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The Importance of Paratext Across Cultures in the Light of Gérard Genette's Theory: Selected Theoretical Considerations and Case Studies in Arabic, Turkish and Polish

Abstract. The aim of this article is to examine selected studies into paratextuality found across three different cultural and linguistic contexts. Three scholars have been asked to investigate the notion of Genette's paratext in their domestic environments via WebQuest research: the Arab region, Poland and Turkey, as well as finding noteworthy case studies in the Arabic, Polish and Turkish languages. The findings have then been analysed, compared and assessed to report on the condition of paratextual research in the Arab region, Poland and Turkey.

Keywords: paratext; Gérard Genette; cultural adaptation; Arab region; Poland; Turkey.

Introduction and context

This article presents preliminary research findings of one of the research projects, "Editing Literatures across Cultures", organised at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń within the Toruń Humanities and Social Sciences Summer Programme (July 2024). The study was coordinated by Grzegorz Koneczniak (Poland), and the team members were Damla Yağızyılmaz (Turkey) and Mahmoud Abu Hanieh (Jordan). The objectives set at the project meetings were to analyse various dimensions of paratextuality and its uses on the basis of Arabic, Polish and Turkish texts. Thus, it can serve as a development and completion of the survey section already contributed by Iwona Loewe, who gave examples of Genette's followers, mainly the scholars who, as students, participated in his courses, as well as Polish academics (see Loewe 2007, pp. 16–19). The methodology employed has been that of classroom assisted WebQuest in order to find the most relevant texts dealing with contextualised uses of paratext. The scope of the results returned was narrowed down to the case studies showcasing various applications of paratext as regards the genre, form and purpose of works analysed paratextually, the kind of cultural activity (media, translation), discussed with the help of paratextual framework.

Any discussion on paratext will inevitably lead to the definitions and typologies proposed by Gérard Genette in his famous study *Seuils*, published in French in 1987 and translated into English in 1997 as *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (translated by Jane E. Lewin). This was the case of the pilot meeting within the project meetings, for which the introductory part of Genette's work, in its English translation, had been selected for our analysis. Not going into details developed in further parts, the section provided us with the definition of paratext, its main division and functions, the latter particularly subject to our discussion. Genette's theory hinges upon significant distinctions: the major external opposition between text and paratext, understood as the subsidiary textual, graphic and other content surrounding the text and affecting its meaning, and the internal distinction between peritext, found inside the same book (or volume), and epitext, the content related to the text yet found elsewhere, in separate publications. Genette assumes the importance of both in the process of reading, understanding and interpreting a literary text and shows his point on the basis of specific functions that paratexts are supposed to fulfil: "spatial, temporal, substantial, pragmatic, and functional characteristics" (Genette, 1997, p. 4; see also Konecz-

niak, 2016, pp. 96–99; cf. Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 41). These aspects were in detail discussed with reference to examples drawn from the cultures of the project team members (cf. Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 41).

As regards the first two functions, Genette addresses the proximity of the text and its paratexts and the localities and times defined by means of paratext, which are the various places of publication of a given work and years of original and subsequent editions. Such functions are particularly important in marking the differences between the location of the author during the writing process and the place in which a given work is set (see Genette, 1997, p. 4; cf. Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 41). Similarly, the year of publication and the times in which the work is set are also important in researching the distance between the authorial attitude towards the time and place depicted, impacted by his or her view of them (Genette, 1997, pp. 4–7; cf. Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 41). We gave examples of editions and reeditions of literary works and hypothesised on changes in patterns of reading those depending on a given impression.

The substantial function seems the broadest one, as it refers to the essential form of existence characterising a given paratext and falls under the categories of textual and non-textual manifestation (Genette, 1997, p. 7; cf. Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 41). The former, notwithstanding whether we are dealing with peritext and epitext, comprises the content of preliminary pages (half-title, full title or preface) and verbal statements directly referring to the given work and constituted in the written form (Genette, 1997, p. 7; cf. Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 41). Both make paratexts predominantly various forms of text. Yet, Genette is also aware of other types: "these may be iconic (illustrations), material (for example, everything that originates in the sometimes very significant typographical choices that go into the making of a book), or purely factual" (1997, p. 7; cf. Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 41). The typographical aspect is equally important in shaping the reader's understanding of a work, through use of traditional or modern typefaces, font colours, leading (line-spacing), to list just a few paratextual elements of a text (see Genette, 1997, p. 7; cf. Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 41). In terms of factual paratexts, Genette refers here to the objective knowledge of an author's age, or the number of works published, which again shapes the reader's approach to the work they are about to read (1997, p. 7; cf. Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 41).

The pragmatic features of a paratext draw from findings within linguistics and relate to the communicative situation – these are based on the common idea of a communication situation, borrowed from Roman Jakobson's

language functions, and focusing on the features and spheres of influence displayed by the agents situated in a specific context and conveying a textual message in a particular manner the (Genette, 1997, p. 8; cf. Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 41). Genette warns against common generalisations regarding the pragmatic functions and ontologies, and points out a network of communicative entanglements, bearing in mind the complexity of creative, editing, publishing and reception contexts of mediations between the "sender" and the "addressee". He is also aware of the ephemerality and lack of ontological stability and fixity of the two figures (and more) figures involved in the textual interaction (cf. Koneczniak, 2016, p. 98; cf. Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 41).

The aim of the remaining meetings, the outcome of which is presented in this article, was to examine paratextual research and its contexts across three different cultural backgrounds, Turkey, the Arab region and Poland, on the basis of selected theoretical and analytical case studies drawn from Turkey, Jordan and Poland, and related to the French original. We did not seek to show the reception of Genette's thought (for such an approach, predominantly with reference to Francophone and Polish continuators, see Loewe, 2007, pp. 16–19); instead, first of all, we were interested whether paratextuality might have independent origins in different cultures and literatures and, second of all, if not, whether Genette's theory is universal enough to cover literary and cultural analyses in those environments, not mentioned by Loewe. We proposed the following research questions prior to the WebQuest conducted: 1. How has the theory of paratext been used and expressed in Turkish, Arabic and Polish languages? 2. Are these uses and developments of Genette's approaches, or do they have independent etymologies and ontologies? 3. Does the analysis of paratextual studies in Arabic and Turkish reaffirm the usability and applicability of Genette's theory, noticed, for example, in the Polish texts discussed in this article? 4. What do the three different contexts have in common in terms of the treatment of paratext?

As regards the first two questions, in the Polish context, as found by Patrycja Przybysławska, the significance of paratextual elements had already been noticed prior to the formulation of Genette's theory and thus with no use of the concept "paratext" (https://poetyka.wordpress.com/paratekst/). However, this essay will reaffirm that it was Genette's framework that overrode such early attempts in Polish studies following the formulation of his ideas. Having conducted the WebQuest, we discussed selected texts in detail.

Paratext in the context of the Arabic language

In the case of Arabic, discussions of editorial and paratextual dimensions of a text are rooted in Genette's thought. Genette's concept of the paratext has been translated and adapted multiple times into Arabic; however, each translation varies in the naming convention of the term paratext, for example, "النص الموازي، ،العتبات الملحقات النصية، المناص، والمحيط الخارجي" (thresholds, parallel text, the unavoidable, textual accessories, the external perimeter). They all uphold the core idea of the paratext. What can be noticed in the different translations is that they do not stray too far away from Genette's intentions, as they all orbit his definition of the paratext, and they all focus on the details that Genette sets. Each translation of the term serves a different function for researchers and academics, depending on their intended message, and for an audience who might better understand the subject through the use of a specific term. According to حافظ المغربي (Hafez Al Megherbi), as read in his article entitled "عتبات النص و المسكوت عنه قراءة في نص شعري" ("Paratext and the unspoken aspect in reading poetry"), the importance of paratext cannot be questioned:

> Paratext has remained one of the many treasures of literary criticism in the Arabic language from many angles: reception, discourse analysis and textual transcendence, and they will always remain active semiotic functions in the texts they contain. If the text/work is a focus of interpretation and analytical reading – [paratext is] an integrated structure built from certain structures that can be dismantled for reconstruction. According to all this, thresholds are no longer marginalised things as before, not paid attention to. Therefore, "deconstruction came to restore consideration to the margin, which had remained unthought of or unvoiced, to show that the importance of the margin is no less than the importance of the centre, and that the margin sometimes plays a decisive role in bringing about dramatic changes in the structures and institutions of the centre" (Amal Dunqul, 1987). In fact, it may in many cases become the one that reveals what is left unspoken in the structure of the text (Hafez Al Megherbi, 2011 p. 5; trans. Mahmoud Abu Hanieh).

Yet عبد المالك أشهبون (Abed Al Malik Ashhabon), as found in his book entitled عتبات الكتابة في الرواية العربية ("Paratextuality in the Arabic Novel"), pro-

vides a contradictory interpretation to the two other voices represented in this section about the use of paratext in Arabic literature, as he states:

> It cannot be said that the new critical practice [the use of paratext] in our Arab world succeeded in providing cohesive and comprehensive answers to the questions of the literary text, including its surrounding texts, in the stage that followed traditional criticism, as many questions are still pending until further notice, due to a lack of representation of advanced critical experiences, or as a result of an unjustified closure around oneself at times, as some Arab critical practices continued to complain of a noticeable lack of thought in keeping pace with changes in the critical process at the high level (Ashhabon, 2009, pp. 23–24; trans. Mahmoud Abu Hanieh).

Similar to the already developing domestic referential network of paratextual research, the Arabic direction shows a similar tendency, with Ashhabon's book being referred to in the third and final example of paratextual interpretation in this section – an article entitled عتبات النص ودلالاتها في (Abu أبوالمعاطي خيري الرمادي by الرواية العربية المعاصرة تحت سماء كوبنهاغن ً أنموذجا Al Muate Khere Al Ramade), translated as "Text thresholds in the modern Arabic novel *Under Kubinhagins Heavens*". Here, the main substitute for the term paratext in Arabic is the term عتبات النص (threshold of the text), which is justified with three reasons outlined by the author. First, it is the most famous and common term among literary critics; second, it covers the totality of Genette's concept, as it achieves communicating the ideas of intersection, separation and connections; it is likened by the author to the threshold of a house, as it connects the outside to the inside and one has to go through it when entering or exiting; and finally, it is equivalence, as it does not hold any contradictory meaning to the meaning of Genette's paratext. The author describes the significance of paratext in a literary work as a way to help the receiver (the audience) to correctly enter the world of the literary text and direct their reading perspective. The article mostly follows Genette's interpretations of the elements of the paratext, as it first analyses the cover. The article argues that the cover is the first step between the receiver and the text, and from their interaction with the cover their relationship with the text begins to form. That relationship is determined by factors such as their mental state, their cultural level, the type and level of their education, and their environment.

The back cover is seen in the article as a natural extension of the front cover that holds an equal level of value to the receiver, as the back cover serves three different functions according to the article: it confirms the implied meaning of the front cover, it adds to the input or interaction of the receiver with the cover, or creates a different implication than what was established in the front cover. According to the author, the back cover of the novel intentionally negates the assumptions created by the front cover, which in itself creates a degree of confusion and disturbance within the receiver that echoes the confusion and disturbance of the girl on the cover:

> It [the publisher's note in the back cover] is a vision that leans the novel towards romantic novels, and it may have been necessary for the appropriate title for the novel to be *Love Under Copenhagen's Sky*, but the components of the front cover unit – the position of the girl's image, the group of colours that make up the image, refuses to agree with this vision that shocks the recipient due to the interpretation it carries that is contrary to the set of data hidden in the front cover of the text, the data that determined for them the path of their entry into the work. It is a word whose contradiction with the front of the text I see as an intentional contradiction to create a state of interpretive imbalance in the recipient, consistent with the state of disorder apparent in reading the front cover, on the one hand, and on the other hand, consistent with the state of imbalance controlling the girl in the picture (Ramade, 2014, p. 289–293; trans. Mahmoud Abu Hanieh).

Then we have the section on the illustration, in which the article argues that it is needed by the receiver as much as the publisher and the writer need it, as thinking about the contents, and attempting to interpret it, places the reader in a participatory role in the creation of the text. The article analyses the illustration of *Under Copenhagen's sky* which depicts a girl floating through the air, as she seems to be screaming in pain. The author of the article states that it is the image that forces the receiver to enter the world of the novel through the aspect of disturbance which is, as the author continues, an aspect that requires the receiver to be armed with an understanding of romance novels, or it can be entered through the aspect of cultural conflict, which requires the receiver to be armed with an understanding of critical reading methods: "It is an addition that places a brick in the edifice of the potential narrative on which the thresholds are built. The position of the girl's picture on the cover, and the set of colours that define her features, pro-

duce an image of a monster confused between perfection and imperfection, disturbed, unable to stand firm on the ground and failing to fully soar toward the sky. It is an image that forces the recipient to enter the world of the novel through the gate of disturbance" (Ramade, 2014, pp. 293–295; trans. Mahmoud Abu Hanieh).

Al Ramade then examines the title, which is described in the article as one of the major keys to unlocking the text and, without it, there is no truth to the text. The author goes in-depth in regard to the title, in particular, focusing on the typeface of the title, as he concludes that the typeface intentionally breaks the rules of Arabic typography to reflect the state of disturbance that the book is trying to communicate. Meanwhile, the author's name is written perfectly according to the rules of Arabic typography, which pushes the receiver to consider the contrast between the title and the name of the author. Thus,

> The difference between the two typefaces prompts a reading that examines the relationship between two representations. It is a reading that starts from the relationship between the turbulent, winding line and the state of disturbance that dominates the image of the cover girl, especially since the title is written in purple, suggesting instability of emotions, as if we were linking the state of instability with the place, Copenhagen. It is a connection that achieves two goals: the first is the connection of thresholds [paratext], and the second confirms the building block of alienation in the potential text, which limits the theme of the text to the tragedies of alienation and issues of identity (Ramade, 2014, pp. 295–296; trans. Mahmoud Abu Hanieh).

The article defines dedication as an acknowledgment by the author towards people they credit with their success or towards people they have a hateful relationship with, which acts as a form of self-affirmation. And sometimes the dedication is for the reader, as they are the true receiver of the work. In the novel, the author dedicates her work to her parents in a way that, according to the article, forces the reader to stop to understand the implication and decide on the method to approach the text: "The dedication to this reading favoured alienation and estrangement, and the anxiety of identity and the conflict between the self and the other associated with them, as an initial introduction to the world of the text (Ramade, 2014, pp. 297–298; trans. Mahmoud Abu Hanieh).

The epigraph, as it is understood in the article, is a way to direct the reception strategies of the receiver or a way to interpret the title of the work. Al Ramade states that the novel implies the question for the receiver about the connection between the epigraph and the title. The article asserts the connection between the two as the idea of alienation – the alienation of the girl on the cover in what is presumed to be Copenhagen and the alienation implied by the lines of poetry in the epigraph: "The value of the poetic epigraph does not lie only in the fact that it is an inevitable threshold, nor because it is a sign that determines the way to access the text, but also because its author is the great Arab poet Abu Tayeb al-Mutanabbi, the most controversial poet in regards the ideas of the self and the other, and the most settled, wandering and suffering from alienation and estrangement. These are the same meanings that the study shows in the cover and introduction" (Ramade, 2014, pp. 298–300; trans. Mahmoud Abu Hanieh).

And, finally, the surrounding interviews are addressed, too. These are seen in the article as a form of advertisement that benefits the understanding of both the text and the creator of the text, although the article intentionally excludes analysing the publisher's seal, as the article explains that its view on it is that it serves a legal role more than an artistic role, "disregarding the icon of the publishing house and the way it is presented, out of the conviction that its role is more legal than artistic" (Ramade, 2014, pp. 292–293; trans. Mahmoud Abu Hanieh).

The discussion shows that Genette's idea transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries. Originally, created in the context of Western, not only Francophone, literary context, it can be, and it has been, adopted so as to interpret texts from the Arabic literary context, in the case of which the significance of the cover, the content on the preliminary pages, the layout typeset and even the kind of typography convey messages to the reader, as crucial as the main text itself. What is worth noting is that the kind of typography, used against the rules and conventions of Arabic, can be a challenging and even oppositional technique. Similar to the evolution of the theory of paratext in the Western context, wherein Genette undeniably serves as the foundational figure, in Arabic, discussions concerning the application of paratext begin with Genette's framework and typology.

Paratext in Turkish case studies

Although "paratext", the concept introduced by Gérard Genette, is a very comprehensive subject that needs to be researched, there is hardly any theoretical study in Turkish reaching beyond the original insights into what paratexts are, what they cover, how many types they are divided into and what their subdivisions are. The only academic articles and research papers addressing studies on this subject in Turkey are mostly related to the examination of paratexts in certain works written by Turkish authors and in the Turkish language.

To give a clear example, Esengül Sağlam Can (2023) has analysed the preface of the novel titled *Kokotlar Mektebi* by Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar in terms of Genette's theory of paratext, in her article "Paratext ve Roman: Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar'ın Kokotlar Mektebi Ön Sözü Üzerine Bir İnceleme", published in the journal *Turkbilig*. The first aspect that stands out in the preface is the propensity to draw attention to the work's fictionality. As Can argues, Hüseyin Rahmi's warning concerning the fictionality of the novel and directed to the reader should be analysed under the "how?" category that Genette developed while analysing the functions of prefaces. Due to this warning, the readers will not have to search for the answers as to the people or situations that are described in the novel. On the other hand, according to Genette, as quoted by Can, these warnings presented to the reader in the prefaces have a paradoxical structure. Denying any similarities protects the author, but it also makes the reader want to search for such connections (Genette, as quoted in Can, 2003, p. 176).

According to Genette, the cover of a book provides helpful insights about the literary work, and this significance of a cover has also been commented upon in the context of the Turkish literary context. For example, the cover of the novel *Masumiyet Müzesi* ("The Museum of Innocence") by Orhan Pamuk, the recipient of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature, is directly connected to the content of the work. As the author himself has stated in an interview, the front cover of the book is a collage made from the photograph collection that he created while writing the novel. On the back cover of the book, there is a photograph of Orhan Pamuk taken in Gustave Moreau's Museum by his daughter Rüya, to whom he dedicated the book (Pamuk, in an interview, Güven, 2008). With the little details they have, the cover designed by Orhan Pamuk himself influences the reader's first impression of the work.

However, Munise Aksöz (2018) has written an article titled "Yanmetin (Paratexte) Nedir? Metin Çevresindeki Yazılı Öğeler (Peritexte) Nelerdir?" ("What is 'Yanmetin' (paratexte)? What are the written elements around the text (peritexte)?" (translation of the title by Damla Yağızyılmaz) that helps us better understand Genette's concept of paratext in all aspects, and not only being related to a specific literary work. The word "paratext" was translated into Turkish as "yanmetin". This word consists of the combination of two separate roots: "yan" and "metin". The word "yan" means "next to something, addition", and the word "metin" means "written text" in Turkish (Aksöz, 2018). We can better comprehend that paratexts are neither the original text itself nor an entirely new text when we analyse the meaning of these two words (Aksöz, 2018). Rather, they are small pieces that are closely connected to the main text (Moenninghoff, 2003, p. 22, as quoted in Aksöz, 2018, p. 32).

Aksöz confirms Genette's point that getting a reader to read, buy and pay attention to a book is indubitably one of the most important functions of paratexts. The choices made about the paratext's components, such as the book's title, the font, colours and cover, also influence the success that the book achieves (Aksöz, 2018). For instance, the wrong selection of paratextual elements may prevent a novel from reaching the intended demand, even if it is really outstanding on its own merits (Aksöz, 2018, p. 33). According to Genette, paratexts are used to surround the main text, give it integrity and provide guidance to the reader on how to use it. They guide the reader's expectations of the book in addition to allowing them to interact with the text (Genette, as quoted in Aksöz, 2018, p. 33).

Paratexts are divided into two categories by Genette: peritext, each element of the book such as the font, foreword, title and table of contents; and epitext, elements that exist outside the book such as interviews, book reviews, author letters and critical literary analysis (as quoted in Aksöz, 2018, p. 33). The term "peritext" is translated into Turkish as "metin çevresindeki yazılı ögeler" ("written elements around the text"), while the term "epitext" is translated into Turkish as "kitap çevresindeki ögeler" ("elements around the book") (Aksöz, 2018, p. 34), which allows us to confirm that Turkish uses the domestic expressions based on the definitions of the terms while adapting them from other languages.

Although Genette is not referred to, a noteworthy example of paratextual elements as found in the discussion of Turkish literature can be inferred from selected analyses of the famous Turkish novel *Kürk Mantolu Madon-*

na (1943), translated as "Madonna in a Fur Coat", written by Sabahattin Ali. Thus, this section will stand as different since it will not focus on strict uses of paratext, as finding a direct application of Genette's theory in the Turkish context might be challenging, Sevengül Sönmez (2013), analysing the popularity of the novel, points its crucial paratextual aspects. The first and most important element is the book's publishing process. The contribution of the publishing house is very important in the recognition and success of a book. Written in a tent by Sabahattin Ali, during the military service, the story was published for the first time in 48 chapters under the title "Büyük Hikaye" in the *Hakikat Newspaper* between 1940 and 1941 (Sönmez, 2013).

Unfortunately, Sabahattin Ali and the newspaper owner disagreed about the story due to its dislikes, and as a result, Ali could not obtain the book's copyright (Sönmez, 2013). Later on, the novel was first published as a book by Remzi Kitabevi in 1943 (Sönmez, 2013). However, as Sönmez writes, the book continued to be disliked and not to be read by the literary circles, and it was nearly forgotten after Sabahattin Ali died, in 1948. The work, which did not receive the attention it deserved for years, started to be published by Yapı Kredi Publications, one of the most prestigious publishing houses in Turkey, in 1998, and the interest in the book increased over the years, along with the publishing house's high advertising power. The fact that the book remains on best-seller/reader lists for more than 50 years after its publication demonstrates the crucial role of publishing in a book's popularity and success (Sönmez, 2013).

According to Genette, an important paratextual element of a book is the title of the work. Cevdet Kudret Solok, who was a member of the literary group called the "Seven Torchbearers", mentions that Sabahattin Ali considered naming the novel "Lüzumsuz Adam" ("Unimportant Man"), at first. However, he ultimately dismissed this title due to his aversion to the dissonance created by the "z" and "s" sounds that it contained (Sönmez, 2013). Later, the novel came to be titled after the significant painting within it, a self-portrait painted by Maria Puder, the lover of the protagonist Raif Efendi (Sönmez, 2013). As found on the "Vakıf K12" project website, Raif, who was impressed by Maria Puder's *Portrait of a Woman in a Fur Coat* at a modern art exhibition in Berlin, came across an article about the painting in a newspaper. In this article, a comparison is made between Maria Puder's self-portrait painting and Andreas del Sarto's *Madonna delle Arpie*. Maria Puder, who was compared to the Virgin Mary in the painting *Madonna delle Arpie*,

was given the nickname "Madonna in a Fur Coat" in the newspaper because she was wearing a fur coat. In Christian visual art, the term "Madonna" is used to refer to works depicting Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the name "Maria" is the equivalent of Mary in Western languages. It can be interpreted that, by giving the name "Maria", which is the name of Jesus' mother, to Raif Bey's lover, Sabahattin Ali wanted to emphasise the value and importance he attributed to the character of Maria Puder in his work, even though the Raif Efendi was the protagonist of the novel (https://edebiyat.k12.org.tr/book/103).

Epitextual elements, such as reviews, author interviews and marginal notes, are developed outside the text itself. Genette underscores the significance of interviews as an important epitextual element, shaping how a work is interpreted and apprehended. Conversing with authors offers valuable insights into their inspirations, themes and creative methods. This added layer of information can provide clarity that may not be readily apparent from the text alone, thereby influencing readers' perception and comprehension of the work. In this case, it is impossible to find an author interview, since Sabahattin Ali was a target of government censorship because of his political editorials, and was killed on the Bulgarian border, allegedly by the Turkish secret services, in 1948 (Çalışkan, 2019).

Although finding an interview with the long late author would be a challenge, in 2016, a BBC reporter Emma Jane Kirby conducted an interview with Sabahattin Ali's daughter, Filiz Ali, which helped us gain a better understanding of the book. The question of whether Maria Puder is a real or fictional character has been a subject of debate among readers and within the literary community for many years. Filiz Ali stated in the interview with the *BBC* that they had discovered some time ago that Maria, the Madonna, was a real woman, from the letter Sabahattin Ali wrote to a friend, about the tale of his passionate feelings for a German lady, when he was in prison, and that Sabahattin Ali met her in Berlin, where he lived for a year as a young bachelor in the 1920s (in Kirby, 2016). As a result of this interview, the emotions portrayed in the narrative attain greater authenticity, consequently facilitating a deeper connection between the reader and the book.

Expanding the reach of a literary work through translation enables readers from diverse backgrounds to engage with the literary works of various cultures, fostering greater cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. *Madonna in a Fur Coat* was translated into English by Maureen Freely and

Alexander Dawe and published by the British publishing house Penguin in 2016, seven decades after its original publication. It has also been translated into 21 languages such as German, French, Russian, Chinese and Arabic (Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2017). According to Maureen Freely, the translator, the reason why the new generation of readers has connected with the book is the fact that the main characters defy gender stereotypes. This, she believes, is one of the main reasons why the book has become popular 70 years after it was first published, as she stated in her interview with William Armstrong for *Hürriyet Daily News*. She mentioned that the translation process was challenging because of certain terms that were specific to that time. However, she also expressed her enjoyment of the beautiful narrator's voice and the process of capturing its flow and authenticity (Freely, in Armstrong, 2016).

Book reviews and critiques can be considered paratextual elements since they play an important role in shaping the success, interpretation and positioning of a book within the literary and cultural landscape. They have the power to mould readers' perceptions, influence critical discourse and impact the book's resonance in various societal and cultural frameworks. As read in *Koltukname*, after *Madonna in a Fur Coat* was published in 1943, the first criticism came from Nazım Hikmet, a Turkish poet and novelist (2013; Sönmez, 2013). In a letter he sent to Sabahattin Ali from Bursa Prison in May 1943, Nazım Hikmet wrote that, "while the first part of the book, the analysis of the inner workings of a petty bourgeois family, tended to expand with magnificence, in the second part this opportunity was wasted"; thus, he both liked and disliked the book. He then suggested that Sabahattin Ali should consider changing the beginning of the book and writing a second volume as a separate novel (Hikmet in *Kultukname*; Sönmez, 2013). This type of criticism provides the reader with the opportunity to engage with the novel from an alternative perspective, fostering a deeper understanding of its content and themes.

In conclusion, Gérard Genette's concept of paratext would offer a comprehensive framework for comprehending the various elements that influence a reader's interaction with a text. An analysis of Turkish literary works, such as Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar's *Kokotlar Mektebi* and Sabahattin Ali's Kürk *Mantolu Madonna*, underscores the significance of both peritextual and epitextual components in shaping the reception and interpretation of a book – and examining these within Genette's framework would enable systematisation of contextual knowledge on such processes as creation,

publication, reception and translation of Ali's masterpiece. These paratextual elements, which encompass prefaces, book covers, interviews and reviews, not only serve to guide reader expectations but also contribute to enhancing the impact and visibility of the narrative. The intricate interplay between these elements illuminates how external factors can significantly shape a text's success and its position within cultural and literary contexts. As Turkish scholarship starts to explore and expand upon Genette's theories, it is expected to yield deeper insights into the mechanisms through which literature is presented and perceived, thereby enriching our understanding of both local and global literary landscapes.

Paratext in selected case studies from Poland

The first and second decades of the twenty-first century witnessed blossoming research into Genette's idea of paratext and its application not only in literature but also across various media, which might serve as the answer to the research question concerning the relevance of his thought in the development of paratextual research in Poland which up to now has extended its original scope of literary research.

The most comprehensive study of paratext in the media studies is Iwona Loewe's monograph *Gatunki paratekstowe w komunikacji medialnej*, with its title translated by the author as "Paratextual genres in the mass media communication" and published in 2007. It is a significant example showcasing the versatility of Genette's theoretical framework of paratext. Loewe reaches beyond the literary dimensions of the use of paratext and, instead, deals with artifacts of popular culture – the scope of the research is enormous, drawing examples from the book and press industries, television, radio and the internet, and analysing paratextual form whose semantic significance has often been neglected; for example, trailers, leaders, blurbs, etc. (see Loewe, 2007). Loewe begins her discussion with reference to Genette's concept of paratext and reports upon the most significant typologies proposed by him, as also listed at the beginning of this article. She also mentions the borrowing of Genette's word, existing in Polish as "paratekst" for lack of a more appropriate domesticated version in the target language. She deals with the development or reception of Genette's thought, particularly in the French and Polish contexts, and addresses further contributions towards it, neglecting somehow

similar developments expressed in Arabic and Turkish, which makes this present article a valid complementation of Genette's impacts upon scholars in other language and culture environments.

Loewe also makes a disclaimer regarding her partial adaptation of Genette's framework and opts for endeavouring to put it in the linguistic (communicative) context, most useful for the analysis of paratextual manifestations in the media. For Loewe, Genette's theory is a starting point, and she moves her discussion towards other divergent uses of paratext not only in literary but also in linguistic, textual and editorial environments, enriching this discussion with considerations about genre, category, form and metatext along with their importance in (mass) culture and communication (Loewe, 2007). In its cross-sectional analysis and diversity of case-studied examples, this text manifests itself as a crucial adaptation of Genette's approach for the forms of cultural and mass-cultural expression (cf. Koneczniak, 2016, pp. 105–107).

Loewe's book has been suggested to open this section for yet another reason: it confirms a developed research networking on a national level, with *Gatunki paratekstowe w komunikacji medialnej* acting as a common reference point. Marzanna Uździcka, who mentions the monograph by Loewe (see 2020, for example, p. 155), argues for the importance of paratext in the fantasy genre, and, in "Paratekst w literaturze fantasy (na podstawie glosariusza)" (2020), she examines the unique paratextual element, the glossary often added at the end of a fantasy novel, as the one reaching beyond common functions of such glossaries in other types of literature (2020, p. 155). In contrast to Loewe's study, Uździcka's research is situated within the specifically literary context, somehow reflecting the original circumstances in which the paratext emerged. Using Genette's idea as an underpinning, stressing its symbolic qualities of being "a threshold", "border", "accompaniment" and "periphery" in relation to the main text (Uździcka, 2020, pp. 154–155), and showing an awareness of how paratext has developed and it still can, she treats the fantasy glossary within the paratextual framework. The author gives various examples of fantasy literature and comments on the functions, significance and composition of glossaries there. She pays attention to the informative, prescriptive and descriptive roles of glossaries as well as considering them within the entanglements that the readers of fantasy works are faced with (Uździcka, 2020, pp. 159–165). Predominantly, she regards paratextual glossaries within the mediation between the author, the world depicted and

the reader, and suggests the conclusion, to be developed in her consecutive studies, that the paratextual understanding of glossaries in fantasy literature might add one more factor to differentiate this genre from others (Uździcka, 2020, p. 165). Notwithstanding the pronounced differences between Loewe's and Uździcka's studies, both have been successful in identifying significant niches to be explored by means of Genette's original framework.

Along with media and fantasy texts, in the context of the adaptation of the theory of paratext in Poland, the field of translation has also benefited in this respect. Izabela Lis-Wielgosz has contributed an article "Przekład omówiony, czyli o statusie i funkcji paratekstu (na przykładzie serii *Biblioteka Duchowości Europejskiej*)", translated as "Discussed translation: on the status and function of paratext in the series *Library of European Spirituality*" (2017) – this specific use of paratext should not come as a surprise, as the author herself argues that paratext, already widely used in literary studies (see Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 40), has often and widely been regarded within the context of translation, giving translators the required possibilities of presenting their work, both the outcome and the process, to their readers (Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 40). The author, similar to Loewe and Uździcka, utilises the flexibility of Genette's framework and the new possibilities that it opens for translation practice, analysis and interpretation – she is aware of the fact that this potential has already been noticed and addressed. What is significant in Lis-Wielgosz's text is that, in her exploration of the directions in which the concept of paratext has developed, the author singles out Polish contributions, and she specifically mentions Loewe's text discussed at the beginning of this section – to point the sometimes-blurred difference between paratext and metatext, particularly as regards the status of footnotes (see Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 41, 50), and one of Loewe's former essays – written in the context of Polish literary and paratextual research (see Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 40).

For Lis-Wielgosz, paratextual elements are predominantly regarded as a translator's tools to make the translated text optimally present in the target culture, which needs to be prepared for the appropriate reception of that text (Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 43, 47). The realm of paratextuality enables a translator to be the added author and to depict their authorial voice, thus making this figure upgrade their status in the translation context. What is also worth noting in Lis-Wielgosz's argumentation is the inclusion of theories suggested by other scholars to adapt Genette's theory for the purposes of translation analysis – she refers to the typologies proposed by Urpo Kovala and Philippe

Lane (see Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 48). Additionally, the author addresses the cases in which there is a necessity for extending the source text with the use of specialist glossaries to facilitate the reception of a given text in a target culture (Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 50), which again stresses the importance of glossaries as powerful paratextual tools. In the concluding section, the author reaffirms the status of paratextual elements, both textual and iconic, as "highly functional in the process of translation" and as necessary in bridging the "source culture" of the original creation and the "target culture" in which the translation is read (Lis-Wielgosz, 2017, p. 52). In the case of literary translation, Lis-Wielgosz's study illustrates a more developed network of interactions within the original pragmatic function of the paratext, in accordance with the categories offered in the foreword to *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation.*

The three contexts of usage of Genette's theory of paratext in Polish identified on the basis of this preliminary WebQuest have been mass-media, fantasy and translation, and definitely along with the three texts discussed there are more to confirm the applicability of paratextuality there. Still, a more detailed analysis would broaden the scope of these contexts. What is worth noting is that in the three studies in Polish, selected on an independent non-referential basis, this referentiality has already been established there via cross-mentions, which may showcase not only the popularity of paratextual considerations in various academic literary and cultural discourses in Poland but also the appreciation of validity and relevance of the methodologies and findings contributed by Polish scholars.

Conclusion

The universality and usability of Genette's theory has already been confirmed and noticed in the texts discussed (see, for example, Lis-Wielgosz, 2017), and this can be reaffirmed after our project discussions. Notwithstanding the cultural context in which we are dealing with paratext, the theory of Genette serves as the underpinning of the conceptual framework. He is unquestionably treated as the giver of the widely accepted concept of paratext and the pioneer of research in paratextuality – this term had not existed in any of the studied contexts prior to his formulation, although, at least in the case of Poland, scholarly interest in such aspects as forwards, prefac-

es and other "external" dimensions of a text had existed (see, for example, Przybysławska; Lis-Wielgosz, 2017).

Notwithstanding the field in which paratextuality has been examined, being it media, literature or translation, the conceptual frameworks applied draw from and on the definitions and typologies proposed by Genette, later modified to serve more specific requirements of investigation. The term and Genette's framework can still serve as a basis of a discussion of a work in its contextual dimensions – the functions and typologies that he proposed are still sufficient and appropriate in this respect in distinct cultures. However, at the same time, Genette's framework is also characterised with flexibility, enabling one to move beyond the literary context, the possibility frequently noticed and followed by scholar, also those whose texts have been discussed here. As regards literary research, paratext appears in the noteworthy discussion of fantasy literature, wherein various apparently subsidiary texts are needed to help the reader understand the main text, and the worlds depicted in fantasy works.

The analysis of the selected texts has helped us formulate the following conclusion regarding the presence and use of the French term. In most of them the authors consider the way in which "paratexte" entered the linguistic realms. In Polish, the word "paratext" has retained its graphic form as a word loan –"paratekst" (Loewe, 2007), while in Arabic the term paratext roughly translates into the threshold of the text (عتبات النص), which is an approximation of the words *para* and *text*, Genette's book has multiple translations into Arabic that differ in the literal translation of the terms (Hafez Al Megherbi, 2011), and in Turkish there exists a domestic expression "yanmetin", based on the definition of the term (Aksöz, 2018). However, Genette's book has not been translated into Turkish yet and neither has it been translated into Polish or Arabic.

In the three contexts, the adaptation of Genette's framework is characterised by a specific versatility and universality of the concept – the authors, aware of such adaptability and usefulness, have developed their considerations within divergent directions, employing a broad definition of the concept to serve as the appropriate and relevant underpinnings. The point of convergence appears to comprise such qualities as paratext being the threshold and margin, inferior to the main text yet playing a crucial role in approaching and understanding literary works and cultural artefacts. This all confirms that the theory of paratextuality can be applicable no matter

what linguistic and cultural boundaries we are dealing with. The analysis of selected Arabic case studies showcases observations in accordance with Genette's assumptions and similar to those found in other European languages. This point might be crucial in the case of international students attending a literary-editorial seminar, wherein Genette's theory can serve as the framework for discussing literary works, encased in their book formats, coming from various cultural and linguistic contexts. In this particular case, the transcultural and transnational flexibility of paratext makes it possible to account for local specificities, as confirmed in the text touching upon the importance of typeface use in Arabic.

The theory of typography follows different rules depending on the notational systems and the applicability of one typeface used, for example, for textual content in Polish due to the defined connotational and semiotic properties of that, may fall into incompatible network of uses in Arabic, or even Turkish. This stems from the fact that the history of typography has been developing along with the culture in which it has been used and which has been impacting other cultures. As a result, common typographical principles and specific typefaces developed nationally and regionally (see, for example, Wells and Preece, 2024). Nevertheless, the application of paratext for an analysis of such enables discussion of typography used in a given cultural and linguistic context, even if that requires typographical knowledge drawn from that context.

As noticed in the texts analysed (specifically in the article by Lis-Wielgosz) and confirmed during the project discussions, the context of translation is the most widely explored field of using paratext across the three cultural environments, all of them displaying the role of paratext in showing a translator's choices, problems encountered and doubts remaining in the process and outcomes. This can be also found in the Turkish context, not analysed here in this respect (see Olgun and Pınarbaşı, 2022). We have all agreed that even though a translator's necessity to expand on the source text in the target language is common knowledge, relating that to the significance of paratextual elements and their power in this respect came up as particularly worth noting, thanks to the observations made in Lis-Wielgosz's article. However, even though the issue of translation is most significant, there is no single literary work, from the global literature canon, posing specific obstacles, or generating researchers' interest across cultures, in terms of the paratext used

in the original and its translated versions that has been examined by scholars in the three cultural and linguistic contexts.

The selected examples of analyses in the Turkish context show that one can also point to paratextual dimensions, the significance of peritext and epitext, without explicitly naming so the aspects studied. In this case using appropriate nomenclature following Genette's contribution would help systematise such examinations and provide them with relevant discourse. This implicit use of paratext has also been observed in the Polish textual and literary scholarship, prior to the formulation of Genette's discourse (see Przybysławska). However, discussing secondary textual and iconic subsidiaries of the main text within the applications and explorations of Genette's concept of paratext has already gained, and still will gain, the required objective methodology and theoretical underpinning.

Finally, this sample of texts excerpted from the three contexts and analysed here point to their local status in terms of research networking. On a broader level, one cannot find any cross-references except for the fact that they draw on the major underpinning – Genette's *Seuils* not existing in its translations into the languages represented in this study. The texts discussed do not seem to cross the borders of their original contexts. However, at least in the Polish context, one can observe the already established network of research on a national level, with Loewe's book addressed in the previous section serving as the master study on paratextual research in Poland. *Gatunki paratekstowe w komunikacji medialnej* are referred to by both Uździcka and Lis-Wielgosz. This is particularly important because Loewe's monograph shows how the literary dimension of paratextuality is transformed into different realms of media, thus paving the way for other similar and different research. A similar network of domestic paratextual research is under way in the context of the Arabic language: *Paratextuality in the Arabic Novel* (2009) by Ashhabon is referred to in Al Ramade's text. And definitely, a similar cross-referential networking on a domestic level is yet to develop in Turkey.

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