



Paratextual Analysis of an Arch-Poet or the Utterance “Education is not Filling of a Pail, but the Lighting of a Fire.”¹

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Abstract

Impact of world famous Nobel laureate writer, playwright, and arch poet William Butler Yeats, can be seen in various areas. Scientists, journalists, statesman, clergymen, educationists and experts from different fields are witnessed to refer some of Yeats’ statements, lines, stanzas of his poems or his well-known utterances in their speeches, articles, columns, public speaks, etc. The utterance “education is not filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire” is one of the most quoted sentences. It is always quoted by authorities and people interested in education. Also, it is possible to find that the sentence used by people who are willing to give suggestions about education. However, people exactly don’t know who really stated it. It may shed light on present education problem. In this paper, it is tried to be explained what the sentence really tells and whether it has positive or negative effects on Yeats and education from paratextual perspective.

Keywords: William Butler Yeats, Gérard Genette, epitext, paratextuality, education system

Bir Baş Şair’in ya da “Eğitim Kovaya Su Doldurmak Değil Ateşi Yakmaktır” Sözü’nün Yanmetinsel İncelemesi

Öz

Nobel edebiyat ödüllü yazar, oyun yazarı ve baş şair William Butler Yeats’in etkisi çeşitli alanlarda görülebilir. Bilim adamları, gazeteciler, devlet adamları, din adamları, eğitimciler ve farklı alanlardan uzmanların konuşmalarında, makalelerinde, köşe yazılarında ve halka hitaplarında Yeats’in cümlelerini, mısralarını, şiirlerinden kıtalarını veya meşhur söylemlerine göndermede buldukları görülmektedir. “Eğitim, kovaya su doldurmak değil, ateşi yakmaktır.” sözü en çok kullanılan cümlelerden birisidir. Eğitim otoriteleri ve eğitimle ilgilenen insanlar tarafından sürekli kullanılmaktadır. Ayrıca, eğitimle ilgili önerilerde bulunmak isteyen kişiler tarafından da kullanılmaktadır. Hâlbuki insanlar gerçekten bu sözün kimin tarafından kullanıldığını tam olarak bilmemektedirler. Bu cümle bugünkü eğitim sorununa ışık tutabilir. Bu çalışmada, aslında bu cümlenin ne anlatmak istediği, Yeats ve eğitim üzerine olumlu ya da olumsuz etkilerinin olup olmadığı yanmetinsellik açısından incelenmeye çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: William Butler Yeats, Gérard Genette, yapıtçevresi yanmetin unsuru, yanmetinsellik, eğitim sistemi

1. INTRODUCTION

William Butler Yeats is world famous Nobel laureate writer, playwright, and arch poet. Influence of him can be seen in various areas. As a prolific writer, he wrote poems, plays, and various works in different genres. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1923. He influenced many scientists and philosophers in different fields. It can be accepted that his ideas led thinkers, experts, and people nearly from all the branches to study and research deeply. It is a fact that Yeats has interesting thoughts and suggestions about education. He spent so much time on thinking about education

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system. He was not pleased with the education system of his time. He complained about it. He believed everybody found a philosophical excuse for what they did. When he was a young student, he was invited to read one of his poems, *The Island of Statues*, in front of critics to decide whether it was worthy of publication in the *College* magazine. He succeeded but he couldn't prevent himself to ask the question to the schoolmaster who is a young man: "I know you will defend the ordinary system of education by saying that it strengthens the will, but I'm convinced that it only seems to do so because it weakens the impulses." (O'donnell, Archibald, & Yeats, 2010: 99). It is implied that Yeats criticizes this type of system since it demotivates students. Those demoralized students thus cannot make decision on their own and it may discourage them.

Scholars, philosophers, literary men, educationists, great figures in history, politicians have been trying to construct a perfect education system in which self-confident students are grown. Hence, they uttered eloquent sentences in their speeches or wrote in their works. Today, thanks to social media and other technological developments, anybody dealing with education most probably reads and quotes the utterance "education is not filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." It is quoted by authorities and experts in education since the sentence may shed light on present education problem. However, people exactly don't know whether Yeats really stated it. Some people claim that it exactly belongs to Yeats, while some others believe that it is misattributed to him. Today, there are a great many social media platforms and internet websites which are established to search origins of the sentences or words. Quoteinvestigator.com is one of the websites searching the real persons who told the quotes most frequently used by people in different environments. According to quote investigator abbreviated as QI on the website, this famous quotation was not uttered by Yeats. QI wrote short history of the sentence by giving its first form at the beginning and the last present type today in the article title of which is "The Mind Is Not a Vessel That Needs Filling, But Wood That Needs Igniting" ([www. quoteinvestigator.com](http://www.quoteinvestigator.com)) at the end. He/she preferred "William Butler Yeats? Plutarch? Socrates? Plato? Apocryphal?" as the subtitle of his/her article. It was published on 28th of March, 2013. He/she believes that "the mind is not a vessel that needs filling, but wood that needs igniting" is the original sentence uttered by Greek author, philosopher Plutarch who is believed to have an influence on writing in Europe. The investigator put forward that misunderstandings and misreadings in time causes this kind of mistakes. Before, this sentence was believed to be uttered by Socrates. The investigator wrote that the original form of the sentence was created in the essay "On Listening" written by him even though people quote this sentence as it belongs to Yeats. Someone may claim that Yeats was not well educated and hated teaching and learning. However, as he was a dyslexic that is why the sentence credited with him. In his own words: "Because I had found it hard to attend to anything less interesting than my thoughts, I was difficult to teach." (O'donnell et al., 2010: 53). His suffering might be one of the reasons why he was so interested in education. It doesn't prove the quotation belongs to Yeats. In fact, "...at school he was placed near the bottom of his class in most subjects and was

derided by his classmates for being unathletic and Irish.” (Holdeman, 2006: 4). Speculations still go on. What makes this apocryphal sentence so important? Education is not only giving courses to students, prepare them for the exams, and help them to gain high scores. It is also motivation, encouragement. In this paper, it is tried to be explained what the sentence really tells and whether it has positive or negative effects on Yeats and education through epitext which is a part of paratext and created by French literary theorist Gérard Genette.

2. METHOD

In order to investigate meaning of the sentence and influences of speculations on Yeats and education, epitext which is a part of paratext developed by famous French theorist Gérard Genette is going to be used. Paratextuality has been explained and interpreted by literary theorists and various scientists. For Genette, a paratext is:

“a threshold... It is an "undefined zone between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text), an edge...” (Genette, 1997: 2).

It may contribute to give firstly the meaning of the prefix –para. One can find a great number of definition of the prefix but here it is going to be given the meaning of –para related with paratextuality. It is defined as:

“a prefix appearing in loanwords from Greek, most often attached to verbs and verbal derivatives with the meanings “at or to one side of, beside, side by side” (parabola; paragraph; parallel; paralysis), “beyond, past, by” (paradox; paragon; paragon); by extension from these senses, this prefix came to designate objects or activities auxiliary to or derivative of that denoted by the base word (parody; paronomasia), and hence abnormal or defective (paranoia), a sense now common in modern scientific coinages (parageusia; paralexia). As an English prefix, para1 may have any of these senses; it is also productive in the naming of occupational roles considered ancillary or subsidiary to roles requiring more training, of a higher status, on such models as paramedical and paraprofessional: paralegal; paralibrarian; parapolice” (<https://www.dictionary.com>).

It is also defined as “beside: alongside of: beyond: aside.” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com>).

Text is (1): “the original words and form of a written or printed work (2): an edited or emended copy of an original work” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com>).

According to Genette, paratextuality = peritext + epitext. Paratext is formed by the words para and text. In mechanism between text and reader / target group is included in the scope of paratextuality (Civelek & Tilbe, 2016: 36). Peritext being one side of paratext includes everything within the book such as cover of the book, pictures used on covers, name of the book, quotations written on the cover, printing information, table of contents, etc. Anything outside of the book is considered as epitext. Epitext doesn't need to be related with only book. Newspaper articles, interviews, TV and radio programs, internet sources, social media activities about

writer's any kind of work can be accepted as epitexts. Besides, anything about writer's private or social life is also epitext. That is, epitext is not only texts about writer and his works. Songs from writer's lyrics, films based on his/her novel, celebrations may also be epitexts. Posters on billboards, ads in newspapers, on TV, radio and internet are other examples of epitexts. Smart phone applications and internet services such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Periscope are rich sources of epitexts. Besides, videos in Youtube, Dailymotion, Vidivodo, and Bing can be assigned as epitext as long as they are related with author or his/ her works. Degree of relation with the author or his/her works are disregarded. Tweets of author, Facebook events, shares and comments on websites and blogs are accepted as epitexts. There is no time and space limit for epitexts. An epitext could have been created in advance before a forthcoming book or any work of writer; by this way that epitext may inspire writer to write, create a new work. Moreover; an epitext can be created after the work is published. Some other epitexts are being created at the same time with the work. How is it possible? For instance, a writer can announce on Facebook, Twitter or other social media platforms that he already writes his/her new work or he/she gives information about characters of his/her new play, he/she shares some passages from his new novel, he/she writes some of the lines from his new poem. These are all considered as epitexts. It is not compulsory for an epitext to be in paper format. All the information about writer and his any work or any character from his works, briefly any point regarding the writer is taken into consideration as epitext.

Genette believes an epitext must be classified as spatial, temporal, substantial, pragmatic, and functional That is, epitext should answer the questions of where, when, how, from whom to whom and to do what (Genette, 1997: 4). Epitext exists anywhere outside of the book. Its place is out of importance. It may be located on billboards, in ads page of a newspaper, on TV or radio channels as an advertisement. It is not necessary to be in real life. It also exists in virtual life. The article titled as "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire': It's an inspiring quote, but did WB Yeats say it?" (<https://www.irishtimes.com>). It was published in *Irishtimes* newspaper which is printed in Ireland. However, it was reached via internet from official website of the newspaper which is www.irishtimes.com. As a matter of fact, most people prefer digital newspapers today. "Today, newspapers are the fastest and the cheapest agents in supplying the need for learning." (Deniz, 2017: 5). Number of people reading printed versions of newspapers is falling day by day. However, it doesn't mean that printed versions are not evaluated as epitexts. In analysing epitext according to its time, two important factors are taken into consideration. The first one is based on birth and death date of the writer, but it does not mean that writer must have died. An epitext may be created while the writer is alive. If you consider life of writer for determination of time of epitext, it is either posthumous or anthumous. Posthumous epitext appears after the writer's death. Anthumous epitext is revealed before he dies, in other words when the writer is alive. The article was published on Tue, Oct 15, 2013. That is, it is a posthumous one because Yeats died in 1939. Substantial feature of epitext shows us how epitext is created, in which format it reached to reader. The article in

Irishtimes is a digital form of written newspaper. It can be said that it is digital. Pragmatically an epitext expresses the sender, addressee and medium. When the writer himself writes, creates, forms the epitext it is called authorial. Sometimes publisher is sender of the epitext through publishing advertisements of the work, then the epitext is publisher's. Also a third person except from these two sides can also be the sender. This type of epitext is named as unauthorial epitext. Responsibility of the epitext is on behalf of the sender. Any epitext which is denied by the author himself is named as unofficial. The epitext is official as long as the writer accepts all legal responsibilities. Third parties may be remembered as semiofficial. The article analysed in the paper was written by Robert Strong. It can be accepted as unofficial epitext. Epitext functionally tells the readers for whom it was created. Writer may have a large number of intentions to create epitext. There is no restriction for epitext to have only one aim. Epitext can encourage readers to buy a new book, draw attention onto writer or work, increase popularity of a work of art. Epitexts sometimes guide the readers while reading that work, give hints about characters or plot of a play, give social, political messages to public. Watching an advertisement on TV about a novel, or listening a song from lyrics of a poem on radio, hearing some people talking about a play in society may psychologically force people to buy that work or make research about the poet, author or playwright. It takes attention of people, arouses interest. The article by Robert Strong is not directly about Yeats. Its main aim is to analyse, criticize present education system and emphasize his feelings and ideas. For this reason, he quoted this famous sentence. Strong stresses that no matter who really said this sentence or when he said. He benefits from it for the sake of giving some clues for students and proposals for educationists. When Robert Strong was in US, he went to a conference. At the conference he heard the speaker quote the sentence. The speaker believed that education shouldn't teach students only courses and exercise power over them to get high marks from the exams. Parents, educationists should let them play with woods, matches and set a fire. For this, what students need is not high scores but motivation. It is like teaching them fishing instead of telling how to fish. Strong also warns students not to refer such kind of sentences whose exact producer is not known since using these types of quotations without showing their sources may cause some legal and illegal problems.

3. RESULT and DISCUSSIONS

In this paper, it is hoped to introduce this new concept and its application with an example from Yeats through the article written by Robert Strong from Irishtimes. Epitext, peritext, paratextuality is not well known in Turkey. They are all new. It is also intended to show that epitexts are not only applied to literary works. Any work of art, any product could be example of epitext. It is observed that William Butler Yeats is still popular even though 69 years passed after his death. These kinds of speculations don't damage Yeats' reputation since he is not responsible for the sentence that was uttered after he had died. That is, it is an unofficial epitext. On the contrary, rumours are expected to increase popularity of Yeats. When someone hears the sentence he may wonder who is Yeats, what is his occupation, where he lives. It helps a person to read

about Yeats and his poems, plays and other works. By this way he may advise other people around him to read Yeats. These people may be the people who have never heard a poem, or read a poem of Yeats. He may start reading literature thanks to Yeats, but the news, article or column which made it possible should be remembered. Epitext can be seen in any stage and field of life any time. It also shows us that Yeats is still popular and gives inspiration to many people in various branches such as education, politics, arts, sports, etc. It may be inferred that "lack of mass communication tools such as internet, social media in the period of Yeats prevented him from reaching larger masses." (Çolak, 2017: 94). The epitext may help educationists to solve the existing problem in present education system and encourage them to find, create new methods and system proposals. It may also encourage other researchers to apply paratextuality to any work of art, other fields or to activities in all fields of life especially literature and education.

As a result, it is a posthumous, written epitext created by Strong in digital platform and it is indirectly related with Yeats. It successfully impresses people whether it was really uttered by Yeats or not. It makes educationists feel themselves obliged to reflect on education system and make more research for it. This article itself can also be considered as a posthumous, epitext directly related with Yeats.

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