

41.A paratextual approach to Irish ethnic identity in the Wanderings of Oisin**Rařit ÇOLAK¹****APA:** Çolak, R. (2022). A paratextual approach to Irish ethnic identity in *the Wanderings of Oisin*. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, (S11), 587-593. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1146733.**Abstract**

The world in recent years have witnessed undoubtedly the most brutal, tyrannical, unmerciful events of cultural identity, ethnicity, religion, policy and other factors which make people different from each other. Surely, it is not a new movement or concept, not the first and may not be the last to oppress, neglect, forget and isolate the others who do not think like us. History of humanity is full of these unpleasant samples. Nearly, in every part of life people face such kind of unforgettable moments. Some fields especially literature is shaped on the basis of minorities who strive for telling their humanly feelings and ideas. Hence, great writers, playwrights, poets are those who have tried to cry the innocent sounds of their nation through their works. One of the great figures who aimed to defend the rights of his nation and regain their identity is the arch poet of English literature, William Butler Yeats. In this study, it is aimed to analyse the identity problem of the Irish in one of his great poems Wanderings of Oisin read by Nathan and presented in YouTube through paratextual approach by Gérard Genette.

Keywords: Paratextuality, Yeats, Genette, identity, Oisin**Oisin'in Gezintileri'nde İrlanda etnik kimliğine yanmetinsel bir yaklaşım****Öz**

Son yıllarda hiç şüphesiz dünya, insanları birbirinden farklı kılan kültürel kimlik, etnik köken, din, politika ve diđer faktörlerin en vahři, zalim, acımasız olaylarına tanık olmuřtur. Elbette bu bizim gibi düşünmeyenleri ezen, ihmal eden, unutan, tecrit eden ne ilk ne de son ne yeni bir akım ne de yeni bir kavram deęil olmayabilir. İnsanlık tarihi bu tatsız örneklerle doludur. Neredeyse hayatın her anında insan bu tür unutulmaz anlarla karřılařır. Bazı alanlar, özellikle edebiyat, insani duygu ve düşüncelerini aktarmaya çalışın azınlıklar temelinde şekillenir. Dolayısıyla büyük yazarlar, oyun yazarları, řairler, milletinin masum seslerini eserleriyle haykırmaya çalışınlardır. Ulusunun haklarını savunmayı ve kimliğini yeniden kazanmayı hedefleyen büyük isimlerden biri de İngiliz edebiyatının baş řairi William Butler Yeats'tir. Bu çalışmada, Nathan tarafından okunan ve YouTube'da yayınlanan Yeats'in büyük şiirlerinden birisi olan Oisin'in Gezintileri'nde İrlandalıların kimlik sorunu Gérard Genette'nin yanmetinsellik yaklaşımıyla çözümlenmek amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yanmetinsellik, Yeats, Genette, kimlik, Oisin**Introduction**

The world in recent years have witnessed undoubtedly the most brutal, tyrannical, unmerciful events due to the reasons such as cultural identity, ethnicity, religion, policy and other factors which make

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people different from each other. Identity attributes people to belong somewhere, to embrace certain kinds of ideas or to draw particular lines between others. Noticeably, it is a kind of tool to find meaning in life. Philosophers, politicians, literary men, clergymen, etc. have always tried to find solutions to the problem of identity. There are various views to determine identity of a person, but it is quite difficult to make a precise definition of the term “identity” on which everybody will agree. However, it can be basically identified as “the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that make people different from others” (Oxford, n.d.). It is not possible to choose family, ancestors, and racial heritage. That is authenticity:

The condition of those, according to Heidegger, who understand the existential structure of their lives. Heidegger held that each of us acquires an identity from our situation—our family, culture, etc. Usually we just absorb this identity uncritically, but to let one’s values and goals remain fixed without critical reflection on them is ‘inauthentic’. The ‘authentic’ individual, who has been aroused from everyday concerns by *Angst*, takes responsibility for their life and thereby ‘chooses’ their own identity. But Heidegger also holds that some degree of inauthenticity is unavoidable: the critical assessment of values presupposes an uncritical acceptance of them, and the practical necessities of life give a priority to unreflective action over critical deliberation. So, as Heidegger makes clear, authenticity is like Christian salvation: a state which ‘fallen’ individuals cannot guarantee by their own efforts (Baldwin, 2005, p.70).

From the beginning, Cain and Abel, the struggle between strong and weak has continued. History of humanity is full of events, which are not easy to forget and hide because of various internal or external reasons. We, as human beings, live in a society and should adapt ourselves to live in harmony with other people. Feeling of being superior to another is an instinct, which leads to catastrophic results unless it is controlled. People, who cannot train it, feel that they are superior to others anyway. Undoubtedly, there are psychological reasons for such kind of feeling; however, this study will not focus on them but it is necessary to learn about psychological roots. Considering the globalized world, importance of individual psychology becomes more and more important every day. Individuals feel that they should realize themselves in various ways; psychologically, politically, educationally, sexually, etc. They want to be in a higher position than their present situation because they have aims and targets in life.

Othring has been one of the most crucial issues of post-colonial studies. The other is one of the two sides, which is colonized; the self is the colonizer of that side. The other side is always seen as the cause of problem or the problem itself. However, who determines it? Surely, the stronger one, the colonizer, the rich or the white. The concepts, colonizer, colonized, culture, nation, identity have become more important than before and cultural studies have been at the centre of canon that deal with these concepts and issues. Relatedly, the nature of culture should be discussed. According to Hall: “In recent years, and in a more social sciences context, the word ‘culture’ is used to refer to whatever is distinctive about the ‘way of life’ of a people, community, nation or social group.” (Hall, 1997, p.2). In this regard, cultural studies can be identified as a combination of various disciplines to discuss or shed light on issues, especially identity-related ones. It can be considered

as scholarly and pedagogical practices has a much discussed genealogy that goes back to the 1960s and is associated with centers of research and teaching in the U.K. (from polytechnics and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham to Sussex University and Cambridge University) but since the 1960s can be found in local versions throughout much of the English-speaking world, including the United States, and in South and East Asia. From the outset its work was both text-based and fieldwork-based research: that is to say, it had a joint ancestry in theories and methods in the humanities and social sciences (Reid & Trawick, 200: p. 7-8)

Some may claim that countries which have inferiority complex because of their identity or other characteristics such as religion, geographical position, skin colour try to cover their identity, or

nationality by dominating, suppressing, and killing others. Countries, the colonizers, which consider that they are the superpower of the world, or on the way to become, do whatever they can by neglecting animal rights, woman rights, children rights, property rights in a nutshell any kind of rights. What does this superiority which is the reason of not only interpersonal wars but also international chaos mean? The word *superior* is identified as “having a feeling of superiority that shows itself in an overbearing attitude” (Merriam Webster, n.d.). Superiority complex was first named in the early 1900s by Alfred Adler who was born in 1870 in Vienna. He was one of the good followers of Sigmund Freud but later he noticed that he had disagreements with him and he resigned and founded his own society which was Society for Free Psychoanalysis at first, then became Society for Individual Psychology. He suggested evaluating an individual with his/her relations in society. He became one of the greatest man of psychotherapy with Jung and Freud. He died in 1937, in Scotland. According to Adler “As we are social beings and do not wish other people to see that we feel inferior, we try to cover this up by developing and displaying some form of superiority.” (Adler, 1997, p. XIV). People try many ways to do it:

We have a number of ways of doing this, one of which is overcompensation (i.e. doing something more than the situation demands), another is deprecating others, yet another is avoiding everything which could risk our exposure. In other words, we are moving from a felt minus to a desired plus, from a feeling of not being good enough to a belief that we are indeed good enough - a natural development and one which can be encouraged. (Adler, 1997, p. XIV)

Naturally all people are not same but it does not mean that one is superior to others. Physically, some people are strong, some are weak, some are tall, some are short. Imagine a world that everybody is at the same weight and height in the same physical bodies. Everybody is the same. Being naturally different does not mean some have more freedom and more rights than the others. All the people are equal in terms of rights according to Islam. It was same in holly books but as a result of degeneration, some groups or societies feel uncomfortable since they are at the same level with others. Some rich people do not feel happy to sit at the same restaurant with other people who are not equal to them socially or economically. Some people claim that they have superiority to all other nations and they are well-created super nations. That is why they invade lands of other countries, kill other people, children and they think that it is their natural right or they find some causes to create their own right. They never recognize United Nations, Human Rights and other international organisations. They cross the borders of belief and humanity without any hesitation and after centuries they apologize for the slaughters, tortures, genocides. Even today it goes on every part of the world. Media shows how black people killed by American police, Palestinians who are systematically exposed to genocide.

William Butler Yeats

Irish people experienced such kind of injustice, intolerance, inequality and some great figures especially literary men have been trying to fight for their basic human rights. One of those great figures is William Butler Yeats, Irish prose writer, dramatist, arch poet of English Literature who was born in Sandymount, Ireland. He tried to point history of Ireland which is full of such kind of depressions, people's loss of belief in religion, art, literature and society which led them to be victims of their Irish identity. Yeats's identity is shaped by culture and history of his country. That is, understanding, reading and learning about the Irish identity crisis, Yeats can be considered as cut out for it.

Colonized people especially the artists and writers need to move into the culture of the colonizer due to their identical problems. In addition, they transfer their own traditional, cultural background to the new social structure. Yeats's identity crisis was already started with his father's conversion from

Christianity with the influence of Charles Darwin and John Stuart Mill for the sake of being a painter when he moved to London. “As a child who divided his time between London and visits to family back home, he grew sharply conscious of the conflicts that alienated colonial Ireland from imperial Britain and that, within Ireland, divided Protestant descendants of British settlers from their usually less powerful and poorer Catholic neighbors.” (Holdeman, 2006, p.3). Due to the financial problems that Yeats family lived because of Land League they had to move to Sligo where Yeats was inspired mostly. Yeats spent months at Merville which gave him the opportunity to write one of the great poems of his literary career; *Wanderings of Oisín*. “East of Sligo the waters of Lough Gill lapped the shores of many small islands such as the one later immortalized as “The Lake Isle of Innisfree.” In the north, waterfalls cascaded down the slopes of Ben Bulbin, under which stood the fine church at Drumcliff, where Yeats’s great-grandfather had been Rector, and where the poet himself would be buried.” (Holdeman, 2006, p.2). Staying between Sligo and London led to belonging problems for him. He was depressed and humiliated by his schoolmates since he was Irish. When he was in Sligo, he cannot deny his Anglo Irish identity: “In Sligo, he communed with soul-restoring beauty but could not escape some awareness of the fact that his Anglo-Irish family’s connections to that beauty were less time-honoured than those of the Catholic servants and laborers they employed, whose ties went back for centuries, and whose disadvantaged position reflected their ancestors’ displacement by British settlers.” (Holdeman, 2006, p.4). Yeats could not believe that he is Protestant or Catholic since he cannot ignore the ideas of his father whose thoughts were uncommon and against tradition. However; Yeats was in search of a spiritual truth which led him use interesting symbols combining both religion and spiritual elements.

According to Yeats, politically, England was symbol of capitalism, power struggle which gave no right to live for the weak and full of factories with grey. On the other hand, Ireland was a good source of beauty, unspoilt nature with refreshing and relaxing atmosphere. Yet, Britain insisted on maintaining its authority on Ireland both legally and illegally:

The British sometimes justified their empire in Ireland and elsewhere by describing those over whom they held sway as savages. In texts ranging from novels to political cartoons, they stereotyped the Irish as irrational, effeminate, and drunken: in other words, as unfit to govern themselves. During his early years, Yeats sought to counter such stereotypes by presenting

Ireland – and especially its ancient and rural aspects – as full of beauty, wisdom, and passionate heroism. He thus also laid a foundation for building his own satisfying identity. (Holdeman, 2006, p.7).

One of the remarkable works of Yeats, a good example of struggle against such kind of injustices, is *Wanderings of Oisín*. It reflects Irish myth and legend through which Yeats showed his loyalty to Irish history and identity. It focuses on Irish folklore and ancestry, which he suggested Irish nation not to forget.

Analysis of *Wanderings of Oisín* through Paratextuality

In this paper, it is aimed to analyse *Wanderings of Oisín* read by Nathan presented in YouTube through famous French literary theorist Gérard Genette’s concept of paratextuality. Genette defined a text with its relations with other texts. He named these relations as paratextuality in his book *Threshold of Interpretation*: “For us, accordingly, the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public.” (Genette, 1997, p.1). He pointed that paratext is anything inside or outside of the text. It is understood that paratext is comprised of two types of texts. It is formulated as peritext (inside) +epitext (outside) = paratext. He identified peritext “...titles and subtitles, pseudonyms, forewords, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, intertitles, notes, epilogues, and

afterwords...” (Genette, 1997, p. xviii), but in this paper main aim is to analyse the poem within the frame of epitext. In this regard, “the epitext is any paratextual element not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating, as it were, freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space.” (Genette, 1997, p. 344). It is clear that epitext is any material related to the works (poem, play, novel, etc.) of the poet, writer, etc. and it is not compulsory to be in written form. Epitexts give reader a chance to define the text according to space, time, form, communication and function. Genette classifies characteristics of an epitext as:

More concretely: defining a paratextual element consists of determining its location (the question *where?*); the date of its appearance and, if need be, its disappearance (*when?*); its mode of existence, verbal or other (*how?*); the characteristics of its situation of communication - its sender and addressee (*from whom? to whom?*); and the functions that its message aims to fulfill (*to do what?*). (Genette, 1997, p.4).

Considering the technological developments, visual and printed press materials, social media equipments, any item related to the works of writers can be accepted as epitexts. Especially, social media platforms and video sharing sites have become an important part of our life. People can easily access these platforms and search about anything related to their needs and wishes. Some people like recording and sharing videos or photos. *Wanderings of Oisín* is an epic poem of Yeats, which was published in 1889 in the book named *Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems*. It can be said that it is a poem which made a great contribution to Yeats' fame as a significant poet of Irish nation. Minority writers have always felt responsibility to shed light on problems of their nation by giving examples from their own history and customs. In his poem, Yeats told his public to protect their land and culture, be loyal to their identity and home. Oisín (legendary hero in the poem) remembers the days he fought for his country and misses his homeland:

“Oisín. Saint, do you weep? I hear amid the thunder
The Fenian horses; armour torn asunder; (210)
Laughter and cries. The armies clash and shock,
And now the daylight–darkening ravens flock.
Cease, cease, O mournful, laughing Fenian horn!

The hundred years had ceased;
I stood upon the stair: the surges bore
A beech–bough to me, and my heart grew sore,
Remembering how I had stood by white–haired Finn
Under a beech at Almuin and heard the thin”
Outcry of bats.
(Yeats & Finneran, 1997, p. 378-379)

Yeats also warned his nation not to leave their home for worldly desires and wishes because when they leave the country alone their religion will be changed:

“S. Patrick. Be still: the skies
Are choked with thunder, lightning, and fierce wind,
For God has heard, and speaks His angry mind;
Go cast your body on the stones and pray,

For He has wrought midnight and dawn and day”

(Yeats & Finneran, 1997, p. 378-379)

Sharing on Youtube with the title “*The Wanderings of Oisín by William Butler YEATS read by Nathan | Full Audio Book*” is the epitext of the poem. Considering the first characteristic of the epitext, the place of it is Youtube (LibriVox Audiobooks, 2018). It was uploaded to Youtube on 21 June 2018 by LibriVox Audiobooks. It is an audiobook. It is especially remarked that it was read by Nathan in English with this subtitle: “Read by: Nathan in English”. Audience was also informed about the duration of the recording with a time schedule. It shows exact minute that each chapter starts. They also shared the genre(s) of the poem which is myths, legends, fairy tales and narratives. Dates regarding Yeats’s birth and death were also written. A short summary was added at the bottom, too. For the listeners who ask for more information, the link was also given.

The second feature of the epitext is the time of it. When was it created? Genette identified time elements either anthumous or posthumous: “To designate elements that appear after the author's death, I – like everyone else - will use the term *posthumous*; to designate elements produced during the author's lifetime, I will adopt the neologism proposed by my good master Alphonse Allais: *anthumous* paratext.” (Genette, 1997, p. 6). If the epitext is created before the creator’s death, it is anthumous, but if it is created after his/her death it is posthumous. In order to identify whether the epitext is anthumous or posthumous, it is necessary to know when the poet died. Yeats was born on 13 June 1865 and he died on 28 January 1939. That is, the epitext is posthumous since it was created after he died.

The next element about the epitext is how it was presented, in which form the addressee saw it. It was in virtual platform, it is not printed and it is an audial epitext. There is a cover in the video which places the name of the book and publisher of the recording at the top on the left.

The fourth feature of the epitext is related with communication. Who sent the epitext to whom? Sender of the epitext is LibriVox Audiobooks. Yeats is the first, direct sender of the original poem and LibriVox Audiobooks is the sender of the epitext. In fact, addressee is not reader here, it is the audience who listens to it, listeners.

Final point that should be known about an epitext is its target. Function of the epitext depends on the aim of the creator. Various ideas can be claimed about the functions of the epitext. For example, the company probably wanted to increase the interest towards Yeats or they reminded Yeats to new generations, or they created another form of the poem. Some people can claim that they wanted to earn money by this way. They tried to draw attention to ethnic identities through Yeats’ poem. To make an interview with the person who has the responsibility of the project seems to be the best way to learn about the main aim.

Conclusion and discussion

Individual differences such as gender, identity, ethnic characteristics, belief, political views, etc. are the elements that make humans different from each other. No human being is superior to another. Those who cannot control their inhuman desires believe that they are superior and they make the earth unliveable place. Great leaders or people those who feel this problem of humanity in their hearts have always tried to find solutions for these problems depending on their abilities and capacities. One of those great men is William Butler Yeats. It can be said that he fought for not only for the rights of his own nation but also for the universal problems of humanity until the end of his life. He tried to mirror these

problems in his poem Wanderings of Oisın. The poem was analysed by Genette's paratextuality. According to his formulation, the audiobook shared by LibriVox Audiobooks is an epitext of the poem. It is in virtual platform, world famous video source, Youtube. It was shared in 2018. It is not in written form; it is an audial epitext. LibriVox Audiobooks is the sender of the video and it is aimed to serve firstly readers of Yeats or anybody interested in literature or poetry. In a broader sense, it can be assumed that public is the receiver, audience since it does not require any charge or submission. Thus, concept of identity, ethnic problems that Yeats touched in his poem reaches to larger masses through different perspective.

People eat fast, think fast, move fast, spend fast, and love fast. In other words, people live fast. They do not want to do activities, which requires patience like reading. They do not spare enough time for it. In this respect, snackable videos, pictures, sharings have become more attractive for people, especially for the youth. Social media platforms and other digital sources have become more and more significant. It means they give a rich source of epitexts for researchers. It gives more chances to make more research in the field of paratextuality.

As a result, Yeats is represented to the people from a different perspective and form. Young generations can accidentally or intentionally listen this poem while they are searching for any kind of video. Thanks to the audiobook, they may love reading poem, Yeats or other poets from different cultures. They can get rid of prejudices towards people from other nations, cultures and religions.

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