

**A Study of the Method of Titling in Moslem Naseri’s Story
Collection, *Twelve Tales of the Lives of Fourteen Innocents of
Shiite***

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Introduction

The title of the story can be the most prominent and the most significant message of the story. Title is considered to be a collection of linguistic signs composed of words and sentences which determine the orientation of the text, point toward the overall content of the story, and attract the audience. As an intratextual paratext, the title can itself be divided into “intratextual title” and “extratextual title”: intratextual title is related to one or two elements in the text such as the subject, theme or form of the text by whose combination the text is created; and extratextual title refers to the extratextual elements such as characters outside the story or the setting in which the text is created. The title of the story is also divided into thematic and enigmatic titles. A thematic title has a guiding role as it provides a key to the understanding of the text; i.e., it distinctively determines the center of the reader’s attention from the outset. The meaning of the second type, the enigmatic title, is revealed after due attention to other elements of the paratext as well as by completing the reading

of the text. Genette believes that the functions of title are giving identity, description, implicit valuation and attractiveness.

Methodology, Review of Literature and Purpose

This research focuses exclusively on the method of titling in one of the story collections written for children and adolescents. The analysis of the basis for choosing the titles of the stories in this collection helps us in understanding the structure, type and function of the titles. The Collection *Twelve Tale of the Lives of Fourteen Innocents of Shiite* is a rewritten work by Moslem Naseri intended for adolescent audience. This collection includes stories with social, moral and educational themes which narrate tales from the lives of the Shiite Imams using the most reliable historical and Islamic sources with the use of a simple and fluent language.

In this research, in two separate sections, first the structure of the titles and then the relationship between the titles and the texts of the stories and the role of intratextual and extratextual elements in choosing the titles are analyzed in order to determine the types of the titles from the perspective of Namvar Motlaq and Qavimi and their functions from the perspective of Genette, and also to evaluate to what extent this method of titling is appropriate for stories written for children and adolescents and how it affects their mindsets.

The techniques of story-telling are discussed in many books and articles; however, there is no independent study on the role and significance of title in the contemporary stories for children and adolescents, although there are some articles on the analysis of titles in other story collections and works.

Discussion

Methods of choosing a title for a story include: using the name of the main character of the story or its setting; using extratextual phrases which are outside of the book; and innovating a title by the writer. The analysis of the

methods of titling in the stories under study showed that Moslem Naseri has used the third method in most of the stories, while he has used the method of using the setting in only 8 stories. He often delves into the theme of the stories and chooses a keyword which can be a guide to the main action. Then he uses one of the titles of the stories as the title of the book in the collection. This collection includes 168 rewritten stories from the lives of Imams which are published in 14 books. Each book includes twelve didactic stories from the lives of Imams. Each of these stories has a title of its own and one of these titles is used as the title of that book. All in all, the collection has 14 book titles and 168 story titles.

The structures of the titles are different; they are simple or compound on the one hand, and subjective or objective on the other hand. 24 titles are simple and made of a single word, while 95 titles are made of two words. One third of the titles (49 titles) are either made up of several elements or are in the form of explicit sentences or reports which do not have any ambiguity or literary or artistic functions. The tone of the writer in these compound titles conveys the simplicity of the stories and partly reveals the themes of the stories for the reader.

In this collection, tangible and objective titles are more frequently used. There are also a number of abstract titles which are understandable for the audience. Intratextual elements which are used as thematic titles in this collection are characters, objects and numbers, setting (which is exclusively real, not imaginary), atmosphere and theme. All the stories are similar in theme and can be divided into two subject categories: first, stories whose themes are lessons from Imams' practical, moral and behavioral teachings in their personal lives or their conduct with people; second, stories which revolve around some parts of Imams' lives. The writer has used rhetorical devices such as simile, metaphor, personification and irony in the text of the stories as well as in the titles to enhance the appeal of the stories.

Only a few titles chosen by Naseri are enigmatic. Also, intertextuality can be found only in a few book titles in the collection. Other elements have no role in the titles of the book or the stories. In some of the stories, the logic behind the title is unclear and without referring to the subtitle, the title is not conducive to the theme or the Imam in the story.

Conclusion

The collection *Twelve Tales from the Lives of Fourteen Innocents of Shiite* is a rewritten work of original and real stories about the lives of Imams which includes 14 book titles and 168 story titles. Extratextual elements have no role in the titles of the stories while intratextual elements have a significant role in them. Intertextuality as the only extratextual element has a significant role in six book titles. For most of his stories, Naseri chooses titles which are guides to the reading of the stories; therefore, the titles are intratextual, thematic and descriptive and usually refer to one of the elements of the story or its theme. In some cases, the audience encounters an enigmatic title. The titles of the half of the 14 books of this collection are meant to be guides for the reader. The writer has used “thematic titles” for 6 books but the titles of the other 8 books do not have this characteristic. One can consider these titles as “enigmatic titles”.

In this collection, Moslem Naseri has tried to acquaint children and adolescents with the Fourteen Infallibles’ lives and their deep thoughts by the use of simple, objective and purposeful titles as well as a creative writing method based on the potentials of the sources of the narratives, effective titles and attractive language in his rewriting.

Keywords: titling fiction, intratextual elements, extratextual elements, story collection

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