and external representation might be in a state of constant interaction, the first being determined by the second.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The conducted comparative analysis of Western and Oriental literary criticism (2010–2023) pertaining to “Leyli and Majnun” by Nizami Ganjavi reveals a dichotomy characterized by both persistent methodological differences and emerging areas of interpretive convergence. Orientalist scholarship maintains a focus on the poem's Sufi allegorical dimensions and its reflection of Persianate cultural and societal values. Conversely, Western scholarship employs a broader array of interpretive frameworks, including, but not limited to, psychoanalytic theory, feminist literary criticism, and postcolonial studies.

Finally, the contemporary relevance of “Leyli and Majnun” is affirmed. Despite its medieval origins, the poem continues to resonate with modern audiences. Its thematic exploration of universal human experiences – love, loss, identity formation, societal constraints, and existential inquiry – transcends temporal boundaries. The poem's engagement with issues such as social injustice, gender inequality, and the conflict between individual volition and societal norms retains significant relevance in contemporary discourse.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Adducing the results of the conducted comparative analysis of Western and Oriental literary criticism on “Leyli and Majnun” by Nizami Ganjavi (2010–2023) demonstrates the ongoing vitality and relevance of this literary masterpiece. While distinct cultural perspectives continue to shape interpretations, there is a growing trend towards a more nuanced and integrated understanding that acknowledges the poem's multifaceted nature. By appealing with both Western and Oriental scholarship, we can appreciate the poem's enduring power to speak to readers across time and cultures, prompting reflection on fundamental human experiences and the complexities of love, loss, and the search for meaning.

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*Сведения об авторе:*

Махбубахон Абдумаджидовна Иброхимова,	Mahbubakhon A. Ibrohimova,
соискатель	Applicant
факультет восточных языков	Faculty of Oriental Languages
Худжандский государственный университет	Khujand State University named
имени академика Бободжона Гафурова	after academician Bobojon Gafurov

mahbubakhon1998@mail.ru