

The Interaction of Codes and the Plurality of Meaning in “The King’s Falling in Love with the Maid” (Masnavi-ye Ma’navi)

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of the present article is that the tales of the spiritual Masnavi, with their signifier-oriented structure and underlying layers, implicit meanings and secondary purposes, are written texts. The textuality of these tales opens up numerous entrances to meaning for the reader. These meanings, whose existential aspect is inevitably related to the relative relationship between the author, the reader and the codes, guarantee the written nature of the language of the tale and free themselves from simplicity, solidity, isolation and integration. Roland Barthes' theory of five codes is one of the content-oriented ways of studying text, which this article intends to examine from the perspective of one of the seven propositions considered by this "artistic theorist" using a descriptive-analytical method and citing library studies, namely the plurality of meaning, and while applying his approaches to an example of the stories of the spiritual Masnavi, to show that literature, as the most influential and important manifestation of the language system, always has room for reading, dynamism, and plurality of meaning, and the passion for receiving in it is never satisfied. The research result, in addition to confirming Barthes's view that there is no rule for a literary text and that each reader's reading of the codes and codes of poetic language can determine its semantic aspects, is evidence of the hypothesis that the codes of poetry are inevitably multi-meaning not only because of the ambiguity in the content, but also because of their intertwining, interaction, and enjoyment of the "stereographic" form.

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Introduction

Persian literature, particularly the works of Jalal al-Din Rumi, serves as a profound repository of mystical and intellectual depth. While traditional readings often view these stories as closed or didactic, modern literary theory offers new horizons for exploration. This study addresses the “textuality” of Rumi’s narratives by applying Roland Barthes’ theory of five codes (hermeneutic, proairetic, semantic, symbolic, and cultural). The central research problem lies in the static perception of literary texts; the study aims to demonstrate how Rumi utilizes specific linguistic and narrative mechanisms—within the framework of mystical themes—to transform his tales into open systems characterized by plurality of meaning (*Significance*), effectively avoiding singular, frozen interpretations.

Method

The study employs a descriptive-analytical and library-based methodology. It focuses on the first and one of the most enigmatic stories of the *Masnavi*, “The King’s Falling in Love with the Maid.” By applying the Barthesian framework of five codes, the research examines the structural mechanisms of the tale, specifically analyzing how the interaction and “stereographic” weaving of these codes generate multiple layers of meaning. The study explores how Rumi integrates mystical concepts into the narrative structure, thereby increasing the plurality of the text.

Results

The analysis yields several critical findings:

١. **The Stereographic Text:** Rumi’s narrative structure in this tale is not a closed system but an open one, where the destiny of the text is inextricably linked to the hermeneutic agency of the reader.
٢. **Interaction of Codes:** The study identifies specific mechanisms of code interaction that generate plurality:

- **The Snare (Snare/Evasion):** Rumi deliberately employs partial or incomplete descriptions, such as the ambiguous nature of the Divine Physician, to force the reader into active engagement.
 - **Equivocation (Mixing Truth and Snare):** The disruption of logical narrative progression—such as the palace physicians’ collective failure versus the Divine Physician’s success—creates a tension that moves the reader beyond literal interpretation toward discursive reading.
 - **Jamming (Blocking Understanding):** Rumi intentionally blocks or “jams” the reader’s direct understanding (e.g., the mention of Shams-e Tabrizi and the deliberate concealment of his secret), forcing the reader to interpret the text through the overarching mystical themes of “Love” and “Perfect Man.”
۳. **Stereographic Texture:** The interweaving of these codes, catalyzed by mystical motifs, transforms the tale from a plain narrative into a stereographic text, where the reader’s prior knowledge and cultural background serve as essential tools for decoding.

Conclusion

The research concludes that Rumi’s *Masnavi* operates as a dynamic, open system rather than a fixed didactic work. Through the interaction of codes, the story of the “King and the Maid” transcends its literal surface to become a significant discursive space. This plurality is achieved not merely through narrative complexity, but through the deliberate implementation of codes (snare, equivocation, and jamming) that compel the reader to participate in the production of meaning. Ultimately, Rumi’s work is confirmed as a “stereographic” text that rejects the isolation of meaning, offering infinite possibilities for reinterpretation based on the reader’s own mystical and intellectual engagement.