

## **Title as Paratext in Persian Poetry and Prose from the 5th to the 9th Century AH**

Abdollah Albughobaish<sup>1\*</sup>

Fatemeh Golbabaie<sup>2</sup>

**Received: 16/06/2019**

**Accepted: 07/12/2020**

### **Abstract**

Paratextuality is a fundamental concept in the process of discovering the significations of literary texts, which, according to Gerard Genette, includes signs that guide the reader to the contents of the literary text. Among all types of paratext, titles as the most prominent one in terms of extensivity and variation of function, have a high potential for analysis based on Genette's theories. This paper has analyzed the titles of the most famous classical works in Persian literature from the 5th to the 15th century AH, classifying their titles in five categories: genre, character, author, technique and direct titles. In this categorization, technical titles are subdivided into two types: rhyming and metaphorical. The metaphorical sub-category has also two kinds: discursive and extra discursive. In general, metaphorical titles are more complex and thus make more compact semantic signification in comparison with the rhyming type. In a stylistic perspective, the titles of the first period are simple and short, whereas in the periods that follow, we find more complex and difficult titles. Moreover, due to the literary capabilities of authors, generic evolutions and contents of the literary texts, other titles emerge which extend vertically, not horizontally, and induce semantic implications. Generic displacement and appearance and disappearance of various genres are another property which can be perceived from the titles. The present study shows that in comparison with elements relating to character and place, the element of time has a far less influence in the process of choosing a title. Moving toward atomistic views instead of holism, pursuing a kind of conflict between myth and history, absence

---

\* 1. Assistant Professor of Persian Language and Literature, Allameh Tabatabaie University, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: ghobeishi@atu.ac.ir

2. MA in Persian Language and Literature, Allameh Tabatabaie University, Tehran, Iran.

of the individuality of the author as an active identity, and removing history from the titles of literary works are among the other issues derived from the analysis of the titles of classical Persian literary works.

**Keywords:** Paratextuality, Title, Gerard Genette, Persian Literature, Poetry and Prose

## **Extended Abstract**

### **1. Introduction**

The title of a literary text is of essential importance in a literary work, as it shapes some of its signification and helps us discover meanings implied or hidden in the text. The present paper aims to understand the relationship between title (as paratext) in classical Persian texts and the text as a whole so as to uncover the criteria used by literary writers in choosing titles for their works. This paper also seeks to identify patterns followed in the titles of old literary texts and also discuss the changes in these patterns. The statistical population of the present study includes all classical Persian prose and poetry produced from the 5th to the 9th century AH.

### **2. Theoretical Framework**

Gerard Genette's ideas about paratext are drawn upon here to study the importance of the title in Persian poetry and literary prose over a period of about five centuries. Different elements of the paratext are examined here and titles are divided into five categories based on genre, character, author, technique and whether they are literal or figurative.

### **3. Methodology**

To gather the data, the historical documentary methodology was used, while the descriptive-analytical approach, with an emphasis on Genette's ideas, was adopted to analyze the data.

### **4. Discussion and Analysis**

Five types of titles have been identified in classical Persian prose and poetry: genre-centered titles, as in *The Shahnameh*, character-centered titles as in *Layla and Mjanun*, author-centered titles, such as in *Qabus-*

*Nameh*, technique-centered titles, as in *Kashful-Mahjub*, and direct, theme-centered titles, as in the *Chahar-Maqaleh*. Each of these titles possesses specific characteristics, with some of them being more common. Different titles belong to specific periods in classical Persian literature, or are at least used more frequently.

## 5. Conclusion

The titles of classical Persian prose were divided into five categories. The technique-centered titles are of two types of rhyming and metaphorical. The metaphorical titles are more complex with more significations. In genre-centered titles a kind of struggle between mythology and history can be identified. Author-centered titles are quite rare and no individualized Iranian subject can be found in them. The titles in the first period of Persian literary style are simple and short, while in the 8th and 9th centuries they become more complex. In this period, titles are mostly of the narrative type, indicating a transition from the epic to history and imagination.

## Bibliography

- Albughobaish, A. and Golbabaie, F. 1397 [2018]. "Naqd-e Zistboum-Garayaneh-ye Dastani Koutah az Gholamhosein Sa'edi." *Adabyat-e Parsi-e Moaser*. 8/1: 79-97.
- Balkhi, H. 1365 [1986]. *Maqamat-e Hamidi*. R. Anzabinejad (eds.). Tehran: Nashr-e Daneshgahi.
- Bahar, M. 1373 [1994]. *Sabkshenasi*. Tehran: Amirkabir.
- Ebrahimi Hariri, F. 1383 [2004]. *Maqaleh-Nevisi dar Adabyat-e Farsi va Ta'sir-e Maqamat-e Arabi dar an*. Tehran: University of Tehran.
- Genette, G. 1997. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. J. E. Lewin (trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hadjviri, A. A. 1394 [2015]. *Kashful-Mahdjub*. M. Abedi (ed.). Tehran: Soroush.
- Khatibi, H. 1386 [2007]. *Fan-E Nasr dar Adab-e Farsi*. Tehran: Zavvar.
- Namvar-Motlaq, B. "Taramatniyat: Motale'eh-ye Ravabet-e Yek Matn ba Digar Matn-ha." *Pazhuheshnameh-ye Olum-e Ensani* 56: 83-98.
- Sa'di, M. 1375 [1996]. *Kolliyat-e Sa'di*. M. A. Foroghi (ed.). Tehran: Nahid.
- Safa, Z. 1356 [1977]. *Tarikh-e Adabyat dar Iran*. Tehran: Amirkabir.