

AN ARISTOTELIAN NARRATOLOGICAL READING OF RUMI'S MASNAVI- MA'NAVI

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ABSTRACT: *Narratology is one of the theories that study the narrative and narrative structure to reveal some deeper and hidden aspects of ancient and contemporary texts. Research into the narratological study of ancient Persian stories, particularly tales of Rumi's Masnavi-Ma'navi, is limited primarily to theories of Twentieth Century narratologists such as Genette, Kenan, and Chatman with regard to different dimensions such as temporality of narrative, excluding Aristotle's theories on plot. While plot constitutes one of the important narratological terms in literary criticism, it is necessary to study its role in Rumi's tales. There are just two studies, by Tavakoli and Bamashki, who had drawn upon Aristotle's ideas about an effective plot in Masnavi Ma'navi. Nevertheless, their studies cease to realize that the Aristotelian concepts of peripeteia and anagnorisis are properly applicable to Rumi's classical narrative poetry. Hence, this study presents a narratological study of the interior plot of the selected stories from Masnavi-Ma'navi, namely "The merchant and the parrot," "The snake and the snake-catcher," and "Students and their teacher," in the light of the two Aristotelian concepts.*

KEYWORDS: *Masnavi-Ma'navi, Rumi, Narratology, Aristotle's Poetics, Plot, Peripeteia, Anagnorisis.*

Introduction

Masnavi-Ma'navi, one of the treasures of both Sufism and Dari Persian literature in the 13th century and written by the celebrated Persian poet Jalal ad-Din Mohammad Rumi (also known as Mowlavi and Mowlana), is a series of six books of Persian poetry including a collection of moral and spiritual anecdotes and tales whose spiritual lessons of life will not sink into oblivion. This work has been continually reviewed and analyzed from new perspectives. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons behind the immortality and longevity of this work in narrative literature lies in Mowlavi's use of soft and sweet speech, which makes it pleasant even to contemporary readers. Since *Masnavi-Ma'navi*, also known as *Masnavi*, is full of anecdotes and stories, one of the areas considered to explore this work is narratology, which is the study of the narrative structure. Well-known modern narratologists such as Genette, Prince, and Chatman have analyzed the structure and function of narrative, focusing on different dimensions such as point of view, temporality of narrative, focalization, narrator, and suspense. Narratology is one of the theories

that reveal to the audience and readers deep and hidden aspects of ancient and contemporary texts.

The purpose of the present paper is twofold: firstly, after a brief discussion of narratology, it attempts to restore the position of Aristotle as the founder of narratology; secondly, it intends to elaborate on and identify the Aristotelian theories on the plot of tragedy, particularly the concepts of anagnorisis and peripeteia, which are the main focus of this paper. The present study endeavors to fill in the gap in the previous studies about the narratological study of *Masnavi*, disregarding Aristotle as a classical narratologist. In *Masnavi*, Mowlana has made use of storytelling to achieve didactic and mystical purposes and Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, has discussed the key elements of an effective plot designed to convey moral and didactic lessons to the reader through arousing the feelings of pity and fear, and the purgation or catharsis of these and similar feelings. Therefore, the stories of *Masnavi* have the potential to be assessed using the theories of Aristotelian narratology, some part of which pinpoints the role of the concepts of peripeteia and anagnorisis in the stories. This paper is primarily concerned with the application of ideas and principles of Aristotle to the selected stories of Mowlana's masterpiece, *Masnavi*. The present paper was initially written in Persian two years ago. The researchers have expanded and translated that Persian paper into English.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Research in the field of the narratological study of ancient Persian stories, particularly the stories of *Masnavi*, has a significant background. Some considerable narratological studies have been conducted on this work. They are as follows: "Delay and gap in *Masnavi*" (2011) and "Narrative gap and return to the story in *Masnavi*" (2011); "Narrative structure of the story in *Masnavi*" (2011); "Comparison of the shared stories of *Masnavi* and *Manteg-ol-Teyr* with a constructive approach" (2009); "The imaginative realities of Daghughli story in *Masnavi*" (2008); "Narrative and time scope of narrative in *Masnavi* stories" (2008); "A survey of relationship between time and suspension in the story of 'the king and the maid'" (2009); "Semiotics of Dagoughli event" (2007); and works such as the two PhD theses, *Poetics of narrative in Masnavi* (2010) and *Narratology of Masnavi stories* (2012). These works on the narratological study of *Masnavi* have benefited primarily from the theories of Twentieth Century narratologists on various dimensions including temporality of narrative. Only two of these works on *Masnavi* turn to the main subject of this paper and draw upon Aristotle's ideas about an effective plot to examine the plots of Rumi's stories. In the following section, a review of these two works is presented.

Poetics of narrative in Masnavi is considered a pioneer work of theorization in Persian narrative. In this work, Tavakoli (2007) has analyzed *Masnavi* in terms of the narrative point of view, language and narrative, polyphonic narrative, association and escape in a narrative, story within the story technique, music, time, and the beginning and end of a narrative, and, generally, the order and manner in which a narrative is presented. Nonetheless, what makes the present paper different from Tavakoli's study is the discussion of the internal plot of *Masnavi*. Aristotle maintains that a plot ought to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. With reference to this statement, Tavakoli argues that, using successive escapes to sub-narratives, Mowlana, in his narratives, is in conflict with Aristotle's definition of plot in its traditional sense.

Unlike Tavakoli, in the present article, the authors turn to different dimensions of Aristotle's plot, i.e. *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia*, to demonstrate that Mowlana's narratives are not in conflict with the Aristotelian plot. Like every other narrative, *Masnavi* has the potential to be evaluated against Aristotle's ideas about plot. In the section on the association and plot, Tavakoli refers to escapes in the story of "The Lion and the Hunts," stating that "the escapes in the two parts of the story gives a dual approach to the story" (p.241), and, thereby "in the first half of the story, the lion has a positive and dominant characteristic whereas in the second half, it is a negative and beaten character" (*ibid.*). In the present paper, the authors will refer to this duality in the lion using the concept of *peripeteia*.

Bamashki's book entitled *Narratology of Masnavi's stories* (2012) analyzes all of the stories of *Masnavi*, employing theories of the second generation of contemporary theoreticians of narratology, such as Genette, Kenan, and Chatman; thus, disregarding theories of classical structural narratologists such as Barthes, Todorov, and Grimas, this book examines *Masnavi* in terms of the manner of Mowlana's narration, which has a great impact on the reader. In a meeting to review the book, attended by Horri, in the discussion related to the fifth chapter of the book on plot, Bamashki said that she examined the beginning and the end of Rumi's stories. In response to Bamashki's question whether it is wrong to review topics such as the title, the beginning, the middle, and the end, which means she studies the plot of the narratives, Horri (2013) replied that this was just one part of the plot:

In talking about plot we have beginning and end, but we also have the flow of the course of the story. The plot you are talking about is the external plot including beginning, middle, *etc.*, but the storyline itself has an inner plot; it starts with an exposition, then a rising action occurs, arrives at a crisis, then a falling action and (Horri, p.5) Therefore, in her book, Bamashki concerned with the outer plot comprising a beginning and an end, excluding the role of the inner plot in narration. The present paper, however, provides insights about the inner plot of the stories using the Aristotelian elements of *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia*, which, in Horri's opinion, cause some changes in the initial equilibrium state of the story.

Hence, the existing studies on the role of narratology in *Masnavi* have discussed merely the manner of narration and the external plot of Rumi's stories. Furthermore, the majority of these studies have employed modern theories of narratologists other than Aristotle. Nevertheless, the present paper turns away from the above-mentioned setbacks by employing the Aristotelian concepts in *Masnavi*. In any discussion on narrative and narratology, it seems reasonable to point out Aristotle's role in the history of this approach and then move toward its modern contributors.

DISCUSSION

Narratology is a rather new science in the field of literary criticism. By studying this field, we find out that its theoretical lineage is traceable to Aristotle's *Poetics*. Aristotle analyzed key elements of an effective and coherent plot in his own time and recorded his findings in his famous book *Poetics* in the section on tragedy. In his definition of narratology, Prince (1982) refers to this point, clarifying the extent to which principles of modern narratology rely on traditional ones. He maintains that "narratology is the study of the structure and function of the

narrative. Although this concept is new, its principles are not new, going back in time to Aristotle and Plato” (Prince, p.146).

In a similar way, in the existing literature on the subject of literary criticism in the sections related to narratology, Aristotle is listed among important narratologists. For instance, Barry (2002) and Cobley (2005), in their separate discussions of narratology and its background, stress that Aristotle had an important role in the history of narratology, regarding him as the “ultimate ancestor” of narratology and regarding his *Poetics* as a concise explanation on mechanisms of poetry (Berry, p.145, Cobley, p.1). Furthermore, both Akbari (2010) and Meghdadi (2010) refer to the initial point of the science of narratology, emphasizing that Aristotle, by making a distinction between two kinds of narration, namely narration by the narrator and narration by the characters, took the first step in the realm of narratology, and that Aristotle’s ideas make up the starting point of narratology (Akbari, p.5; Meghdadi, p.280). In “Review of the narrative story: Contemporary poetics,” Sadati (2010) notes that “the first person talking about narrative is Aristotle, who, . . . by examining the effect of the tragic elements such as plot and character, talks about narratology for the first time” and “after Aristotle, there is no special discussion about narrative and narratology until its beginning in the twentieth century” (p.4).

Therefore, Aristotle can be considered to be the founder of classical narratology and his ideas about the plot of the story and its components can be applied to the stories of *Masnavi*. Before beginning an Aristotelian study of *Masnavi*, the following section provides a definition of narrative, narratology, and the role of Aristotle in the history of this science.

Narrative and Aristotelian narratology

One of the considerations important to narratological study is the term “narrative,” for which there are various definitions. We need to know what we mean by narrative and what components it has. In its broad sense, a narrative is a text which tells a story and has a narrator or a storyteller; in other words, a narrative is a story which retells a set of events happening in a period of time. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Abrams (2005) defines narrative as “a story in prose or poetry including a set of events, characters and their speech and deeds” (p.282). Narrative has been also defined by Prince (1982) as “the representation of events and situations, real or fictive, in a sequence of time” (p.4). From these definitions, it is inferred that narratologists take into account the relationship between events of a story in a sequence of time. However, apart from the element of time, which Genette, the prominent French narratologist, regards as the main factor and a necessary feature of a narrative, it must be said that the causal relationship between the events is another important element in a narrative.

What makes a narrative different from a description is, accordingly, the “nonrandom connection” between events. Toolan (2004) presents another definition for a narrative and defines it as “the perceived sequence of the non-randomly connected events” (p.20). He further declares that, in every story or narrative, there are identified and constant situations which change due to another event. According to this scholar, it seems that time, causal, and nonrandom events play a vital role in determining the narrativity of a work; therefore, every event should be the result of another event. This causal and temporal relationship has been used, for the first time, by Aristotle in his discussions on tragedy and plot.

Aristotle considered three main elements of the story as the most important aspects of a narrative: plot, character, and dialogue. Aristotle asserted that the first principle and the soul of tragedy was plot and the second in importance was character (Aristotle and S. H. Butcher, pp.28-29). Due to the significance of plot, the present paper turns away from the inclusion of the other two aspects, focusing on the plot. Being the most important of all elements of the story, plot refers to the structure and arrangement of incidents. Here is a definition of plot provided in Zarrin-Koob's (1990) translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*:

The first term used for the structure of the narrative is the plot. Plot is the result of the combination of the time and causality. A union is dominant in plot which has been addressed for the first time by Aristotle. He was of the opinion that a tragedy requires a whole and united mimicry act, and this act must have beginning, middle and an end, and if each of these components be displaced, the work becomes torn apart. (pp.127-128). In *Aspects of Novel* (2005), Forster gives a simple but functional definition of plot. He defines the story as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence while plot is a narrative of events in which the emphasis falls on causality. (qtd. in Meghdadi, p.356). In this description, in addition to the temporal relationship, there is a reference to the cause and effect relationship between events. For example, "The king died and then the queen died" is story because only the logical sequence of events in chronological order is followed. However, "[T]he king died, and then the queen died of grief" is a plot (Forster, p.118), since the cause of the death of the queen is stressed in this statement. Mowlana, in a couplet of the story of "The Prince and the Handmaid" states: "He said: Thou were my beloved (in reality) not she; but in this world deed issues from deed." This refers to the causal relationship (Daad, pp.99-100). In other words, "plot is a coherent and correlated plan which starts at a point and ends at another one and between these two points a number of causally related events happen" (*ibid.*, p.57). Aristotle considered three parts for a plot:

A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. (Aristotle and S. H. Butcher, p.31).

Plot can be enhanced by an intelligent use of "two most powerful elements of emotional interest" (*ibid.*, p.27), namely, peripeteia, or reversal, and anagnorisis, or recognition. These elements work best when they are used as an integral part of the plot. Anagnorisis and peripeteia are English translations of the Greek words "ἀναγνώρισις" and "περιπέτεια," which are translated as "discovery" and "reversal", respectively. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle used these two terms in his discussion on tragedy and comedy. He defined peripeteia or the reversal of the situation as "a change by which the action veers round to its opposite," and anagnorisis or recognition as "a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune" (*ibid.*, p.41). Nevertheless, Barry (2002), in his explanation of narratology, has made use of these two Aristotelian terms in a cartoon diagram taken from a box of cat's food. He concludes that "these Aristotelian concepts can be found even in the simplest texts" (p.146). Another instance of the use of these two terms in cases other than tragedy or comedy is the one presented in Meghdadi's *Dictionary of Literary Theory: From Plato to*

Contemporary Age (2010). Here, the elements of anagnorisis and peripeteia are examined in Poe's short story entitled "The Purloined Letter" (p.394). Therefore, it is inferred that these elements are not specific to tragedy or comedy, and can be investigated in the narrative poetry of Mowlana.

Peripeteia was used for the first time in the discussion of plot of tragedy by Aristotle, which literally means "reversal and things-going-wrong" and, in plot, it means "the change in the situation and status of things to its opposite" (Daad, p.313). A character in a story might discover a characteristic of him/herself, which he/she was not aware of before, and such an "awareness and discovery leads to some actions and reactions in the character, which might bring about a change in the character of the story" (*ibid.*). Most often, peripeteia occurs simultaneously with anagnorisis or immediately after it. Anagnorisis is also a literary term used by Aristotle in his definition of the plot. According to Daad (1997), anagnorisis is "the process of the character's awareness of a point or a truth of which he was unaware and ignorant till that time" (p.241). For example, reversal happens to Rustam and his fate is reversed (peripeteia) when he realizes that he had killed his own son (anagnorisis). Aristotle believes that the best type of anagnorisis is the one which is simultaneous with peripeteia. In *Dictionary of literary theory: From Plato to contemporary age*, Meghdadi (2010) refers to the existence of the concepts of "reversal or peripeteia" and "discovery or anagnorisis" in an effective plot (p.394).

Another important point about discovery or anagnorisis is that, according to Aristotle, there are six types of discovery: the first is the one brought about by signs or tokens; the second, the formal declaration; the third, the one affected by memory; the fourth, resulting from inference; the fifth, the "synthetic," "fictitious," or "false" discovery; and the sixth and the best one is brought about by the natural sequence of events in the plot itself. The synthetic or false discovery is the one which results from the false reasoning of one of the parties involved. In "The fifth form of 'discovery' in *Poetics* of Aristotle," Cooper (1918) defines the "synthetic or fictitious discovery" as the one related to discovery by inference in which one of the parties, by deceiving the other party, falsely infers the matter; or the false discovery might occur when no deceit is intended by either party, and the person himself/herself jumps to conclusions and acts accordingly by a false reasoning (pp.258-260). An example for this type of discovery can be found in Sophocles' *Oedipus the Rex*, in which Oedipus unwantedly kills his father and marries his mother. The false discovery occurs when Oedipus hears that his godfather, whom he thinks is his biological father, dies. Hence, Oedipus concludes that his father died a natural death and that he was not involved in his death, therefore the prophecies were wrong and he could, by no means, be the murderer of his father. But, later it is proved that Oedipus made a false discovery of the matter. This type of discovery also causes some reversals in the status of the characters, which is also noticeable in *Masnavi* stories. It seems necessary to point out that Aristotle, in a discussion of the elements of plot, concentrates on the hero or the main character undergoes changes; however, in the stories of *Masnavi*, anagnorisis and peripeteia might happen to several characters.

Another important point in relation to the plot, as discussed in *Poetics*, is that plots, as imitations of real events, are either simple or complex. According to Aristotle, a plot is called simple when "the change of fortune takes place without reversal of the situation and without recognition"; a

complex plot is the one in which “the change is accompanied by such reversal, or recognition, or by both” which should arise from the internal structure and events of the plot (Aristotle and Butcher, p.39). Here, by identifying the elements of anagnorisis and peripeteia in *Masnavi*, it is concluded that the plots of the stories in this collection fall within the second category, namely complex plot.

In relation to the order these elements occur in a story or a narrative, it should be said that there are three types of their occurrence in a play: peripeteia occurs simultaneously with anagnorisis, prior to anagnorisis, and/or subsequent to anagnorisis. In discussing the application of the two Aristotelian elements of anagnorisis and peripeteia to Persian poetry, there exists only a paper entitled “A study of Aristotle’s discovery and reversal in three poems by P. E’tesami,” in which Mehrvand and Attari-Khamne (2015) refer to the concurrence of anagnorisis and peripeteia as the best type of the occurrence of these Aristotelian elements in E’tesami’s selected poems. The authors of that paper observe the similarity and difference between anagnorisis and peripeteia, emphasizing that the type of the change occurred to the fortune and thought of the character is internal or external:

An important point to be taken into mind is the similarity and difference between anagnorisis and peripeteia. Both of them refer to a change in the character and are similar in this respect. Their difference lies in the fact that anagnorisis is an internal change (intellectual) and transformation from ignorance to knowledge, but peripeteia is an external change (behavioral and tangible) in the fate of the person, such as the fall from the peak to the depth of nothingness, rising from poverty to wealth (rags to riches), or the transition from misery to prosperity. If again, we take into consideration the story of Oedipus, the internal change happens to him when he realizes that he has killed his father and married his mother; since he recognizes his true identity (his parents) after a long time. The external change- which is more noticeable- occurs when Oedipus blinds himself, because his behavior has changed completely due to the previous events and has been drawn from being a prince to a popper and is forced to leave the town because of his oath (p.169).

In the following section, the researchers of the present paper aim to answer the question whether there is any relationship between the charm of the three stories of *Masnavi* and the correct use of the three types of “precedent,” “subsequent,” and “concurrent” anagnorisis and peripeteia.

Concurrence of anagnorisis and peripeteia in “The merchant and the parrot”

“The merchant and the parrot” is the famous story of a merchant who unbeknownly brings from India the secret of liberation and salvation for his parrot, paving the way for the clever parrot to achieve freedom. This is one of the pleasant yet informative stories of *Masnavi* recounted eloquently by Mowlana. Zamani (2002) in his *Comprehensive Commentary on Masnavi* indicates that the main focus of this story is “the voluntary death and breaking from ungodly belongings and getting rid of the false self and ultimately arriving at the annihilation position” (p. 494). Here, the caged parrot is an allegory of a wayfarer who seeks to get released from the cage of the earthly body and its requirements (*ibid.*, p.495). Pournamdarian (2001) comments on this story, stating that “the story of the merchant and the parrot comes in the first book to be an allegory of the liberation of the soul from the prison of the body and the world” (p.273). In his

The Broken Ladder, Zarrin-Koob (2003) also refers to it as a voluntary death and encouragement to silence (p.164).

In “The merchant and the parrot,” we witness two opposing lifestyles: a lifestyle in a limited world without the pleasure of freedom and a lifestyle in a risky and vast range with the joy of freedom. This story is mainly about training human beings to depart from captivity toward its opposing point, that of freedom. What is learned from this story is, in fact, an answer to the question as to what the consequences of negation or denial of freedom are. If the parrot had not realized the contrast between freedom and captivity and had not moved from bondage to liberation, he would have died in the cage without the experience of flying. The story demonstrates that death and oblivion in the cage would be the destiny of the one who denies freedom. In *The Green garden of love*, M. A. E. Nodushan (1998) comments on the symbolical and mystical layer of the story, maintaining that in this story

lies the secret of man’s freedom. The parrot is the symbol of a troubled man who has the talent to reach to perfection (Kamal) and in spite of being caught in the prison of the worldly body and life, he seeks redemption. The free Indian parrot teaches him [the caged parrot] that ‘you will not get free till you die’. He feigns death and gets free (p.153).

The above discussion is a part of the existing commentaries on and interpretations of the story that recounts its mystical and ethical dimensions. Nevertheless, the aim of this paper is to analyze the story on the basis of Aristotelian narratology, including the identification of successive anagnorisis and peripeteia in the plot of the story to answer the question whether the simultaneous use of the two narratological elements of anagnorisis and peripeteia as well as the false discovery of the merchant and the true discovery of the parrots can bring success for this story, having a two-fold impact on the reader. In this section, various stages of anagnorisis and peripeteia in the parrot and the merchant will be explored briefly.

In the beginning, the merchant and the parrot are in a stable state. The merchant has a beautiful parrot, which, unlike his kinsmen, is captive in a cage. After the merchant’s trip to India and the conveyance of his parrot’s message to Indian parrots, one of them falls down from the tree and dies. The merchant misunderstands this event and thinks that the dead parrot was one of the relatives of his own parrot and regrets the delivery of the message. This stage is the false discovery (false anagnorisis) of the merchant, an issue which later leads to reversal (peripeteia). As a result of this false discovery, unaware of the fact that the action of the Indian parrot contains a message for the imprisoned parrot, the merchant naively recounts the reaction of the Indian parrot to his own parrot. The parrot quickly understands the message of his friend by feigning death following this discovery:

[The merchant] said: “I related those complaints of yours to a number of parrots like yourself.” “[O]ne of them felt the pain and sorrow so deeply that its gall was torn asunder, it trembled and fell down dead.” (Mowlavi, 1/1655-6)

The moment the parrot heard what the other parrot had done, it began to tremble, fell down and went deadly cold. (1/1961)

Once again, through the parrot's deceit, the merchant makes another false discovery of the situation, assuming that the parrot became dead. Thus, he took its corpse out of the cage and threw it away. But, to his surprise, the parrot immediately flew and sat on a high branch. Therefore, as a result of the false discovery of the merchant and the proper understanding of the friends' message, reversal occurs in the status of the two; thus, the parrot gets released from confinement and the merchant loses his valuable parrot:

“Then he threw it away out of the cage, but the parrot flew up, perching on a high branch. The seemingly dead parrot flew as swiftly as the eastern sun rushes westward.” (1/1825-6)
 The merchant gets surprised of the act of the parrot, saying: “O the beautiful bird let me know the secret behind this act of you” (1/1828). The parrot demystifies that the Indian parrot advised him with his own deed, implicitly advising that the reason for his confinement was his sweet sound and he needed to give up this trait to gain freedom. The parrot shared his advice with the merchant, bidding farewell to him. The merchant approved that the parrot showed him the spiritual path of truth, which he would follow him. Therefore, the merchant became aware of the practice of the parrot and moved from ignorance to knowledge, concluding that his life was as valuable as the parrot's and, in order to save his life, he needed to leave all his material belongings. Unlike the previous reversal for the merchant, this reversal is positive because both the parrot and the merchant underwent desirable changes in their conditions, which were simultaneous with their discoveries. “The master was amazed at the bird's flight, and suddenly he realized the secret of its trick” (1/1827). Also, the merchant said: “Go and good luck to you. Now you have shown me a new way to live” (1/1846).

That there was no length of time between the occurrence of anagnorisis and peripeteia leads to the simultaneous occurrence of these two concepts possible, which brings about internal and external changes in the parrot, the merchant, and the reader. It is the concurrent occurrence of Aristotelian elements in the plot that makes this story as one of the most beautiful and effective stories of *Masnavi*.

In this story, both the parrot and the merchant made discoveries (anagnorises) at some levels. These discoveries, true or false, brought about reversals (peripeteias) and changes to the status of the two characters. If we take the status of the merchant into consideration, what occurs to readers is how a little negligence and carelessness, together with a quick decision without proper thinking, causes the loss of things valuable to the merchant. Similarly, the reversal in the merchant, who lost his parrot, implies that one should be cautious of what one says and should not say everything before everyone, which may be used for one's own disadvantage. But the ultimate reversal or peripeteia in the merchant shows that living in freedom requires the renunciation of people's flattery. By taking into consideration the status of the parrot, who moves from refinement to freedom, we realize how one can change the situation to the better. The parrot, who discerns the merchant's speech, realizes the hidden message of his friends and discovers that the truth can result in a reversal in his condition. As Nodushan (1998) says, the merchant is the symbol of a person who was ignorant; however, the teaching of the Indian parrots opens his eyes to the truth (p.153).

Another interesting point in this narrative is its story-within-a-story characteristic. A narrative is embedded here within the text of the main narrative. The minor story is recounted by the narrator or one of the characters. These two narratives are in parallel with each other, containing a truth in relation to the main narrative (*Wikipedia* “Story within a Story”).

If we consider the order of anagnorisis and peripeteia, it is observed that peripeteia precedes anagnorisis (because the Indian parrot’s fortune changes by falling down and pretending his death. Later, the merchant understands that his parrot and the Indian parrots pretended death [peripeteia]). In the case of the merchant’s parrot, anagnorisis precedes peripeteia (a quick discovery of his free friends’ message).

Another instructive narrative in *Masnavi* with stages of anagnorisis and peripeteia is “The snake and snake-catcher,” which will be discussed in the following section. By reflecting on the story, it is observed that the reversal or change of fortune is not always as a result of being deceived by another party; it can be brought about by the person’s false inference of the situation. It will be noticed that a careless mistake by a person might be the source of the people’s misfortune around him/her.

“The snake and snake-catcher”: The effect of anagnorisis and peripeteia on the society

This narrative is the story of a snake-catcher who unknowingly and out of his greed speculated that the frozen dragon was dead, hence, took it to the city. This reckless action puts the snake-catcher himself and citizens in trouble when they discover that the dragon is not dead. Comparing the world to the frozen dragon, Nodushan (1998) asserts that this world looks frozen and dead, but it is, in fact, alive with a spirit inside it: “this world is similar to the frozen snake, when the sun of trial and resurrection shines on it, its identity is revealed” (p.218). Therefore, the lust inside us is like the dragon: if it ever finds an opportunity, it will become alive, devouring us all. Our ego is a snake eager to become a dragon, desirous and fierce. It is frozen and humiliated in the cold of austerity: but the heat of lust empowers it and reveals its vicious characteristic. In this story, as Nodushan argues, the snake-catcher is the symbol of “a man imprisoned in his ego whose greed leads to his destruction” (*ibid.*). The dragon is the sensuality hidden inside every human being, young or old, deceiving everyone in a different way. Mowlana says, “[Y]our ego is a dragon not dead/ it is immobilized due to the lack of instruments” (3/1450), and in the case of finding an opportunity, it is strengthened, leading the man to his destruction.

In this story, Mowlana asks the man to seek the right path in order to inhibit the dragon from sensuality. Because he stresses that “he who seeks, finds,” and in order to prevent this dragon from nurturing, he wants the man never to show mercy toward the frozen dragon and not to allow the sun of Iraq ever shine on it or inhibit its radiation. By mortifying it, Rumi tries to protect us from spiritual death. Just like other stories in *Masnavi*, providing ethical and mystical results from simple narratives, in this narrative as well, Mowlana invites the man to overcome the dragon of sensuality and his lustful desires and to be aware that any time it is possible for the fire of lust to flame and lead the man astray from the right path. It also indicates that people usually believe what they see. But, at the end of this story, the reader learns that, to understand and analyze the problems of life, we need to open our metaphorical eyes, instead of the physical eyes, through anagnorisis and peripeteia in order to prevent a catastrophe before it occurs.

If we consider the stages of anagnorisis and peripeteia in this story, the snake-catcher's false discovery of the status of the snake led to the final reversal in himself and the crowd who had curiously gathered to watch the giant snake. When he saw the frozen snake in the snow, he thought it was lifeless. Thus, he took it to the city. Like him, the people also believed that it was dead. As a result, both the snake-catcher and the people made a false discovery of the situation, which led to their negligence:

He assumed it was dead, but it was alive and he did not see it quite well.

It was motionless because of the snow and frost; it was alive but appeared dead (3/1006-7)

After a while, the scorching sun shone on the dragon and warmed it. Gradually, it recovered consciousness, and in no time, the awakened dragon felt hungry, attacking the people to appease its hunger. Most of the people among the crowd experienced a shocking collective reversal or peripeteia; the crowd who had gathered to watch the dragon and thought to have a pleasant time became confronted with a frightening dragon, eventually injuring and killing them. The snake-catcher was petrified and immediately regretted his deed, realizing his mistake. However, there was no escape from the horrific disaster. The snake-catcher's penance was of no avail. In some special cases, as is the case in this story, a person's errors should not be assumed trivial, since it might bring about a terrible collective punishment. Anagnorisis and peripeteia in the snake-catcher occurred simultaneously when the people saw the dragon devouring the man:

The snake-catcher was paralyzed with fear on the spot, crying, "What I brought from the mountains and the desert?"

The blind sheep awakened the wolf: unwittingly it went towards its Azrai'l (Angel of death).

The dragon swallowed the stupid man; blood drinking is easy for him (Mowlavi, 3/1049-51)

Anagnorisis and peripeteia in this story is concurrent because the snake-catcher immediately realizes his mistake when all is done. The peripeteia in him and the crowd is simultaneous with their death, leaving them no time for repenting or blaming the snake-catcher. In this story, by reflecting on the destiny of the snake-catcher, it is concluded that if, like the snake-catcher, negligence, pride, and greed inhibit our true understanding of the situation, and if we do everything without considering its repercussions, and if we act on the basis of our own personal benefits, we will discover a horrible truth when we are put in the grips of the dragons of sensuality and lust. Thus, not only do we ourselves, but also people around us will suffer from the ramifications.

In sum, it is possible to compare the similarities and differences of the two stories of "The merchant and the parrot" and "The snake and snake-catcher." In fact, both stories incorporate false discoveries first, which make the effect of the true discovery so prominent. Their difference lies in the source of the false discovery. The merchant in the previous story made a false discovery of the situation through the deceit of the parrot; however, the snake-catcher in the story made a false discovery through his own false inference of the situation. This, the consequent reversal happened.

The last story, selected from among pleasant stories of *Masnavi*, is the story of some clever students who try to find a way to escape the classroom and obtain a joyful holiday. One of them

suggests a trick to be played upon the teacher. The question is how the students' trick could be interpreted, using the two Aristotelian concepts, *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia*.

Anagnorisis and peripeteia: Schoolchildren's trickery in "The students and their teacher"

If education is not pleasurable, students may find a new way not to resort to individual acts of playing truancy but to make the teacher be absent so that they all be absent with the teacher's consent. This is exactly what happens in "The Students and their teacher." Having suffered much weariness and exertion from the hands of their teacher, some crafty students in a school of a village in Iran found a tricky way to hinder the educational work and compel the teacher to let them free. Eventually, a clever boy came up with a plan:

One of them who was the most intelligent said that they should speak to the master about his paleness.

And tell him he did not look normal, and maybe it was due to the weather or fever (3/1526-27).

The following day, they decided to put the plan in action. When the teacher came to the classroom, each student condoled with him on his sickly appearance. Even the cleverest, the most honest, and the most innocent students supported the idea consistently. Accordingly, one of the students said, "O teacher, how pale are you!" Another said, "[Y]ou are looking ill today." At first, the teacher did not believe them, answering that there was nothing wrong with him, but, as one student after the other continued assuring him that he looked pale and ill, perhaps being a bit tired or hoping to rest, he was finally deceived into believing that he must have been really ill. Therefore, he returned home along with the students, telling his wife that he was ill. Yet, he was not aware of that.

He said: "I myself, too, was unaware of it, but the sons of bitches drew my attention to it."

"I was unaware because of being busy with teaching, whereas I had already had such a heavy illness within me."

When one is deeply occupied with his work, his eyes get blind about his own ailment (3/1602-4). Before the students, his wife tried to persuade the teacher that he was not ill, giving him a mirror to look in, but he refused and went to bed and asked the students to continue their lessons. However, the clever student thought again and read his book loudly. Then, the students assured the teacher that the noise would give him a headache. Thus, the teacher had to believe them and dismiss them to their home. Thus, the students returned home freely and happily.

In *Commentary on Masnavi*, Shahidi (2007) states, "[T]he story of the teacher being ill through the delusion of the students, is the starting point in proving that the human beings are born with different intellectual abilities, some are more and some are less" (p.237). Through this story, Mowlana concludes that "the wisdom of a child surpasses the wisdom of other children and even the teacher himself. So, being wiser is innate, not acquisitive; otherwise, the teacher who is more experienced than the students would not have been deceived" (*ibid.*, pp.237-8). As it is seen in this story, a student taught such a plan to other students and the teacher was deluded into imagining that he was ill and even thought he had got a fever. One of the themes of this story is to differentiate knowledge from doubt. Moreover, if one gains the perfect knowledge, "he will

not be influenced by others and if he does not reach this position his knowledge is incomplete and he might be deluded” (*ibid.*, p.236).

The common feature of the three selected stories, as mentioned before, is the existence of the false or fictitious discovery in addition to the discoveries made by the natural sequence of events in the plot. In this story, the first phase of discovery is the time when the clever student finds a trick to be played upon the teacher. This discovery causes two reversals (*peripeteias*): one in the status of the students themselves who get released from the classroom and school; the other in the health condition of the teacher who was healthy on his arrival in the classroom but, because of the students’ collusion, he imagined that he was ill, finding himself really ill. The other realization is evident in the teacher, which is considered to be a false discovery. This false discovery causes a reversal in the teacher, making him ill. Shahidi maintains that “some have knowledge and some have doubts, and in the discovery of the truth, doubt is imperfect” (*ibid.*): this is evident in the false discovery of the teacher.

If we take into consideration the status of the teacher, *anagnorisis* comes after reversal. But, from the standpoint of the students, *anagnorisis* is precedent to *peripeteia* and the teacher, by making a false inference of the students’ statements, achieves a reversal in him, and the students make a positive reversal in their condition, becoming free. It is understood that when a human works seriously and with perseverance, he/she forgets him/herself, being unaware of these happenings around him/her. He/she even does not know about his/her illness. In his *The Stories and Messages of Masnavi*, Riazi (2004) states, “[T]his resembles the story of Prophet Joseph, in which the Egyptian women were charmed by the beauty of Joseph and unknowingly cut their fingers and then became conscious, or like the warriors in the battle field who lose their hands and legs and they do not understand” (p.220). Concerning the precedence of *anagnorisis* to *peripeteia*, it is observed that it was just a delusion and hallucination that made the teacher feel ill and this was the result of the wisdom of the student who suggested the trick. The teacher who was initially healthy was deceived by the students, undergoing a false discovery in which he thought that he was ill and that he got a reversal in his own health condition. That “people are different in wisdom” and sometimes a child gives advice to elders is demonstrated in this story (*ibid.*, p.219). The students with their cleverness and sharpness in deceiving the teacher released themselves from school and lessons; however, the teacher confined himself to bed with his delusion and false discovery.

CONCLUSION

This paper presented a narratological reading of three selected stories of *Masnavi-Ma’navi* on the basis of Aristotle’s theories about an effective plot, which includes the identification of the elements of *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* in the plots of the stories. Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, considers these two elements as mediums for conveying moral and ethical lessons to readers by raising the feelings of fear or sympathy, and creating a more favorable impact on them. In order to convey the moral and ethical teachings, Mowlana made use of a narrative and story with a highly effective and attractive plot, employing elements which made his *Masnavi-Ma’navi* a masterpiece in the world. Considering Aristotle as the founder of narratology and by analyzing the selected stories from *Masnavi* in the light of Aristotelian narratology, the authors attempted

to fill in the existent gap in previous studies on the narratology of *Masnavi-Ma'navi* — they were mostly based on modern theories of narratologists other than Aristotle. The stories under this study incorporated three types of the occurrences of anagnorisis and peripeteia and the fifth form of discovery, namely the false or fictitious discovery, which were among the best types of discoveries.

By putting together, the findings of the present paper and other studies in the field of narratology of *Masnavi*, the authors of the present paper found out that *Masnavi* as a classical narrative work has the potential to be evaluated on the basis of both modern and classical generations of narratologists. This proves that *Masnavi* is relevant at any period of time. For Rumi, true knowledge is the one which “transforms the soul and promotes the traits and morals of the person” (Zamani, p.274). In this paper, by analyzing anagnorisis and peripeteia in the characters of the selected stories, the authors tried to show that, through this kind of reading, a similar peripeteia and catharsis occurs in the reader as well, making him/her closer to true knowledge. This will let readers have access deep structures of the stories and be able to come to wider and multiple interpretations of the stories. The investigation of these Aristotelian elements in *Masnavi*, as one of the classical narrative works of Iran, promotes its value and status in the view of readers and helps them recognize the innovative and intellectual power of the craftsman of this masterpiece.

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