

Paratextual Comparison of Two Poets: William Butler Yeats and Avnî

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Abstract: William Butler Yeats is an Irish writer, dramatist, educationist and philosopher. Sultan Mehmed II, the Conqueror of İstanbul, is one of the greatest sultans of the Ottoman Empire. W. B. Yeats was born in Ireland on 13th of June in 1865 and he died on 28th of January in 1939 in France. Sultan Mehmed II was born at Edirne Palace on 30th of March, in 1432 and he died on the 3rd of May in 1481 in İstanbul. Despite the fact that they originated from different societies and nations, they wrote poems about similar themes such as nation, land, freedom and love. In this study, it is expected to research Irish statesman, William Butler Yeats who won the Noble prize for literature in 1923 and Mehmed II who conquered İstanbul in 1453 and wrote various ghazals by comparing the books Fâtih Dîvânı ve Şerhi translated in English as Diwan of Sultan Mehmed II with Commentary and The Collected Works of William Butler Yeats Volume I whose subtitle is The Poems through paratextuality. Paratextual approach which belongs to French literary critic Gérard Genette is going to be the main agent in assessing life, works and impressions of both extraordinary artists, Archpoet and Avnî.

Keywords: William Butler Yeats, Sultan Mehmed II, poems, paratextuality, Gérard Genette

İki Şairin Yanmetinsel Karşılaştırması: William Butler Yeats ve Avnî

Öz: William Butler Yeats İrlandalı yazar, oyun yazarı, eğitimci ve filozoftur. Sultan II. Mehmed, İstanbul Fatih, Osmanlının en büyük sultanlarından birisidir. W.B. Yeats 13 Haziran 1865'te İrlanda'da doğmuş ve 28 Ocak 1939'da vefat etmiştir. Sultan II. Mehmed 30 Mart 1432'de Edirne Sarayı'nda doğmuş ve 3 Mayıs 1481'de İstanbul'da vefat etmiştir. Farklı toplumlardan ve milletlerden olmalarına rağmen millet, vatan, özgürlük ve aşk gibi benzer izleklerle şiirler yazmışlardır. Bu çalışmada 1923'te Nobel edebiyat ödülünü alan İrlandalı devlet adamı William Butler Yeats ile 1453'te İstanbul'u fetheden ve çeşitli gazeller yazan Sultan II. Mehmed'in şiirleri ve kişilikleri, başlığı İngilizceye Diwan of Sultan Mehmed II with Commentary olarak çevrilen Fâtih Dîvânı ve Şerhi kitabı ile alt başlığı Şiirler olan William Butler Yeats'in Toplu Eserleri 1. Cilt'ini karşılaştırmak amaçlanmıştır. Her iki sıra dışı şairin, Başşair ve Avni, hayatları, eserleri ve bırakmış oldukları intiba değerlendirilirken Fransız edebiyat eleştirmeni Gérard Genette'e ait yanmetinsel yaklaşım ana unsur olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: William Butler Yeats, Sultan Mehmed II, şiirler, yanmetinsellik, Gérard Genette

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I. Introduction

Reading and writing is very sophisticated process including reader and writer in it. Writing without reading is nearly impossible. In order to express ideas and thoughts on a specific subject needs reading about it firstly. A person should know something about that topic before telling and talking. In an amateurish way or professionally individuals write down events or experiences they lived. Intentionally or not they distribute the papers they write by this way other people may have chance to read them. Writer and reader become significant partners of the process. Asserting that every person's aim is to be read by the other people is not worthy. While some people make agreements with publishing houses to reach a good number of readers, some others compose and read only for themselves. May be they do not have goal to be famous. They only write to verbalize their intense feelings.

Yeats who has Irish origins is master in drama and poetry. He also compiled Irish folk tales and legends. He influenced his friends and other people especially writers with his foresights. "Beginning as a late Victorian aesthete and ending as an influential contemporary of Eliot and other modernists, Yeats set the pace for two generations of important writers." (Holdeman, 2006: ix). His father was an advocate; his mother was a housewife coming from a very rich family. In 1865 he was born in Sandymouth, Ireland on the 13th of June. Yeats had to move to London with his family owing to the fact that his father wanted to become a famous artist. As a child Yeats preferred to spend his time in his hometown where his love for legends and folktales which were told by his relatives was happened. He saved great, happy memories in Sligo. "I have grown happier with every year of life as though gradually conquering something in myself, for certainly my miseries were not made by others but were a part of my own mind." (O'donnell, Archibald, & Yeats, 2010: 45). He served Ireland in various fields. It can be said that he was successful in politics, too. In 1922, he was elected as senate. He never gave up writing until he died.

In his early twenties, for example, he takes up the role of Irish poet. Intent on developing an Irish literary tradition, he delved into Irish legend, folklore, myth, and literature, editing, translating, and publishing Irish texts and thereby bringing back to life a national tradition. Further, he renews this tradition by producing plays and poems specifically Irish in content and interwoven with Irish tales that he refashions to suit his poetic purposes (Hoffman, 2009: 105).

He was always in pursuit of telling through writing in wide range of writing styles from drama to poetry. "Yeats performs aurally and physically that which has impressed his creative mind, and in putting to pen to page, he seeks first some aural pattern for his words that encompasses and can be understood by all people at all times." (Hoffman, 2009: 6). He died of illness during his stay in Paris. According to David Holdeman, "...he had instructed George to bury him temporarily in France and then later remove his body to Drumcliff in County Sligo. She accordingly arranged for a temporary grave in nearby Roquebrune." (Holdeman, 2006: 114). Compared to Mehmed II, it can be said

that Yeats' religious life was very sophisticated. It is clear that Mehmed II was Muslim but Yeats sometimes defined himself as Christian and deist. Thus "Yeats envisions in non-religious terms an impersonal divine or cosmic force that constitutes, relates, and unites all things and all times." (Hoffman, 2009: 25)

Sultan Mehmed II, the Conqueror of İstanbul, was born at Edirne court on the 30th of March in 1432. His mother was Hüma Hatun. He came to the world as the fourth son of the sixth Ottoman Emperor Sultan Murad II. He took his primary education at court. "Mehmet II was a great ruler who can truly be considered the second founder of the Ottoman Empire owing not only to his numerous conquests, but also to the new and modern structure he brought to Ottoman government...". (Doğan, 2014: 75). İnalçık stated in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* that "in the spring of 1443 it is known he was sent from Edirne to Manisa as governor with his two lalas (a statesman who was assigned as the tutor of the young prince) Kassabzâde Mahmud and Nişancı İbrâhim b. Abdullah Bey" (İnalçık, 2003: 395). His father left the throne and went Bursa. Mehmed II had to struggle with problems and wars on the borders from the north to south, from the east to west. He began to lose some lands that were gained by his father and it aroused gossips and murmurings among the people. He couldn't repress the riots of janizaries and Murad II took control and came to throne again. He fought against enemies with his father and married. When he went back to Manisa he learnt that his father had died and he was called to throne again. Mehmed II believed that he had to conquer İstanbul to confirm his authority and finish speculations about the power loss of the empire. He succeeded to conquer İstanbul and declared concrete establishment of the Ottoman Empire. He opened Hagia Sofia which is hotly-debated even today. He died on the 3rd of May in 1481. He wrote poems with Avnî pseudonym. His style was believed to be clear and understandable. "He managed to blend poetry of his age with gentle imaginations, his clear phrases and fluent language was accepted among good examples of Turkish poetry which had not been densed with poetic devices." (İnalçık, 2003: 406). It can be said that he gave importance to scientists and philosophers of his time. "In 1454, there were an Italian humanist Ciriaco d'Ancona and other Italians at his court and they taught Roman and Western histories to him." (İnalçık, 2003: 407). He made great contribution to art, culture, social life. He supported artists and poets. His target was to create a strong country in this regard he did his best nearly in all fields for the sake of Allah.

"The sole aim of his life was to transform the Ottoman State into one of the greatest and most powerful, and with this aim in mind he always acted in an uncompromising and even ruthless manner in terms of politics, economics, and social planning, while also taking great care to encourage and patronize scholarship and the arts." (Doğan, 2014: 75-76).

II. Method

Some paratextual features of the books *Fâtih Dîvânı ve Şerhi* whose title in English is *Diwan of Sultan Mehmed II with Commentary* and *The Collected Works of William Butler Yeats Volume I* whose subtitle is *The Poems* were analysed according to principles of Gérard Genette. He is a French literary theorist, structuralist but he has been defined

with many other characteristics. In the foreword of Genette's book *Thresholds of Interpretation*, translated by Jane E. Elwin, Richard Macksey defined him with these sentences "...he has at various times been called many names - structuralist (both "high" and "low"), narratologist, historian of discursivity, rhetorician, semiotician of style, postmodern poetician, mimologist, transtextualist...(Genette, 1997: XIII) in the foreword.

A text tells readers about other texts through some devices and it is nearly impossible to find a text without any relationships with others. Genette identified these relations with the name of paratextuality. In the same book it was clearly stated that:

Paratextuality: The subject of the present book, comprising those liminal devices and conventions, both within the book (*peritext*) and outside it (*epitext*), that mediate the book to the reader: titles and subtitles, pseudonyms, forewords, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, intertitles, notes, epilogues, and afterwords - all those framing elements that so engaged Sterne; but also the elements in the public and private history of the book, its "epitext," that are analyzed in the latter part of this volume: "public epitexts" (from the author or publisher) as well as "private epitexts" (authorial correspondence, oral confidences, diaries, and pretexts). (Genette, 1997: XVIII)

Genette formulated paratext as paratext=peritext and epitext. Peritexts are all the items that are related within the book and epitexts are everything outside of the book. Titles, subtitles, contents, cover, colour are peritexts of a book. *Fâtih Dîvânı ve Şerhi* gives us the name of the publisher on its cover. It is Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu. The publishing institution gives the reader the message that it is vitally considered with an official authorities and it is really a serious study. However, the book *The Collected Works of William Butler Yeats Volume I* was published by a private company which is Scribner. It doesn't mean that it is not a serious work, it shows that it was not supported by a state or government financially. The expression Volume I clearly announces that the book continues with other volumes. Some readers may infer that this book was published for earning money but nobody can exactly prove this until he/she makes an interview or ask the publisher their aim. The word "*şerhi*" says that ghazals of him were commented in order to tell about him in a better and understandable way. "...I considered publishing a new edition of the poems; together with a new commentary; that would better reflect the intellectual, literary, and the political understanding of this great figure and his era." (Doğan, 2014:25). Michael D. Sheridan translated ghazals and comments into English. It gives the impression how important work it is. Its aim may be to introduce and tell the western world about poetic side of Mehmed II. Also foreword written by the Prime Minister of the period, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, makes the work was legally taken into consideration by authorities.

Readers are given opportunity to learn where and when it is published or created, in which form it is, who is aimed to address and who is the sender also what it is aimed to do. Epitexts don't need to be in written form, any type of expression about the texts can

be epitext. Especially, it is really difficult to imagine forms of epitext in rapidly globalizing world in parallel with technological developments. In this respect, shares on social media environments and video sharing sites such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Youtube and other similar sites can be evaluated as epitexts.

III. Findings

Advertisements and displays of the book *The Collected Works of William Butler Yeats Volume I* is found on various sites. Searching in Google about Yeats' book, you see different versions of it. The book analysed in the paper is the second edition edited by Richard J. Finneran. Readers firstly see www.amazon.com. in the first ranking as kindle edition. Readers can get the book from sites like www.amazon.com, www.simonandschuster.com, www.kobo.com, www.rarebooks.ie by paying. They may find other editions on different platforms. People who want to buy the book can easily get it from these different sites which sell books online or they can reach second hand books on worldwide sites by paying less than the new edition. The following figure was retrieved from www.amazon.com:

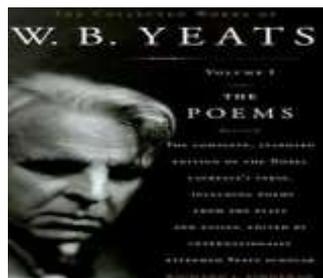


Figure 1 Photo of the book *The Collected Works of William Butler Yeats Volume I* Retrieved

The book of Yeats analysed in the paper is 752 pages. 219 poems of the poet were included. The best price of the book is 6.99 \$ and it changes according to features. In order to classify an epitext it is necessary to know dates of birth and death of the poet. Since poets' date of birth and death are taken into consideration, it is classified as anthumous (if the text is published before his/or her death) and posthumous (if the text is published after his/ her death). The book was published in 1997. It means that it is a posthumous epitext since it was published after the death of the poet, Yeats. Addressor of an epitext can be directly the poet, writer or creator or any other person except from him. Scribner is publisher it can be considered as indirect or second addressor as Yeats may be the direct or primary addressor of the text. Addressee of an epitext is either the people around the creator of the text, or local people. It can be his/her friends but it can be said that Yeats wrote his poems to be heard and read by all the people in the world. Yeats reflected real world in his poems. "Poetry, for Yeats, must be tethered to the "real" world and to the experiences of flesh and blood beings, which as his claims for national poetry suggest must include that of the poet's experiences in his time and place."

(Hoffman, 2009: 105) Yeats didn't accept the norms that were defined by the society he lived in. He always tried to go beyond reality and question the presence. "Always a questioner, Yeats immersed himself in psychical research, searching for clear evidence that the soul existed after death and that the supernatural world intersected at points with the human realm and existence." (Hoffmann,2009:129) His aim was to be universal and to tell the beauties of Ireland through his native language and local characteristics. Thus the addressee of the book is not only readers but also all the people in the world.

Always concerned with creating a flesh and blood language, Yeats seeks to develop a local language but in rhythms that reflect all men's speech. Yeats's flesh and blood language must register the personal and local, as well as the impersonal and universal, in keeping with his symbolist aim to encompass the individual and the universal (Hoffman, 2009: 106).

Status of the epitext changes in time. It can be visual, printed, virtual, auidial or audio-visual, etc. The epitext of the book is visual epitext which is found in digital media. Different editions may use other photos. That is epitexts may vary. Aim of the epitext can be evaluated in two ways. From poets' perspective it is to reach more people and tell themselves. From publishers' perspective, some readers may claim that the aim is to earn money, while the others will say that it is to make a contribution to provide people with the poems of Yeats.

One who wants to search about the book *Fâtih Dîvânı ve Şerhi* for any reason can find many results ranking in Google. Different versions of it is available and surprisingly some of them are free of charge. The book analysed in the paper is 665 pages. 84 pomes were included. Readers firstly see photos of the book. They face with e- book edition of it on <http://ekitap.kulturturizm.gov.tr> in the first ranking. Readers can download the book from the website without paying. It is also sold by publishers online such as <https://esatis.yek.gov.tr>, www.kitapyurdu.com, www.dr.com.tr, etc. The best price for the book is 20 TL on the website of Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı. The following figure was retrieved from www.kitapyurdu.com:



Figure 2 Photo of the book *Fâtih Dîvânı ve Şerhi*

The book was published in 2014. It indicates that it is a posthumous epitext since Sultan Mehmed II died in 1481. It is found on websites in digital platform. It is a visual epitext. Muhammet Nur Doğan can be evaluated as the indirect addressor since direct addressor of the book is Sultan Mehmet II. Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu may be a medium to make the book reach to the public. Addressee of the poems is public. Given that Sultan Mehmet II is a padishah nobody can say it is written for the aim of earning money, becoming famous and being appreciated by surroundings.

Personal photos of possessions of Sultan Mehmed II in Topkapı Palace Museum, portraits and miniatures depicting Sultan Mehmed II, sketches from Sultan Mehmed II's personal notebook in Topkapı Palace Museum Library, Treasury Library department, poems not in the primary, manuscript, facsimile in Millet Manuscript Library are given at the end of the book.

Both poets wrote poems related with İstanbul. İstanbul is centre of beauty, intelligence and wisdom for them. They exaggerated the holiness and beauty of İstanbul in their poems. For instance, Mehmet II wrote a ghazal which tells the beauty of Galata. He sees a beautiful in Galata, she is likened to Jesus.

Whoever sees Galata longs no more for the heaven of Firdevs.

Whoever sees its heart-adorning cypress thinks no more of the cypress
of heaven

I saw there a Jesus speaking like the Franks.

Whoever sees Jesus will think it was this Jesus' lips that gave him life

O Muslims! whoever sees that Christian will lose their wits, their mind,
their faith and belief- an infidel they will become.

Whoever drinks that beauty's pure wine will think no more of the
waters Kawthar. Whoever sees that beauty's church will go no more to
mosque.

Avnî, whoever sees that cincture slung round your waist and cross
hung from your neck will think you, too, a Frankish infidel! (Doğan,
2014: 449)

Yeats was looking for a place to spend his last years. He believed that there was no country for the old. He wanted to go Byzantium.

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium. (Yeats & Finneran, 1997: 197)

Yeats and Mehmet II are from different parts of the world but they have common points in their poems. Today, Europe still discusses full membership of Turkey into European Union. However, people know that being a membership is a political issue. It will be understood that art, poem breaks the borders between countries and people. It is easier to come together in literature and society than in geography and policy.

IV. Conclusion and Discussion

Paratextuality lets the reader see what happens behind the text itself. It may help the public understand the difficulty that writers and poems experience during their writing. It may also give publishers a good chance to reveal their real targets in publishing books and other works. Peritexts give information about the gist of the book. Epitexts encourage people to buy new coming books. They may also remind novels, poems, plays and other works to the people. Advertisements, displays, shows, posters, newspapers can be very useful in order to reach more people. Conferences and symposiums are very good examples of scientific events to discover new approaches and methods like paratextuality.

People may remember old poets and writers thanks to epitexts. Epitexts give chances not only readers but also to the whole public to learn about the poetic sides of statesmen like Yeats and Mehmet II. They serve as a bridge between writers and readers. They also place publishers in the process, by this way publishers become more conscious about publishing. They can improve themselves to find new ways of reaching more readers.

Paratextuality can be one of the main agents that help literature to bring people together and sing the same song and although they are from different geographies, regions, colours, races and religions as in the examples of Yeats and Mehmet II.

Finally, this paper can be considered as an epitext of the books of Yeats and Mehmet II. This paper is a posthumous epitext since both poets died. The paper itself is a written epitext. It is being presented at Uşak University. Since writer of the paper presents it, it is also audio-visual. Addressor is Raşit Çolak and addressee is firstly the audience in conference hall then all the readers after its publication. Its aim is to analyse Yeats and Sultan Mehmed II from different perspective. It may also pave the way for new

researches in paratextuality. It is hoped to encourage new researchers to study other literary men and statesmen from various parts of the world.

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Figure 1 Photo of the book *The Collected Works of William Butler Yeats Volume I* Retrieved December 10, 2018 from <https://www.amazon.com/Collected-Works-W-B-Yeats-Revised-ebook/dp/B003P9XHRQ>

Figure 2 Photo of the book *Fâtiḥ Dîvânı ve Şerhi* Retrieved December 21,2018 from <https://www.ges.gov.tr/tr/kitap/fatih-divani-ve-serhi-sert-kapak/>

<http://www.amazon.com>

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