

## Methods of Translating Metonymies in *The Masnavi*: Boosting Larson's (1984) Model<sup>1</sup>

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### **Abstract**

Translation suffers from many limitations, one of which is the rendition of metonymical expressions from one language into another. Rarely any language can be found wherein no metonymy is used. This study is conducted to compare and analyze metonymies in Rumi's *Masnavi* and its English translation by Mojaddedi (2004). Larson's (1984) model was adopted as the framework for analyzing the way metonymies were rendered. In the first phase, the source-text metonymies and their equivalents were extracted from *the First Book of the Masnavi* and its translation. Then, the methods employed in rendering each metonymy were specified and the frequency of each method was determined. Finally, it was attempted to boost the current model. The results showed that 'literal translation' was the most commonly used method while 'translation of metonymy into metonymic entity plus sense' was the least frequently adopted method. Also, the study proved that Larson's model doesn't cover all methods used by Mojaddedi. Additionally, four new methods were detected by the researchers including Literal translation, Deletion, Generalization, and Specification.

**Keywords:** Metonymy, *The Masnavi*, Rumi; Mojaddedi (2004), Larson's (1984) Model

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## 1. Introduction

Studying metonymy seems to have “a history of more than two thousand years” (Guan, 2009, p. 179). Metonymy is a type of figure of speech in which the name of something is replaced with something else which is closely connected with it (Zheng, 2014). According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metonymy means “using one entity to refer to another that is related to it” (p. 36).

Metonymies are sometimes culture-specific. In some cases, especially literary texts, the source text (ST) may convey some concepts that are completely unknown in the target language (TL). They may relate to a kind of drink or food, a social custom, or even a religious belief. Such concepts can be called culture-specific concepts (CSCs) which are among the most challenging problems faced by literary translators (Afrouz & Mollanazar 2016; Afrouz 2019, 2020, 2021a). Under such circumstances, rendering metonymies would be a real challenge for the literary translator. Translators who translated from their mother language into a foreign language, or “native translators”, seem to face less difficulty, at least in realizing the underlying meanings related to CBTs since they “are expected to have full familiarity with their own culture” (Afrouz 2017, p. 41). In the current study, the translator is a native Persian poet and a literary translator of classical texts.

Persian literature is a treasury of so many kinds of speech figures. Metonymy is one of them. Many masterpieces in Persian literature have been rendered into the English language. *The Masnavi* is the masterpiece of Molavi—more famously known as Rumi in the West. The present study aims to analyze the metonymy in *the First Book of the Masnavi* and its English translation in order to come to a better understanding of the metonymical concepts raised in this masterpiece and the way they have been treated by the translator.

The current research probes to figure out the methods used in translating different types of metonymies in *the Masnavi*. It also attempts to reveal whether

the translator has been consistent in resorting to specific methods of rendering metonymies or he has changed it on various occasions.

Larson's (1984) model was employed as the framework of the study. She proposed three methods for translation of metonymy: "First, translating the sense of the word in a nonfigurative way; second, maintaining the original word and adding the meaning of the word; third, substituting a figurative equivalence in the target language" (p. 114). It is not claimed to be a perfect model covering all possible methods. However, as an initial step, almost all researchers need to rely on the existing models, as we did. It is also noteworthy to remind that different methods of translation can lead to the production of various types of equivalence (Afrouz, 2021b)—most of which, of course, "do not imply 'perfect'" (Afrouz & Shahi, 2020, p. 3).

This research is going to answer the following questions:

1. What types of metonymies were used in *the First Book of the Masnavi*? What methods were used in translating them?
2. To what extent has the translator been consistent in rendering metonymies?
3. What is the most (and the least) frequently employed method of translating metonymies?
4. To what extent does Larson's model cover methods used by the translator? Are there any methods used by Mojaddedi but not mentioned in the model? Can Larson's model be improved?

## 2. Review of Literature

Many researchers attempted to work on metonymy and give a better understanding of this concept. A number of them were reviewed in this section.

Kamei and Wakao (1992) asked seven native speakers of Japanese and five native speakers of Chinese to translate 25 English sentences which included metonymies. The researchers attempted to judge the acceptability of the

translations. Kamei and Wakao (1992) found that the correct translation of metonymical expressions usually depend on universality of the metonymy, and the familiarity of the translator with the context and the culture of the ST.

Al-Salem (2008) investigated the translation of metonymy in five translations of the *Holy Qur'an*. The corpus consisted of thirty examples of Sura Al-Baqarah. The Literal translation was found by the researcher to be the most efficient method for translating Qur'anic metonymies.

In Guan's (2009) study, the researcher concluded that realization of metonymy's "cognitive nature" can boost the effectiveness of teaching lexical items and help to develop students' vocabulary knowledge.

Zheng (2014) conducted research focusing on methods of translating English metonymies into Chinese. By exploring the properties of metonymies, Zheng tried to provide a clear picture of them and found that for many metonymies in English there could be found an appropriate counterpart in Chinese. But, there can also be found some culture-loaded metonymies in any language which can potentially create challenges for learners of different cultures.

Aaram, Tayebzadeh, and Hassani Helm (2016) conducted research in Persian about the semantic deviation of metonymies in 85 verses from *the Masnavi* and found that the poet used a language that deviated from the literary convention or everyday speech.

Exploring methods of translating metonymy received relatively less attention than it really deserved in the studies conducted up until now. To the researchers' best knowledge, researchers mainly focused on the cultural words and metaphorical expressions of the work, but translation of metonymy was not dealt with in recently conducted studies. The current study was carried out to fill the gap.

### 3. Methodology

The study is corpus-based descriptive research focusing on the issue of metonymy translation methods in Persian classical literature.

### 3.1 Corpus

*The Masnavi* is the great classical Persian masterpiece composed by Molana Jalal-Uddin Mohammad Balkhi (Rumi). Rumi's *Masnavi* consists of six books (26,000 verses). Each book contains about 4,000 verses. Many scholars such as James W. Redhouse (1881), C. E. Wilson (1910), R. A. Nicholson (1926, 1930, 1934), Mojaddedi (2004), Williams (2006), and Holbrook (2011) rendered the book into English.

*The Masnavi* was selected as the corpus of the study since it contains a lot of speech figures, including metonymy. Mojaddedi's translation was chosen since it was the only translation that preserved the stylistic features of the ST and appeared in the form of rhythmic poetry.

### 3.2 Procedure

The research was carried out by taking the following steps:

1. Studying the first book of *the Masnavi* and its English translation to identify the Persian metonymies and their equivalents.
2. Specifying the methods employed in rendering each metonymical expression.
4. Determining the frequency of each method.
5. Specifying the capacity of Larson's model in covering methods for rendering Persian metonymies in *the First Book of the Masnavi*.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Results

Three methods for translating metonymy were proposed by Larson (1984): (I) translating the sense of the word in a nonfigurative way; (II) maintaining the original word and adding the meaning of the word; (III) substituting a figurative equivalence in the target language. Four new methods were detected by the researchers and thus entitled distinctively. They included: (IV) literal translation; (V) Deletion; (VI) Generalization; (VII) Specification.

The frequency of each method is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Frequency of Each Method

Strategies	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)	(V)	(VI)	(VII)	Total
Frequency	26	1	3	35	9	5	2	81
Percentage	32.10 %	1.23 %	3.70 %	43.21 %	11.11 %	6.17 %	2.47 %	100 %

Shamisa and Anvari (1993) classified Persian metonymies into different categories. In Table 2, the names of various types of metonymies were replaced by some of the English alphabets: (A) Whole for Part; (B) Part for Whole; (C) Contain and Container; (D) Product for Producer; (E) Instrument for Action; (F) Body Organs for Human; (G) Proper for Common; (H) Referring to an entity by its past status; (I) Material for Entity; (J) Relative for Oneself; (K) Describer for Described; (L) Metonymy of Respect; (M) Metonymy of proximity; (N) Irony; (O) Minority for Majority; (P) Metonymy of Similarity.

Table 2. The Frequency of Each Type of Metonymy

Types of metonymy	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Total
Frequency	1	14	7	0	12	13	0	7	4	5	8	1	6	0	1	2	81

As Table 2 demonstrates, 'Part for Whole' (B) was the most frequent type of metonymy and 'Whole for Part' (A), 'Metonymy of Respect' (L) and 'Minority for Majority' (O) were the least frequent types of metonymy.

#### 4.2. Discussion

In this section, several examples for each category of metonymies are presented and discussed. The instances are extracted from *the First Book of The Masnavi*.

**PART FOR WHOLE:** it refers to a type of metonymy in which a term for a part of something refers to the whole of something.

**Example 1:**

ST	کز نیستان تا مرا ببریده اند / از نفیرم مرد و زن نالیده اند (مولوی: ۱)
TT	'Since from the reed-bed they uprooted me My song's expressed each human's agony (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 5)

In this verse, (مرد و زن) (i.e., man and woman) is a term which refers to *each human* in general, not merely a man or a woman. In other words, (مرد و زن) are human. The translator has rendered this metonymy into sense. If this verse is taken literally, no sense could be made of it.

**Example 2:**

ST	مرد مال و خلعت بسیار دید / غره شد از شهر و فرزندان برید (مولوی: ۹)
TT	On seeing robes and wealth he was beguiled, He left his townfolk, even his own child (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 15)

In this verse, the term (فرزندان) (i.e., children) refers to members of a family in general. The translator has literally rendered this metonymy. However, it should be noticed that a sort of 'shift' has also occurred.

**CONTAIN AND CONTAINER (Location for Entity):** it refers to a type of metonymy in which a term for contain refers to the container.

**Example 1:**

ST	کای لطیف استاد کامل معرفت / فاش اندر شهرها از تو صفت (مولوی: ۹)
TT	O gentle master, pure intelligence Talk everywhere is of your eminence! (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 15)

In this verse, (شهرها) (i.e., cities) refers to people of the city. People of the city are the contain and the city is the container. The translator has rendered this metonymy into sense.

**Example 2:**

ST	هر ستاره اش خونبهای صد هلال / خون عالم ریختن او را حلال (مولوی: ۸۵)
TT	For moons he puts out all the stars at night To kill the whole world, he has every right! (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 109)

In this verse, (عالم) (i.e., world) refers to people in the whole world. The term (عالم) is the container and people in the world is the content. The translator has literally rendered the metonymy.

**INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION:** it refers to a type of metonymy in which a term for an instrument refers to an action.

**Example 1:**

ST	دست میزد چون رهید از دست مرگ / سبز و رقصان در هوا چون شاخ و برگ (مولوی: ۶۶)
TT	On fleeing death, the hare began to clap And dance like leaves which in the breeze would flap (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 83)

In this verse, (دست مرگ) (i.e., the hand of death) refers to the danger of death. Actually, death has no hand but the poet, by using the term, (دست مرگ) tried to refer to the action which leads to death. The translator has rendered this metonymy into sense.

**Example 2:**

ST	چون قبول حق بود آن مرد راست / دست او در کارها دست خداست (مولوی: ۷۹)
TT	God has accepted him, so understand In all he does his hand is like God's hand (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 101)

In this verse, the term (دست خدا) (i.e., the hand of God) refers to the power of God. The translator has literally rendered the metonymy.

**Example 3:**

ST	دست ناقص دست شیطان است و دیو / زآنکه اندر دام تلیس است و دیو (مولوی: ۷۹)
TT	The hands of others are the devil's own In their abuse and lies it's clearly shown (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 101)

Similar to the previous instance, in this verse, (دست شیطان) (i.e., the hand of the devil) refers to power of the devil. Mojaddedi has again literally translated the metonymy.



**BODY ORGANS FOR HUMAN:** it refers to a type of metonymy in which a term for body organs refers to human.

ST	گر گشاید <u>دل</u> سر انبان راز / جان بسوی عرش سازد ترکتاز (مولوی: ۷۳)
TT	Just lift the cover of this mystery Your soul will seek God's Throne then eagerly (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 93)

In this verse, the expression (*گشودن سر انبان دل*) means to reveal a secret. In other words, (*دل*) (i.e., heart) does not simply denote 'heart', as a body organ, but it refers to human as a whole. In the English translation, the translator has referred to its sense by employing an imperative form.

**REFERRING TO AN ENTITY BY ITS PAST STATUS:** this type of metonymy refers to a type of metonymy in which a term for an entity refers to its past status. It includes the following two types:

ST	چون گریزانی ز ناله <u>خاکیان</u> / غم چه ریزی بر دل غمناکیان (مولوی: ۸۸)
TT	Since from all men's laments You thus depart Why fill with grief each tired and aching heart? (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 112)

In this verse, (*خاکیان*) (i.e., those who are created out of dust) refers to the creation of human beings from clay or dust. It alludes to several verses in *the Holy Qur'an* wherein the creation of people from clay is indicated. The poet referred to the past status of human beings. In its English translation, the translator has specialized the metonymy by using the word 'men'.

**MATERIAL FOR ENTITY:** it refers to a type of metonymy in which a term for a material refers to an entity.

Example 1:

ST 1	بند بگسل باش ازاد ای پسر / چندباشی بند <u>سیم</u> و بند <u>زر</u> (مولوی: ۱)
TT 1	Unchain yourself, my son, escape its hold!

	How long will you remain a <u>slave</u> of gold? (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 5)
ST 2	اینک این خلعت بگیر و زر و <u>سیم</u> / چون بیایی خاص باشی و ندیم (مولوی: ۹)
TT 2	Accept this robe of honour and this <u>gold</u> , When you arrive a special rank you'll hold. (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 15)

In this verse, (*سیم و زر*) (i.e., silver and gold) refers to money and not merely the material from which the money is formed (i.e., silver / gold). The translator literally rendered the metonymy.

**Example 2:**

ST	ای من آن زخم پیلبان / ریخت خونم از برای <u>استخوان</u> (مولوی: ۱۰)
TT	That elephant who's beaten savagely, They shed his blood just for his <u>ivory</u> (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 17)

In this verse, (*استخوان*) (i.e., bone) refers to the elephant's ivory. The translator has rendered this metonymy into sense.

**RELATIVE FOR ONESELF:** refers to a type of metonymy in which a term for kinship name refers to a person who is not a relative.

**Example 1:**

ST	ای برادر چون بینی قصر او؟ / چونکه در چشم دلت رسته است مو (مولوی: ۶۹)
TT	How can <u>you</u> see a palace of this kind When one stray hair has made your heart's eye blind. (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 88)

In this verse, (*ای برادر*) (i.e., O my brother!) does not necessarily refer to somebody's brother. In its English translation, the translator has generalized the metonymy.

**Example 2:**

ST	جبر را ایشان شناسد ای <u>پسر</u> / که خدا بگشادشان در دل بصر (مولوی: ۷۲)
TT	Compulsion like this few identify

	God's given these men's hearts an inner eye. (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 92)
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In this verse, *(ای پسر)* (i.e., O my son!) does not necessarily refer to somebody's son. It generally addresses all human beings. The translator has deleted its equivalent.

DESCRIPTOR FOR DESCRIBED: it refers to a type of metonymy in which a term for the describer refers to the described.

#### Example 1:

ST	باد و خاک و آب و آتش بنده اند / با من و تو مرده با حق زنده اند (مولوی: ۴۰)
TT	Earth, water, wind, and fire, his faithful slaves, Alive with him, to us seem dead as graves. (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 54)

In this verse, *(حق)* (i.e., the Truth) refers to God. The word *(حق)* is one of the attributes of God. The poet doesn't refer to God directly; instead, he used one of God's attributes. In its English translation, the translator has just referred to the pronoun 'him'.

#### Example 2:

ST	زاهد ششصد هزار ساله را / پوزبندی ساخت آن گوساله را (مولوی: ۵۰)
TT	Satan, ascetic for millennia, then Was muzzled and would not be freed again. (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 65)

In this verse, *(زاهد ششصد هزار ساله)* (i.e., the ascetic of six hundred thousand years) refers to Satan who worshiped God for thousands of years before being rejected from Paradise. In the beginning, Satan was an ascetic. The translator has rendered this metonymy into sense.

#### Example 3:

ST	پس ترا هر لحظه مرگ و رجعتیست / مصطفی فرمود دنیا ساعتیست (مولوی: ۵۶)
TT	Each moment you must die and then return The world is but a moment', you'll soon learn. (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 73)

In this verse, the term (مصطفی) (i.e., the selected one) refers to the Prophet Mohammad. It is one of the attributes of the Prophet. The translator has omitted its equivalent.

**Example 4:**

ST	بهر این فرمود <u>رحمان</u> ای پسر / کل یوم هوفی شان ای پسر (مولوی: ۷۹)
TTs	And so the <u>Merciful</u> chose to declare 'Each day He's busy with a new affair. (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 113)

In this verse, the term (رحمان) (i.e., the merciful) refers to God. It is one of God's attributes. Mojaddedi literally rendered this metonymy as 'the Merciful'.

**METONYMY OF PROXIMITY:** refers to a type of metonymy in which the poet uses a word that is closely related to another word.

**Example 1:**

ST	ای که هر <u>صبحی</u> که از مشرق بتافت / همچو چشمه مشرق در جوش یافت (مولوی: ۸۸)
TT	While <u>each dawn</u> sends out from the East its light You are its source, full, shimmering and bright. (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 112)

In this verse, the term (صبح) (i.e., the morning) refers to the sunrise or the sun-light in the morning. Therefore, (صبح) and the light of the sunrise are closely related. Mojaddedi has literally rendered this metonymy.

**Example 2:**

ST	حس دنیا نردبان این جهان / حس عقبی نردبان <u>آسمان</u> (مولوی: ۱۴)
TT	These senses are the ladders of this world, From <u>heaven</u> separate ladders God has hurled. (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 22)

In this verse, the term 'آسمان' (i.e., sky / heaven) refers to the Heaven (vs. the Hell). In other words, in Persian literature, it is believed that the Other World (either the heaven or the hell) are in the sky. The poet used the term 'آسمان' to refer to heaven. The translator has literally rendered the metonymy.

**METONYMY OF SIMILARITY:** metonymy of similarity refers to a type of metonymy in which a word is used instead of another based on the similarity between them.

Example 1:

ST	در نیابد حال پخته هیچ خام / پس سخن کوتاه باید والسلام (مولوی: ۱)
TT	The way the <u>ripe</u> must feel the <u>raw</u> can't tell, My speech must be concise, and so farewell! (Mojaddedi, 2004, p. 5)

In this verse, the two terms (پخته و خام) (i.e., ripe and raw) respectively refer to an experienced person and an inexperienced one. The poet used these two terms because there is a sort of conceptual similarity between (پخته و خام) and the experienced/inexperienced people. Mojaddedi literally rendered the two metonymical expressions in this verse.

#### 4.3. Answering the Research Questions

The research questions posed in the introduction are answered based on the findings:

1. What types of metonymies were used in *the First Book of the Masnavi*? What methods were used in translating them?

The following types of metonymies referred to by Shamisa and Anvari (1993) appeared in the work: (A) Whole for Part; (B) Part for Whole; (C) Contain and Container; (D) Product for Producer; (E) Instrument for Action; (F) Body Organs for Human; (G) Proper for Common; (H) Referring to an entity by its past status; (I) Material for Entity; (J) Relative for Oneself; (K) Describer for Described; (L) Metonymy of Respect; (M) Metonymy of proximity; (N) Irony; (O) Minority for Majority; (P) Metonymy of Similarity.

The following methods were detected to be used in translating the metonymies: (I) Translating metonymy into sense; (II) Translating metonymy into

metonymic entity plus sense; (III) Translating metonymy into metonymy; (IV) literal translation; (V) Deletion; (VI) Generalization; (VII) Specification.

2. To what extent has the translator been consistent in rendering metonymies?

The results demonstrated that the translator has employed a variety of methods for translating metonymies. Therefore, the translator was not consistent.

3. What is the most (and the least) frequently employed method of translating metonymies?

Based on the data presented in Table 1, 81 metonymies were found in *the First Book of the Masnavi*. 43.21% of the detected cases of metonymies had been translated via the method of literal translation, while only 1.23% of the metonymies were rendered into metonymic entity plus sense.

4. To what extent does Larson's model cover the methods used by the translator? Are there any methods used by Mojaddedi but not mentioned in the model? Can Larson's model be boosted?

The study showed that Larson's model doesn't cover all methods used by the literary translator. In this regard, four new methods were detected by the researchers: (a) literal translation; (b) Deletion; (c) Generalization; (d) Specification.

## 5. Conclusion

Seven different methods were applied by Mojaddedi to deal with Persian metonymies. The analysis of the translations of *the Masnavi* revealed that 'literal translation' was generally the most frequently utilized method. Translating metonymy into sense was identified to be the second most frequently used method. In this method, only the sense of the word is preserved. It is, therefore, TL-oriented. The third most frequently employed method was the 'Deletion' of the metonymy in English translation, and the fourth one was Generalization of the metonymy.

Translating metonymies into metonymy was identified to be the fifth most repeatedly used method. Via the use of this method, the metonymy can be substituted by another metonymy. It is, therefore, a target language or, phrased more accurately, a target culture-oriented method.

The sixth mostly used method was Specification of the metonymy. In some case, translators prefer to specify metonymies in order to clarify or provide further information about a concept. The least frequently employed method was 'translating metonymy into metonymic entity plus sense'. In this method, the word is preserved and the sense is added. It can be considered both source culture-oriented and target language-oriented. This method can help the reader to become more familiar with the source culture and also understand the meaning of the metonymy.

The current research will hopefully provide the students of translation studies and translator training to come to a better understanding of the methods of rendering metonymies in literary texts in general, and classical Persian literature, in particular. Although metonymy can be found in almost all text types, the scope of this study limited to literary texts. From among all literary texts, *the Masnavi* was the focus of the present study.

The present research was conducted on *the First Book of the Masnavi*. Therefore, the same research could be done on other books of *the Masnavi* in order to confirm (or even disprove) the findings of the current study. Comparing translations of two groups of translators, for instance, native vs. non-native translators, could be another suggestion for further research.

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## روش‌های ترجمه مجاز در «مثنوی معنوی»: ارتقاء الگوی لارسین (۱۹۸۴)<sup>۱</sup>

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### چکیده

ترجمه با چالش‌های بسیاری مواجه است. ترجمه مجاز یکی از این مشکلات است. به ندرت می‌توان زبانی را یافت که آرایه مجاز در آن جلوه‌گر نباشد. تحقیق حاضر بر آن است که آرایه مجاز را در دفتر اول مثنوی معنوی مولانا و ترجمه انگلیسی آن به قلم مجددی (۲۰۰۴) بررسی و تحلیل کند. در این پژوهش، برای طبقه‌بندی و تحلیل روش‌های ترجمه مجاز از الگوی لارسین (۱۹۸۴) به عنوان مدل اولیه استفاده شده است. در گام نخست، انواع مجاز و معادل‌های انگلیسی آنها شناسایی شد، سپس روش‌های مورد استفاده در ترجمه هر یک از مجازها دسته‌بندی و میزان بسامد هر روش تعیین گردید. در نهایت، تلاش شد تا مدل فعلی ارتقاء داده شود. طبق یافته‌های تحقیق، «ترجمه تحت‌اللفظی» پربسامدترین و ترجمه «مجاز به-صورت مجاز و افزودن معنا» کم‌بسامدترین روش مورد استفاده بود. علاوه بر آن، تحقیق حاضر نشان داد که مدل لارسین الگوی جامعی نیست، زیرا تمام روش‌های مورد استفاده مترجم را پوشش نداده بود. در تحقیق حاضر، چهار شیوه جدید (ترجمه تحت‌اللفظی، حذف، تعمیم و ویژه‌سازی) شناسایی و معرفی شد.

**واژه‌های راهنما:** آرایه مجاز، مثنوی معنوی، مولانا، مجددی (۲۰۰۴)، الگوی لارسین (۱۹۸۴)

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