

The Structural Framework of Passions from Greimas' Perspective: Love as a Model in Algerian Popular Discourse

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Abstract

The semiotics of emotions facilitates an in-depth understanding of the affective dimension and human tendencies within narrative structures. This approach enables the tracking of complementary or opposing affective relationships within narratives, viewing emotions as active forces in texts that interact with diverse literary, social, and cultural contexts. It is applicable across various types of literary texts and narrative discourses, functioning as an essential analytical tool for deciphering emotions and their relationships within events. This analysis reveals underlying psychological aspects and identity-driven motivations that shape narrative logic and influence its flow, ultimately contributing to a deeper exploration of human relationships as reflected in literature and art. This article applies Greimas' semiotic framework to the Algerian folk narrative, commencing with an analysis of actions and advancing toward an analysis of emotions, while taking into account the unique characteristics of Algerian popular discourse. This investigation seeks to test the capacity of Greimas' theory to encompass the complexities of folk narratives, particularly given the theory's modernity in its methodology and its operational and terminological framework, which incorporates extensive theoretical elements drawn from the material sciences.

Keywords: Passions; Structural Analysis; Love; Popular Discourse; Semiotics of Emotions

1. Introduction

Emotions and passions form the affective life through which individuals interact, manifesting as traits and behaviors within society. They serve as a foundation for either connection or discord, representing a key aspect of human development that influences both psychological and

cognitive inclinations. From Greimas' perspective, the semiotics of passions examines emotions and feelings emerging from the self in an active state, tracing emotional inclinations as sensory or implicit qualities within the text by identifying their indicative expressions or latent emotions. These serve as diverse components within the text's deep structures, as they are considered fundamental to meaning, enabling an exploration of their semantic impact in the narrative.

Passions within the framework of semiotic analysis are those emotions that influence the self's narrative program and operate throughout the narrative sequence, as opposed to temporary emotional states of the self or entities driving the narrative universe of the text. No narrative program can unfold without these motivational passions or the self-driven passions that propel it.

In this article, we will apply these theoretical concepts to a genre of Algerian popular discourse, specifically the folk tale, to address the following question: Is it feasible to apply the mechanisms of passion semiotics to folk storytelling, and to what extent can this discourse incorporate its operational principles?

2. Conceptual Definition of the Semiotics of Passions

The semiotics of passions developed within narrative semiotics, created by Greimas and his followers to represent passions through symbols and structures that evolve and interact within the narrative. It focuses on analyzing human emotions and passions, examining their representation and perception across diverse texts, including literature, culture, and art. In other words, it is the study of passions as preceding concealed semantic properties. By nature and compositional potential, it encompasses a series of emotional states that develop outside cognitive and pragmatic dimensions, creating a new dimension within the generative pathway, known as the affective dimension.

This approach provides tools to understand the affective dimensions in texts, demonstrating how human emotions symbolically reflect and simulate profound experiences. The theory investigates how meaning is constructed and produced through the narrative agents' actions driven by their passions and emotions. It captures the emotional meaning within textual segments, whether large or small, to derive meaning and essence by interpreting structural and semantic components, both on the surface and in-depth, both analytically and interpretively. Passions here are less about internal emotions or psychological sensations and more about dynamic, value-driven structures and narrative forces influencing the storyline, such as jealousy, love, hatred, fear, courage, etc. These forces act as motivators that drive the narrative's elements, leading characters to make decisions or achieve their narrative goals.

The narrative transforms as the characters' passions shift, resulting in movement between desire and fulfillment, pain and hope, sorrow and happiness. This dynamic imprints on the story's text, affecting its flow and development. Thus, passions are narrative states, not mere psychological abstractions, shaping the reader's engagement and driving interaction with the story's logic. These passion-driven structures create suspense and intrigue, prompting the reader to reassess characters and events, as seen when a character's pursuit of an impossible love leads to betrayal, weaving the narrative threads together and reconstructing it.

3. Key Terminology

In dissecting the structural framework of passions that influence the popular narrative pathway, we employed Greimas' semiotic terminology for analyzing the passions, drawing from a range of fields including mathematics, physics, and chemistry. This terminology is clarified below for the reader's comprehension in understanding the emotional analysis of literary texts:

1. *Constituting Affective Potential*: This resembles the qualitative imagination of the self, where the image/goal is shaped by the adaptations defining the self's being.
2. *Sensitization*: A process viewed as the effects of identity meanings derived through inference.
3. *Phoric State*: The affective state.
4. *Protensivity*: Tension-driven force.
5. *Becoming (Devenir)*: The outcome or transformation.
6. *Valence*: The relational equivalency.

4. Summary of the Model Tale: "The Beast and the Princess"

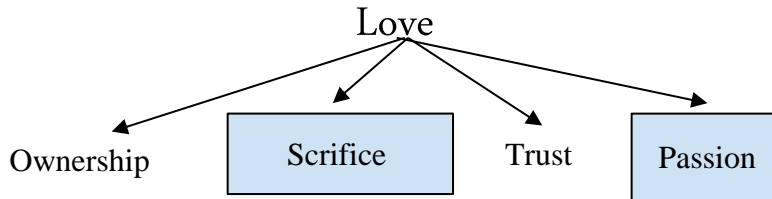
The story unfolds within an unspecified temporal structure, linked to the sequential progression of narrative events, as well as spatial structure, beginning with the princess (Sabra) wandering, lost and hungry, in a forest. A beast (the lion) appears, and she initially assumes he will devour her, but instead, he takes her to his lair, warming and feeding her while guarding her through the night. They agree to marry, although the princess intends this as repayment for his kindness rather than out of genuine desire. On the journey to her palace, she criticizes the foul odor of the beast's breath, deciding to rid herself of him. Sensing her intentions, the beast decides to kill her. The princess, realizing his resolve, enlists the aid of a black servant to eliminate the beast before he can harm her. However, the beast perceives her betrayal and kills her mercilessly, culminating in the triumph of the beast's narrative and affective program, while the princess' oppositional program meets utter failure.

5. The Structural Framework of Love as a Passion

Love, as a passion, requires an identity-bearing self and a counter-self, both competing for an undefined, composite objective. In this framework, the selves represent both states of being and action, symbolizing the desired object. Often, failure is the likely outcome for both parties, particularly when anger is intense.

The initial state of stability in love is crucial (the "calm before the storm") and concerns the self and the counter-self. In the initial narrative setting, the two selves ($S1$ and $S2$) are in connection through another passion, "attachment," symbolized by marriage, an action facilitated and realized primarily by one party (the beast), which we will detail further.

Hence, $S1 \cap S3 \cup S2 \cap S3$ reflects the passion of love or attachment, where $S1$ is the beast, and $S2$ is the princess. This connection stems from the tension in passion (love) within $S1$ and $S2$, leading to its



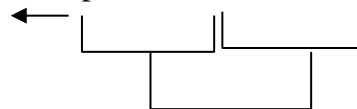
This perspective applies to S1 as well as to S2. This harmony of passion leads to eternal union (marriage) and temporary stability—an earlier phase that precedes the stage of upheaval. This invites us to pose the following fundamental question: Is this connection, born from the passion of love, utilitarian in nature, or does it carry intrinsic meaning?

Considering the eventual outcome, we believe that this connection was more a symbolic value than a true meaningful bond. The princess and the beast are merely counterparts of identity rather than true selves of essence, as their connection has a utilitarian dimension, nothing more. Evidence of this is their separation at the first hint of anger. Their passion becomes evident in the forest scene, where the beast immediately decides to save the princess without hesitation, though he could have harmed her (considering the beast as a symbol of predation associated with masculinity). Similarly, the princess agrees to marry him without much thought.

This passion reflects the idea of sacrifice in S1 and S2. How so? The lion’s sacrifice lies in passing up an easy opportunity for predation or something similar, while the princess sacrifices her social status to marry him. This sacrifice, in turn, transforms into an exclusive form of possession.

The result of the desire of love

S2 separate with S1 · S1 connected to S2



This connection was established through a qualifying adaptation at the level of being (ability + will + knowledge), originating internally from the self-identity itself (we observed no evidence of an external sender at all). The distress resulting from the splitting of the desire of love led to the two selves being driven toward connection, without obstacles. However, it is possible that Self 2 was compelled to connect with Self 1 and was unable to prevent this connection; in other words:

- Self 2 (S2) exhibits both ability and will.

- Self 1 (S1) exhibits both ability and will.

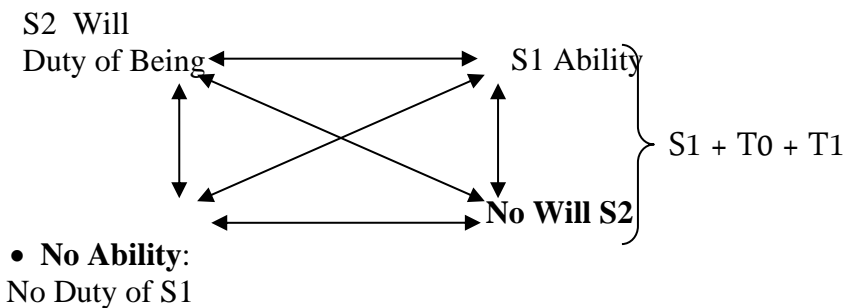
Thus, the desire-sufficiency differs between the two selves, which explains the subsequent emotional crisis.

The sender pushed the princess into the forest, and then drove the beast to appear in the same place before disappearing. This spatial connection led to an emotional connection, which caused an emotional tension represented in the desire (love). Initially, this desire was in a dormant state; once tension arose, the desire surfaced and split, leading to the process of welding (separation and connection).

If the desire (love) splits, it results in the initial situation (embodied in S S1). Conversely, this outcome is divided into similar elements of the same nature (distress, sacrifice, possession, etc.), which we refer to as the emotional determinants of this desire. These elements fall within the non-utilitarian dimension; for example, love leads to marriage, a utilitarian outcome, which is not the focus of our study.

We can capture this desire within the framework of time and space, and it is evident from a narrative perspective. The forest setting and the beginning of the storytelling led to the splitting of the desire of love between (S1, S2) through the presence of ability, will, and existential duty. In the time and space (T1 + S0), Self 2 (the princess) was in a state of turmoil. However, this turmoil (both psychological and physical) transformed into stability in the time and space (T + S).

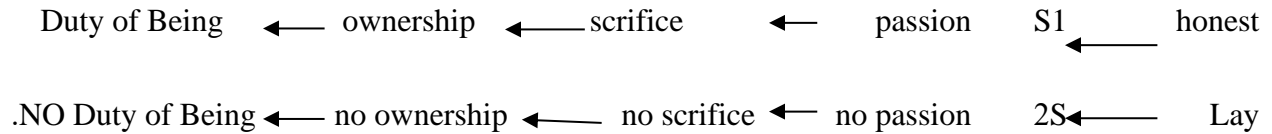
Thus, we can represent this as follows:



Through this analysis, we can assert that the princess (S2) neither desired the beast as a husband nor had the ability to prevent this marriage. According to Mohamed Dahy, love is subject to various emotional variables, such as "the competition variable, the tension variable, or the betrayal variable." Thus, the emotional self (S2, the princess) may have been influenced by the third type (betrayal) if she became attached to a third party other than S1, or by the second type (tension) if emotional crises emerged that negatively impacted the nature of the relationship.

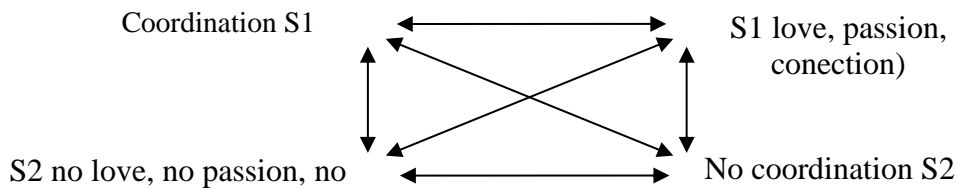
We consider narrative moments and situations to be the primary drivers of the desire of (S1 and S2), as actions are the result of desires. From this, the emotional relationship between S1 and S2

becomes clear. The beast represents a true self-identity, based on the adaptive attributes we identified, while S2 is considered a quasi-self; thus, we regard her as a potential self.



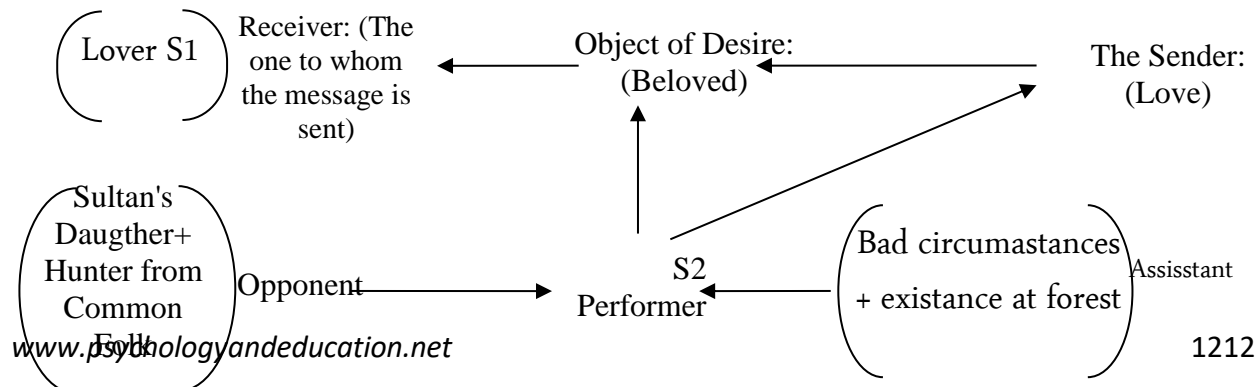
These emotional determinants of the two selves clearly show that for Self 2 (S2), the desire of love remains intact and has not undergone splitting as it did with Self 1 (S1). It appears as though S2 is driven and compelled into this connection, which is explained by the subsequent emotional tension, represented by (anger) within the narrative segments (S S2, S S3). Overall, the narrative trajectory of (S1 and S2) was coherent, while the emotional (desire-based) trajectory was entirely contradictory. The connection was realized through marriage, representing a utilitarian dimension, whereas the opposite occurred on the emotional level, leading to an explosive situation in the subsequent phase.

The following diagram illustrates this situation:



This diagram represents all the outcomes of the desire of love, including tension, consequences, counterparts, and the welding process between (S1 and S2), along with adaptive attributes that revealed the nature of the emotional trajectory for each self.

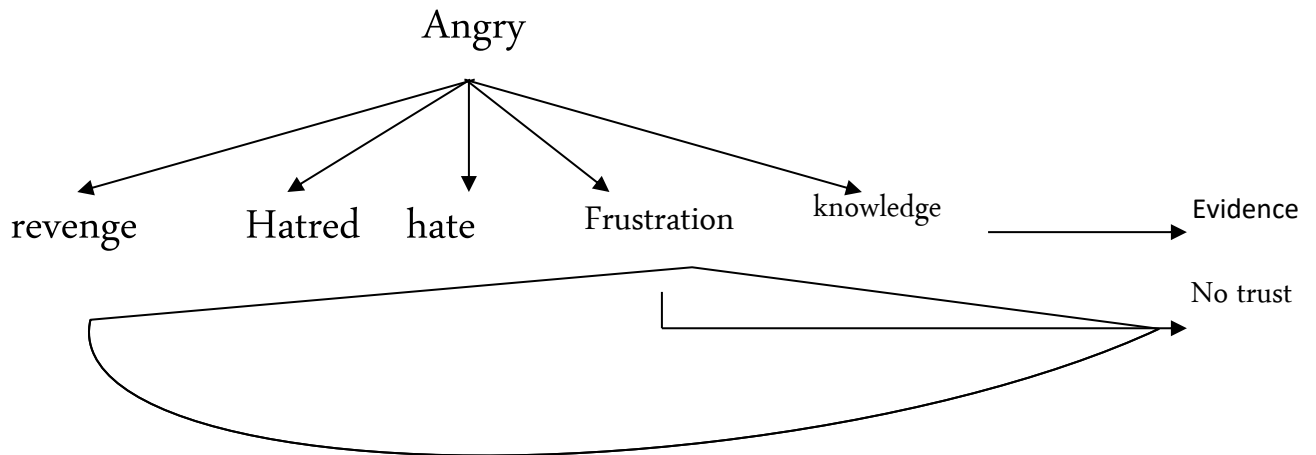
Accordingly, we will define the actantial structure that explains the composition of love as follows:



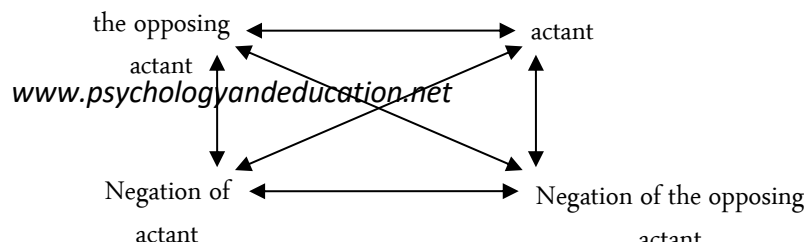
In the second narrative segment, Self 2 (S2) continues along the same path that has been outlined for her, both on the utilitarian and emotional levels, confirming our previous analysis. She reproaches her husband for the foul smell of his breath (a utilitarian aspect), which stems from certain identity-based perceptions. These perceptions are manifested in the moment of anger she experiences, prompting her to criticize her husband without considering the potential consequences of such a desire. This situation is pivotal in driving S2, thereby escalating the emotional tension (emotional mass) represented by anger.

This tension arises from the loss of trust between S1 and S2, meaning that S2 becomes cautious and wary of S1's reaction. This is exactly what happens when S1 learns of his wife's betrayal and her plan to kill him.

But what is the motivation for S2 to decide to kill S1 with the help of S3, the Black servant, who plays only a narrative role (representative) rather than an actantial one, meaning his role is unclear and ambiguous? However, we might suggest an identity-based relationship between S2 and S3, which is not apparent and not mentioned in the text. In any case, the anger splits when S1 learns of S2's plan, leading to emotional determinants as follows:

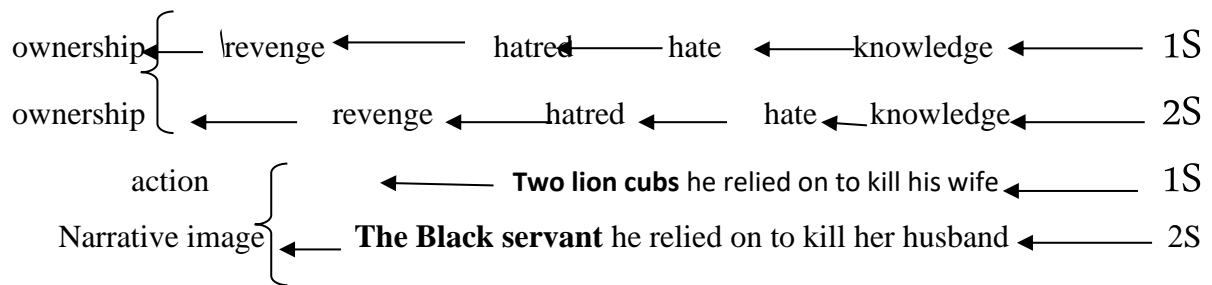


Logically, this splitting, through its intensity, will escalate into a heated debate and a bloody conflict, reaching the point of revenge. This emotional split will manifest on the surface of the text (the narrative structure), transforming S1 and S2 from emotional entities into entities of state and action, or into two opposing actants, as follows:



Naturally, the actant or its opponent will ultimately be either affirmed or negated, according to the principle of (negation/affirmation).

On the other hand, in this central situation (the main program), we can distinguish between two similar adaptations (qualifications), whether at the level of being or at the level of action, as follows:



We observe that there is qualification through action and another through emotion, contrary to what Mohamed Dahy adopted in his analysis. He states: "The self must possess emotional competence that qualifies it to perform a narrative program."

This analysis expresses a deadly conflict, with a debate whose outcome is inevitably bloody, given the alignment of both internal (emotional) and external (action-based) qualifications. Note that we can simultaneously connect desire and action in the analysis. However, this conflict between the two selves requires a value object, a target for connection or disconnection. So, what is this object?

We are dealing with a lover and a beloved, both of whom represent a state entity and an action entity at the same time. The object is not entirely clear, especially with this type of desire. Thus, according to Greimas' terminology, we consider that the two selves themselves represent a shared object, meaning:

- **S1:** Identity entity, state entity, action entity, object
- **S2:** Identity entity, state entity, action entity, object

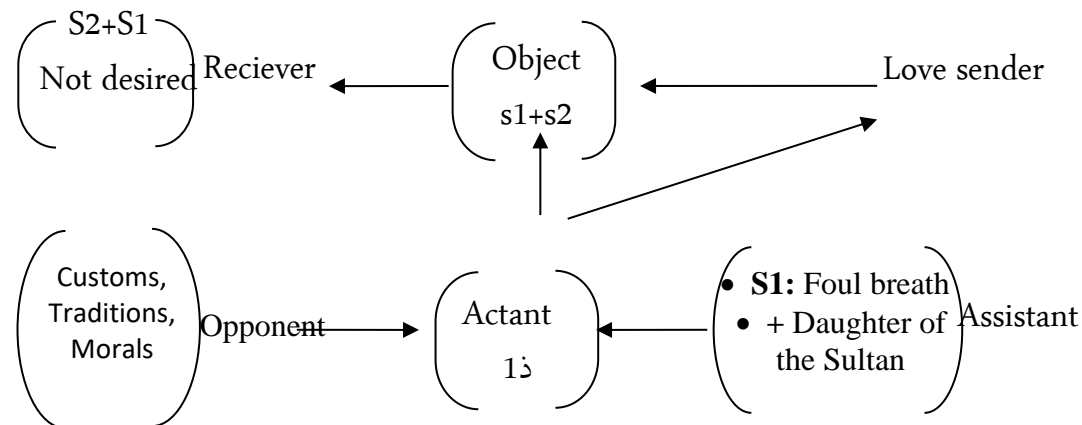
Overall, S1 relies on the two lion cubs as qualification through action and on his hatred and resentment towards his wife as qualification through being, allowing him to exact his revenge successfully. This indicates the presence of the essential components of competence (knowledge, will, ability). In contrast, the counter-program (S2) fails, despite possessing the components of competence (being + action). This prompts us to ask: Why did the two trajectories end this way?

In this situation, the imprint of the sender (whom we shall call the "social observer," as the theory does) becomes evident, favoring the duty of being, which represents a cultural dimension that cannot be bypassed, despite the emotional intensity that characterized both S1 and S2. We might have expected the social observer not to side with either one, especially since the judgment was very harsh on S2, disregarding her high social status. This contradicts the conventional understanding of anger as found in dictionaries. At the moment of revenge, initiated by S1, he transitions from a potential self to an actualized self, considering that his emotional and narrative trajectory was more efficient than the counter-program, based on the outcomes of both trajectories. He will remain in a latent state until his emotional and narrative path concludes, turning into a realized self when rewarded in the ending, either through connection or disconnection (welding between the object and the self).

This debate produced roles of three types:

1. **Actantial Roles:** S1 and S2 (state entities, action entities).
2. **Thematic Roles:** Scenes that embody the actantial and emotional roles.
3. **Emotional Role (Pathemic Role):**
 - o **S1:** Hatred, resentful, vengeful, unforgiving.
 - o **S2:** Hatred, resentful, vengeful, unforgiving.

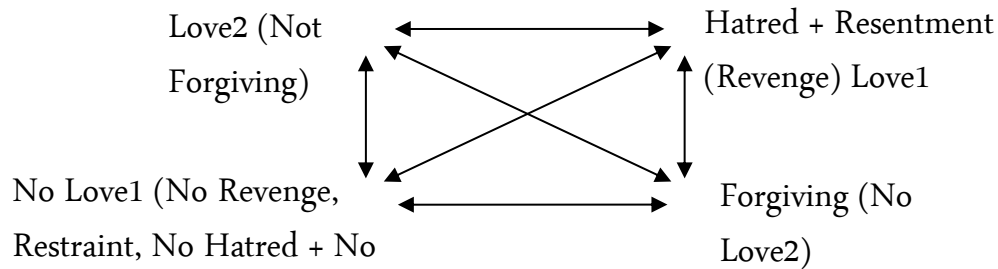
Based on this analysis, we can define the actantial structure of the desire of love:



The intensity of desire and the threshold of ethics serve as criteria that appear on the surface level to issue a judgment on S1 or S2, which can be either negative or positive. The feeling of anger, on one hand, and the reaction of S1 or S2, on the other, confirm the collapse of

the epistemic component (trust in the object). At this very point, trust between S1 and S2 turns into caution and vigilance when S1 perceives the evidence and then the proof of betrayal.

This epistemic collapse leads to the disappearance of terms synonymous with love (restraint, forgiveness, pardon, patience, etc.), which did not manifest at all in the state of being of the two selves. This is further evidence of the emotional intensity of the affective dimension of the two identity selves. Consequently, the composition of anger did not align at all with its conventional definition. Based on this premise, we can present the emotional composition of anger as follows:

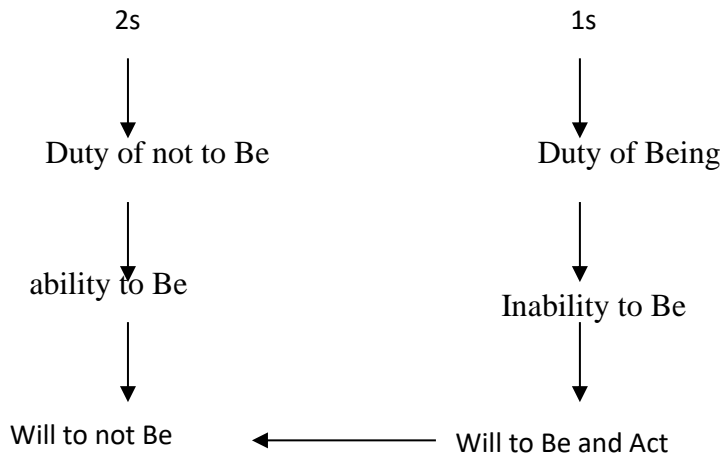


We are now positioned at the point (Love1), which represents the state of being of S1 and S2 and their performative action as embodied through the text, while synonyms and antonyms are absent. The desire of each self falls within the framework of individual desires, particularly free from moral dimensions. If it were a shared (collective) desire, the hunter would have simply divorced her and freed himself, as modes of existence are states that produce actions, moving from potentiality to actualization, and then to realization after a latent period. But how do we explain this latency?

We believe that potentiality is related to both selves, as is actualization, followed by the stage of latency. At this point, we cannot determine which of the selves will become realized until the judgment is issued by the "social observer." Thus, the latent self is positioned between the moment of acquiring competence and the moment of performing the final action and validating the judgment. Greimas states: "The latency, which may be an imposed deletion of a narrative program, occurs between the acquisition of competence and execution. It can be defined as a process through which the qualified self is able to carry out the action."

Hence, we consider S1 to be the realized self in the end, as it acquired competence (knowledge + ability + will), enabling it to carry out its action. It transitioned from a state of connection to an initial state of disconnection, relative to its original object, and not the object S2, where a connection then disconnection occurred.

Through these exchanges at the level of being and action, we find ourselves facing two segments or trajectories, each presupposing the other:



These two segments produce emotional (pathemic) roles, such as distress, doubt, caution, vigilance, hatred, resentment, and revenge, among others. The type of belief in love held by (S1 and S2) determines whether the duty of being is fulfilled, and this is exactly what happened: S1 was genuinely in love with S2 (duty of being), which led to the collapse of the epistemic component between (S1 and S2). This collapse was sufficient to completely reverse the situation due to the intense conflict between S1 and S2, resulting from the splitting of desire.

3. Deep Level:

The validating qualification is seen as a judgment issued by a sender or social observer, affirming one actant and negating the other (actant → negation of actant). This is evident from the beginning and end of the trajectory, where negation and affirmation manifest through a pre-planned transfer process. Thus, a role exchange occurs throughout the trajectory, stabilizing the situation at the conclusion, with each actant assuming its rightful position based on the cultural, ethical, economic, and referential perspective of the text.

It is clear that (S1) was positioned at the center (Being + Appearing), genuinely in love with (S2), implying belief in the being. Thus, the desire of love did not split into its original components and remained intact. Meanwhile, (S2) was positioned at the center (Non-Being + Non-Appearing), harboring hidden and latent anger, meaning that the desire of love had not yet split. To achieve the role exchange, a pivotal event had to occur, represented by the wife's betrayal of her husband. At this decisive moment, S1 shifts from (Being + Appearing) to (Non-Being + Non-Appearing), while S2 moves from (Non-Being + Non-Appearing) to (Being + Appearing), revealing her true self through this exchange of roles.

The transition of S2 from position (A) to position (B) signifies a truthful state; that is, moving from falsehood to truth. In contrast, S1's position becomes false; that is, moving from truth to falsehood. This indicates a violation of standards by S2 and adherence to standards by S1, leading to a connection and disconnection (welding) of the two selves with two original value

Marriage, as a social value, is expected to involve compatibility between the two parties, whether morally or materially, serving as the guarantee to make the act of marriage possible. However, the failure of the accomplishment within the text is due to the absence of this compatibility. From the perspective of the narrative, marriage should be considered from two angles:

Primarily as an identity aspect.

Secondarily as a utilitarian aspect.

This was not achieved in our story, leading the entire program to turn into a true tragedy, in which desires played a decisive role, directing the two selves towards two identity paths that contradict both the ethical and sociocultural dimensions. This complexity makes it difficult to understand without a broad knowledge of the epistemological foundations from which the authors start. Additionally, the novelty and distinctiveness of the subject make it filled with terms from various domains [...], indicating that the book is intended for academic researchers.

As a logical result, both programs meet with utter failure, as declared by the narrative in the conclusion. We believe that semiosis is clearly evident during the analysis of desires, given the semantic system obtained in analyzing desires such as jealousy, longing, and anger. Thus, it seems that desires function as signs, as envisioned by Charles Sanders Peirce: "According to Peirce, a sign does not produce a self-contained meaning; rather, it generates a more advanced interpretative process based on the act of representation and forms of reference."

Conclusion:

We have attempted to convey these intriguing theoretical ideas (semiotics of desires), which are filled with terminologies derived from material sciences, such as the analogy of mass, atoms, etc. Capturing any desire at the level of discourse is not an easy task; even more challenging is analyzing discourse based on the self's desire. The integration of being and action, or aligning the semiotics of desires with the semiotics of action, requires substantial effort.

The process of translating the intangible into the tangible, converting being into action, and transforming emotional roles into narrative programs, as well as linking qualification with being and action, then placing everything within the framework of time and space, demands numerous and continuous practical procedures. This is necessary to embody these theoretical concepts within a systematic semiotic approach to desires, which is what we aimed for in this article. We have strived to understand the theoretical terms and their backgrounds, then

compared them with the semiotics of action. We adopted the theory through an initial approach, which we believe may require adjustments, extensions, and further additions, awaiting the interest of scholars and specialized researchers.

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12. **Algirdas Julien Greimas** and **Jacques Fontanille**, *Semiotics of Passions: From States of Things to States of Mind*, previously cited reference, p. 41.
13. **Social Observer**: Engages in a cultural role, possibly acting as an actantial role.

14. **Previously cited reference**, p. 41.

15. **Previously cited reference**, p. 195.

16. **Faiza Yakhlef**, previously cited reference, p. 61.

Symbols Used in the Study:

- **S1**: Actant of Action (The Beast).
- **S2**: Actant of State (The Princess).
- **M**: Value Object.
- **U**: Separation State.
- \cap : Connection State.
- **S S**: Narrative Segment.
- **F**: Space.
- **Z**: Time.