folklor/edebiyat - folklore&literature, 2025; 3(2)-122. Sayı/Issue - Bahar/Spring
DOI: 10.22559/folklor.4889

Araştırma makalesi/Research article

Smyrna as the Cacophonic Space of the Other(s) in Martha Nicol's *Ismeer, or Smyrna, and its British Hospital in 1855, by a Lady*

Martha Nicol'ün *Bir İngiliz Hemşirenin İzmir Hatıraları* Adlı Seyahatnamesinde Öteki (ler)in Kakofonik Mekânı olarak İzmir

Nurten Birlik*
Orkun Kocabıyık**

Abstract

Martha Nicol's diary *Ismeer, or Smyrna, and its British hospital in 1855, by a lady [M. Nicol]* gives the observations of a female nurse who comes to Smyrna (Izmir) to help the medical staff in the British Hospital during the Crimean War. In her limited encounters with the host cultures, the narrator's rationality and immunity to and her clinical detachment from these cultures attract attention. Her mind

Geliş tarihi (Received): 09-05-2024 Kabul tarihi (Accepted): 30-12-2024

* Prof, Dr. Middle East Technical University Faculty of Education Department of Foreign Language and Education. Ankara-Türkiye/Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Yabancı Diller ve Eğitimi Bölümü. nbrilik@metu.edu.tr. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4544-9595

** Doç, Dr. Akdeniz University Faculty of Letters Department of English Language and Literature. Antalya-Türkiye/ Akdeniz Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü. okocabiyik@akdeniz.edu.tr. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8498-2587

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

works as a categorizing intellect rather than an empathizing observer. As a result, what we are given in her account is taxonomic observational data and substantive appearances as she remains on the surface of things. When she is outside the hospital, the social space remains undialectical and distant for her. This essay argues that there is implicit Eurocentrism combined with imperial ideology in her attitude. Her stay in Izmir also implies a cultural encounter between the West and its ontological Other, the East, for her, and is charged with resurfacing elements from the collective memory of her culture. This essay aims to discuss her attitude toward the local cultures in İzmir and how her account is characterized by the West- East dichotomy. This essay also aims to decipher the political unconscious of the text despite its observational representationalism. In this endeavor, it will give a hearing to what is voiced as well as what is left unvoiced, how the traditional binary polarities are employed within the textual universe of the book, how the Eurocentrism of the Westerners is foregrounded in the depictions and the possible subversions of this Eurocentrism.

Keywords: *Martha Nicol, the Crimean War, travel literature, Eurocentrism, Smyrna*

Öz

Martha Nicol'ün, gönüllü bir hemşire olarak geldiği İzmir ile ilgili gözlemlerini aktardığı *Bir İngiliz Hemşire'nin İzmir Hatıraları* eseri hem bir günlük hem de bir seyahatname olarak ele alınmaktadır. Martha Nicol, Kırım Savaşı sebebiyle geldiği İzmir'de İngiliz Hastanesi'nde altı ay kadar görev yapmıştır. Buradaki gözlem ve deneyimlerinin ürünü olan *Bir İngiliz Hemşirenin İzmir Hatıraları*'nda; ev sahibi kültürlerle sınırlı karşılaşmalarında anlatıcının rasyonelliği, tepkisizliği ve bu kültürlerden kopukluğu dikkat çeker. Zihni, anlatıcı konumundayken empati kuran bir gözlemciden ziyade kategorize eden bir zekâ olarak çalışır. Sonuç olarak, onun söz konusu eserindeki açıklamalarında okura sunulanlar, kendisi olayların yüze-yinde kaldığı için, bu taksonomik gözlemsel verilerin dışavurumudur. Bu makale, Martha Nicol'ün *Bir İngiliz Hemşirenin İzmir Hatıraları*'nda İzmir'deki yerel kültürlere yönelik tutumunun ve anlatımının Batı ve Doğu ayrımıyla nasıl karakterize edildiğini tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Aynı zamanda metnin gözlemsel temsiline rağmen onun politik bilinçdışını deşifre etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. İncelemede; neyin dile getirildiğinin yanı sıra neyin dile getirilmediğine, geleneksel ikiliklerin kitabın metin evreninde nasıl kullanıldığına, Batılıların Avrupa merkezciliğinin tasvirlerde nasıl ön plana çıkarıldığına ve olası tahrifatlara kulak verilmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Martha Nicol, Kırım Savaşı, Avrupa merkezcilik, seyahatname, İzmir*

Preamble

Martha Nicol's[1] diary *Ismeer, or Smyrna, and its British hospital in 1855, by a lady [M. Nicol]* gives the observations of a lady nurse (a volunteer, not a *vouée* or a paid nurse with a clear job description) who comes to Smyrna (İzmir) to help the medical staff in the British Hospital during the Crimean War.[2] In her expositions to the host cultures in Izmir, the narrator reveals her views in an aloof manner and demonstrating her inability to penetrate into these cultures. She acts like a small island that is untouchable by these substantive appearances, like a female Robinson Crusoe who created her own island that isolates her from the social context at large. In her accounts, rather than what she observes, her attitude to what she observes is interesting. Because of her clinical detachment from the social space and her Eurocentrism, and because she is confined to the space of the hospital most of the time both as a nurse and as a woman, the text cannot be explored with an emphasis on how accurate her statements or how judgmental her points are, and it is this aspect of her endeavor that worked as a departure point for this essay. These expositions, though limited, are enough for the purpose of this essay to explore her attitude, if not the objectivity in her account of these cultures. In the absence of a satisfying correspondence between the textual and the contextual (social and historical) elements, the stress we are putting here goes the other way; we are interested not in the accuracy of what she says, but in what we can get from her way of representing İzmir. This discussion is a specific rather than a generalized exploration, therefore, we are going to take her observations as a subjective account that hints at the epistemological configuration in its background.

If we take space as a social construct, the narrator's early days can be taken as a process of drawing the boundaries of space in Izmir. However, although she is given access to the domestic space of the ethnic groups and observes them in their rituals in the public space, she cannot read and go beyond the empirical details and relies heavily on what she heard about them before her arrival. The following quotation illustrates how she is distanced from the real East: "I felt as if I was walking 'in the Arabian Nights,' and should hardly have been surprised if I had been asked to step into Aladdin's palace, or met - the African magician at any moment: and this feeling I had whenever I went into it, and up till the time we left" (Nicol, 1856: 18). The good thing about her position as an outsider is that she conceives Izmir and its locations as dynamic, but she misses the relational aspects of these locations.

Despite her positive attitude to the Turkish side, the Other (East) appears as the dominant definer, that is, as the excluded ontological Other which is integral to the ontological certainty of the mainstream (the British), and western epistemology as the dominant leg of the binary is at the centerpiece of the book. At this point, the text underlines how it draws upon a larger cultural context with which it goes into a mutual transformative interaction. That is, beneath her observational objectivity, we cannot help noticing the ideological elements of the Enlightenment epistemology. This awareness of the wider world of ideology in literary texts points to "the role of the historical context in interpreting literary texts and the role of literary rhetoric in interpreting history" (Brannigan, 1998: 4).

In this essay, we aim to decipher the political unconscious of the text despite its superficial representationalism. In this endeavor, we will give a hearing to what is voiced as well as what

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

is left unvoiced, how the traditional binarisms are employed within the textual universe of the book, how the Eurocentrism of the Westerners is foregrounded in the depictions and the possible subversions of this Eurocentrism. It is because of this reason that it is only the general aspects of literary discussion we have taken up here. This essay also aims to suggest some roadmap to be able to read and talk about such texts of travel literature covering the Turkish context without validating or invalidating the views about the *East* in the *West*. For the time being, what we have at hand is usually either the vocabulary range of the Orientalists (Eurocentric or not) or the descriptive accounts of these encounters. By looking at encounters from the flip side of the coin (not from the perspective of the West but from the perspective of the East), we aim to voice the unvoiced in travel literature and to enable future readers to talk about such encounters on easier ground.

1. İzmir *as an uncharted social space of the other(s)*

Martha Nicol's *Ismeer, or Smyrna, and its British hospital in 1855, by a lady [M. Nicol]* is narrated by a lady nurse whose observations about İzmir rely heavily on the accommodation provided for them, sanitary conditions in the city, the multiculturalism of the city (İzmir seems to be a cultural space of cacophony composed of different ethnic groups that co-exist on seemingly unproblematic ground), and the rituals (death, marriage etc.) of the ethnic groups in the city. In her observations we see how she feels insecure in a foreign territory both as a woman and a British subject. Another thing we feel is the fact that she manages to remain aloof to what she observes.

As a woman in a foreign country, the author does not travel unescorted; she travels with a party of twenty lady nurses who come to the city at the same time with her. Nicol refers to this party upon her arrival in İzmir in an enthusiastic manner:

> On the third of March 1855, I was fairly en route, one of a party of lady volunteers for the British hospital at Smyrna. We started from the London Bridge station for Folkestone at 6 P.M.; Mrs. Sidney Herbert, with her usual kindness, coming to see us off, and bidding us a kind and affectionate farewell, with many wishes for our success and well-being. (Nicol, 1856: 1)

When they arrive in Izmir after a long and difficult journey, the lady nurses realize that the British authorities in the city were unprepared for their arrival. However, the nurses were provided with all their needs like accommodation and workload specific to each one of them right in the beginning. The authorities' attitude to the lady nurses can be defined as indifferent in the beginning. Nicol's first observations concerning the accommodation are as follows:

> It was thought advisable, that we should not begin work at the hospital until some house near it, in the Turkish quarter, could be found for us, and beds, tables, and chairs put in it; the Frank quarter, in which we were then located, being at a considerable distance. The nurses, however, were able to get rooms in the hospital, and went there the day after the arrival. (Nicol, 1856: 17-18)

As soon as she arrives in the city, she becomes aware of the ethnic diversity in it:

> It was a sad and striking scene, to witness this train slowly winding through the long

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

> narrow streets of Smyrna; while groups of Franks, Greeks, Armenians, Turks, and Jews stood looking on, but all in silence and with apparent respect, some (not the Turks of course) even taking off their hats as we passed. A year ago such a scene would not have been permitted to proceed unmolested. (Nicol, 1856: 54)

The city seems to accommodate a wide scale of ethnic and religious groups and relationalities which exist in their own heterotopia: "There is an English chapel and chaplain at Smyrna; a Dutch church, at which the service is conducted in French; and an American chapel, and these are the only Protestant churches in the place" (Nicol, 1856: 25). What she says about a Greek funeral demands attention as she proves to be exact at these moments of observation of the rituals:

> I was attracted one morning to the window by a curious subdued kind of chaunt, and saw a procession, headed by Greek priests in their coloured and richly-embroidered robes, carrying crosiers, candles, incense, etc. After them, some Greek men of the better class, in Frank dress, holding a black and white pall, curiously devised with skull and cross-bones, and many other symbols. After them, borne about knee high, came an open coffin, which, however, from the drapery hanging round it, had not the appearance of one. In it lay the body of a young Greek woman, dressed in full ball costume; a wreath of white roses on her head, a white veil falling on either side, and a *bouquet* in her hand…I afterwards became quite accustomed to these Greek funerals, having frequently almost brushed the corpse as it was carried past…I am told, for thus adorning their dead is, the Greeks believe that in the resurrection their friends will rise either well or badly dressed as their remains have been committed to the tomb. (Nicol, 1856: 139-140)

A close reading of these lines reveals that although she is an outsider to the Greek culture, she can decipher their cultural and religious markers like "skull and cross bones" and religious lexical reservoir as in the case of "resurrection."

Although, for the narrator, Britishness is a frozen identity and she never seeks to destabilize that identity, she doesn't seem to have an explicit Orientalist attitude to the Turkish community in the city or it is difficult to pin down this attitude as it is cloaked or sugar-coated in observational objective data. The fact that she usually gives the Turkish quarter in a positive light might be because Britain fights on the same side as the Ottoman Empire in the Crimean war.

> We were not sure of the Greeks, and felt rather strange in any other quarter of the town than our own; but the moment we reached the Turkish quarter, we had a sense of protection and an at-home feeling which was very pleasant. The women, too, evidently liked us. Many a time we have been stopped in the streets, to have our hands shaken an "Bono Inglese" said to us, with kind looks. The children used to run after us, also saying "Bono Inglese"; and a very favourite speech with them all was, "Inglese bono, Francese bono, Turco bono, Mosco no bono." (Nicol, 1856: 186)

As the above given lines indicate, the narrator feels safe in the Turkish quarter and tells how the Turkish people try to communicate their warm messages to her despite the linguistic barriers. The sense of solidarity is objectified not through words but through the body language, which is universal:

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

> Then followed a hearty pat on the back, a laugh, and shake of the hands. I always felt perfectly safe with the Turks, notwithstanding the saying of a boatman, Mehmet, whom we used to employ, "That some of the Turks were not at all grateful for our help in this war, and would have as little compunction in seizing us for ransom as Symoon and his band, if they dared." (Nicol, 1856: 186)

Despite the sense of solidarity between the two communities, the textual details tell that this solidarity takes place across a cultural distance:

> I asked him if he and his people did not call us Giaours? He said, "No! they only called the Greeks Giaours"; and asked me, in return, "Whether British women abused each other, as Turkish women did? saying to each other, when they were angry, "I wish your eye may be put out." (Nicol, 1856: 186-187)

A similar close reading also tells that although she is on friendly terms with the Turks, satisfactory communication between them seems to be impossible due to lack of cultural familiarity on both sides. Neither the narrator nor the Turks can relate to each other fully due to their cultural incompetence regarding the other. As stated in the quotation, despite her lack of familiarity, she feels safe in the Turkish side of the city. The local Greek community is on the Russian side in the Crimean War despite the fact that they are Ottoman citizens. The Turks, the French and the British celebrated the victory which implied a defeat to the Greeks:

> There were thanksgivings offered in all the Christian churches on the occasion. Some French soldiers, in coming out of the Consulate chapel, were attacked by a party of Greeks, who did not share in the general hilarity, and who stabbed one of them so severely that he died. The assault was quite unprovoked, for the Frenchmen were going along quietly, and doing nothing to exasperate the Greeks, so it must have been a sore feeling on account of the Russian defeat which prompted the deed. (Nicol, 1856: 184-185)

As the lines given above reveal, although the winning parties did not provoke the Greek community, there were bitter feelings between them and the Turks, the French and the British. As stated elsewhere, the Greeks' taking the Russian side despite being Ottoman citizens is an irony of situation and it tells more about the multiethnic demography of the Ottoman empire.

In spatial terms, she cannot conceive Izmir through mappable boundaries in the beginning. She conceives the whole city as a cacophony of different heterotopias that co-exist on easy ground. However, textual details like the quotation above tell that, in fact, these heterotopic communities do not exist on easy ground as this is an ethnically stratified social space. This detail is also interesting to account for her myopia in reading the social and historical context of the region as the following paragraphs will reveal.

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

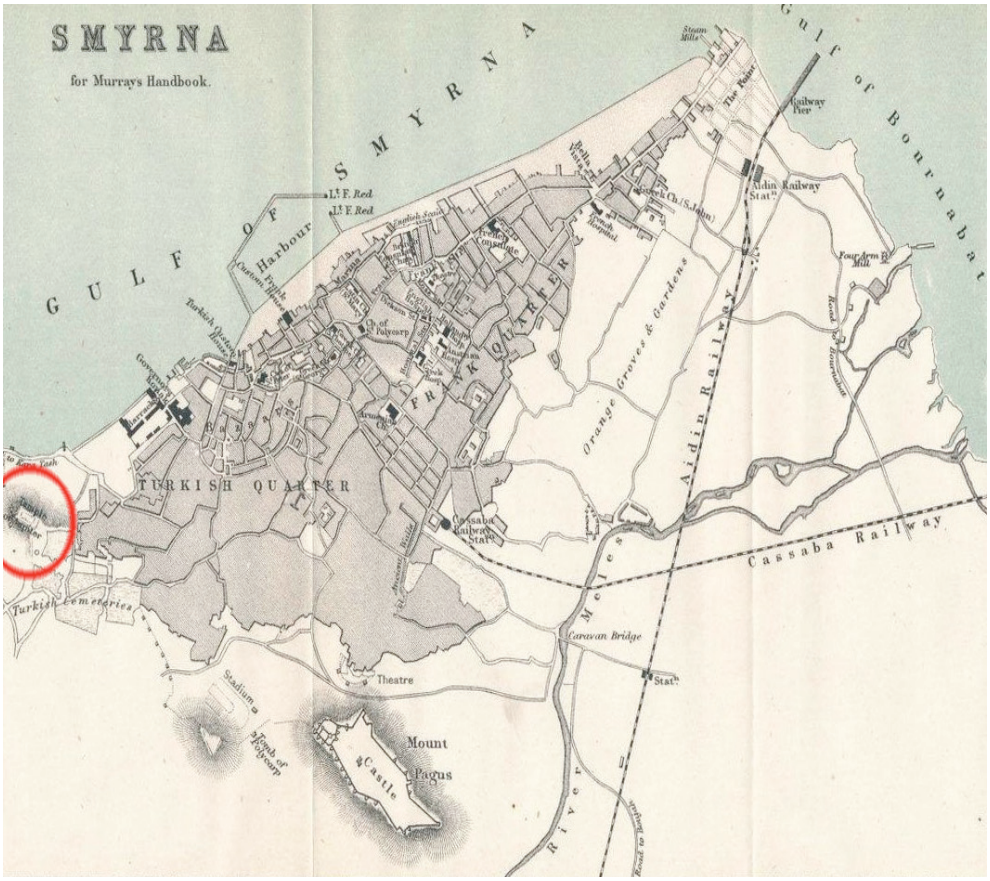

Figure 1. Plan of Izmir showing the urban structure in the 1870s. John Murray, *Handbook for Travellers in Turkey in Asia* (London: Franklin Classics Trade P., 1878).

A closer look at the map of the city at the time reveals the cultural and ethnic diversity in the city [figure 1]. These groups live in their own quarters which we might liken to the Foucauldian idea of heterotopia[3] without any interaction with each other. If we take heterotopia as a culturally and ethnically enclosed island, her account offers only the fragmentary views of the cultures she is exposed to. At some points, the members of these heterotopic groups collaborate with each other. A case in point is the incomprehensible intricacy between the Zebecques (the Turkish highlanders) and the Greek highlanders. The Zebecques are "great friends" with the Greek highlanders led by a man called Symoon and "aid them considerably" (Nicol, 1856: 152). This collaboration runs against the official discourse and the communal attitude in Turkish groups. The narrator cannot read such details and see that both the Zebecques and the Greek highlanders exist on the margins of their heterotopias. Another detail she cannot see through is the fact that in these ethnospaces in the city there seems to be cultural autonomy. Without interfering with each other's spaces these groups manage to co-exist. They're not taking the other as its ontological other points at a greater divide between

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

them. They don't assign the other even the position of the abject or the stigmatized. Therefore, this distance to binaristic thinking in their case is open for different interpretations. However, these groups and the relations (or lack of them) remain a closed book to the narrator.

Reading between the lines or by looking at the historical context, we can infer that outside threat from the local Greek highlanders to the British citizens is too much to understate. A member of the hospital staff was kidnapped by the Greek highlanders, for example:

> I believe if the victim had been one of the hospital staff, who was a single man and had no family dependent upon him, he would have been left to the tender mercies of the brigand Greeks, who seldom take life, however, if they can help it, their only object being a ransom; they send, demanding a certain sum to be paid at a specified time and spot, indicated by them; if this is done, their prisoner is immediately released; if not, the demand is repeated, and enforced sometimes by one of their victim's ears or fingers: but whether, when much exasperated by pursuit and non-payment, they would kill or not, I cannot say. (Nicol, 1856: 144)

Or she gives an account of how these highlanders treat the Turks:

> They shot the child before his grandfather's eyes, and afterwards put an end to the misery of the old man in the same way. Upon Dr. M'Raith remonstrating with them (for he understands modern Greek, and most of the languages spoken in the East), they said; "He is only a Turk"; thereby implying he was nothing more than a brute. Three other men were killed when he was in their custody; but they were Turkish cavasses in pursuit of them, with whom they had regular engagements; and although shocking enough to witness, were not so horrible as the other two cold-blooded murders. (Nicol, 1856: 148)

Sometimes she reveals interesting and grounded observations about the Ottoman administration:

> But I believe, in reality, the ranks in Turkey are not very well defined; a man in any position is eligible for the office of Pasha, or any other government post and although just removed from his workshop, will fill his new appointment with the greatest ease and dignity; the grand secret of the latter quality is, that it is impossible to put a Turk out .of countenance, "nil admirari" seems ·to be interwoven into his existence. (Nicol, 1856: 198)

Another interesting point that demands attention at this point is that despite this threat coming from the local Greek community, they hire Greek people to serve them both at the hospital and in their homes.

> We could not do without Greeks; and the Greeks could not do without stealing. One of them in my division completely outwitted me: I thought him the most honest little man in the world; and although I heard constantly rumours of forbidden things being brought in to the patients, and missed various articles from my corridor, yet so sure was I of Yanico's integrity, that on his coming crying to me to say he had been accused of taking something he ought not, and telling me, in a mixture of Greek, English, French, and Italian, that 'if the floor was paved with guineas he would not touch one,' I wrote him a splendid character, and to my dismay, soon afterwards, someone came and gave me irrefragable proofs of his bringing every sort of unlawful thing to the men. So I could no longer uphold poor Yanico, and saw no more of him; but I suppose to this day he shows the grand character I gave him. (Nicol, 1856: 123)

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

Muslim members of the community are not allowed to tread into their domestic space or hospital although it is a Turkish hospital where they work. These details cover another Eurocentric element about the British in İzmir despite the historical conflicts; they opt for the Greek locals. In fact, she refers to the Latin name of the city although it was officially Izmir at the time. The Muslim community is still the cultural abject to her despite the fact that they fight on the same side. This affinity with the Greek culture and abject elements regarding the Turkish side is also revealed between the lines in her limited expositions to the domestic space of the local communities. What she sees in the Turkish quarter doesn't appeal to her taste. Neither the Turkish food nor their music is appealing to her. She doesn't enjoy the Turkish or food as she states in several places in the text. She only likes Turkish coffee, the sweetmeats served with it or the preserves made from the local produce but Turkish music is nonsense to her ears (Nicol, 1856: 203, 238-239). Her observations about the Turkish domestic space are as follows:

> In the specimens I saw, of the domestic life of Turkish families, the balance of power seemed pretty equally divided between the husband and wife; and if the women are ignorant and uneducated, they are very fit companions for the men, who are much the same… But to return to the commandant's wife. We sat and looked and smiled at her, and she did the same at us…After sitting playing at dumb show for some time, we rose to go; but they signed to us, and said "Ottur," "Sit down"; so we did as we were bid…Then there was a cup of coffee handed to each, in very small china coffee-cups, which stand always in "*zarfs,"* as they are called…At first, I could not bear the Eastern coffee; but latterly I began to like it excessively. They do not grind it as we do, but pound it in a mortar; so that much of it is as fine as flour. They put a great deal in for a small quantity of water…When we had discussed our coffee, Mrs. Commandant, senior, showed us over the house, which was by no means very nice. In all the Turkish houses I have visited, I have never seen any beds; they appear to use the divans for sleeping, and cover themselves with what my ward-master used to call "*palampores,*" and others "*epaplomitas*"; but, *Anglice*, wadded silk or calico quilts. The part of the house of which the lady seemed peculiarly proud, was the bathroom, which had apparently just been used, the water being quite hot; and she kindly invited us to go there as often as we liked and make use of it. Of this invitation we never availed ourselves. I had enough of a Turkish bath in our first house, where we had one, although it was somewhat out of repair, and could not be heated. (Nicol, 1856: 198-201)

Her observations on the sanitary conditions indicate that she appreciates the domestic space of the Turkish side but she is appalled at their 'disregard' of the 'sanitary reform' in the public spaces:

> But here I must say a word for the Turks, whom I have generally heard accused of being dirty in their persons, houses, and habits. This, from what I have seen, I do not think is correct. Any of their houses I visited were always scrupulously clean, and so were their persons and dress; indeed, I should say, the poorer classes infinitely surpass ours in cleanliness; very few of even the poorest do not now and then endeavour to provide for themselves the luxury of a bath…But they have one or two idiosyncrasies that, I believe, have acquired for them this reputation. One is their dislike to destroy animal life, in whatever shape it presents itself; and by this amiable trait we suffered, for all our houses literally swarmed with animated nature of every description. Mosquitoes, of course, we expected in their season; but I am sorry to say, fleas and bugs became

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

> household words with us ….The other habit I alluded to in the Turks is the utter disregard they show towards sanitary reform; and I really think, unless Smyrna was the most healthy place in the world, they must have the plague there perpetually: at least, I am sure if we had at home all the horrors we had there – stagnant pools, refuse of vegetable and animal food lying rotting in all directions, filthy drains never cleaned, and carrion of all descriptions meeting you at every turn – we should all be dead of the plague in a month. (Nicol, 1856: 208-209)

She gives acute details about the architectural design of the Turkish houses:

> On Monday afternoon, we went to the house prepared for us, which, as it was like most other Turkish houses, I may as well describe. It opened from the street into a court, and was separated from it by a high wall and close wooden gate; part of the court was paved, as you continually see in the East, with smooth stones of different colours, inlaid so as to represent flowers and other designs, and part was railed off as a small garden. At the side of the court opposite the entrance, was the kitchen and one or two rooms intended for servants, which were joined to the main body of the house, but had no communication through. In the wall which joined them was a fountain, which seldom failed to supply us with water. You went up a step or two to the front door, and entered a paved hall, out of which opened rooms on either side. In one of them was a deep, dark, unpleasant-looking well, with a trap-door, which some facetious person informed me the Turks used for putting their superfluous wives in; but which I, being a more matter-of-fact individual, suspect had something to do with the fountain on one side and the bath on the other. Nearly all the rooms had divans at the end – i.e., the wooden frame-work of them – which formed a very convenient shelter for all sorts of animated nature. In the low flat there were three bed-rooms, the bath-room, and two or three dark closets and holes, which the Turks seem to delight in. The upper flat was on exactly the same plan as the lower; an open space in the centre, and chambers on each side opening into it. On this flat there were five rooms, two of which opened into each other, and from the inner one, down some steps another opened over what had been a stable; and as in these houses the under and upper flats are only separated by a thin and open flooring, it may be imagined the full benefit of the stable odours was had up-stairs. In all, there were nine rooms, and twenty people lodged in them. One large and very dirty one on the upper flat was reserved to be cleaned in process of time, and turned into a sitting-room if possible; but sickness soon made us feel that eight small rooms were by no means sufficient, especially in that climate, for twenty people: so our grand project of the sitting-room was never carried into effect. (Nicol, 1856: 26-27)

She misinterprets some of the details like the trapdoor which is a functional component of the fountain or 'the dark closet and holes' which are in fact storage spaces for the locals. She cannot decipher the domestic sphere provided by this house. The architectural details point at the division between domestic and the social spaces. The small garden, the well, the open space etc. are the architectural markers of integration of the social and the domestic. Only certain people from outside are allowed to these spots and socialize with the household members. The well keeps the women of the house in the domestic sphere by relieving them from a trip for water outside the house.

Even if she does not get a sense of threat, she cannot penetrate into the Turkish space. She remains a perfect outsider in this encounter. She feels more comfortable in the Greek cultural

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

space. Despite the lived accounts of kidnapped British citizens by the Greek highlanders, she doesn't make even one generalizing negative statement about the Greek community. It is left to the imaginative and interpretive skills of the readers to fill in this narrative gap in her account. This point should not lead to an image of her as culturally biased, but we should take this affinity with the Greek community and alienation from the Turkish quarter as imprints of the historical, cultural and religious effects of the encounters in history. The fact that like the Greek community she belongs to the Judeo-Christian historical background makes a big difference in her attitude to the Turkish community, and this can be understood to a certain extent.

The narrator's attitude to the ethno-spaces in the city compels us to look more closely into the space(s) in a theoretical framework. Soja sees two dominant conceptions of space in the West. The first one is configured by the Enlightenment:

> This essentially empiricist (but also occasionally phenomenological) interpretation of space reflects the substantive-attributive structure that has dominated scientific thought since the philosophy of Enlightenment, a powerful heritage of objective naturalism to which spatial and social theorists have repeatedly appealed for both insight and legitimacy. (Soja, 1989: 122)

The second conception of space is the one formulated by Bergson. For Bergson, time as the realm of duration was "the carrier of creativity, spirit, meaning, feeling, the 'true reality' of our world and our consciousness," in contrast to space which, as in the case of the categorizing intellect, was understood as "orienting the mind to quantity (versus quality), measurement (versus meaning)" (Soja, 1989: 122). According to Soja, both of the conceptions fail to represent space in its totality: "Whereas the empiricist myopia cannot see the social production of space behind the opacity of objective appearances," Soja claims, "a hypermetropic illusion of transparency sees right through the concrete spatiality of social life by projecting its production into an intuitive realm of purposeful idealism and immaterialized reflexive thought" (Soja, 1989: 124). In the narrator's account, we see the first conception of space with her objective naturalism organizing her reality. As in Soja's words, the narrator cannot see beyond the objective appearances and this inability paralyses her in her perception of the non-Western ways of being, cultures and people in Izmir. Very suitably, her attitude to material reality shapes the narrative elements in her account. Objective materiality and its account dominate her narration. Almost all her sentences are imbued with cold-blooded surface rationalism. Spatiality remains on the level of an orderly and reproducible depiction of empirical data. Mimetic representation of space dominates her account, and she cannot move on to the psychological and metaphorical dimensions of space. Accordingly, her language remains referential repressing the evocative, the irrational, the subversive and even the associational dimensions that might have been captured by a more alert observer. All these details tell that she was configured by the Enlightenment concept of space and remains loyal to its configuration till the end

2. Literature and history in *Ismeer, or Smyrna*

The book is also part of travel literature in a different form. That is, it is not only about what the narrator experiences in a distant land but the time and location of these experiences assume significance for other reasons, too. It exposes the Western readers to the cultures of the Other(s),

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

but it also tells the story of the British during a devastating war waged in distant geography where they have to tackle emotional loss. Moreover, it is about a hospital and the struggle there by the British against many hardships. It is not about the heroic deeds of the British soldiers but it is about their misery in physical and emotional terms. It is a transitional place on the way back to the war, at the same time. These elements complicate the implications of the space created in the hospital and its account in the form of travel literature.

Due to reasons given above, the reader is offered observational data in the form of a diary in which travel literature and historical facts merge into each other. Her diary is a text mostly relying on factual/ observational data but it still retains its literariness. At this point, literature's significance in the readers' perception of reality comes to the fore. Jean Howard claims that "literature is an agent in constructing a culture's sense of reality" (Howard, 1986: 25). In this line of thought, by giving an account of the events in her narrative and by defining the local cultures and ethnic groups for her readers, the narrator constructs a sense of reality for her readers and offers a way of imagining things in Izmir during the Crimean War. In this sense, the narration testifies to the intricacy between literature and history, and points at literature in history or history in literature by laying bare the situatedness of the narrator and reveals that it is almost impossible to give an account of the events outside this situatedness. If an alert reader looks at the ideological standing of the focalizer in the narration, s/he can see the complexity of the seemingly naïve and objective account of this historical period. By naively pointing at the polarized local histories and cultures, her account also hints at the idea that there cannot be a monolithic or totalizing history of the region as each ethnic group comes with its own culture and account of the events. A case in point is the position of the Greek community in the Ottoman context. The victory at the end of the book coming with the fall of Sevastopol implies a defeat to the Greeks but a victory to the Turks, the Francs, and the British. So how can we locate the end of the war in a homogenous historical account of the period? This question gets even more complicated by the fact that almost all the household employees or the hospital staff are picked from the Greek community despite the polarity between the English, the Ottoman administrators, and the Greek community during the Crimean War. The narration illustrates the idea that there can only be local historical accounts depending on the perspective the events are told from or the situatedness of the narrator. By narrating historical incidents and casting a totalized frame on them, but doing it in a naïve way, the text also implies that history is a homogenized account of plural and often contradictory accounts.

History is defined as "a continuous, systematic narrative of past events as relating to a particular people, country, period, person, etc., usually written as a chronological account" (The Random House Unabridged Dictionary). In this account, the past events are totalized within a coherent narrative, and the implied reader is expected to respond to this narrative from a definite vantage point. In other words, the implied reader receives an organized course of events in the particular period as in the way they are depicted in the narrative and this becomes 'the' historical account for them. This diary, if read with an alert mind, is a good example of this totalizing attempt actualized from a definite ideological vantage point under the cover of the observational data. As Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson state, there is no stable, fixed, or "single 'history'", but there are "only discontinuous and contradictory 'histories'" (Seldan and

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

Widdowson, 1993: 163). In this mode of thinking, there is a radical departure from history as a coherent or singular narrative and there is a conscious acceptance of the discontinuity and contradictory elements in the so-called coherence. This diary assumes significance in this regard too, as it cannot hide skillfully its ideological stance. The reason for this might be the fact that the narrator comes from another peripheral discourse, Scotland and she also speaks from the margins of the phallogocentric discourse as a woman. Another point that makes her a peripheral figure is the fact that she is not a *vouée*, so she is not structurally part of the medical organization. Therefore, being a Scot, a woman and a lady nurse, she could not internalize the ideology of the Empire thoroughly or she cannot repress the double consciousness regarding this ideology, that is, she is both inside and outside its mainstream discourse.

Conclusion

In Martha Nicol's *Ismeer, or Smyrna, and its British hospital in 1855, by a lady [M. Nicol]*, the heterotopic groups in Izmir are given through the Eurocentric filter (combined with British imperial ideology) of the narrator. This essay problematizes the narrative details about intercultural encounters in the book not by looking at their truth value but by focusing on the way she depicts them. What she observes in her immediate surroundings remains as a collection of things or substantive appearances which might have social causation but which lack the potential and power to penetrate and speak to her psychologically or emotionally. In other words, her intention to offer observational evidence is in league with her categorizing and rationalist intellect, thus, her mind is oriented towards quantity, factual data of things rather than a qualitative observation. Due to a lack of emotional involvement on her side and her rational and empirical myopia, the narrator cannot see through the intricacies of space in the city. This essay also highlights the idea that Eurocentrism and imperial ideology shaping a text written by a Scottish woman makes this text even more interesting as it becomes an account of an Other (a Scottish woman from the western logocentric discourse) about another Other (the East).

Endnotes

1 Although the narrator appears as Martha Nicol on the cover page of the book, there are no other literary or historical references to a Martha Nicol both in the text itself or in any other sources. Philip Mansel in *Levant* also reinforces the anonymity of the mentioned nurse in his research, but he cites the above-mentioned author/source as Martha Nicol in his bibliographical notes. For argumentative coherence, we will also refer to the narrator as Martha Nicol (2010: 366).

2 The Crimean War took place between 1853-1856 and was fought mainly in Crimea between the Russians and an alliance composed of the Ottoman Empire, Britain, France, and Sardinia-Piedmont. Battles were fought in the region of the Alma River, Balaklava, and Inkerman before the besieged Sevastopol was taken by the allies.

3 Foucault defines heterotopias as follows in "Of Other Spaces": "There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places — places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society — which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias" (1984 : 47).

ISSN 1300-7491 e-ISSN 2791-6057 https://www.folkloredebiyat.org

Research and publication ethics statement: This is a research article, containing original data, and it has not been previously published or submitted to any other outlet for publication. The author followed ethical principles and rules during the research process.

Contribution rates of authors to the article: First author %60, second author %40.

Ethics committee approval: Ethics committee approval is not required for the study.

Support statement: No financial support was received for the study.

Statement of interest: There is no conflict of interest between the authors of this article.

Araştırma ve yayın etiği beyanı: Bu makale, orijinal veriler temelinde hazırlanmış özgün bir araştırma makalesidir. Daha önce hiçbir yerde yayımlanmamış olup başka bir yere yayımlamak üzere gönderilmemiştir. Yazarlar, araştırma sürecinde etik ilkelere ve kurallara uymuştur.

Yazarların katkı düzeyleri: Birinci yazar %60, İkinci yazar %40.

Etik komite onayı: Çalışmada etik kurul iznine gerek yoktur.

Finansal destek: Çalışmada finansal destek alınmamıştır.

Çıkar çatışması: Çalışmada potansiyel çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

References

Brannigan, J. (1998). *New historicism and cultural materialism*. St. Martin's.

Howard, J. (1986). The new historicism in renaissance studies. *English literary Renaissance*, (16 /1),13-43. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6757.1986.tb00896.x

Foucault, Michel. (1984). Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias. *Mouvement, Continuité*, (5), 46-49.

Mansel, P. (2010). *Levant: Splendour and catastrophe on the Mediterranean*. John Murray.

Murray, J. (1878). *Handbook for travellers in Turkey in Asia*. Franklin Classics Trade P.

Nicol, M. (1856). *Ismeer, or Smyrna, and its British hospital in 1855, by a lady* [M. Nicol] James Madden.

Selden, Raman, and Peter Widdowson. (1993). *A reader's guide to contemporary literary theory*. University Press of Kentucky.

Soja, Edward. (1989). *Postmodern geographies the reassertion of space in critical social theory.* Verso.

Bu eser Creative Commons Atıf 4.0 Uluslararası Lisansı ile lisanslanmıştır.
(This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License).