

The Actantial Model of Fatimah's Marriage in the Arabic Fiction *Āmāl Wāqī'īyyah*: A Semiotic Narratological Study

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Abstract

In the novel Āmāl Wāqī'īyyah, Fatimah offers to be married to the destitute Musa, a move which disregards the social class decorum and incurs the wrath of her wealthy father, who decides to halt it. But Fatimah, as subject operator (or heroine), steps up action by contending with her family's resistance and assuring the jittery Musa's family of her sincerity and tenacity. This semiotic narratological critical study sought to investigate – in the story of Fatimah - this novelist's notion of tackling life's intractable challenges through commitment and the adoption of expedient measures – an area presumably ignored by critics. It – following the method of Greimas's actantial model – aimed to examine difficulties encountered by Fatimah and how she surmounted them. It found out that her proposal is met with opposition by her rich family who tried hard to frustrate it with their affluence and influence. However, out of strong determination, she boldly confronted the antagonists, neutralizing their malicious intrigues until her desire got satisfied. By keeping in the foreground her singlemindedness, which led to her eventual victory, our novelist emphasizes the lesson that heart desires do not come as easy as pie and that doggedness is the elixir that clears the snags.

Keywords: actantial model, Fatimah's marriage, determination, hurdles, victory canons

Introduction

This semiotic narratological critical study represents an attempt to investigate – in the story of Fatimah - this novelist's notion of the catalytic role of single-mindedness and the adoption of expedient measures in tackling life's intractable challenges. This important area, which constitutes the secret behind the success of all human endeavors, is presumably under-explored in semiotic narratological studies.

To fill this wide lacuna, we have chosen to study the struggles of Fatimah, a prominent character in the Arabic fiction *Āmāl Wāqī'īyyah*, in her move towards getting married to her choice husband-to-be, Musa, in a way that x-rays the difficulties she encountered and how she surmounted them. Our preferred method of study remains Greimas's actantial model, which, through its semiotic apparatus which focusses the novel's major and minor characters, normally

exposes the roles played by these human and non-human characters as sender, receiver, message, operator or hero, supporter and antagonist.

The study found out that Fatimah's proposal is met with stiff opposition by her rich family who tried hard to frustrate it with their affluence and influence. However, out of unwavering determination, she – in her role as operator - boldly confronted the antagonists neutralizing their malicious intrigues one after another until her desire got satisfied. Our novelist throughout the story keeps in the foreground Fatimah's single-mindedness, which led to her eventual victory. Thus, the significance of the study lies not only in tracking - using the aforementioned model - this logic of tenaciousness, presumed to be the general process of goal achievement, but also in showcasing this virtue, which probably represents the author's intended lesson for humanity, as a reminder that heart desires do not come as easy as pie and that doggedness is a viable elixir that clears the snag.

This Novel and Its Author

The novel *Āmāl Wāqī'yyah* is a social, struggle fiction written by the Nigerian Arabic writer, Jamiu Abiola, who, born in 1975 to the family of Chief M.K.O. Abiola, attended University of Lagos Staff School for his primary education. During the period, he, under the tutelage of Ustaz Fatai (Abdul-Salam), underwent Arabic learning after which he started a regimented study pattern, sometimes till very late at night making him to successfully master the Arabic language after a short while. He then proceeded for his secondary education to King's College, Lagos and Kent School, Connecticut (USA) and tertiary study at New York University with a Major in Political Science and Minor in French and Arabic. Jamiu is a polyglot who speaks standard Arabic, English, French, German, Hausa, Italian, Japanese, Kanuri, Spanish, Shuwa and Yoruba languages. However, he has decided to be writing all his books in Arabic as a sign of appreciation to the Arabic language for opening his eyes and heart to the beauty of Language and Literature (Jamiu Abiola: Biography). Apart from the novel under study, other Arabic novels to his credit include: *Sajīnah al-ḍamīr*, *al-Ri'āsah al-masrūqah* and *al-Ra'īs al-ladhī lam yaḥkum* (Jamiu Abiola).

The novel under study, published in 2014, contains five major interwoven story subdivisions of Musa, Iman, Karim, Samiyah, and Fatimah. These subdivisions, craftily knitted together, constitute the novelistic whole, which accentuates the theme “realistic hopes” (*āmāl wāqī'yyah*) - the cardinal implication of the novel. Fatimah is the only child (Abiola 11, 145) of an extremely wealthy businessman of great aristocratic influence in Egypt and the Arab North Africa. Musa, on the other hand, comes from a flatly poor, broken home. Both Musa and Fatimah are schoolmates at Ahl al-Khayr University. While Musa is incon-

trovertibly the most outstanding law student and the overall best student, Fatimah is the undisputable best student of journalism (Abiola 11, 12, 128).

Story of Fatimah's Marriage

The entrancing personality of Musa (ever-rising profile: his unparalleled intelligence, tiptop academic standing, quick-wittedness, excellent performance in collegiate activities, and Solomonic wisdom in addressing daunting social challenges, which popularized him as a leading light among fellow students on campus, and later, his good luck which handed him appointment as an aid to a minister and himself, afterwards, a minister) (Abiola 12, 39, 40, 45, 47, 64, 84, 288, 343) allured Fatimah into impudently offering to be his wife (Abiola 11, 39, 64, 85, 63, 64, 74, 105, 108, 145, 271, 272) - a craving which put her on the horns of a dilemma. Musa, having acceded to her wish (Abiola 11), apprised his mother, Samiyah, of the offer persuading her to approve of it. Samiyah discovered that her poor son is intending to marry from an aristocratic family, whose head is ill-natured, nervous and autocratic - a case of overstepping the social class mark (Abiola 67, 70-72, 78, 86, 88-89). However, satisfied later with Fatimah's humble appearance, display of wisdom, respect, sincerity and commitment, she gave her approval (Abiola 115-118, 125, 277). Manal, Fatimah's mother, initially loathed the proposal but was compelled to agree by Fatimah's bristly response to her uncomplimentary remarks (Abiola 63, 107, 127-128). Abdulhamid, her father, too fastidious to accept her choice of someone from the lower class, got annoyed and decided to rid her of Musa with millions of dollars even if it will cost Musa his life. He gave the fiendish task to Faruq Mamduh, his Machiavellian mercenary usually hired to tackle arcane challenges (Abiola 106, 130-132, 140, 145). While this was ongoing, Mustapha visited Abdulhamid to ask for his consent to marry Fatimah. Gleeful to this (for Mustapha is from a wealthy family), he tried in vain to lord it over Fatimah to marry Mustapha (Abiola 151, 190-191, 195, 200, 212). As a comeuppance for Fatimah, Abdulhamid attempted to retrieve from her his voluminous shares in his group of companies registered in her name (Abiola 131, 204, 243). He fired his lawyer, Majid Mubarak, for declining to assist him on this and employed another one, Ammad Safwan (Abiola 244-247). The sacked lawyer revealed the plot to Fatimah and helped her to block the retrieval (Abiola 248-253, 260, 270). When the services of Musa's father, Sulaiman Hamdan, became indispensable, Abdulhamid employed him with a colossal amount of money. Sulaiman visited his estranged family with the only print-out of a newspaper report carrying the pictures of Musa and Samiyah and captioned: "Daughter of a wealthy man falls victim to a band formed by a covetous woman and her aspiring son." He demanded from Musa to redeem the family's image by distancing himself forthwith from Fatimah and

threatened to kill him if he failed to do so within two days (Abiola 231, 243, 266-267, 269, 277, 283-284). Reacting to this dreadful incident, Manal called for an emergency meeting, which was attended by Musa, Fatimah, Samiyah and her friend, Amal, all of who - after a robust review of the dangerous moves by Abdulhamid and his men - agreed that it has become exigent to outsmart them by immediately taking the following expedient steps: to report to the police that Abdulhamid and his gang are after the life of Musa and that some miscreants are planning to dupe Fatimah of her shares, to hurriedly and secretly hold the nuptials between Musa and Fatimah and afterwards quickly announce it in a popular newspaper to prevent a possible dissolution by Abdulhamid, and to travel out of the country for the raised dust to settle (Abiola 289). Facilitated by Amal, the marriage was held in her father's absence and without his consent with the minister, Musa's as good as gold boss, standing as bride's guardian (Abiola 296). Then, Fatimah held a meeting with her parents in a restaurant outside their home to allow Musa to witness the proceedings at a distance. In this meeting, Fatimah fearlessly exposed her father's evil plans against her and her chosen fiancée informing him that the marriage has been consummated, that she is pregnant for Musa and that she has reported to the police that Sulayman Hamdan, working for him (Abdulhamid), is threatening to kill Musa. She also showed him a clearance from the ministry of finance securing her shares from theft and seeking her permission to request the police to arrest suspected thieves. Abdulhamid, furious about this affront, divorced Fatimah's mother but decided to let Musa and Fatimah be (Abiola 320-324, 328). This is how Fatimah, who desired to marry Musa, strove hard after the marriage and ultimately achieved her goal.

The Greimassian Narratological Approach

As a departure from fellow structuralists' neglect of the content of linguistic utterances in their inquiries, Greimas [1966] attempted to make a structuralist analysis of linguistic meaning. For him, every sentence can be compared to a drama. The roles in this imaginary play are always the same: a subject acts upon an object. These roles are acted by different actors, but the programme of this grammatical theatre never really changes. He then goes on to transfer this picture from the level of the grammatical structure of the sentence (intra-linguistic) to the level of the events that are expressed in the sentence (extra-linguistic) (Darmstadt 47-49, Tyson 224 and Işık 1463). That is, in developing Vladimir Propp's (1928) theory (Işık 1464), Greimas applied to narrative a semantic analysis of sentence structure in order to arrive at the universal 'grammar' of narrative (Selden, Widdowson and Brooker 68) since the story is a semantic structure (Tyson 224-225). He believes that Man is the Talking Animal: he is homo

loquens; so, the fundamental structures of his language must inevitably inform and shape the fundamental structures of his stories (Hawkes 69) but examining the organisation of the text as discourse (not as sentence) (Kanonge and Jordaan 1) focusing on the events on the level of the events, the story, not the textual level of the plot (Darmstadt 48). As a simplification of Propp's thirty-one "functions" within folklore and fairy tales, Greimas created a canonical narrative schema involving six actants (Ghimn and Shields 233-234, Eagleton 91) This schema is referred to as the actantial model.

The Actantial Model:

This model is an analytical tool for narrative action (Hébert 49, Marsen, Biddle and Noble 7), which may be broken down into six components (Hébert 49, Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker 68-69), each of which is a structural unit (Eagleton 91). An actant is neither a specific narrative nor a character but a structural unit (Eagleton 91). It is a character function or slot filled by the actual character[s] (surface phenomena) in a given story. A single character may perform the work of two or more separate actants (Tyson 225) and when describing an action, we must assign each of its elements to each actantial class (Hébert 49). These actants are: sender, receiver, subject, object, helper, and opponent (Marsen, Biddle and Noble 8). This subject is discursive (subject of a discourse), not sentential (subject of a sentence) (Kanonge and Jordaan 1).

This model is the main operational tool (in the Greimas's semiotic narratological enterprise) devised by narrative semioticians to deal with identities and relationships (Marsen 7). Its main role is to reveal different functions of actants in a narrative (Kanonge and Jordaan 2). In the tales, characters or objects reveal themselves to be one of these actants (Ghimn and Shields 233-234, Eagleton 91).

In our story, Fatimah's attention (FA) is the sender (S₁), marriage to Musa (MM) is the object (O), Fatimah is the receiver (R) (hereinafter referred to as FR), Fatimah, the actress or heroine in the traditional parlance, is in our language the subject (S₂, hereinafter called FS), helper (H), or protagonist, is Manal, Musa, Samiyah, Amal and minister; opponent (Op), or antagonist, is Abdulhamid, Faruq, Sulayman and others. Mustapha is the anti-subject who desires the subject Fatimah.

Structure of the actantial model:

The Greimassian actantial model notes that a story gives an account of the quest of a subject for an object (Kanonge and Jordaan 2). The forwarding of the plot involves the transfer of some entity (a quality or an object) from one actant to another. Thus, the fundamental structure of narrative is the same as the fun-

damental structure of language: subject-verb-object. This basic narrative grammar generates three patterns of plots by aligning the six fundamental actants into three pairs of oppositions (Tyson 225). In it, a subject that lacks a certain object or has lost status causes a sender to enter into some sort of project, contract or quest with a subject to resolve this lack. Opponents and helpers intervene in what Latour refers to as a “trial of strength” or “test.” (Ghimm and Shields 233-234, Eagleton 91)

Relations between actants in a narrative:

The model shows the relational positioning of agents in a story: Subject—Object, Sender—Receiver, and Helper—Opponent (Tyson 225, Hawkes 71). The pairs describe three basic patterns which perhaps recur in all narrative: desire, search, or aim (subject/object); communication (sender/receiver); auxiliary support or hindrance (helper/opponent) (Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker 69). In our story, FA longed for FR’s MM and imparted its coming to FR (= Sender—Receiver relationship). FA, who could not itself work to get MM for FR, manipulated FS persuading her to do the action of getting it. She (FA) manipulated her (FS) by transmitting to her the importance of MM and giving her knowledge of how to get it done making FS to now desire it (= Subject - Object) and Manal and others helped FS to get MM while Abdulhamid and others tried to hinder her from getting it (= Helper—Opponent).

The axis of communication:

This is the bond between the sender (S₁) and the receiver and can be verbal or material (R) (Al-Marzūqī and Shākir 65-66). S₁ is the person (or feature, or event) responsible for initiating the quest; R is the actant for whose benefit the quest is undertaken. S₁ imparts the object to R, who may or may not accept it. There is a contract between S₁ and R, which can be: compulsive, or concessional or reflexive (Al-‘Ujaymā 65-66). S₁ plays three main roles as his mission: (1) to transmit the importance of the object to the potential subject. The communication of the object takes the NU form: (S₁→O →R) The schema indicates the attempt of S₁ to create the need for O in S₂. For this reason, S₁ is called subject of state, for he longs for the object (Kanonge and Jordaan 3). S₁ might wish to get for the receiver what he has not achieved or to separate from him what is currently with him (Laḥamdānī 33-34) He might want S₂ (himself the R) to join the object reflexively with himself (‘iktisāb/acquisitive) or transitively with another person who is the R (waṣl/conjunctive) or to separate it from himself as R (tanāzul/ condescending) or from another person who is R (intizā/removal) (Al-‘Ujaymā 51); (2) S₁ is also said to be a subject manipulator: Senders do

not act themselves directly, but they make subjects act, by transmitting modalities to them for the acquisition of the object. Modalities consist of transmitting knowledge about the object, or a duty to provoke the want (devoir) of the receiver; (3) S₁ represents values that come into play in a narrative. It can judge the action accomplished by the subject operator. For this reason, it is called subject adjudicator (Kanonge and Jordaan 3).

The axis of desire:

The subject and the object are the sine qua none of every narrative. The course of a narrative is the description of the quest of the subject for the object. All other functions in a narrative are determined by their relation to the subject and the object (Kanonge and Jordaan 2). The relation between the subject and the object is called a narrative utterance (NU), which can be either an utterance of state (UoS, stipulating that the subject is either in conjunction with the object or not) or an utterance of doing (UoD) (Kanonge and Jordaan 2), also called a narrative programme (NP) (Post 32). UoS is of two types: the conjunctive utterance of state (cUoS) (stating that the subject is in conjunction with the object: S₁ ∩ O) and the disjunctive utterance of state (dUoS) (stating that the subject is not in conjunction with the object: S₁ ∪ O) (Kanonge and Jordaan 2, Kurtis 152). In narrative utterance of state what S₁ wishes (I need that thing, bring it or I do not want this thing, take it away from me) determines the job of S₂ (Laḥamdānī 33-34).

Narrative programme (NP), which ensures that narration progresses (Laḥamdānī 34) indicates a transformative doing in which a beneficiary subject, who initially is in disjunction (∅) with the value object is at the end in conjunction (∩) with the value object (Post 32, Laḥamdānī 34). This transformation (which constitutes the plot) (Tyson 225) requires the intervention of a subject of doing (S₂ or a subject operator), the real actor or hero who does what S₁ cannot do (Qaysmūn 206). Thus, narrative is essentially a chain of current states or situations undergoing transforming doings to other situations (Kurtis 152, Hawkes 71, Shaqrūsh 131). There can be no NP except with two main functions: contractual function, which indicates manipulation (by S₁ of S₂) and test functions. (Shaqrūsh 132, Tyson 226). The tests, which focus two situations (1. level of lack, nature of intervention and action; 2. disappearance of lack), has three stages: fathoming the task (competence – 'ahliyyah or ma'rifah al-kiyān), doing the action (performance – 'injāz al-fi'l or fi'l al-kiyān) and giving judgment (al-ḥukm or kiyān al-kiyān). (Qaysmūn 206). Commission or manipulation (contractual structures, Tyson 226) corresponds to having/wanting-to and it is a sender's persuasive action to bid the subject execute a given programme.

Competence or knowing-how/being-able-to qualifies the subject and empowers her/him to perform. Helpers establish capacities around their hero's identity. Performance or making/doing (faire) consists in transforming an undesired state of affairs into a valued object. Legitimation (or disjunctive structure, Tyson 226) concerns an epistemic judgment determining whether the performance conforms successfully to an implicit or explicit "contract", whereby receivers acknowledge the subject who has fulfilled it (Ghimn and Shields 234-235). As condition for competence, S2 asks himself the following stipulations: Must the action be done? Am I willing to do it? Do I know what it entails? Am I capable of doing it? (Shaqrūsh 133). The NP can be written as follows:

$$NP = S_2 [S_1 \cup O [S_1 \cap O]].$$

The axis of power:

Helper helps S2 to reach his goal while the Opponent distracts S2 from reaching his goal (Kanonge and Jordaan 3).

This structural relations in the actantial model are illustrated in the following chart labelled fig.1:

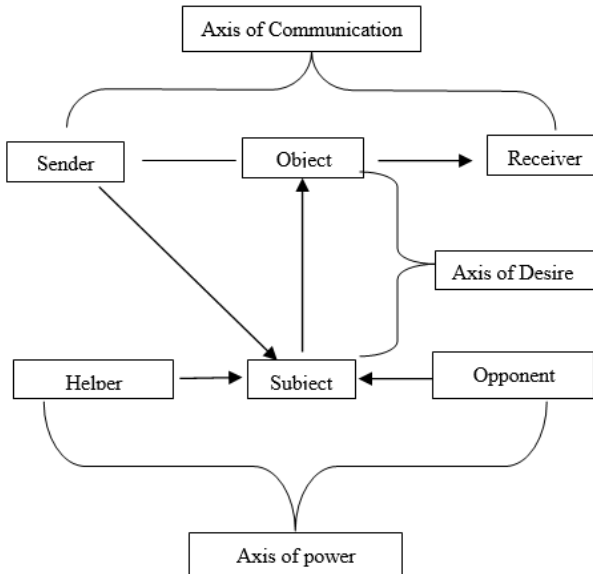


Fig 1: Actantial model illustrating the three relationships between actants in any narrative.

Actantial Model of Fatimah's Marriage

The narrative programme (NP) of Fatimah's marriage, which is the basic programme (bNP) since the story contains sub-NPs called instrumental programmes (iNP), has to go through the three axes explained above: communication, desire and power. Thus, bNP, just like the iNPs, covers contract or manipulation (Shaqrūsh 132, Tyson 226) and the three tests: competence, performance and judgment (Qaysmūn 206).

Thus, NP in our story, that is, Fatimah's attention (FA), which was formerly separated from marriage to Musa (MM) is conjoined to it (MM) with the intervention of Fatimah (FS), has the following formula:

$$NP = FS \longrightarrow [FA \cup MM \longrightarrow [FA \cap MM]]$$

This intervention is the intermediary, transforming doing F (*Faire transformer* in French) of Fatimah the subject operator or operator meta-subject (FS), the traditional heroine. This transforming doing carries the following UoD formula:

$$F(\text{transformation})[FS \longrightarrow (FA \cap MM)].$$

Technically put, Fatimah (FS) caused Fatimah (FA) to be in conjunction with (MM), the message she (FA) intends to send to Fatimah (FR). FS is a subject operator and FA is a subject of state (Kanonge and Jordaan 2). Since FA is a quality in Fatimah, FA is still Fatimah. While FA is passive, FS is active and works on behalf of FA, that is, herself, in a reflexive, not transitive, doing (Kanonge and Jordaan 2, Kurtīs 152).

Thus, $FS \longrightarrow [FA \cup MM \longrightarrow [FA \cap MM]]$ means in everyday language that Fatimah (FS) engaged in self-help assisting herself (FA) to get what she desires by personally taking action facing the difficulties and subduing them. The textual manifestation of the process of this achievement is explained below:

Manipulation of Fatimah (contractual structure)

Manipulative communication made by FA (subject of state) to FS telling her why the marriage is not only important but indispensable to the future life of FR includes the narrator's quotation from Fatimah (FS): "Your historical fame is nothing but a miracle in my view" (Abiola 12). This is a statement from her to Musa, which indicates that FA had earlier whispered same into FS's mind. Furthermore, the narrator's omniscience discovers that FA whispered into her (FS's) thought that FR has a brighter future with Musa as her fiancé (Abiola 40); that he deserves to occupy her heart for the acceptance he enjoys on campus (Abiola 45); that he epitomizes virtues (Abiola 64); that her great harvest (Musa) must not slip from her (Abiola 74); that he is the most compatible for her at all time (Abiola 84); that he is her destined husband (Abiola 271-272) and

that his profile is so astronomically soaring that he had dinner with the president of the country (Abiola 288). In addition, FA's manipulative transmission of modalities (knowledge about MM) as subject manipulator to FS on how to do the action is to intimate her that she must get the consent of Musa's mother, the support of her own mother, and plan ahead of the clogging intrigues of her father (Abiola 108, 143 and 323). After interacting with FS, the communication of MM made by FA to FR to impart it to her and provoke her want takes the following narrative utterance formula:

FA—>MM—>FR = (First function of NP) (Shaqrūsh 132, Tyson 226).

Test structures

The second function of the NP of Fatimah's narrative is the test of competence, performance and judgment (Shaqrūsh 132, Tyson 226).

I. Fatimah testing her competence

The sub-programme of the acquisition of competence is different from the base NP, because the Sender manipulates and sanctions the Receiver from a level that transcends the narrative universe in which the subject operator (SO i.e. S₂) accomplishes its narrative trajectory (Post 33). However, Sender equally manipulates S₂ (here, FS), who must assess his level of competence before setting out in search of the object (here, MM) (Tyson 226). Thus, Fatimah (FS) assessed herself by providing convincing answers to questions she asks herself (Shaqrūsh 133):

Must the action be done?

According to our narrator, FS is convinced that this search for MM must be done because she (Fatimah, FA) is unable to restrain herself from falling in love for him (Musa) right from the first day they met (Abiola 54-46); she must not lose Musa (Abiola 64); Musa is her destiny (Abiola 271-272) and thus this is her first and last love (Abiola 128).

Am I willing to do it?

Fatimah, FS, is not ordinarily willing to get MM for FA but rather determined after seeing that she will not labour in vain because she (FA) is willing to cause FR to join Musa to make him the happiest man on earth (Abiola 11); she loves him more than her family (Abiola 106); she has decided to be married to him (Abiola 63-64); she is prepared to sacrifice anything to get Musa (Abiola 115); he has confidence in her (Abiola 183-184); he has hope of a brighter future (Abiola 63).

Do I know what it entails?

Fatimah, FS, knows that to get MM for FA, she must pass through the rigour of seeking approval from parents and in case there is resistance, she, because FA is expecting MM for onward transfer to FR, must aggressively push her way through (Abiola 106, 108, 130-131, 143, 323).

Am I capable of doing it?

Fatimah, FS, is convinced of her capability after she discovered that with her are weapons of diplomacy, politeness, submission and impudence which she will effectively apply when appropriate in the course of carrying out her tasks (Abiola 11, 115-118, 128, 143, 320). This is the first stage of test (Qaysmūn 206).

II. Test of Fatimah's performance

The novelist tells us that Fatimah (FS, or the heroine) was not complacent but took rigorous, practical and necessary steps toward actualizing MM for FA. Musa *ab initio* did not show awareness of love of FA for him but FS directed his attention to it and he recognized it (Abiola 11-12). Musa's mother was hesitant to consent to MM (Abiola, 71, 78, 88) but FS diplomatically got her consent (Abiola 115-118, 125, 277). Her (FS's) own mother attempted to resist the proposal but she crudely, later, politely got mum's consent (Abiola, 63, 107, 127-128). Mustapha suddenly appeared and smartly sought her father's permission to marry her. Her father agreed because he is from a wealthy family and attempted to force her to marry him (Abiola 190-191, 195, 199-200) but she bluntly coerced Mustapha to withdraw his marriage request (Abiola 151, 190-191, 195, 200, 212). While Fatimah as subject (S_B) desired marriage to Musa (O_B), Mustapha as anti-subject (S_A) craved after marriage to Fatimah (O_A). In the anti-subject/subject relationship in narratives, if S_A must get O_A , S_B must abandon O_B . That is, for Mustapha's desire to be satisfied, Fatimah must jettison the idea of marriage to Musa - something which she (not being fancy-free) will not contemplate until she breathes her last. Thus, engaged in quest to marry Musa, she met Mustapha's overtures and proposal with a rebuff (Kanonge and Jordaan 2-3).

Forging ahead, her father vehemently rejected the poor Musa and resolved to get rid of him with all at his disposal (Abiola, 130-132, 140, 145) but she submitted herself post-haste for solemnization of the marriage without the knowledge of her father (Abiola 289-296). When fear overwhelmed her and her spouse about a possible dissolution of the marriage if her father eventually gets wind of it, she called a family meeting where she boldly disclosed that she is now an expectant mother having been married to Musa and that she has lodged a complaint to the police that he (her father), through his agents, is after the life of

Musa. This declaration forced him to allow the marriage to stay (Abiola 320-324, 328). This is the second stage of test (Qaysmūn 206). The actantial model of Fatimah's marriage explained above is graphically represented in the flow chart below:

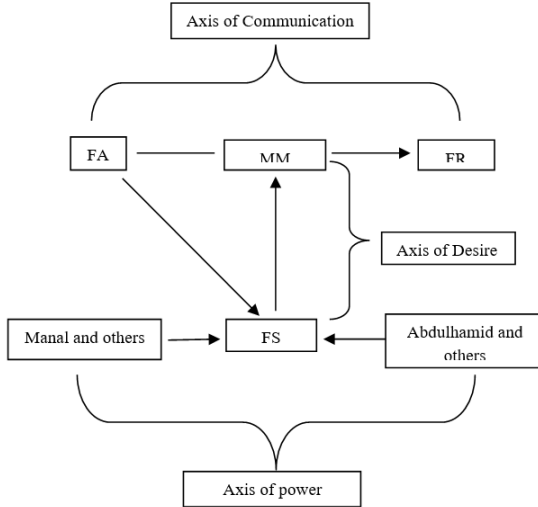


Fig 2: Actantial model illustrating the three relationships between actants in Fatimah's marriage.

It should be noted that Fatimah plays a number of actantial roles in the narrative. She is the sender (S₁), the receiver (R), the subject operator (S₂) and she got help not only through other people or things but also through her innate attributes like humility before Musa's mother, anger before her mother and impudence before her father. This multiplicity of roles can be represented diagrammatically thus:

The simple narrative of Fatimah's marriage as analyzed is the base Narrative Programme (bNP) in our story. It consists of several sub-programmes, instrumental narrative programmes (iNP), which are necessary for the realization of the bNP (Post 32). Were Fatimah to be complacent and unwilling to take radical steps toward forcing her way to getting married to Musa, she would have remained helplessly unmarried to him. The following measures, which represent the iNPs in the trajectory of her marriage are instrumental to her success:

iNP-a. Fatimah (FS) got for herself (FA) the attention of Musa (AM)

iNP-b. Fatimah (FS) got for herself (FA) consent of Musa's mother (Mu-M)

- iNP-c. Fatimah (FS) got for herself (FA) her mother's consent (Hr-M)
- iNP-d. Fatimah (FS) secured for herself (FA) withdrawal of Mustapha's marriage offer (WMO)
- iNP-e. Fatimah (FS) submitted herself (FA) to a hurried marriage solemnization to Musa (HMS)
- iNP-f. Fatimah (FS) forced her (FA's) father to allow her marriage to Musa to stay (MMS)

Thus, the chain of these major events that constitute FS's performance from the beginning to the end of the story is diagrammatically illustrated thus:

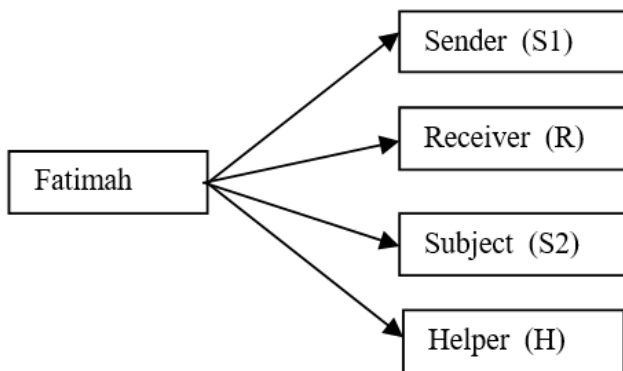


Fig. 3: Chart describing the tasks performed by Fatimah in the course of striving after marriage to Musa.

III. Judging Fatimah's performance

Consequent upon the aggressive actions taken by FS, FA is now able to deliver MM to FR. FA is delighted that abiding happiness has been ensured in the heart of Fatimah now that the marriage is consummated (Abiola 296) allowing her and Musa to legally co-habit (Abiola 312-313, 336), make public announcement of their marriage (Abiola 337) and go for honeymoon (Abiola 337-344). FS is hereby judged successful. This is the third stage of test (Qaysmūn 206, Ghimm and Shields 234-235).

Summary and Conclusion

From our analysis so far, it is discovered that Fatimah, realizing the potency of these confronting problems to hinder the actualization of her dream if not faced headlong, with unbendable resolve, proactively moved against them deploying appropriate tactics to address appropriate situations: she in a brazen-faced manner declared to Musa's face her heart-felt love for him (Abiola 11, 12); she humbly appeared, displayed strong commitment and uncommon sincerity of love for Musa before his mother (Abiola 115-118); she overbore her mother to succumb after which appreciative utterances followed (Abiola 128, 143, 198, 199, 211, 214); she vehemently rejected the dead-on-arrival idea of an alternative fiancé in Mustapha (Abiola 197, 199, 211, 214); she hastily solemnized her marriage to Musa before her father's intrigues overtake and consume the two of them, especially Musa (Abiola, 289-296) and lastly, she informed her father that she is married to and pregnant for Musa and claimed that a petition complaining about his (her father's) plot to eliminate Musa is before the police. All these forced her father to surrender and allow the marriage to stay (Abiola, 320-324). Thus, the marriage became realistic and went with a swing.

In conclusion, it is observed that in the imagination of the novelist, Fatimah's marriage desire has a host of difficulties ahead of it and she with firm resolve faced them – with the help of appropriate steps enunciated above -knocking them off the way one after the other until she finally got married to her chosen Musa. The semiotics of this narrative is that these activities drawn from the fictional universe of the novelist symbolize the fact that desires, especially those with intricate obstacles threatening to clog their achievement, can only be satisfied by actors with firm resoluteness. Thus, our novelist from the imaginative realm, is indirectly teaching humanity that life is full of daunting challenges to overcome which the will to act is a key factor.

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