

Yakın Doğu çöllerden, develerden ve palmyelerden ibaret değildir

Gamze SORAL¹

Hande KOLAT²

Kemalettin YİĞİTER³

Özet

Bu makalede, 20. Yüzyıl İngiliz öykü ve roman yazarı William M. Pickthall'un Türkiye, Mısır, Pakistan ve Suriye gibi Doğu ülkelerini gezip gördükten sonra buradaki insanları ve onların yaşam biçimlerini roman ve öykülerinde tarafsız bir bakış açısıyla anlatması incelenmiştir. Onun, Doğu Dünyasının derinliklerine ışık tutan ve buradaki insanların içten, dost canlısı, sözüne güvenilir, misafir perver ve dürüst olmalarını anlatması ne yazık ki, kendi anayurdu İngiltere'de "A loyal Enemy of England", yani düşmanlarımızın sadık dostu olarak anılmasına sebep olmuştur. Oysa o, bu dünyanın perdesini merakla indirip, gerçekleri tüm çıplaklığıyla sergilemiş bir yazardır. Yine bu makalede, ünlü yazar Edward Said'in Orientalism adlı eserinde bugünkü Doğu'yu değerlendirmesinin İngiliz yazarlardan biri olan Pickthall'un çok daha önceden doğru olarak değerlendirmiş olduğu vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Doğu, Oryantalizm, Edward Said

So called Orient is something more than deserts, camels or palms

Abstract

In this article a British novelist and short story writer living in 20th century, William Pickthall's following his travels to East; Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Pakistan and etc, to let the people in East to be known as themselves with goods and bads, that is objectively by the help of his works is examined. Pickthall, having illuminated the depth of Eastern world by his works, was unfortunately called for some time in his hometown as "A Loyal Enemy of England" that is a close friend of our enemies; was prone to introduce Easterners as friendly, loyal, hospitable and decent individuals. However, Pickthall was such a writer who had cracked the door of Oriental world open and laid the East barely. Furthermore, in the article it has been underlined that great author Edward Said's evaluation of East in his work called Orientalism, had been accomplished previously by Pickthall being one of the English authors.

Keywords: East, Orientalism, Edward Said

¹ Öğr Gör. Gamze Soral, İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi, gamzeyenidoğan@aydin.edu.tr, Tel.0212 425 61 51

² Öğr. Gör. Hande Kolat, İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi, handekolat@aydin.edu.tr, Tel.0212 425 61 51

³ Prof. Dr. Kemalettin Yiğiter, İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi, kemaletinyigiter@aydin.edu.tr Tel. 0212. 425 61 51

"Those who loved the British Empire in the East, as Englishmen in former days imagined it, will understand, for they have shared the author's progress towards disillusion as illustrated in the Eastern stories here. Goodwill and geniality towards Eastern peoples could hardly flourish in the shadow of the Czardom which still lies over England's Eastern policy. May it be lifted and goodwill return!"

W. M. Pickthall, 1922

Born in 1875, William M. Pickthall an unexplored value of the late 19th and early 20th century succeeded to impress all who came into contact with him during his life time (A Brief Biofgraphy). Only after his death in 1936, he could hardly be noticed as a man of discreet generosity who had spent a crucial part of his life in Eastern World including Syria, Palestine, Pakistan, Egypt, Ottoman Empire, Jerusalem and etc. Besides, Pickthall credited the existence and greatness of God in whose works depicted as Eastern People say *Allah* (Pickthall, 1918). Having lost his father as a child, Pickthall knew the taste of his cold and mournful house in London closely and had a longing for warm and intimate place to reside in which he found later in East during his travels. In the beginning of his career as a young man Marmaduke applied for the vacancy in Foreign Office but unfortunately failed in his attempt that led him to set off East starting from Port Said:

"In all my previous years I had not seen happy people. These were happy. Poor they might be, but they had no dream of wealth; the very thought of competition was unknown to them, and rivalry was still a matter of horse and spear. Wages and rent were troubles they had never heard of. Class distinctions, as we understand them, were not. Everybody talked to everybody. With inequality they had a true fraternity... A government which touches every individual and interferes with him to some extent in daily life, though much esteemed by Europeans, seems intolerable to the Oriental" (Pickthall, 1918).

With these lines in his travelogue *Oriental Encounters*, Pickthall highlights his emerging affection for East, what the distinctions between East and Europe are and how joyful Easterns live away from rush of globalized world full of financial, political and psychological worries as symptoms of civilization (A Brief Biography). According to Pickthall, East meant lightheartedness and freedom that he could not find in his homeland.

Though his earliest novels did not bring him fame, in time he went far by the birth of his work, *Said the Fisherman* that was one of the bestseller English novels of the day. His success was praised by some of the leading novelists like H.G. Wells and Granville Browne in his way of portraying Arab life (A Brief Biography). He believed that the mission of a novelist was to unfold every aspects of human personality, accordingly he presented the East with good and bad sides in his works and it was quite sure that East was something more than deserts, camels, and turbans: It was the name of freedom and happiness. He depicted the Orient as he found not as others wished to describe but as it was. In this way, East in his novels shone brighter.

On analyzing his works, one thing appealing and striking is that the difference of depiction in his early and late works. It must be emphasized that he touched his works with a different sense in his early works when he was not acquainted with the life and culture in East and had Western values as a British man and in contrast, in his lately works he had a pretty different approach to his environment, human essence, East and West worlds and etc. at the time when he met with Oriental culture and owned totally different values belonging this world. In his *Brendle*, he told the story of a group of people living in the same town in which he frequently referred to religious words such as

Satanic Deftness, Heaven, Una and Lion, and etc (Pickthall, 1915). On the other hands, in the *Valley of the Kings*, the author averted his vantage to Near East and correlatively he portrayed characters such as Iskender, Emir and Elias who decided to go treasure hunt to Valley of the Kings. In the novel, he attached importance to native words like Dragoman, Allah, Khawajah and etc (Pickthall, 1920). In his *Oriental Encounters* which is a kind of travelogue, Pickthall intimately explains his notion of East and Eastern people in each distinct story. Never felt malevolence against an Easterner and conversely befriended them, Pickthall took the ones in East world as normal presences by no means as quite different formations. In his accomplished work, there has been a great deal of incidents which he told at first hand and represented as discrete short stories. In the introduction part of the *Oriental Encounters*, Pickthall wrote a brief autobiography telling his adventure launching on his native land ending in the land of wonders. This book namely, is a fertile product of his arrival and adaptation to continent of Easterners. As it can be understood from the lines of his introductory, he gently laid stress on his desire of travelling east and being quite content during his existence in different parts of East world. “What was my rapture when my mother one fine day suggested that it might be good for me to travel in the East, because my longing for it seemed to indicate a natural instinct, with which she herself, possessing Eastern memories, was in full sympathy” (Pickthall, 1918). His adventure commenced his acquaintance with Rashid, one of the main characters of the book having requested Pickthall to be his servant during his stay in the East which was actually unaccountable for a man; a Westerner. Besides Rashid the volunteer servant, Pickthall spent all his time with a Syrian friend of his, Suleyman, from dawn to sunset on the saddle. They lived in a small mountain village where they established an unbroken friendship. Being a man who never prejudged the East and Easterners and conversely established tight friendship ties with local people was the target of who continuously misinterpreted the values of east and directly easterners. For that reason, Pickthall like the other people who in a way involved in Eastern studies and enthusiastic for Oriental culture, for instance William Whiston having been expelled from Cambridge in 1709, has been referred as a loyal enemy by his people for his closest concern to East (Said, 1978).

“ ... All my education until then had tended to impose on me the cult of the thing done habitually upon a certain plane of our society. To seek to mix on an equality with Orientals, which were never done, nor even contemplated, by the kind of person who had always been my model” (Pickthall, 1918).

While reading the book, one can easily indulge into his own world starting from childhood, evolving into a growing adult in the deserts of East. While Pickthall puts forward his feelings for his newly met world, he does not hesitate to announce barely what he was taught in his native land about Oriental world was pretty different than the real life experienced. Besides what he depicted in his *Oriental Encounters* is rather clear that he was fond of sincerity of Easterners and the way of Orientals' living their simple life. In fact, this was what made him different than the rest of his people, in a similar way to people called others by Westerners. In his *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said highlighted for the first time what the original meaning of the term Orientalism was, as an orient himself.

“Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor it is a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious “Western” imperialist plot to hold down the Oriental world” (Said, 1978).

Said who was Oriental himself grew up in two British colonies; Palestine and Egypt and might be regarded as the pioneer of Oriental studies from a totally different point of view; from Orientals point of view, with his masterpiece started a new era evolving the modern Orientalism. He enlightened the humankind with the theory he put forward and directed their perspective into the real world of Orientals. His long lasting observations of West and East relations made it clear that Westerners used to make the Orient speak and describe what Orient was. Furthermore, upon depicting East as a subject matter, Orientalists did not transfer the real situations in a natural way, in contrast the basics of writings was formed of representations (not the truth) of East which had superficial impression in terms of style and none in terms of semantics. Another critical point he brought out was that Westerners' this much deep interest in East culture, extracts from Oriental literature including travel books and fantasies showed that West highly got into the mainstream of illuminating Eastern world and civilization, and used the richness of Eastern world for their own improvements. He mentioned in his *Orientalism* that because of its richness, Orientalism as a discourse had accomplished to survive and serve the purpose. While Said laid the correlation between East and West World bare, he had an intention of protecting the rights of Eastern people who are in a manner named as Orientals by revealing the real Eastern world which is not an immature child, a coward female, an ignorant, an illogical creature as they (who call themselves "we" or "us") classified (Said, 1978).

Besides, Edward Said underlined the fact that in the postmodern world there has been still a consolidation of misinterpreted Oriental portrait by the reinforcement of written and visual media; books, magazines, newspapers, televisions, radio stations, movies and so on (26). By explaining all these facts, Said also questioned the connection between knowledge and power as presented by Foucault. For West, primarily for Britain, knowledge of something or somewhere means perceiving it from its origins to its ends, and power correlatively is owned by those having a certain level of knowledge (1978). Therefore, knowing East amounts to rule over Orientals and Orient is made known as Westerners create it by themselves. Said as an Orient (as Westerners call) himself tried his best to display that all these raised by Western society isn't the reality, however the fact is that East has vast historical and culture values dating back to centuries ago and at the same time succeeded to impress western society for a long period of time and caused them to utilize the improvements in East to keep pace with it and develop their own civilizations.

Pickthall unlike Said as a Westerner himself was one of those who reacted against the Eastern World and the people in it friendly and treated each of them as human beings different from his colleagues and his people did. In essence in his society, his positive attitudes towards Easterners caused him to be named as a loyal enemy which meant the one valuing the East and for that reason being an enemy of his own country. What made Pickthall and Said think similarly was their touch to Orientals and their worlds in a friendly manner. For Pickthall, East was something unknown and at the same time it was familiar as a homeland embracing him. He had never felt malignity against this new world basically having a long lasting history and an unbelievable culture including various traditions, different types of music, art, dance, handcraft, a wealthy religion and etc. In his books, he mainly endeavoured to depict what he experienced during his travels to East. Thus in his travelogue, *Oriental Encounters*, as mentioned before, he told short stories to let his readers inside the world of fantasy, traditions, mysticism and exoticism. While telling his experiences as short stories, he did not go over negative incidents he had faced. In one of his short stories, he depicted his experiences of finding a land to build a house inside. However, his attempts to buy a land encountered unexpected reaction of native landlords who had desire of selling the land except fertile trees which they profit from their fruit for their living. After having a crisis of tree, Pickthall had

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faced another problematic issue in which he was swindled by one of the natives and caused him to give up looking for a land for his own. Nevertheless, Pickthall had never attempted to insult Eastern world by his comments.

From the last century on, it has been witnessed that the Earth has been turning around the Western world; conversely has not brought good luck to Eastern world owing to their own presentations given by Occident. Although Eastern culture has a long lasting, wealthy history and various types of cultural motifs, people in the Occident tend to make themselves believe that East was the opposite; disappointingly it was inferior. As a modest British author William M. Pickthall, with a sense of affability portrayed the life, culture, history, tradition of Eastern World which he had discovered during his travels to East. His goodwill for a highly novel terrestrial globe traced back to optimistic standpoint of his parents; Mr and Mrs Pickthall who had supported their son in his attempt to set off on an intercontinental expedition starting from Port Said lasting in many different parts of this unexplored land. Both as a traveler keeping diaries and a novelist Pickthall, one hand, was prone to write fictitious matters; on the other, he intimately displayed and reflected the real world in the East as a mirror reflecting sun and light directly. Additionally, he had befriended native people whom he met and shared a lot during his stay in Oriental World and never hesitated to believe in their sincerity. What was surprising about him was that comparing to his countryman who had a degrading treatment towards Easterners then, his attitude towards them was unbelievably and uncharacteristically amiable. One could witness his lenient manner in his novels such as *Early Hours* (1921) and *Oriental Encounters* (1918) *The Valley of the Kings* by the characters he created such as *Camruddin, Nesibeh Hanım, Rashid, Suleyman, Emir and Iskender*.

Having appreciated Eastern Culture to a great extent and displayed his positive feelings towards this culture in his novels and travelogues, a successful man of letters, Pickthall is not commonly known among his own people. However, it must have been emphasized that he contributed a lot to the presentation of Eastern culture due to his friendly and fair manner. Lastly, it has also been pointed out that Pickthall had a vital contribution to the struggle of master scholar, Edward Said who had fought against destroying the established notion of Eastern Culture and Easterners; namely Orientalism.

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