# Analysis of the Narrative Structure of the Rewritten Story of *Mathnavi*, "Love's Alchemy"

**Omid Vahdanifar**

Assistant professor of Persian Language and Literature,

University of Bojnord

## Introduction

Rewriting of the old literary works has considerably flourished in the recent decades. That many literary texts have been rewritten for different age groups of children and young adults testifies to the significance of these texts for these age groups. In rewriting, "after selecting the original old text and simplifying it, fictional spaces are created by establishing elements of time and place for events, and then, new structures are built for the stories by expanding the plot" (Najafi-Behzadi & Safari, 2015: 72).

It is not easy for young adults to read the intricate tales of *Mathnavi* and understand the protean thoughts of Mowlana; therefore, writers of children and young adult literature undertake the task of rewriting the long stories of *Mathnavi* in the form of independent shorter stories to help readers find their way in the intricate tales (ibid, 72).

Seyed Ishaq Shojaei has rewritten one of the tales of *Mathnavi*, "The King and the Maid", with the new title "Love's Alchemy" in his collection of stories, *The Ladder of the Sun*.

**Methodology, Review of Literature and Purpose**

By the use of library resources and descriptive-analytical methodology, this research will focus on the narrative structure of "Love's Alchemy" on three levels of narrative and narrative system, sequence and plot in order to show how the narrative structure of this story presents the formation of a new action in the process of moving from a disrupted situation to a situation of equilibrium.

There have been a number of studies on the rewritten stories of *Mathnavi*, for example, "Studying Several Decades of Rewriting *Mathnavi*" by Payvar (2001) and "A Look at Rewriting *Mathnavi Ma'navi* for Children and Adolescents" by Okhovvat (2004). Najafi-Behzadi and Safari (2008) in "Studying and Analyzing Some Rewritten Tales of *Mathnavi* for Adolescents" try to identify important structural and narrative patterns (narrative techniques) for presenting a creative rewriting which is in proportion with the mental and linguistic potentials of adolescents by comparing the narrative structures of ten tales of *Mathnavi* with their rewritten texts. Ali Abbasi (2012) in "Comparative Study of the Narrative Function of Plot in Two Old and New Narrative: The Rabbit and the Lion from *Mathnavi* and The Predatory Lion and the Clever Rabbit from *Sweet Tales of Mathnavi Ma'navi*" compares the two mentioned stories on the two levels of narrative and plot and concludes that the former story has one plot, while the latter one has two plots. *Rewriting the Tales of Mathnavi for Adolescents* by Jafar Ebrahimi (2008) and *Simplified Mathnavi for Adolescents* by Ahmad Nafisi (2008) are also worth mentioning.

The researcher has not come across any study which analyzes the story "Love's Alchemy" from the perspective of its narrative structure.

**Discussion**

Every structural design attempts to organize the three elements of plot. Creating balance between these processes requires skillful designing of narrative structure which eventually gives beauty to the work (Abbasi, 2014: 101). This study analyzes the story "Love's Alchemy" on three levels of narrative and narrative system, sequence and plot.

The type of narrative used in the story "Love's Alchemy" is heterogeneous storyworld narrative; therefore, the narrator keeps his temporal and special distance from the actants of the narrative to narrate the story of the young king. The story begins with a description of the scene in which the main character (the king) as the actant is passing through the neighborhoods of the city. The character is described as "The Young King" which means we are dealing with an active narrative system and the main character is taking the role of an actant. The narrative begins with a detailed description of the setting by the narrator in an indirect manner from third person point of view. Every narrative has at least one sequence but sometimes several sequences are combined to create a story. This story is comprised of three sequences, which are themselves created by several narrative propositions. Analyzing the plot structure of a work is important in showing the writer's method of expression; therefore, one of the aims of this study is to identify the plot structure of "Love's Alchemy" since "the beauty of a narrative depends on various elements and one of them is 'the innovative plot of the story'" (Mohammadi & Abbasi, 2002: 183). Analyzing the plot of "Love's Alchemy" and its overall narrative structure reveals that this story has a "normal" plot because the plot structure is fairly coherent and orderly. In fact, the events follow each

other in this story. Therefore, the plot is not complicated and can be considered a simple plot because the natural order of events is dominant over the fictional order and the events are always taking place one after the other in a chain. As a result, the story can be categorized among those with "open" plots.

**Conclusion**

Every story follows a set of rules laid down by the author from the beginning. The analysis of the narrative structure of "Love's Alchemy" (a rewriting of the story "The King and the Maid" from *Mathnavi*), yields these results:

1. The type of narrative of "Love's Alchemy" is "heterogeneous storyworld narration" in which there is an active narrative system which has a central action structure and all the actants are planning to work it out. This central structure is supported and opposed by two groups of actants. Accordingly, the central structure of the action serves the actant to move from a disrupted situation to an equilibrium. Eventually, the savior shows up and by creating a discursive umbrella, supports the hero actant and help him/her reach success; therefore, the action takes place and the central action is stabilized.

2. The narrative of the story is comprised of three sequences and sixteen narrative propositions. The sequences are combined to create the narrative. The first and the second sequences come one after the other and are combined as chain-making. The third sequence enters the narrative as internalization and as one of the propositions of the second sequence and the final text is created.

3. The story has one normal plot. In fact, the narrative structure has an orderly plot because the story begins with a description of the passage of the main character (the king); then, the disruptive force (the maid) creates a conflict in the story. Afterwards, a crisis enters the story (the maid's illness). Then the story reaches the climax (the maid's disinterest toward Habib) and then reaches its denouement (the separation of the maid from Habib). Hence, the story can be said to have a coherent plot and the way plot elements are organized reveals the author's power in story-making. The events have cause and motivation and lead to the conclusion of the story. Therefore, they create surprise for the reader. The plot has a structural unity which draws the readers into the world of the story. In sum, it could be said that the author has taken advantage of narrative and structural patterns in creating a suitable rewriting compatible with the mental and linguistic potentials of adolescents.

**Keywords:** narrative, narrative level, sequence, plot, "Love's Alchemy"

**References:**

Abbasi, A. (2012). Comparative study of the narrative function of plot in two old and new narratives: The rabbit and the lion from *Mathnavi* and the predatory lion and the clever rabbit from *sweet tales of Mathnavi Ma'navi*. *Literary History*, *70*, 123-140 (in Persian).

Abbasi, A. (2014). *Applied narratology*. Shahid Beheshti University Press  (in Persian).

Barthes, R. (2008). *An introduction to narrative structure analysis* (M. Ragheb, Trans.). Rokhdad-e Now  (in Persian).

Ebrahimi-Shahed, J. (2008). *Rewriting the tales of Mathnavi for adolescents* (4 Vols.). Peydayesh  (in Persian).

Genette, G. (1972). *Figures III* (du Seuil, Ed.). Seuil.

Mohammadi. M. H. (1999). *Methodology of children's literature criticism*. Soroush  (in Persian).

Mohammadi, M. H. & Abbasi, A. (2002). *Samad: The structure of a myth*. Chista (in Persian).

Najafi-Behzadi, S. & Safari, J. (2015). Studying and analyzing a number of rewritten tales of *Mathnavi* for adolescents. *Kavoshnameh*, *31*, 71-101 (in Persian).

Nafisi, A. (2008). *Simplified Mathnavi for adolescents*. Tehran (in Persian).

Okhovvat, A. (1992). *The grammar of fiction*. Farda (in Persian).

Okhovvat, F. (2004). A look at rewriting *Mathnavi Ma'navi* for children and adolescents. International Conference on Mowlana's Thoughts, 396-417 (in Persian).

Payandeh, H. (2015). *Opening novel: Iranian novel in the light of literary theory and criticism*. Morvarid (in Persian).

Payvar, J. (2001). Studying several decades of rewriting Mathnavi. *Book of the Month of Children and Adolescents*, *4*, 16-22 (in Persian).

Scholes, R. (2004). *An introduction to structuralism in literature* (F. Taheri, Trans.). Agah (in Persian).

Shaeiri, H. R. (2009). From structuralist sign to sign-discourse semantics. *Literary Criticism*, *2*(8), 33-51 (in Persian).

Shaeiri, H. R. (2016). *Sign-discourse of literature: Theory and method of literary discourse analysis*. Tarbiat Modarres University Press (in Persian).

Shojaei, S. I. (2007). *The ladder of the sun: Rewriting Mathanvi Ma'navi's stories*. Research Foundation for Astan Qods Razavi (in Persian).

Todorov, T. (2003). *Structuralist Poetics* (M. Nabavi, Trans.). Agah (in Persian).