U N I V E R Z I T A K A R L O V A V P R A Z E

Filozofická fakulta

Ústav anglofonních literatur a kultur

Diplomová práce

Rudolf Stránský

Demetra Vaka-Brown jako představitelka amerického orientalizmu v literatuře

Demetra Vaka-Brown as a Representative of American Orientalism in Literature

Praha 2009 vedoucí práce: Prof. David L. Robbins, PhD.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to all those without whom this thesis would have never been written.

The person who first introduced me to the works and life of Demetra Vaka-Brown is Yiorgos D. Kalogeras, professor of American Ethnic and Minority Literature at the English Department, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Professor Kalogeras has also supplied me with almost all the necessary texts.

I am also very grateful to Prof. David L. Robbins for his patience, encouragement and insight and also for all the time he has dedicated to the supervision of this thesis.

A big “Thank you!” also goes to Mrs. Maria Argyropoulou, Greece, Father Lukáš Nováček and his Presbytera Zuzana, Slovakia, Mrs. Jana Milojević and the Balcáreks, Czech Republic. Their support and encouragement was very important for me.

Čestné prohlášení

Čestně prohlašuji, že jsem svou diplomovou práci „Demetra Vaka-Brown jako představitelka amerického orientalizmu v literatuře“ vypracoval samostatně pod vedením Prof. Davida L. Robbinse, PhD. Prameny a literatura, které jsem k tomu použil, jsou uvedeny v seznamu literatury.

V Michalovcích dne 15. srpna 2009

Anotace

Tato magisterská diplomová práce je věnována dvěma románovým cestopisným fikcím *Haremlik – Some Pages from the Life of Turkish Women* (1909) a *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul* (1923) a jejich autorce Demetře Vaka-Brown (1877 – 1946), americké spisovatelce a novinářce řeckého původu narozené v Istanbulu. Obě knihy popisují radikální změny v tradiční osmanskoturecké společnosti mezi počátkem 20. století a koncem první světové války prizmatem změn v životech a postojích tureckých žen. Autor diplomové práce analyzuje problematiku identity, postojů a výpovědí autorky i vypravěčky a na základě kritérií stanovených Edwardem W. Saidem v jeho stěžejní knize *Orientalism* a na podkladu dalších prací dokazuje skutečnost, že obě knihy Demetry Vaka-Brown mohou být vnímány jako dílo ideově úmyslně zaměřené v duchu orientalistického diskurzu s tzv. kryptonacionalistickým prořeckým politickým podtónem.

Klíčová slova

Americká přistěhovalecká identita

Americký orientalismus

Americko-turecké vztahy

Orientalismus

Orientalismus v literatuře

Řecko-americká literatura

Řekové v USA

Said, Edward W.

Vaka-Brown, Demetra

USA – blízkovýchodní politika

Annotation

This MA thesis is dedicated to the two fictional travel narratives *Haremlik – Some Pages from the Life of Turkish Women* (1909) and *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul* (1923) and to the person of their author, Demetra Vaka-Brown (1877 – 1946), the Istanbul-born American writer and journalist of Greek origin. Both books describe the radical changes which took place in the traditional Ottoman Turkish society between the beginning of the twentieth century and the end of the First World War, as they are reflected in the everyday lives and attitudes of Turkish women. Based on Edward W. Said's definitions of Orientalism as a Western cultural and political attitude towards the Middle East and on other sources, the author of the MA thesis analyzes Vaka-Brown's authorial and narrative identities and attitudes to conclude that the two works of Demetra Vaka-Brown can be classified mostly as an example of an orientalist discourse, intentionally tinted with the so-called "cryptoethnic" pro-Greek political connotations.

Keywords

American Orientalism

American Immigrant Identity

Greek American Literature

Greeks in the U.S.A.

Orientalism

Orientalism in Literature

Said, Edward W.

Vaka-Brown, Demetra

U.S. – Middle East Politics

U.S. – Turkish Relations

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Theme Selection

When selecting a possible theme for my prospective MA theses, I was looking for a topic that would cover all possible fields of both my personal interest and academic research. As a student of American and Turkish studies with an abiding interest in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Greek culture and history, I was fascinated when Yiorgos D. Kalogeras, professor of American Ethnic and Minority Literature at the English Department, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, introduced me to the works of Demetra Vaka-Brown (1877 – 1946), the Istanbul-born American writer and journalist of Greek origin, who is according to Kalogeras the first professional Greek woman in America, or rather American Greek, "whose name, date of birth, date of immigration and life story can be established with relative accuracy".[1] Her work, personality and personal history perfectly covers all my interests: an ethnic Greek born in Turkey who becomes an accomplished and widely read author (at least in her times) writing in English mainly about her fatherland, Turkey, and its inhabitants, traditionally understood as antagonists of her own race. Thus, Demetra Vaka-Brown, the immigrant woman with the hyphenated name which combines both her ethnic origin and newly acquired American identity, stands at the crossroads of many boundaries, be they geographical, social, political and, as we will see later, even sexual. In addition, by their very nature, many of these affiliations are rather conflicting. In order for the author to remain authentic, and in Vaka-Brown's case, to remain an authority on the given subject, they need to be carefully balanced.

What else makes Vaka-Brown interesting? Being a part of American mainstream culture, she, however, did not concentrate on her immigrant transition or "Americanization"

[1] Yiorgos Kalogeras, "Contested, Familiar and Exotic Spaces: The Politics of Demetra Vaka Brown's Identity." In *Haremlik: Some Pages from the Life of Turkish Women* by Demetra Vaka-Brown. (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2004) v*.

experience, unlike her other accomplished contemporaries of "ethnic" background, for example Mary Antin or Anzia Yiezerska. Instead, Vaka-Brown wrote extensively about an "exotic", "Oriental"[2] theme that was very popular with readers not only in America, but also in the rest of the Western world at that time.[3] In addition, the period of time Vaka-Brown published most of her works with the Ottoman Turkish and Balkan ("Oriental") theme, that is, the first three decades of the twentieth century, was the beginning of the political involvement of the United States in the East Mediterranean region, manifested originally in the American philanthropic involvement with the Christian minorities of the Ottoman Empire, or, as Kathlene Postma puts it, it was the beginning of the era of "vigorous American expansionism".[4] Thus, in the first thirty years of the last century Vaka-Brown's works were widely read and published; moreover, given her ethnic background and personal history, she was considered a specialist and canonical commentator on the Middle East life and issues.[5] Given Vaka-Brown's privileged position in shaping the public opinion, it is definitely very interesting to examine what kind of message about the Orient she passed or wanted to pass to her reading public.

1.2. Aims of the Thesis and Methods Used

Demetra Vaka-Brown, the American writer sometimes called the Christian Turk, the Ottoman Greek or even the American Turk,[6]who nevertheless preferred the term "Byzantine Greek" herself, was a universally accepted (and, therefore, credited with authority and power)

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[2] The word *Orient, Oriental* in the context of this MA thesis pertains to the countries and nations of the former Ottoman Empire. Unless stated otherwise or indicated with inverted commas, it is not stylistically marked.
[3] Kathlene Postma, "American Women Readers Encounter Turkey in the Shadow of Popular Romance," *Journal of American Studies of Turkey 9 (1999):* 71-82. 15 Jan. 2009 <http://www.bilkent.edu.tr/~jast/Number9/Contributors.html#Postma>.
[4] *ibid.*
[5] Yiorgos Kalogeras, "Nationalism Unveiled: A Greek American View of the Harem," *Women, Creators of Culture* (American Studies in Greece: Series 3), Ekaterini Georgoudaki and Domna Pastourmatzi, eds., Thessaloniki: Hellenic Association of American Studies, 1997, 107.
[6] Kalogeras, Nationalism 108

interpreter and mediator of the Orient to the early twentieth century America. The aim of this paper dedicated to two of her most-read books, fictional travel narratives called *Haremlik – Some Pages from the Life of Turkish Women* (1909) and *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul* (1923), is to study these works in the light of the theory of Orientalism, as put forward by Edward W. Said in his influential book of the same name.[7] In this paper, I claim that Demetra Vaka-Brown is a classical Orientalist in the Saidian sense, presenting herself as a knowing authority, which can inform the West "correctly" about the Orient and thus claim the power to interpret the East. Special attention will be paid to the study of various mechanisms employed in constructing the Orientalist self which are marked with the ambiguities of both the narrator's and author's polyphonic identities. In addition, given Vaka-Brown's many conflicting identities, be they ethnic, cultural, social, geographic or even gender, the very message that this Orientalist writer wanted to pass to her readers will be studied, and based on the analysis of Vaka-Brown's own *hybrid identity* as well as that of her autobiographical narrator, and on the *views of the Other*, as expressed by both the narrator and the characters of the books, be they Westerners or Easterners, I claim that both Vaka-Brown and her "narratorial" projection, Demetra, while maintaining a strong sympathy to the traditional Ottoman culture based on sharing the same cultural and historical experience with the Turks, nevertheless tried to rouse the USA to intervening in Turkey in favor of the Greek cause.

From the many books Demetra Vaka-Brown wrote or co-authored together with her American husband Kenneth Brown, I selected *Haremlik*[8] and *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul*[9] because they form a piece of writing coherent in space, theme and time continuity. Both books depict an autobiographical narrator (we will call her Demetra in order to differentiate her from the authorial presence) who having spent some years in the United

[7] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).
[8] Demetra Vaka-Brown, *Haremlik: Some Pages from the Life of Turkish Women.* Reprint of the 1909 Houghton Mifflin edition. (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2004).
[9] Demetra Vaka (Mrs. Kenneth Brown), *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1923).

States and having become already Americanized, returns as a traveling visitor to Istanbul, her birthplace, and through the series of encounters with the Turks, usually women, observes and comments on the changes taking place in the late Ottoman society.

When discussing Vaka-Brown as an Orientalist author who describes the transformation of the traditional Ottoman society into modern Turkey through the prism of everyday lives and attitudes of Turkish women, I will not, however, put any special emphasis on approaching the selected works from the point of view of gender studies or from a feminist perspective, because I do not consider them relevant to the approach to my topic. There is, nevertheless, an interesting book by Reina Lewis[10] which is partly dedicated to such a discussion and which will be also used in the development of my argument.

The paper will first state the basic characterizations of Orientalism as put forward by Edward Said; even though I am aware of the criticisms of Said's concepts, they are, nevertheless, out of the scope of my work. As Vaka-Brown is not widely known and given the fact that her life story is instrumental in my argumentation, another chapter is dedicated to a brief introduction to Demetra Vaka-Brown's life; in addition, given the scarcity of academic texts on her work, I will include a short overview of the current academic discourses dedicated to her[11]. Other chapters will be dedicated to Vaka-Brown as an Orientalist, and the themes of hybrid identity, cultural mediation, views of the Other and political agenda as reflected in the two selected books, which will be close-read, will be discussed in greater detail.

[10] Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).
[11] The prospective Vaka-Brown scholar will not be able to find many academic works dedicated to this author. That is why the Bibliography of this thesis may be considered a little bit short.

2. ORIENTALISM

Even the most ardent critics of Edward W. Said's (1935-2003) concept of *Orientalism* would agree that his book of the same name, which appeared in 1978 and has been republished several times since, is a ground-breaking and important text that almost single-handedly and essentially overnight changed the course of many academic disciplines, including literary studies, history, sociology, anthropology and, above all, Middle East and postcolonial studies.

Based on his comparative and historical study of the 19th century French and Anglophonic literary discourse about the East, especially about the Arabs and the Muslims, and strongly influenced by the works of thinkers like Foucault, Chomsky and Gramsci, Said concludes that the Western approach to the Middle East is based on a set of general "infallible" presumptions, circulated from one generation of thinkers, politicians and academics to another, rather than on a direct knowledge. As such, it is an entrenched system of thought, an "a-priori" knowledge or a pattern of making certain generalizations that represent the Orient as an antithesis to the West. As a politically and even economically willed discourse rather than a mistaken notion, it establishes certain biased notions and representations like Oriental despotism and cruelty, cunning and sly servility if not in position of power, tendency to irrationality, revealed especially in ecstatic religious mysticism, sexual promiscuity of "Oriental" male predators on the one hand and the suffering of "Oriental" women locked behind the bars of harems on the other hand.

Said claims that the Orientalist discourse is based on the will and intention to politically dominate the "inferior" culture. He asserts that "(…) as a cultural apparatus Orientalism is all aggression, activity, judgment, will-to-truth, and knowledge (…)",[12] with a vast influence defined by the "(…) area of concern (…) of travelers, commercial enterprises,

[12] Said, 204.

governments, military expeditions, readers of novels and accounts of exotic adventure, natural historians and pilgrims (…)".[13] As such, he argues, it is based on the 19th century accounts of a few travelers and scientists, "specialists" with the knowledge that is universally accepted as truth; therefore, as ideas and conceptions became canonical, they were usually not subject to further criticism and scrutiny. Moreover, as another writers, travelers, academics and politicians depended on this pre-defined discourse for their own education, the Orientalist notions were further spread throughout Europe and the West, because the scholars simply assumed that "the Other" was already known from previous discourses.

In his introduction to *Orientalism*, Said states several definitions of Orientalist discourse, out of which two are in my opinion important for this paper on Vaka-Brown and which can be clearly discerned in the way she takes advantage of both her and her narrators multifaceted, half Oriental and half Western hybrid identity, in the manner she describes both their own mediatory powers and also in the way she approaches "the Other":

1. "A western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." (3)
2. "A distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts." (12)

Further on, we will se how these notions function and are applied to Vaka-Brown's texts and discourse.

[13] Said, 203.

3. DEMETRA VAKA-BROWN

3.1. Some Relevant Facts about Her Life and Works

As both Kalogeras[14] and Arapoglou[15] inform, a research of the archives shows that some of the information about her life that Vaka-Brown shares with her readers in her autobiographical novel *A Child of the Orient* (1914) and in her posthumously published (and possibly husband-contributed) serialized autobiography in the Greek American literary magazine *Athene* (1947-1952) may not be objectively validated; however, as there are virtually no other sources available, a Vaka-Brown scholar has to rely mostly on her own autobiographical narratives[16].

Demetra Vaka was born in 1877 on the island of Prinkipo (in Turkish *Büyük Ada*), located in the Sea of Marmara very near to the coast of Constantinople/Istanbul[17], the then capital of the Ottoman Empire. She was the daughter of an ethnic Greek official of the Ottoman Administration and, apparently, her family belonged to the privileged Greek upper-middle class of the capital. After having received private tutoring in Constantinople, the socio-economic status of her family allowed her to be sent abroad for studies, probably in convent schools in France. Due to the financial difficulties Vaka's family had to face after the unexpected death of her father, she had to abandon her studies and leave France; once back home, Vaka left again, this time to avoid an arranged marriage. Thus in 1894, at the age of seventeen, she accompanied the newly-appointed Ottoman consul to the United States, an ethnic Greek, as the governess of his children.

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[14] Kalogeras, Contested v*.
[15] Eleftheria Arapoglou, *Mapping Literary Identities: Space Trans-actions and Inter-actions in the Works of Mark Twain, Henry James, and Demetra Vaka Brown.* PhD. dissertation. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece: January 2005, 233.
[16] For the purpose of this paper, I rely on the biographies of Vaka-Brown by Arapoglou, Lewis and Kalogeras (Contested).
[17] The name *Constantinople* will be preferred to that of *Istanbul* throughout this work; firstly, because it was the official name of the City in Vaka-Brown's time and, secondly, she herself used it.

Once in the U.S., she did not stay under the Consul's protection for a long time. In 1894 and 1895 the Ottoman government ordered the massacres of the Armenians and the Ottoman Christian consul was put in a rather trying position to "justify" the killing of Christians to a very sensitive and interested American public. Having failed to do so in the eyes of the Ottoman administration, the Consul was revoked back to Constantinople; however, Demetra Vaka chose to stay in the United States.

Before becoming fluent in English, Vaka worked as a Greek copy editor for the Greek American newspaper *Atlantis.* Later on, she taught courses of French and classical Greek at private colleges. Even though she considered both jobs as "tedious and unrewarding,"[18] it nevertheless influenced her career decisions because she eventually became a professional journalist and a regular correspondent to major popular publications such as *The Atlantic Monthly, The Century, Asia, The Outlook, Colliers Magazine, Delineator* in the U. S., and *Cassel's Magazine* in the U.K. As Kalogeras observes, her transition from the immigrant to middlebrow press still remains a mystery.[19]

When she married Kenneth Brown in 1904, who was himself a published and read author of novels, Demetra Vaka, who appended her husband's Anglo-Saxon surname to her immigrant one, was already an accomplished, Americanized professional. However, there are no doubts Kenneth Brown's presence was pivotal in Vaka-Brown's professional life and literary career. Vaka-Brown actually acknowledged her husband's contribution to her writing in English in her dedication of *Haremlik* (1909) to Kenneth Brown. This book, published in Britain under the title of *Some Pages from the Lives of Turkish Women* in the same year[20], is at times perhaps a rather sentimental study of the "Oriental" and "exotic" aspect of Ottoman everyday life.

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[18] Kalogeras, Contested vi*.
[19] Kalogeras, Contested vi*.
[20] Lewis, 25.

Moreover, she signed some of her books as Demetra Vaka (Mrs. Kenneth Brown), and three romances, *The First Secretary* (1907), *The Duke's Price* (1910) and *A Pawn to a Throne* (1919) bear the authorial signatures of both Demetra and Kenneth. Interestingly, Kalogeras claims that the fact her posthumously published fiction, *Bribed to Be Born* (1951), supposedly found by her husband amidst her papers, raises retrospective questions about the authorship of her other works,[21] which together with the books mentioned later include romances *In the Shadow of Islam* (1911), *The Grasp of the Sultan* (1916).

Demetra Vaka-Brown also remained active in the Greek American setting. In 1920, together with Aristides Phoutrides (1887-1923), a Harvard and Yale Classics professor of Greek immigrant origin, she translated into English and introduced a collection of short stories by Greek Demoticists[22]. It was the first translation of these authors to appear in a language other than Greek. In the 1910's, Vaka-Brown was active as a war correspondent who not openly propagandized for the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos (1864-1936), the leading Greek statesman of the first half of the 20th century,[23] and his political cause in favor of the Greek interests in Asia Minor (the so-called *Great Idea*)[24], but who also presented herself as a player in the course of events, charged with carrying messages among various important personalities.[25] Her travelogue called *The Heart of the Balkans* (1917), which depicted the war situation of the Balkans, was followed by a pro-Venizelist book of

[21] Kalogeras, Contested vii*.
[22] **Demoticists** – a group of Greek authors who preferred the contemporary spoken modern Greek (in Greek *δημοτική, dimotiki*) as a literary and official language to that of the archaic and artificial *katharevousa* (in Greek *καθαρεύουσα*), the official language of Greek literature and administration up to 1974.
[23] **Eleftherios Venizelos** as an ardent supporter of the *Entente* (Britain, France and Russia) during the First World War came to conflict with the pro-German Greek king Constantine. Cordially hated by his enemies and madly adored by his supporters, his activities lead to the so-called "National Schism", which was reflected even in the Greek Diaspora. He was one of the most eminent advocates of the "**Great Idea**". /Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 256-257./
[24] **Great Idea** (in Greek Μεγάλη Ιδέα, *Megali Idea*) is a Greek geopolitical doctrine envisaging the unification of all areas of Greek settlement in the Middle East within the bounds of a single state with its capital in Constantinople, modeled on the former territory of the Byzantine Empire, sometimes also called "Greece of the Two Continents and the Five Seas". (Clogg, 3) Such a state would, of course, include significant parts of the then Ottoman Asia Minor. The Great Idea was crushed by the expulsion of Greek army which, originally encouraged by the *Entente* powers invaded Asia Minor, by the troops of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923, and by the subsequent exchange of population between Greece and Turkey.
[25] Lewis, 26.

interviews of contemporary Greek and European politicians called *In the Heart of German Intrigue* (1918) was even translated into several European languages.

Given her origin, background, works and travels and the general Western interest in the political and material heritage of the dying Ottoman Empire, Vaka-Brown was considered a respected, almost canonical authority on the Orient, its culture and politics. Here we should note that sporting a universally accepted, unquestionable authority that makes one an expert with **knowledge** according to Foucault[26] generates a sufficient amount of **power** which is instrumental in influencing others and shaping an unchallenged public opinion. Given these facts, Vaka-Brown's impact on the reading public must have been immense. By the way, the majority of her works were published by the established, mainstream publishing house Houghton and Mifflin.

In 1923, she wrote *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul*, a follow-up to *Haremlik*, where she depicted the changes in the late Ottoman/early Turkish society just before the proclamation of the Turkish Republic (1923) and before the final expulsion of Greek Christian population from Asia Minor.

With the exception of occasional newspaper articles, Demetra Vaka-Brown remained silent up to 1943, when she published her final book, *Delarah*, a romance that returns the reader to Vaka's childhood in Ottoman Constantinople. Kalogeras claims that with the creation of modernizing Kemalist Turkey, Vaka-Brown was deprived of her main theme: the depiction of the Ottoman Empire as a non-western state.[27]

Demetra Vaka-Brown died in Chicago in 1946.

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[26] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981 (see pp. 92-102).
[27] Kalogeras, Contested viii*.

3.2. Current Readings of Demetra Vaka-Brown

The works of Demetra Vaka-Brown have so far been approached from several critical points of view. All of the current readings are concerned with the issues of authorial and narrative identity and their impact on the reading public. The only exception is Eleftheria Arapoglou, who concentrates purely on the issues of fluid identity.

Yiorgos Kalogeras, for example, has understood her texts as a metaphoric "fare" she had to pay for her transatlantic passage; these texts then function as mediators between the discourses of the host and ethnic culture. Kalogeras believes that these discourses both form and inform the multifaceted identities of Vaka-Brown's autobiographical narrator because they legitimize the author's identity as an American, without, nonetheless, silencing Vaka-Brown's allegiance to her ethnic origins.[28]Kalogeras also argued for a multiple construction present in Vaka-Brown's writings: a construction that sees processes, rather than essences, at the core of the formation of the author's cultural identity. The critic claims that in Vaka-Brown's case, these processes are the result of her "liminal identity"; that is, of her positioning and maneuvering between two different worlds and empires. In Kalogeras' opinion, this position undermines the colonial concept of cultural independence. Moreover, Kalogeras introduces the term "cryptoethnicity" which in the critic's approach denotes Vaka-Brown's political Venizelist and Greek nationalistic projects and agenda.[29]

On the other hand, Reina Lewis, who has approached Vaka-Brown through the prism of gender studies, places our author in the context of Orientalism and Orientalization to illustrate the dynamics between the author's Oriental-ness and American-ness; an American-ness, Lewis claims, which cannot be harmonized with Vaka-Brown's Greek Ottoman self-

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[28] See Kalogeras, Contested and Yiorgos Kalogeras, "A Child of the Orient as American Storyteller: Demetra Vaka-Brown," *Working Papers in Linguistics and Literature,* R. Parkin Gounelas ed., Thessaloniki: Aristotle University, 1989, pp. 187-193.

[29] Yiorgos Kalogeras, "Greek American Literature: Who Needs It?" *New Directions in Greek American Studies,* Dan Georgakas and Charles C. Moskos, eds., New York: Pella Publishing Company, 1991, pp. 129-141.

understanding. Because of the inner inconsistence of such self-identification, Lewis argues that Vaka-Brown claims authenticity on both feminine (experiential) and masculine (objective) grounds. Lewis asserts that these grounds which are conventionally contradictory invalidate the canonical Oriental stereotypes that, otherwise, would have constituted a serious threat to the author's rather idiosyncratic exercise of Oriental-ness. In her book, Lewis also presents a thorough analysis of various Oriental symbols and institutions (harem being just one example), including some photographs accompanying Vaka-Brown's texts.[30]

The issue of Vaka-Brown's often conflicting ethnic allegiances is also the focus of Kathlene Postma who refuses to read Vaka-Brown's works as popular sentimental novels but pays attention to the historical and social forces that operate both in Vaka-Brown as the author and her audience. Going beyond the surface of the "exotic" and taking into account the issues of American feminist, expansionist and philanthropic discourse of the era, Postma claims that the generating force of Vaka-Brown's texts is her deep political commitment to both American and Greek nationalism. Postma asserts that the author simply uses the culturally well-established and sought-for mode of sentimental exotic novel in order to advocate the issue of women's rights and the problem of the cultural and political conflict between the West, which assumes the role of the "guardian" of freedom, and the Ottoman East, which threats the harmony of the West. The critic asserts that Vaka-Brown actually preaches "a union of American expansionism and Greek nationalism combined with a plea for the support of educated American women."[31]

In her PhD. dissertation, Eleftheria Arapoglou approaches the issue of Vaka-Brown's ambiguous identity on the ground of space studies. She believes that the ambiguity cannot be satisfactorily resolved within the context of gender studies or purely historic frame. Arapoglou asserts that Vaka-Brown's work can be read as that of a hybrid social

[30] Lewis, Rethinking Orientalism.
[31] Postma, American Women Readers.

geographer,[32] who viewed and, subsequently, mapped the spaces in which she lived or which she visited in the context of both historical developments and social practices and relations. In this creative interaction between the physical and social spaces that, finally, allows her to embrace the fluidity of identity. Vaka-Brown's fictionalized travels, in the course of which she constantly crossed different ethnic, political, cultural, identity and spatial boundaries, record, as Arapoglou claims, the way in which Vaka-Brown unites in a modernist gesture the world inside her with the world outside her. The critic believes that through this gesture, Vaka-Brown becomes a prototypical modernist subject, a traveling *flâneuse*; that is, a seemingly purposeless observer in quest of an abstract knowledge,[33] whose *flânerie* becomes a synthesis of cultural mediation within which the worlds and notions that appear to be irreconcilable, such as the East and the West, the Greeks and the Turks or the Old World and the New (America), can function harmoniously. It is a very interesting approach that may explain certain inconsistencies in Vaka-Brown's depiction of *the Other* on the basis of combining territorial, rather than ethnic, allegiance with the fluidity of identity; however, I feel that it omits the political agenda which is so prominently and evidently present in Vaka-Brown's texts.

[32] Arapoglou, 188.
[33] Arapoglou, 189.

4. HYBRID IDENTITIES

4.1. The Byzantine Greek as an American citizen

In her writings as well as in her life, Demetra Vaka-Brown constantly traveled and crossed many boundaries, be they related to time, place or identity. Her identity as a writer is also a product of many different formations: social, cultural and political. These systems are both interactional and interdependent. For example, the fact that she was born and raised in the cultural *milieu* of late Ottoman and ethnic, yet at the same time cosmopolitan Greek Constantinople affects her internalization of the Ottoman capital and the Turkish characters that she constructs in both *Haremlik* and *Unveiled*. At the same time, the fact that she was addressing a middle-class American audience, to which she tries to pass certain political Orientalist message, advocating the cause of the Greek citizens of the dying Empire, as an American writer, poses a set of expectations on her literary production. The important question then is: how can an author with a first-generation immigrant identity sound both persuasive and authentic to her American readers?

The very fact of emigration places the author in a different social, political and cultural context, and therefore necessitates her allegiance with a new, alternative culture: that of the host country. In the host country, a stable, inborn and native identity cannot be the grounding concept because it is totally divorced from the sense of ancestry and shared historical and cultural experience. In other words, Vaka-Brown as a clearly defined Greek immigrant writer, void of any relation to the everyday cultural and political reality of the U.S., including the lack of the superb command of English, would definitely be completely marginalized and, therefore, her message non-significant and illegible.

In order to achieve credibility and thus influence and cultural power to become the opinion-making interpreter of the Orient to the American public, the author had to undergo a cultural and identity “re-birth”, which, on the one hand, established her as an American with

clearly identifiable American mindset, opinions and habits, well-respected as a successful professional by American society, and which, on the other hand, would enable her to preserve her role of a knowledgeable "local" guide, Ottoman or Greek, who can be undoubtedly trusted with her first-hand knowledge and experience of a foreign culture and whose observations, therefore, become a canon of the Orientalist discourse. In other words, in order to establish accepted and trusted connections and continuities between spaces and times, a process of national rebirth and identity re-formation and re-construction is needed.

Yiorgos Kalogeras, who calls this process of rebirth with the Greek word of the same meaning, *palingenesis*, claims that in America, where the Greek immigrants were distinctively alien and "exotic" to the middle-class Americans in terms of looks, speech, dress, customs and religion, the ethnic identity evolution took the form of a gradual shift from the immigrant "exoticism" to a "(…) universally acceptable state of democratic middle-class citizenship via assimilation,"[34] or, as we may also call it, Americanization.

Apparently, such notions were quite common among the American Greeks in the years Vaka-Brown published both *Haremlik* and *Unveiled*. In his short study about the identity construction of Greek America, Kalogeras mentions two American Greek historians, whose books were widely circulated within the community, and who, by the way, follow the same political agenda as Vaka-Brown. J. P. Xenides, for example, stresses in his book *The Greeks in America* (1922), which was written in English and meant to reach also the "native" Anglo-Saxon American society, the need of *palingenesis* or Americanization, which for him is the assimilation of Greek ethnic identity by a powerful American essence, so that the Greek cause in Asia Minor is adopted by the U.S. In addition, he tries to rouse the sympathy of the contemporary American reading public to the Greeks of Asia Minor by emphasizing

[34] Yiorgos Kalogeras, "Narrating an Ethnic Group: Historians and the Construction of Greek America," *Yearbook of English Studies*, Volume 3 – Off-prints, Thessaloniki: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Faculty of Philosophy – School of English, 1991-1992, 203-204.

Byzantine history and Christianity.[35] Seraphim Canoutas in his Greek book *Ο Ελληνισμός εν Αμερική* (1918)[36] included even an entire essay on the necessity of the Americanization of the immigrant. The bottom line of his argumentation is that if Greeks are reborn in the spirit of American socio-cultural institutions, they may, consequently, as legitimate American citizens create a lobby pressuring the American administration to expedit Greek interests in Anatolia.[37]

In Vaka-Brown's own case, the *palingenesis* process of transforming the immigrant self began with the writer's transfer from Greek American immigrant newspaper *Atlantis* to American mainstream publications, where she became an established professional journalist. Her Americanization, or rather her re-creation on the grounds of hybrid identity was then successfully completed in her 1904 marriage with Kenneth Brown, and her hyphenated surname becomes a powerful symbol of the newly achieved productive blending of her identities and affiliations.

The Byzantine Greek thus became an English-speaking American citizen, in the beginning even hiding her ethnic roots with the signature "Mrs. Kenneth-Brown"; moreover, she did not write about the very process of her Americanization, which would single her out again as an ethnic author, but invested with her new American identity, she rather concentrated on her "expertise" area, the Orient, which was in the centre of the public interest then. Arapoglou mentions a powerful comment to be found in Grant Overton's 1925 edition of *The Women Who Make Our Novels*, which testifies to the general interest in Vaka-Brown as a novelistic authority who addresses the Eastern question through literature: "Give us romances, Demetra Vaka, give us the East; stay with us, write for us novel after novel!"[38] Accepted as a legitimate American author by the "native" mainstream society, Vaka-Brown

[35] Kalogeras, Narrating 200+.
[36] The English translation would be "The Hellenism in America".
[37] Kalogeras, Narrating 205.
[38] Arapoglou, 183.

had, nevertheless, an agenda to advocate and a message about the Orient to pass. Given her origins, extensive travels and undisputed, first-hand "knowledge", she could set off for work.

The prominence of political agenda even outside of her purely fictional novels is attested to by Lewis, who concludes from the reading of Vaka-Brown's memoirs that the author "(…) considered political commentary as central to her works."[39] The Americanized Byzantine Greek was well aware of the impact her texts had on American public. In her memoirs she later wrote that "(…) my price went up and up, and during the First World War, Collier's paid me a thousand dollars apiece for each installment of 'In the Heart of German Intrigue.'"[40]

Opening a parenthesis here, I would like to note that here is an interesting ironical connotation in the term "Byzantine Greek" used both as a description of Vaka-Brown as an author[41] and by the author herself as a self-identification of Demetra, her autobiographic narrator of both *Haremlik* and *Unveiled*. If we broaden the limits of Orientalism to include the Byzantine Empire, we may encounter the criticism of the very expression "Byzantine", which is according to a prominent American Greek Orthodox theologian Fr. John Romanides (1928-2001) itself a derogatory construction of the West[42], namely of French historiography, in the place of the historically more correct (Eastern) Roman Empire. As a construct, it is an integral part of European (Western) discourse that saw the Eastern Roman Empire, even though Christian, as an "oriental", non-European entity, cunning and full of intrigues. Nevertheless, and perhaps because of it, the Byzantine Greek, marked with the "exoticism" of the Orient, especially when duly Americanized, is the correct person, an ideal interpreter, from whom "knowledge" can be obtained.

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[39] Lewis, 26.
[40] Lewis, 26.
[41] Kalogeras, Contested viii*; Lewis, 24.
[42] John Romanides, "Introduction to Romanity, Romania, Roumeli," *Online Database of the Works of Fr. John Romanides.* 21 May 2009. <http://www.romanity.org/htm/rom.16.en.romanity_romania_roumeli.01.htm>

4.2. *Haremlik* – The American Byzantine Greek Revisits the Orient

Paralleling the travels of Vaka-Brown, her autobiographic narrator, whom we will call Demetra, returns for a visit to the country she was born in, after having gone through the process of *palingenesis*. Her own identity, described in *Haremlik* and *Unveiled*, reflects the author herself; nevertheless, it is an artificial construction, an author-created projection of her own self in time and space which, as Kalogeras believes, is at times a convenient cover-up for the author's notions, resulting from her liberation from certain socio-cultural concepts; an openness would not be readily accepted by the general reading public.[43]

Haremlik is set in 1901 and Vaka's narrator, yet unmarried, having spent six years in America, returns to the places she knew as a child and as a young lady. Although Americanized in customs and opinions, she still remains an Ottoman subject; therefore, she refrains from a direct political commentary when addressing her Ottoman Turkish friends. Back in Constantinople for a long visit, she meets her female childhood friends and their acquaintances or relatives, who have in the meantime became the inhabitants of harems. And it is their lives and stories Demetra wants to tell her readers.

She is well aware of the exoticism and sensual/sexual imagery which the West connected with the very institution of the harem, which is viewed as a place of both gratification and deprivation, but generally as a place of masculine tyranny and domination of women, reflecting the "despicable" character of the Turk. Having heard this discourse for the first time in America, the narrator is seriously troubled: "Could it possibly be as the Americans said, and I never have known it?"[44]

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[43] Kalogeras, Contested ix*
[44] *Haremlik*, 13.

Therefore, once inside the harems, she assumes the role of an "objective" interpreter who both for the sake of her readers and for herself decides to "learn the truth"[45]; that is, in other words, based on her origins, her knowledge of the local language and her organic connections to the Ottoman culture on the one hand, and her acquired Western/American "objectivity", Demetra volunteers to become a knowledgeable, and, therefore, trusted and authoritative, guide and opinion-maker on the "Oriental", Ottoman Turkish culture and daily life.

Demetra indeed believes that her American compatriots cannot comprehend the Orient unless they are born there. Aware of her importance as an interpreter and commentator of the East to her Western counterparts, she has to say the following about her role as a secure cultural guide (stress added by the author of this thesis):

> I was talking about the Turks, lately, with some very intelligent American men, and it was only then I fully realized the impossibility for the Occidental mind, and especially for the active and restless American mind, to comprehend the Turkish temperament.
>
> "You cannot convince me," said one of my American interlocutors, "that human nature is different in Turkey from what it is in America."
>
> But that is exactly what is, in a measure, the fact. <u>And to be able to judge the Orientals one has, like me, to be born among them</u>, to live their life for a time *(…)*.[46]

The narrator's attempt to achieve the interpretative authority is, however, compromised exactly by her multifaceted identity. *Haremlik* is permeated with a tangible dichotomy as the narrator, an Ottoman citizen of ethnic Greek origin who became an American author and journalist through emigration, has to struggle with many conflicting

[45] *Haremlik*, 13.
[46] *Haremlik*, 223-224.

affiliations, which are, as we will see later, clearly reflected in the text. Demetra constantly moves on the borders of three cultures; perhaps that is the reason why she has no name given to her either by her Turkish friends or by herself in the text. Namelessness which, however, does not mean an anonymity, thus becomes the very emblem of a liminal, polyphonic identity, which is a "process" in which the narrator constantly re-creates and re-shapes herself and her attitudes towards her surroundings, rather than a stable, definite and defining state.

What are, then, the layers of Demetra's composite identity? First of all, she is a "Byzantine Greek", a ***Romia***,[47] whose ancestors used to rule the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire; therefore, she is an heiress to a splendid past that includes Classical Antiquity with its marvelous works of art and thought.[48] However, her ancestors have lived for almost five centuries under the rule of the Turks, a reality which is known to Demetra and her people as "the yoke of Turkey."[49] And even though especially the wealthy and prosperous Greek merchants and government officials of Constantinople, usually called ***the Phanariots***[50], found according to Clogg[51] a profitable ***modus vivendi*** with the Turks, they all, Demetra including, share and are nourished from their childhood on a dream, or rather an inherited racial archetypal belief which formed the basis of the political discourse embodied in the ***Great Idea***: Constantinople will be eventually returned into Greek hands and the Greeks will become "*(…)* again leaders of the world."[52]

Such expectations may seem far-fetched to the reader but as the narrator herself states, "in Turkey we learn early to defend our nationality."[53] Apparently, it is an inborn attitude

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[47] I have observed that the Greeks of Constantinople actually call themselves even nowadays *Ρωμιοί* ***(Romioi)***, that is, the Romans, and their language *Ρωμαιϊκά* ***(Romeika)***, the Roman language.
[48] ***Haremlik*** 10-11.
[49] ***Haremlik***, 9.
[50] **Phanariots** – a Greek term for the leading Greek elite of Constantinople, derived from the name of the suburb of Constantinople (Greek *Φανάρι*, ***Fanari***, Turkish ***Fener***, meaning "Lighthouse") where the headquarters of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate is situated.
[51] Clogg, 24+.
[52] ***Haremlik***, 11.
[53] ***Haremlik***, 224.

which may explain both the author's and the narrator's pro-Greek agenda in the book. And who else is to advocate best this cause than a Byzantine Greek who, exactly because she grew up in the Ottoman Empire, believes that she belongs to "the good Greek stock *(which)* comes from there *(Turkey)*."[54]

The second part of Demetra's identity is that of being an Ottoman subject, born and raised in Turkey by people who had to interact with the Turks for generations, which again creates in the narrator the security of being the only privileged objective interpreter, who can teach the West about the Orient and inform it about the East. It is communicated to the reader through an episode in the first pages of *Haremlik*, when Demetra rather sarcastically comments on her French co-passenger, traveling with her aboard a ship to Constantinople, who cannot comprehend her discourse on Ottoman politics:

> It was natural that the Frenchman should look at me as if I were losing my mind. It takes a lifetime to understand many things in Turkey: it takes generations to understand the political machinations. *(…)* For three years he had been in command of the smallest fortress in the world, which is on the island of Crete. *(…) (he)* thought he knew Turkey and the Turks – as foreigners do, who have lived in the Sultan's dominion for a time. But I was a Turkish subject, and we had been Turkish subjects ever since there were Turks in Europe.[55]

Paradoxically, this episode challenges what would Said identify as a classical example of the Western Orientalist approach. Thus in a way, Demetra defies Western Orientalism on the grounds of being based on a fictional, false knowledge; nevertheless, she immediately claims such an authority herself by the virtue of being born in the Ottoman Empire and having lived with the Turks, creating a personal version of the Orientalist discourse.

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[54] *Haremlik*, 224.
[55] *Haremlik*, 4-5.

Surprisingly enough, the narrator's fluency and authority in *affairs Ottoman*, that is, her subjective Orientalist discourse, is sometimes challenged and thus rendered questionable when Demetra stops interpreting and starts directly interacting with the Turks. The narrator realizes her different ethnic, non-Turkish identity prevents her from being able to share her "Western" ideas with her Oriental friends. Moreover, because of this lack of being tuned on the same mental and cultural wave, she is forced to give up her often condescending approach to Turkey and accept the Oriental terms and modes of communication.

Such a situation is depicted for example in chapter five where Demetra meets Aishé Hanoum, a Pasha's[56] gift wife, the third out of four, an educated artist who is a former inmate of the imperial palace. French is the language of communication and Demetra tries to persuade her conversation partner that in order to cultivate her talent, she should travel extensively in Europe and visit its famous galleries. Aishé Hanoum, however, who does not feel the need to become a famous artist and who considers her painting as a means to spend her free time, reacts to Demetra's agitated proposals with a series of "what for's". The narrator, who is dethroned from her condescending and patronizing attitude, all of a sudden realizes that the Western mode of communication, embodied in the usage of French, is completely out of place here; in a pang of despair, she reverts into Turkish she "had spoken as a child"[57] and the conversation finishes in a liberating laughter of both protagonists, after which Aishé Hanoum consoles Demetra: "You are a dear little one."[58]

In this charming story, the narrator betrays the weakness of her Orientalist self-construction. In order to communicate meaningfully with the Orient, she is forced to give up her assumed Westernized identity and Westernized cultural mediation and return to her childhood immediate experience of the East, which is also indicated by the words Aishé

[56] **Pasha** – a high-ranking Ottoman official, usually (but not necessarily, especially in the 19th century) a Muslim
[57] *Haremlik*, 103.
[58] *Haremlik*, 104.

Hanoum uses to calm down distressed Demetra. The stress of the text is on living and experiencing the East directly as it is, rather then approaching it with a ready-made "knowledge".

The question is why the narrator actually reveals her cultural weakness which could endanger her position as a knowing, authoritative mediator. Arapoglou's approach of socio-geographical literary mapping[59] would suggest that the incident can be read as an inner identity dichotomy caused by territorial affiliation; in other words, the narrator is not ashamed of her weakness because it is just a means of constructing the social map of the given place. However, it seems to me that the communication problems described by the narrator may be a part of a clever scheme, which by admitting a weakness which is finally resolved (!). What if showing a "human face" actually serves the purpose of strengthening, rather than weakening, the narrator's interpretative authority?

The third level of Demetra's polyvalent identity is her acquired, professional American self, who is willing to distinguish between "us" (the Americans) and "them" (the Turks). It seems to me that such pronouncements serve the purpose of setting a familiar tone to the narrator's Oriental tour; after all, the American reading public would definitely feel more at ease with a socio-cultural guide who is firmly rooted in what they consider familiar and therefore secure. As such, the frequent references to American reality employed by the narrator further strengthen her acceptance as a trusted cultural interpreter.

As we learn early in the book, the narrator received an "Occidental" education which rendered her mind "sceptical"[60] to the socio-cultural pathos of the East. Moreover, having spent enough time in America, she returns to her "native land with new ideas, and a mind full of Occidental questioning."[61] She has "studied the Americans" and "learned to think their

[59] See pages 18-19.
[60] *Haremlik*, 8.
[61] *Haremlik*, 12.

way,"[62] and even though she enjoys her stay in her original homeland immensely, she nevertheless confesses that she cannot live anymore without her new, adopted home: *"(…)* he who tastes of American bustle can never again live long without it."[63] Indeed, Demetra is a woman on her way to full professional success who, once among the Turks, can discuss with the men American politics, a theme that Turkish women cannot follow.[64] Nevertheless, as we will see later on, she is not afraid of making critical remarks about some aspects of the American everyday reality. Her dedication to her new homeland and her fidelity to her American identity is made definitive as she resists the temptation of the East, masterfully and laconically expressed by her Turkish friends who bid her to get married and settled, and by the end of the book she departs back for America, ready to follow her own American Dream.

4.3. *Unveiled* – The American Byzantine Greek Observes the Change

The Constantinople Demetra visited again has changed a lot. The year is 1921 and Turkey which had been defeated in the First World War and its occupied capital is now full of foreign soldiers. The new order of things is visible everywhere, but most prominently on Turkish women who move around the capital unchaperoned and who, in order to survive, have left harems to earn their living. This big change is embodied in the fact that they do not wear their veils over their faces anymore. And our diligent narrator is here to report and "faithfully" interpret the meaning of such a change, which could not be possibly foreseen in the times of *Haremlik*, to her American readers. However, as the Ottoman capital has changed with the passing of time, are there any similar changes in the narrator's identity?

Demetra's identity remains a composite one because we can still clearly distinguish its three basic components: American, Ottoman and Greek. However, compared to *Haremlik*,

[62] *Haremlik*, 220.
[63] *Haremlik*, 221.
[64] *Haremlik*, 22.

they seem to be more harmonious, more polyphonic, the differences are on the surface more smoothed up; therefore, they are actually more sharply juxtaposed. It is still an identity in process but this time, given the changes in the Ottoman Empire, they are more united to serve a cause, as the narrator is ready to pronounce political judgments openly.

In *Haremlik*, Demetra's identity seems to be still fluid. At times it even appears that she is not sure whether she belongs to the East or to the West; moreover, the Orient may sometimes win over her in its way of thinking and reasoning, as we have seen in the incident with Aishé Hanoum. Nothing like that, however, appears in *Unveiled*. Twenty years later, Demetra returns to Constantinople once again, this time as a full-fledged, self-assured professional, a self-made woman, a proud representative of the American Dream that became a reality, and as such she will become an inspiration to some of the Turks she meets. Being securely grounded in American culture, she is not a "child" that could be rendered helpless by the Orient, as we have seen in *Haremlik*, anymore. No, Demetra has now arrived to pronounce strong *judgments* about the East and in her new, almost Messianic identity to *teach* it the "correct way of living", as we will see later on. Indeed, her process of Americanization is complete now because she has married an American, Kenneth Brown, who even appears as a side-character in the beginning of *Unveiled*, playing the role of a kind, sympathetic companion of Demetra's journeys of exploration, even though he is not mentioned at all later in the text.

Again, similarly to *Haremlik*, some familiar cultural imagery the American reading public can relate to easily and thus more readily accept the narrator as an authoritative guide is used. For example, Demetra's exploration of the new Constantinople is paralleled to Washington Irving's character *Rip van Winkle*; in fact, an entire chapter is called "Constantinople's Rip van Winkle."[65] Her American experience and life have made her a full,

[65] *Unveiled*, 24.

complete personality. As she herself states in a conversation with a young Turkish woman, "I became one of them *(…)* The raw material in me is Greek; the article was finished in America."[66]

Being an American is not for Demetra just a matter of a geographical affiliation; it is a matter of *loving* both the country and its people. As the narrator confesses to the same young Turkish woman who is employed in an American company but who, nevertheless, expresses her doubts about the quality of the character of her employers, "If you were ever to come to America and see more of them *(the Americans)*, you would learn to love them as I do." [67](Stress added by the author of this paper.) In a similar statement to Azize Hanoum, a Turkish woman married to a French officer who, however, passionately hates everything connected with her husband's country, Demetra views her identity in the following way:

> I am Greek and was born here, and my people ruled here before yours ever set foot on the shores of the Bosphorus. But by choice and marriage I am American, and unlike you I devotedly love most of the things of my husband's nationality.[68] *(Stress added.)*

Undoubtedly, such strong statements of allegiance to her adopted homeland must have gained the sympathy of the readers, especially in the times America started to gain importance as an international power, another reality which Demetra understands and positively comments about. The Americans working in Constantinople are according to Demetra's testimony "earnest, honest and altruistic" people.[69] Moreover, as in *Unveiled* Demetra openly enters a positive discourse on American reality as that of an unlimited professional opportunity, a view she tries to mediate to her Turkish friends, I am persuaded that such statements of affiliation again facilitate the acceptance of the narrator as an Orientalist guide.

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[66] *Unveiled,* 243.
[67] *Unveiled,* 243.
[68] *Unveiled,* 130-131.
[69] *Unveiled,* 16.

On the other hand, Demetra does not let her readers forget that she is "the daughter of this Orient"[70] which she strives to explain to them. One of the Turkish characters even exclaims: "She belongs to us. She has defended us for years."[71] Based on the witness of both the narrator and the Turkish characters, the readers should remember that Demetra was born and brought up in the Orient and, therefore, she is a secure guide to its mysteries.

Turkey, nevertheless, has a share of Demetra's allegiance as well; it is an integral part of her identity. It is a relation of a territorial affiliation, which is for example manifested in the exotically sounding episode when Demetra listens to the voice of a muezzin, calling to prayer from one of the minarets of the marvelous *Süleymanie* mosque: "I, too, am of the East!"[72] Yet on the other hand, when she attends as a partaker of the Eastern identity a nationalistic, pro-militant and highly anti-Western meeting of young Kemalists[73] in the centre of Constantinople, she readily calls:

> "You know I am here to publish what I learn. (…) I am a Westerner, and no matter how much I may like you personally, I shall do everything to avert the danger to Europe."[74]

The way Demetra's composite identity functions is in my opinion well explained at the end of the book where the narrator confesses with a strong pathos about her relationship to Turkey the following:

> How many, how very many, like this girl and like me, have loved her *(Turkey)*, have wished to serve her, to better things, to give to that former empress city, with the fruit of their brain, the aspiration of the heart, and the travail of their fingers, those imperial vestments which ought to have been

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[70] *Unveiled,* 22.
[71] *Unveiled,* 58.
[72] *Unveiled,* 193.
[73] **Kemalists** – the supporters of the ardently nationalist and, after the creation of the independent Turkish republic, very pro-Western modernization politics of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.
[74] *Unveiled,* 112.

> hers and were not. All these dreamers failed miserably and died with their dreams unfulfilled, while she remains in dirt and squalor, because of a Government that starved their hearts and stunted their ambitions.[75]

Analyzing this excerpt and the whole issue of the narrator's composite identity as reflected in *Unveiled*, one realizes that for the narrator, Turkey and the Ottoman Empire is a story of dreams failed and unfulfilled. The Old World apparently does not have any power of recreation; therefore, it should be dismissed, and it is only America, the New World, where one has a chance to fulfill his/her dreams. It is an excellent example of what Postma calls "a union of American expansionism and Greek nationalism combined with a plea for the support of educated American women."[76]

To sum it up, even though Demetra remains in a way loyal to the cultural heritage of her old homeland, the Ottoman Empire, she guides the reader by stressing redemptive role of America in both personal and collective histories. It is now time for America to act, and she wants to be one of the guides, showing the course of action America should follow in the Middle East.

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[75] *Unveiled,* 244-245.
[76] Postma, American Women Readers.

5. LOVER OF THE OLD AND OBSERVER OF THE NEW

5.1. "The Turk Remains a Turk"

As we have already seen, Demetra sets off to render to her reader "faithfully" the "reality" of the late Ottoman world in *Haremlik* and to comment on the changes which took place in Turkey after the First World War. In doing so, the narrator presents herself as a *connoisseur* of the Turkish reality, which she creates and recreates for the benefit of her readers and for the sake of the message that she wants to pass on them.

In *Haremlik*, the narrator's chief point of interest is the harem[77], a space very exotic to the Western reader, traditionally viewed as a place of both sensual and sexual satisfaction; a view circulated as a part of the undisputed Orientalist "knowledge" in the West. Occasionally, the narrator implicitly informs her readers that harems functioned similarly as the majority of Western households; however, this information is made explicit only later on in *Unveiled*, when one of the Turkish women, formerly a harem inmate, informs the reader: "Harem merely means all the women who compose a man's household,"[78] thus divesting one of the most emblematic "Oriental" institutions of its exotic power and simply dropping it out of the Orientalist discourse.

Demetra by the virtue of being a woman and, moreover, being born in Turkey and knowing the language, claims the right of an authoritative guide to a place the majority of her Western readers would never have the slightest chance to enter. With the help of her Turkish friends, she moves freely around and readily partakes of the Ottoman culture she has known

[77] **Harem** – *haremlık* in Turkish, one of the two parts of a traditional Ottoman household, reserved to women and children, in the case of boys usually up to their circumcision (7-10 years of age). The "masculine" counterpart of the household was called *selamlik.*
[78] *Unveiled,* 203.

since her childhood associations with Ottoman girls. Moreover, being a non-Muslim and having lived in America, she is allowed to interact with Turkish men in ***selamlik*** as well, a right which is traditionally denied to Ottoman women. Therefore, our narrator has to be trusted and relied upon, her description should be taken as a valid statement about the state of things.

Once in harems, Demetra creates a luxurious, exotic, at times rather romantic and sentimental setting which her Western reader would expect to encounter. Even though there are no bloody mysteries or dark secrets and the women live together in a surprising harmony, images implying at least sensual gratification and immense, overpowering and mind-intriguing exoticism are often employed, pointing to the Western expectations which could be summarized easily in the statement that the task of an "Oriental" woman is to lie on the sofa and smell pleasantly.

Indeed, the women of ***Haremlik*** spend their days bathing, taking relaxing massages, reading literature, painting, listening to music and Oriental short stories, receiving guests, wearing luxurious see-through costumes and, above all, being unconditionally loved by their husbands and loving them back with the same devotion. The narrator, a professional self-made Americanized woman, often disagrees with these Ottoman women and asks them whether they are contented with their way of life, whether they do not expect more of it, whether they do not want to be "more free" and, perhaps, successful professionals. As an answer, she is lead to discover that for the women she meets, their seclusion is a matter of a deliberate choice with which they are completely identified. As one of the characters Demetra encounters poignantly observes, "Allah meant women to be beautiful and good; to be true wives and real mothers. Isn't that enough for a mere woman?"[79]

[79] Haremlik, *29.*

I am persuaded that the narrator wants to depict Oriental women and the Orientals in general as contented with the traditional ways of life. The Turk had always been viewed as a potential danger for Europe and the West; nowadays, given the weak economic position of the Ottoman Empire and its dependence on the West for resources, he is more or less harmless, especially if he is left to his exotically perfumed old "Oriental" ways. The narrator, however, warns the Occidental reader that if the Oriental is exposed to the Western nationalistic and political discourse, which find their ways to Turkey through the translation of the 19th century European literature or through the Oriental's knowledge of Western languages, the situation may change dramatically.

However, this danger, which turns into a direct threat to the West in *Unveiled,* is still dormant in *Haremlik.* An open contact with the West is still traumatizing for the Ottoman, as seen in the story of the "Rossetti Woman"[80] in the last chapter of *Haremlik*, called "A Flight from the Harem."[81] In it, the story of a young Turkish woman who, seduced by a handsome Scottish aristocrat, leaves her husband and children and runs away with her lover to Britain, where they get officially married and have a child, which her husband emblematically called Hope as an expression of his hope that his Oriental wife would completely belong to him; that is, that she would become a Westerner. The Turkish lady becomes a regular member of British society and even meets the Queen, however, as she confesses to Demetra later on, "I was always a prisoner"[82] both of her husband's jealous love and of her Ottoman past, even though she had a great deal of personal liberty. Finally, she appealed to her Ottoman husband who arrived to Scotland and secretly took her back home, adopting Hope and enfolding his

[80] In her book, Lewis offers an interesting analysis of the story of the "Rossetti Woman" as well as of the cultural connotations it implies, from the perspective of gender studies which, however, will not be followed in this thesis.
[81] *Haremlik*, 249+.
[82] *Haremlik*, 258.

returned wife with his love again. And as for her child, the Rossetti Woman prefers to bring her up as a proper Muslim woman, rather than to return her to "that godless set of people."[83]

This story, according to modern standards perhaps rather sentimental, tells the reader that a direct exposure of the Oriental to the West is fatal and traumatizing for him. As a young lady, the Rossetti Woman grew up reading French novels and created in her mind a tempting idea of Europe. However, when faced with the reality of the West, she voluntarily opts for the secure seclusion of harem once again. The idea of the West that the Turk can be easily dominated through Westernization is proven completely mistaken because, as the narrator states, "the Turk remains a Turk".[84]

Therefore, any attempt of the Orientals to become Westernized is actually quickly exorcized as a potential danger to the Occident by the narrator. I am persuaded that this is actually the reason why Demetra, otherwise in fact herself a flamboyant feminist, openly and mercilessly scorns the Turkish women who meet secretly to advocate modernist, Western ideas in the chapter rather ironically called "Suffragettes of the Harem."[85] I believe that it is precisely this attempt on both the narrator's and the author's side to protect the West from the destructive impact which the romantic, self-imposed Westernization of the Oriental, embodied in the story of the Rossetti Woman, might have, rather than the incompatibility of the Orient and the Occident suggested by Kalogeras[86] that is to be found behind the narrator's sneer at the Western dress of some of the women or the imitations of Western furniture occasionally found in harems, which are "as European as the Oriental rooms in America are Oriental."[87] This protectionist approach is in my opinion also the driving force of the

[83] *Haremlik,* 265.
[84] *Haremlik,* 154.
[85] *Haremlik,* 153-190.
[86] Kalogeras, Contested xxi*.
[87] *Haremlik,* 73.

narrator's agreement with her Turkish friends that "Turkey ought to work out her own salvation."[88]

Nevertheless, the times are changing and nascent Turkish proto-nationalism, itself a product of a 19th century Western discourse, which is attested to by the belief of some of the women Demetra encounters that the Turks "are a race apart",[89] has found its way even into the harem.

5.2. Nationalism Unveiled

In *Unveiled*, the situation has changed dramatically. Traditional Ottoman harems exist no more and their inhabitants, formerly barred behind latticed windows and thoroughly hidden underneath their veils, are freely roaming in the streets, compelled to do so by the dire need to earn their living. Moreover, the city is full of foreigners and a new phenomenon, impossible some twenty years ago, has appeared: some Turkish women have married non-Muslim men.

As Demetra confesses to one of the new acquaintances she meets, "*(…)* aesthetically, I cannot help being disappointed at the loss of much that was attractive and romantic in the old life."[90] On the other hand, immediately assuming her role as an observer and interpreter of the Orient to the West, and perhaps in order not to be deemed as too sentimental and out-of-place and, therefore, dismissed as irrelevant, which would of course compromise her Orientalist authority, she goes on to say: "But I am thrilled at the way you – the Turkish women – have accepted the change."[91]

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[88] *Haremlik,* 189.
[89] *Haremlik,* 150.
[90] *Unveiled,* 67.
[91] *Unveiled,* 67.

Back to her role of an observer, she meets different Turkish women. Some of them are old, some of them are young, but all of them are somehow touched by the war which brought with itself the need to leave the age-long patterns of Oriental life, described in *Haremlik*, and forced them to rely on themselves, rather than on their men as previously, for survival. As the most visible emblem of the change, all of them go around unveiled.

Demetra's principal point of interest is summarized in the question she asks every "case" she meets: Are you contented with your new situation? Would you prefer the old ways? The answer she gets is also more or less always the same: "Most of us would rather be married and have our homes and our babies than be what you call independent."[92] Nevertheless, the reality of the change has marked their lives for ever. But they are not those fragile, exotic creatures Demetra met and described in *Haremlik* any more. They have become active, taking the course of their lives (and that of their homeland) into their hands. As one of Demetra's acquaintances says, "We shall find ourselves eventually. We shall make mistakes, but we shall learn while making them."[93]

Given the fact that Demetra, in contrast to *Haremlik*, discusses openly politics with her friends and inquires especially about their views of the West, to which they have been so mightily exposed, she learns that behind all the individual stories is one common idea which helped these women to survive – ardent nationalism, which is always demonstrated as a cordial hatred of the West and a strong contempt for the Occidentals, be they foreign soldiers or American Red Cross workers. This type of nationalism, very militant in its nature, is generated by the feeling of superiority and by the common understanding that the West is to be blamed for the current misery of Turkey.

Quite similarly to *Haremlik*, where the taboo of the female part of the household generated the obstacle for the Westerner to scrutinize it, in *Unveiled* it is the concept of hatred

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[92] *Unveiled,* 41.
[93] *Unveiled,* 44.

that re-creates a taboo of denied access to the way of thinking of the Oriental. Demetra, even though she is a Westernized American, is nevertheless allowed to enter and learn, because as a Byzantine Greek, one who is of "the Near East *(…)* as much as you *(the Turks)*"[94], a native in a way; therefore, the emancipated Turks are willing to accept her as a companion. One of her acquaintances, Azize Hanoum, actually confesses: "I hate you less since you are Greek."[95]

Once again, Demetra presents herself as the only knowing and secure guide of the West to the East. And what is the message she has to give to her reader? Her fears, expressed in *Haremlik*, that the Turk who had been exposed to the West becomes a threat to it, have been proven right. The old world does not exist any more. The Orientals have ceased to be the exotic, harmless hedonists; they appear as a new, emancipated power, ready to destroy the West, or, more specifically, the Christian population of Anatolia from which the narrator herself comes, viewed as the cause of and excuse for the Western invasion. Moreover, the West may be attacked on the base of the example it gave to the East. The narrator records some comments she heard to stress the fact that the danger is imminent; these words form actually the last but one paragraph of the book:

> "We shall be ruthless, like the English in India," one of the American-educated girls asserted with emphasis. And the aide-de-camp of the Grand Vizier sententiously observed to my husband and myself, "What do you do to the negroes, when they become obstreperous in America? Your Government fans race prejudice and instigates race riots to kill them off. Well, we can imitate progressive America. Our salvation lies in leaving no living Christian in our lands."[96]

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[94] *Unveiled,* 130.
[95] *Unveiled,* 132.
[96] *Unveiled,* 260-261.

6. CULTURAL MEDIATOR

In the previous chapters we have often seen that Demetra, the narrator of *Haremlik* and *Unveiled*, acts as a self-proclaimed cultural mediator, an infallible guide of the West in the reality of the East, and her position of undisputed authority is based on the fact that she was born and raised in the Orient and has an access to the places which are unavailable to a common Western observer. As a professional and successful American woman, she often makes references to social, cultural and even literal concepts that are familiar to her American reading public, thus giving her witness the attributes of closeness and homeliness which render her authority even a more secure guide. As it was also demonstrated, she uses the power of her interpretative authority to advocate certain issues and messages, such as warning the West about the potential danger of the self-induced Westernization of the East or for political propaganda of the cause of the Greeks of Asia Minor, as we will see later on.

As far as my argument that Demetra claims her interpretative authority on the grounds of familiarity with and partaking of both the Orient and the Occident, I believe that it is important to mention the fact that in order to make her claim even stronger, the narrator frequently makes specific references in both books, the aim of which is to prove that her authority is not usurped but originates in the request of the Orient itself for Demetra to play the role of the mediator.

An excellent example of such a "requested mediation" is found in *Haremlik*, in the story of the Rossetti Woman mentioned earlier.[97] Unwilling to return her half-British girl to the hands of her husband's family which is searching for her in Turkey, the Rossetti Woman asks Demetra to contact her husband's mother (the husband has died meanwhile) and tell her

[97] *Haremlik*, 249+.

that her only granddaughter is alive and safe with her Turkish mother. Although disapproving of being dragged into a situation she did not particularly approve of, the narrator finally agrees, proving herself as a mediator that can be trusted by both the East and the West.

In *Unveiled*, Demetra has become a respectable professional who is well-aware of her role as a cultural mediator of the East to the West. When meeting Turkish women, she usually receives positive commentaries on her previous book about them, *Haremlik*, yet she is aware that her text was often judged as too sentimental in the West.[98] I believe that this is a case of authorial, rather than narratorial, presence in the text. Apparently, the reality of Turkey had dramatically changed during the twenty years since the publication of *Haremlik* and the West had different areas of interest then: the dream-like atmosphere of "Oriental" harems is deemed as too romantic and perhaps even unrealistic, for the Ottoman Empire is almost dead now and the time has come now to decide about the division of its posthumous economic inheritance. Such a situation endangers the narrator's position of authority, because the information she circulates might be viewed as outdated and, because of that, unreliable.

Therefore, in order to save her authority, Demetra mentions numerous positive reactions not only to *Haremlik*, but also to her other works with the "Oriental" theme, which are pronounced by all sorts of the Turks, who may be completely contradictory in the terms of character and political attitudes. As one of her acquaintances characteristically says, "You wrote for us – for us Turkish women, not for the Westerners. *(…)* It was the first healing draught applied to an open wound. *(…)* You write so that you may help."[99] In this way, the author makes a strong claim for undisputable authority as a cultural mediator whose interpretation of the Orient to the West was "sanctified" and marked as correct by the Easterners themselves and who can thus be trusted as a secure guide even in the changing political, social and economic conditions of the East of the 1920's.

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[98] *Unveiled,* 23.
[99] *Unveiled,* 65+.

In *Unveiled*, the narrator is again directly asked by an Oriental to become a cultural mediator of the East to the West. This time, it is not the final act of a romantic love story, but a plea which, in the light of the emerging Turkish nationalism, has the taste of a threat. An old Turkish lady called Dilara Hanoum, recognizing the power of Demetra's pen, asks her to pass the following political message to the powerful of the West:

> Will you write this, please, for the Americans to read? If they are just and nice people, if they are really actuated by altruistic feelings, as you maintain, tell them not to send their missionaries here to insult us with their conscious superiority, tell them not to send their Near East Relief and their Y.M.C.A. to pauperize us.[100]

The same old lady also praises Demetra for faithfully re-interpreting their own Ottoman culture to the Turks in her books. The narrator is viewed that in her description of the old Ottoman cultural institutions, she has the faculty to open the eyes of the Orientals to the beauty of their old system, long forgotten and often despised by the "modern" Turks themselves. The narrator thus reconstructs the cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire and reinterprets it to the Turks:

> "All of us who lived and suffered under the old regime – and felt – must feel the same way. You saved our self-respect. You made us see the attractive part of the system, as you saw it. By ourselves we only saw the other things – the things that stabbed.[101]

In her assumed mediatory role, the narrator often presents herself as an elucidator of the Orientals, imparting them knowledge and broadening, at least in her opinion, their horizons. Both books are rich in the observations of the type "*(t)*he light of comprehension

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[100] *Unveiled,* 75.
[101] *Unveiled,* 65.

leaped into her eyes"[102], usually appended to the narrator's explanation of the West to the Oriental. In fact, Demetra herself explicitly confesses that she is a "missionary of sorts,"[103] whose dream it is to start a school for Turkish girls, where she would "teach them the truth about themselves."[104] However, as she does not have the necessary financial means, the self-assured and actually self-imposed *connoisseur* of the "truth" is contented to educate the East with the help of her writing.

One of the best examples of the educative mediator role is perhaps Demetra's meeting with the Kemalists in *Unveiled.*[105] Having listened to a series of strong, anti-Western pronouncements and threats which end up in what is described as a child-like, ridiculous despair about the current political and military situation, Demetra takes the word and in a condescending tone gives her own solution of the Middle East problem. Her words have an immense, persuasive power on her auditorium:

> In their childlike, trusting way they turned to me as if I were an oracle. The atmosphere was surcharged with madness in which I felt myself the only sane person, and also, somehow, like a priestess in an ancient Greek temple.[106]

By using such a strong religious imagery, the narrator assumes here an almost prophetic or even messianic role of initiating her listeners to the depths of the mystery of knowledge. It is needless to say that her proposals are in the end generally accepted. Her position of a mediator has been marked as almost sacred; moreover, she has proven to her Western reader the fact that not only she can act as a mediatrix, she has actually enough knowledge to *form* the Orientals in accordance with her own will. Therefore, her position of a cultural interpreter is given an important new dimension.

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[102] *Unveiled,* 163.
[103] *Unveiled,* 222.
[104] *Unveiled* 220; stress added.
[105] *Unveiled,* 84-121.
[106] *Unveiled,* 114.

In addition, Demetra does not act only as a powerful tutor to the Orient; she also wants to communicate to her readers the impression that in certain moments, as an American she can become an instrument of liberation to the Orientals. The key concept of her thought is exposing the Turks, who have already come into contact with the West, to the natural application of some American modes of behavior. With a light dose of humor, it is described in the following little incident that involves Demetra's husband as well. The Browns visit a Turkish household and when entering a room, Kenneth says to their hostess who tries to let him pass first through the door:

> "Now we are going to have an American revolution. You are going through the doorway ahead of me *(…)* in fact, you are going to act like an American woman." *(…)* Our hostess accepted *(…)* and indeed seemed to enjoy the novel position of deference in which she was placed.[107]

It is in fact America and her ways, nowadays usually called freedom, that the narrator and her husband mediate to the already emancipated Turkish woman and guide her in understanding that the Americans are "nice, polite" people. I believe that Kenneth Brown is only a stock character in this scene, needed to act the role of the liberal American man who safely introduces an Oriental woman into Western courtesy. It is again the narrator who makes a statement about her power to mediate the American ways to the East, which supports yet again her position of the Orientalist guide.

[107] *Unveiled,* 44-45.

7. MEETING "THE OTHER"

7.1. The Oriental as a Child and a Predator

The most powerful ways of Orientalist discourse are direct representations of "the Other", juxtaposing "us" and "them". In what ways, then, Demetra, the "knowing" Americanized Easterner entitled to authority, describes the Turks she meets and the Orientals in general? What sort of statements does she make about their mindset, habits and lifestyle? What message does she want her Western reader to remain with?

I think that as far as the scope of this paper is concerned, two important Orientalist representations of the Turk: the Turk is an innocent **child**, who can be nevertheless changed into a dangerous, cunning **sexual predator**.

The first image, often repeated in both books, is that of the Turk as a **child**. In *Haremlik*, Turkish women are described as "children of nature,"[108] being spontaneous, open, sensitive and emotional. Indeed, the women of *Haremlik* spend their days playing and enjoying themselves like children, while in *Unveiled,* where they are through their experience of the West during the war partially divested of their childhood innocence, they nevertheless retain at least "the melodious childlike laughter *(…)* of the East."[109]

This image is further strengthened by the fact that the women address one another and especially Demetra with fancy diminutives like "little crest of a wave", "little cherry blossom", "*yavroum*[110]" and many others. In a way, such characterizations suggest intimacy, innocence and, above all, harmlessness. By using the image of a child in this connotation, the narrator persuades the reader that the Orientals she meets and introduces to him are unspoiled, harmless and mostly naïve people, preoccupied mostly with playing.

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[108] *Haremlik,* 134.
[109] *Unveiled,* 214.
[110] **yavroum –** (*yavrum),* the Turkish expression for "darling", currently used either by lovers or homosexuals.

Frankness and openness is also associated with the image of the Orientals. The narrator appreciates that even though many of the harem inmates are very well educated even for the European standards, they still remain "children of nature"[111], without false prudery or shame, expressing their thoughts freely, which is a faculty that is missing from the women of *Unveiled*, apparently because of their sudden exposure to the West.

The image of the child is also connected with the idea of the "noble savage", which the narrator employs as well. Specifically, she has the following statement to make, which would be definitely considered racist nowadays:

> The most discouraging thing about Turkey is that, while the old-fashioned Turk is a man on whose integrity you may depend, as soon as a Turk becomes Europeanized he looses his own good qualities, without obtaining those of the West – exactly as the American Indian does. He is so vitally different from us, and his mind is so naïf and unspoiled, that the result of contact with our sophisticated thought is very harmful.[112]

The idea of the noble savage has been used in the Orientalist domination discourse since ***Robinson Crusoe.*** It divides the world into an experienced, knowing adult European and a simple, childlike, yet dignified "native" who finally turns out to be the European's helper and, usually, also a slave. As such, he is meek and can be formed; in addition, he does not pose any direct threat to his overlord.

I feel that this is a very powerful image the narrator wants her reader to experience. The East and the Oriental are both harmless, if they are left to their cultural ways, unspoiled by the discourse of the West. Indeed, the contact with the West may prove fatal to the Oriental, as it was in the case of the Rossetti woman discussed earlier, whose innocence was spoiled by her direct, carnal knowledge of the West. However, having been literally burnt by

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[111] *Haremlik,* 134.
[112] *Haremlik,* 189.

living the West as it is, this time the Turk returns through forgiveness to her original innocent child-like state, back to her Oriental purity and harmlessness, a case that will not be repeated, however, in *Unveiled*.

There is, however, one more aspect to naiveté and being child-like. It implies that such a person should be, or at least could be, guided, formed and above all, **helped** to understand. And, of course, it is the task of the West to play the role of the skillful teacher, as the children of the Orient are unable to help themselves.

In *Unveiled*, the East actually recognizes and accepts its need to be guided. "We are very improvident," says one of the new Turkish women, and when the narrator observes "You are like children, my dear," she immediately adds with a resigned sigh: "There is a great deal that is nice about us, but we are ignorant. I knew so little before the World War."[113]

Another episode of *Unveiled* further proves the narrator's Orientalist persuasion that the Oriental is dependent on the Western discourse in order to understand his own history and find solutions for the problems posed to him. The narrator realizes that despite the threats of the Kemalists against the West, when on the basis of her explanation of the state of things in international politics they realize their limited possibilities to act as they wish, the Turks actually become a bundle of helpless children that need help:

> In their wild talk, their quick turning from one attitude to another, they were like children – children smarting after a whipping that had humiliated their spirits and bruised their bodies. The fact that they had deserved the whipping they faced not at all. In describing to me the humiliation they had been subjected to by the Allies, and especially the French, one lady wept.[114]

In this extremely condescending, even sarcastic way the narrator observes that once the Oriental is faced with an obstacle, in his inability to act he behaves like a spoiled brat, thus

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[113] *Unveiled,* 213.
[114] *Unveiled,* 114.

changing all his threats into ridiculous remarks. Demetra wants the reader to believe that the childlike character of the Orientals needs to be guided even in the process of interpreting their own history.

With the help of this testimony, crucially important for the future of the Western involvement in the Middle East, the narrator suggests that if the Orientals are carefully guided by "knowing" people of her own type and background, they can be actually taught, manipulated and dominated in the way profitable to the West and, of course, to her own cause of safeguarding Greek interests in Asia Minor. However, she insists, such an "education" should be conducted by people who are sensitive to the Oriental mind and to the riches of the cultural heritage of the Orient, thus again implying herself.[115] Only then the East itself will ask the West for guidance, as it happened many times during her own encounters with the Turks. Any other attempt to "educate" the Turks is in her opinion futile. Demetra voices this persuasion of hers in narrating the story of her encounter with two American missionaries, ridiculed as not being on speaking terms with one another because of their different sectarian allegiance, who, being totally ignorant of Turkish language, culture and customs and, in addition, cordially despising the "heathens", did not manage to convert a single Turk to their faith.[116]

Another powerful image of the Turk, traditionally connected with the Orientalist discourse about the ravenous sexuality of the Easterner and the problem of sensual gratification and deprivation, is the depiction of the Oriental as a sexual predator, potentially dangerous to the Westerner. It is usually connected with the imagery of a dark Oriental man who manipulates, tempts, seduces and finally usurps a fragile, helpless Western beauty; however, in *Unveiled* it is an Oriental woman who through her sexuality manipulates the Western man who is, by the way, her husband.

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[115] *Harmlik,* 189.
[116] *Haremlik,* 187.

In the chapter called "The Avenger of Her Race,"[117] the narrator tells the story of Azize Hanoum, a young and extremely beautiful, openly Westernized Turkish woman whose father and brother, active in the Turkish military resistance, were brutally and mercilessly murdered by French soldiers during a raid. Later on, she meets the commander of the squad, who personally ordered the execution of her relatives, and without ever revealing her true identity, accepts to be seduced in order to lure the Frenchmen into a marriage which will finally cause him to go mad and probably commit a suicide.

It is a very dark story of hatred and vengeance, executed on the unknowing and unsuspecting Westerner through a masterful manipulation of his sexual desires, by skillfully commanding the forces of gratification and deprivation, even at the cost of Azize Hanoum's own mental and emotional exhaustion and eventual disintegration. Nevertheless, as she confesses to Demetra,[118] she is willing to sacrifice herself in order to take a revenge on her husband and, through him, on all the Westerners. Having once succumbed to the Frenchmen's desire, she never let him approach her again, allowing only enough contact to keep his desire burning.

Employing the traditional Orientalist discourse, the author uses a powerful, exotic Oriental imagery to communicate the danger luring in the person of Azize Hanoum. The story, its setting and description is emblematic of Vaka-Brown's classification as an Orientalist because it fully embodies Said's thesis that Orientalism is "a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, *(…)* sociological *(and)* historical texts;"[119] therefore, I have decided to include the episode almost in full:

> Of a sudden *(Azize)* became rigid. She listened intently. Then quickly her extended hand unfastened the bejeweled net that held her hair. A torrent of

[117] *Haremlik,* 122 – 142.
[118] *Unveiled,* 142.
[119] Said, 12.

gold covered her slim shoulders. *(…)* Her eyes narrowed. Her lips quivered. Like an odalisk bringing out the full voluptuousness of her body, she sank back at full length on the settee. Leaning over to the vase on the table, she took from it a spray of hyacinth and brought it to her lips. Then nonchalantly she called out: "*Entrez!*" *(…)*

She brought the flower closer to her lips and inhaled its scent. Every motion, every act enhanced her enchantingness. The loose white silk garment, the cascade of gold on her head, the pale pink of the flower with which the two small white hands were toying, were all a complement to the play of her eyes.

The Frenchman was overwhelmed, and the passion that surged through him was no more attractive to behold than an earthquake *(…)*

His voice was unsteady when he spoke. "Will you make room for me here at your feet?" *(…)*

"No!" She answered, so softly that her refusal was a caress. "Your—er—nearness is so disturbing, Armand, *mon ami*."

Her mouth and chin were hidden behind the flower. Her eyes were veiled, somber and exciting. The Frenchman grew whiter. *(…)*

Then, contradictorily, she gathered herself together like a kitten, and made room for him close to her.

He dropped on the seat like a man who was drunk. She passed one of her perfumed hands through his hair, brought her cheek close to his lips, but not so close that he could kiss her, while the hand that held the flower almost touched his face.

> He made as to take her in his arms, but she eluded him and was on her feet with a movement that from its perfect grace seemed slow, but which must have been swift.
>
> "Now you must go – please Armand."[120]

This story meets the general expectations of the Western reader about the classical Oriental harem and the scenery it describes could be quite successfully transformed into a painting. The staging is excellent: a wide range of classical Orientalist exotic images is used. For example, the Oriental woman is depicted as a sensual, perfumed odalisque, using her body, her movements and even her voice as a promise of immense sexual gratification. She picks up and smells a flower. Her lover is prostrated at her feet, physically sick by the love she denies to him. The colors also play their part: gold, pale pink, transparent white, all of them evocative of sensual pleasure. It is definitely one of the most perfect classical Orientalist stereotypes Vaka-Brown has ever created.

As Kalogeras observes[121], it is actually the only time when Vaka-Brown uses the images of sexual fulfillment and deprivation in her work. Therefore, special attention should be paid to it because, apparently, an important message to the readers is communicated here. In the light of my argument, I believe that Demetra, herself being a liminal identity and therefore allowed to enter one of the sanctuaries of the East, is privileged to witness the ultimate warning of the East to the West: if you try to conquer me, I will find ways to destroy you.

No story like that ever appears in *Haremlik*. However, the women of *Unveiled* are no longer childlike noble savages; the sudden and violent exposure to the West they experienced during the war caused them to lose their innocence and, compared to *Haremlik*, there is no longer the secure, forgiving warmth of the traditional household. Nobility or Oriental charm

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[120] *Unveiled,* 136-138.
[121] Kalogeras, Nationalism 115.

has become a theatrical mask, a survival mimicry that covers brutal, cold hatred against the invader.

In the story of Azize Hanoum, Vaka-Brown describes the dangerous, fatal outcome of the attempt to guide and dominate the East without respecting it or without having at least a secure, authoritative guide with roots in both cultures, such as herself. Once again, she stresses her own position of a secure mediator here; because forced into a corner, the "innocent children" of the Orient may become brutal, cruel savages who fight back and in their rage they do not pity even their own lives. As we have seen before, the author through her "narratorial" projection suggests that if the Orientals are to be securely guided and formed, a "knowing" mediation is needed.

7.2. Commenting on the Orient

There are some aspects of the East the narrator feels obliged to explain to her readers. One of them is the concept of Oriental slavery because the pages of *Haremlik* are populated with them. The narrator makes sure that the reader understands it has nothing in common with slavery as known in the West; in her opinion, it is in fact a charitable institution that enables the children of lower-class Muslims to climb the social ladder and be financially secured and even freed in due time.[122] And indeed, all the slaves she meets in *Haremlik* are happy and contented with their situation. The institution of slavery does not exist in *Unveiled*, because it practically disappeared during the turmoil of the war.

In *Haremlik* and especially in *Unveiled*, one can find more interesting observations about the culture and the people of the Orient which the narrator wants to pass to her readers. The majority of them, however, follows the stereotype Orientalist clichés of the era and if

[122] *Haremlik,* 119.

they are isolated from the text and then put together, the image of the Turk the reader gets is extremely racist. If it is combined with her frequent comments in both books that her interest in the Turks is based on purely aesthetical observations, the narrator, in spite of the fact she claims common cultural heritage, in the eyes of the critic loses her position as a "knowing" socio-cultural guide Demetra so much insists on. Nevertheless, those clichés were the images that the West could relate to and perhaps even expected; and what for a contemporary critic compromises the mediating position the narrator so much insists on, could have been viewed as the validation of such a claim.

This group of comments, the clichés, is generally found in *Unveiled* where more open political statements are also pronounced. It includes straightforward condescending judgmental generalizations like the statement that the *pre-Saidian youth*, whom I am going to mention next, although educated, had a mind incapable to reason, as it is characteristic of the Orientals.[123] The Turks are also described as having a "lazy, fatalistic temperament."[124] Moreover, history has proven them "wretched governors" who mismanaged all the riches of their Empire and brought the flourishing culture of the Arabs and Persians to decadence[125]; in addition, they are in general backward, uneducated[126] and cruel.[127] The narrator goes as far as to tell one of her Turkish acquaintances that "*(t)*o the stores of the world upon which civilization feeds and grows you have added nothing."[128] In addition, while on the one hand Demetra praises Islam as having "as sublime thoughts as ours" and comments positively on Qur'anic prohibition[129], she condemns the ***hodja***[130] of the ***Süleymanie*** mosque together with "the most holy men of Turkey" as having probably never done "a lick of useful work in his

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[123] *Unveiled,* 257.
[124] *Unveiled,* 215.
[125] *Unveiled,* 257.
[126] *Unveiled,* 188.
[127] *Unveiled,* 143.
[128] *Unveiled,* 220.
[129] *Unveiled,* 190.
[130] **Hodja –** a Turkish word meaning both teacher and clergyman

life" and having "never thought beyond the needs of the moment."[131] In this way, Demetra behaves like a full-fledged Orientalist who from her position of authority supports the common Orientalist prejudice that the Easterners are intellectually incapable and, therefore, they can be (and perhaps should be) controlled more easily.

In *Unveiled*, Demetra introduces her audience to a phenomenon which I have called *pre-Saidian theory of Orientalism.* She describes an educated young Turkish man who, as she believes, suffered from the sickness which was common among the majority of young people in Egypt, India, Turkey and the Philippines. As Demetra says, "*(h)*e honestly believed that the decadence of Turkey had nothing to do with the Turks, but was manufactured by Europe, who was plotting against his country."[132] When reading this observation, one can believe that he has just met young Edward Said! Apparently, the awareness of the existence of a specific Occidental discourse about the East, the aim of which is domination and power, existed in the East even long before Said.

7.3. Viewing the West

In her two books, the narrator puts into the mouths of the Turks she meets judgmental comments about the West. Are we to believe them as authentic views of "the Other", this time Occidental? Can we rely on this mediated witness? It is virtually impossible to answer this question; therefore, we will have to rely on what the author wanted the West to see as an Oriental view of the Occidental reality.

The statements of *Haremlik* are few, laconic and, more or less, the same. From the Oriental point of view, America is a "half-civilized country"[133] and the West in general "a godless set of people."[134] However, such comments are quite rare in the text and generally it seems that the majority of *Haremlik* women, even though being fluent at least in French and

[131] *Unveiled,* 192.
[132] *Unveiled,* 257.
[133] *Haremlik,* 75.
[134] *Haremlik,* 265.

reading French novels, do not feel the need to comment on the life and realities of the Occident.

The only exception is a group of "revolutionary" women described in the chapter called "Suffragettes of the Harem,"[135] a group of ardent feminists called "Twilight" that the narrator openly sneers at. Empowering themselves with the motto "Down with the Old Ideas," they are led by a young woman who has been already divorced twice in her early thirties. She tells Demetra that she likes most about American women "the courage they have in discarding their husbands."[136] Finally, their fascination with everything Western in fact takes the form of madness, when one of the speakers suggests that some of them should commit a suicide in order to draw attention to their cause, an idea that is finally laid aside.

This group of young feminists is presented as having absolutely mistaken notions about the West. Their ideas are based on reading literature rather than on direct experience. On the one hand, they are enthusiastic about the latest developments in the feminist movement, yet on the other hand, after their passionate condemnation of the "old" patriarchal ideas, they recline gracefully on their sofas and entertain themselves with Oriental music and sweets, thus completely negating their previous furor with enjoying the benefits of the system they have just criticized.

Opening a parenthesis, I doubt that it was the author's intention, but this group in fact represents what could be called "Orientalism upside down" or perhaps "Occidentalism". In both Orientalism and "Occidentalism", the ***a-priori*** knowledge of "the Other" is based on the acceptance of a given set of conclusions, expectations and ideas rather than on a direct experience. It is a "pseudo-Knowledge" and as such it is ridiculed by the narrator, who has a personal experience of the Western world and, therefore, dismissed as nonsense. However, is Demetra aware of the fact that in spite of her own direct knowledge of the East, she herself

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[135] *Haremlik,* 153-190.
[136] *Haremlik,* 158.

behaves in the similar way by supporting certain Orientalist notions by her generalizations about the Turks?

If the Oriental characters of *Haremlik* were more or less silent about their visions of the West, in *Unveiled*, on the other hand, the West is openly hated. It is viewed as the cause of the current turmoil and misery in the country. Some groups, for example the Kemalists, express their hatred and threats openly but remain basically inactive, while others, as seen in the case of Azize Hanoum, fight their own personal war with the West; a war which is actually going to destroy them as well.

Yet hatred is not the only attitude of the Orientals of *Unveiled*. While the characters usually have negative things to say about Europe, America, in spite of being an Occidental country, is often viewed as a possibility for prospective professional success. Dilara Hanoum, an elderly Turkish lady, who has just condemned Western expansionism, describes her own version of the American Dream:

> *(Dilara Hanoum)* patted the bed. "This is American – see!" *(…)*
>
> "Most comfortable bed on earth. I wish I could come to America to see your factories with my own eyes, where all your wonderful things are made. Here we have none of all that – no opportunities for poor men to work and to get on. *(…)* They do not have the freedom, as with you, of hundreds of industries to choose from."[137]

It is not only the American Dream and the possibility to become a self-made man that Vaka-Brown puts into Dilara Hanoum's mouth; note also the concept that America is a country which produces "comfortable" things which cannot be found elsewhere. This commentary is very important, and also the fact an Oriental says it. If Orientalism is, quoting Said, "a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic,

[137] *Unveiled,* 67.

sociological, historical, and philological texts,"[138] then this is a perfect example of it, for it draws the Western reader's attention to the East as to a place of prospective vast business opportunities. In fact, Dilara Hanoum's words are almost prophetic of the future of the American – Middle East relations.

Compared to ***Haremlik***, the situation has changed radically. It is no longer the East, now politically and economically crushed by the war and on the verge of Westernization and cultural assimilation, attested to by the dropping of the veil and the dissolution of harems, which is exotically attractive to the West because of its mysterious "otherness". It is now the West with its modern technology and comfortable goods which make life easier that is desirable. The fact that an Oriental wants to enjoy the fruits of American industrial development sounds like a direct invitation for American businessmen to come to the East, where they can gain a new, vast market which is, above all, willing and ready to buy.

The author, who projects her thoughts through her characters to her readers, is very well aware of the fact that America has a big production of goods that needs to be exported to other countries under the pretext of making one's life more comfortable and luxurious. And every economic interest is naturally followed by political attention. The Ottoman Empire who once dominated the East is in dust, the time of new, American hegemony in the East has come. The author invites America to the East intentionally. As we will see in the following chapter, she has a political agenda for which she needs the support of America.

[138] Said, 12.

8. POLITICS IN WRITING

Although Demetra claims that she is "esthetically" interested in the observation of the Turks and presenting herself as a lover of the old Ottoman culture, at the same time, nevertheless, the narrator makes the reader aware of the fact that she expects Turkey to change or be changed. In *Haremlik* she says the following:

> In my enthusiasm *(sic!)* for Turkey I do not wish to be understood as implying that Turkey is perfect, or that all her customs are beyond reproach, or that the Turks do not need "elevating." On the contrary, there are many things about them which to me are hateful, and which I cannot reconcile with their good qualities.[139] ***(stress added)***

What are these "hateful things"? In the opening pages of *Haremlik,*[140] Demetra narrates an old Greek legend about the fall of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire which, as she herself admits, "has been repeated to every Greek child for nearly five hundred years."[141] It is a story of the Eucharistic liturgy in the *Hagia Sofia*, the cathedral church of Constantinople, which was interrupted in the moment when the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II conquered the City. The legend has it, as the narrator says, that the priests took the communion chalice and the bejeweled book of Gospels and vanished through a small side door, from which they will once again appear to finish the liturgy on the day when Constantinople is restored to the Greek hands. And as the narrator says, "perhaps *(…)* the day when the little door in Saint Sophia will open *(comes,)* and the holy mass is finished, and the

[139] *Haremlik,* 190.
[140] *Haremlik,* 9-10.
[141] *Haremlik,* 9.

Greeks, again leaders of the world, will gather up all our exiles and bring them back to live under the sky of Hellas.[142]

I am persuaded that it is precisely this Greek desire to become once again the overlords of all the countries that used to belong to Byzantium, expressed in the political doctrine of the *Great Idea*,[143] advocated by the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, whom Demetra so openly admires in *Unveiled*, which is the driving force of Vaka-Brown's writing. As she states later on in *Haremlik*,

> *(…)* although the Greeks may love and respect the Turks, may live side by side with them, there must always exist that antipathy of blood to remind us that they are our conquerors, and that some time we must drive them from our land *(…)*[144] *(stress added)*

In his essay *Greek American Literature: Who Needs It?* and elsewhere, Yiorgos Kalogeras introduces the term "cryptoethnicity" for this Vaka-Brown's Greek nationalistic political agenda.

Vaka-Brown dedicated *Unveiled* to Prince Sabaheddine, a member of the Ottoman imperial family who lived in exile because of his liberal political thinking. He was one of the advocates of the political doctrine of *Ottomanism* which tried to create an "Ottoman" national identity, based on territorial rather than ethnic or religious affiliations. Apparently, Vaka-Brown sympathized with his belief that

> all Ottomans, be they Turks or Arabs, Greeks or Armenians, Syrians or Jews, be they Mohammedans or Christians, should look upon one another as compatriots, sharing in the government of their country and its benefits,

[142] *Haremlik,* 11.
[143] see page 15
[144] *Haremlik,* 247.

> shouldering its responsibilities, its burdens, its labors, and loving each other in the sharing. [145]

Of course, such a political doctrine does not satisfy Greek irredentism, but at least it offered them the perspective of a fair share of power in the Empire and protected them from genocide. Vaka-Brown's support the idea seems to be reflected in Demetra's observation of the Sea of Marmara, which divides Constantinople into its European and Asian parts. In the narrator's eyes, it "lovingly hugs Europe and Asia, imploring them to be friends."[146]

However, what was still a possibility in the days of *Haremlik*, becomes an absolute utopia in *Unveiled*. Turkey is defeated and in Constantinople the victorious Western powers quarrel over precedence and individual interests, as Demetra observes even in the street-fighting of the European soldiers.[147] Moreover, the Turks Demetra meets dismiss Prince Sabaheddine several times as a "traitor" on the payroll of the West and, moreover, a "secret Christian."[148] The message Vaka-Brown sends to her readers is that with the newly emerged Turkish nationalism and passionate hate of the West, there is no possibility of peaceful coexistence of Christians and Muslims in Turkey. The Turkish characters she created openly say that the only solution of the problem from which Turkey will benefit is the complete extermination of the Christians of Anatolia, who have always been used as a means of interfering of the West in Turkish politics. The threat becomes so real that in order to prevent such a catastrophe, Vaka-Brown actually tries to manipulate her American readers in favor of an American intervention, motivating them by economic profit.[149] On the other hand, at the same time she warns that the Western powers should not quarrel about the "Turkish card,"

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[145] *Unveiled,* To Prince Sabaheddine, v.
[146] *Unveiled,* 98.
[147] *Unveiled,* 10.
[148] *Unveiled,* 105.
[149] See the entire Chapter 1 of *Unveiled* and the story of Dilara Hanoum, pages 58-59.

fighting one another for individual profit, because such machinations threaten the lives of Christians in Asia Minor.[150]

In order to underline the fact that the situation is critical, Vaka-Brown finishes *Unveiled*, which on the surface is an observation of Turkish women, with the following desperate warning and appeal, in which she summarizes both the story of Azize Hanoum and all her conversations with her Turkish contemporaries, presented in the book:

> Life to the Turk is valueless, since he does not even value his own life very highly. He possesses a quality uncomprehended by the west. He is the pilot of his own conscience. He can murder, and keep his self-respect. He can wade to his knees in the blood of his co-nationals, and suffer not a qualm, because he is the master, not the servant, of his conscience. His psychology is different from ours as the symbols with which he writes. *(…) /The understanding between the Turk and the Westerner will not come/* so long as the concession-seekers of Europe and America are willing to stake the lives of the Christians of Asia Minor against the riches of Anatolia, nor so long as we keep him in Europe to be used as a political counter for the next deal of European bargaining.[151]

[150] *Unveiled,* 19.
[151] *Unveiled,* 261.

9. CONCLUSION

Finally, it seems that it is the Greek political interest which Demetra Vaka-Brown, the "Child of the Orient" who through the process of *palingenesis*[152] became a successful professional in America, tries to advocate through her books. In order to sound persuasive to her American readers and to gain public support for her cause, as a skillful Orientalist, she plays with her hybrid and border-line American-Greek-Ottoman "narratorial" and authorial identity, presenting herself as a "knowing guide" to Ottoman politics and culture. This is an important fact because, according to Said, the Orientalist discourse was often based on the undisputed authority of the "knowing" traveler.[153]

As far as the identity of Demetra, the narrator of her fictionalized travel books, is concerned, it is constructed from various cultural and ethic layers, which help her to gain the confidence of both the East and the West. First of all, she is an American, a Westerner, and by constantly reminding the reader of this fact she creates an instant atmosphere of familiarity and a specific bond of trust with the Western reader. However, because of the virtue of being born in the East and being recognized by the Orientals as "one of us", she is allowed to enter places which appeal to the Westerner's need of the exotic and to which he is denied access, such as the Oriental harem, or, by extension, the enclosed Turkish nationalistic circles of the post-war Turkey. Once in these "Oriental" spaces, the narrator supplies her reader with her observations of and commentaries on the East which should be considered the "true" and "real", and therefore to be trusted, depiction of the Oriental world. Meanwhile, she does not let her reader forget that she is a "Byzantine Greek" whose ancestors used to be the overlords of what is nowadays either Turkey or the Ottoman Empire.

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[152] see page 21
[153] see chapter 2 of this thesis

While in *Haremlik* Demetra, who returns to Constantinople after six years spent in America, is in a way still inarticulate in voicing the Western point of view, which is represented by her lapse to using Turkish when unable to explain some concepts about the West in French, in *Unveiled*, narrated some twenty years later, she is an accomplished, married American professional who, in addition, supports her identity of a socio-cultural mediator on the grounds of the positive reception and the recognition of her books on the Orient as "truthful" by the Orientals themselves. Moreover, her authority of a guide is further accentuated by the fact that in both books, Demetra is actually asked by the Orientals themselves to pass certain messages, be they cultural, political or private, to the Western world.

In the course of her Orientalist discourse, Demetra establishes and strengthens certain Western presumptions about the Orient. In addition, especially in *Haremlik* the atmosphere is rich in exoticism and imagery, as the majority of women Demetra meets are described as perfumed, exotic odalisques who spend their days in enjoying themselves and relaxation, contented with their role of wife and mother. In *Unveiled*, this exotic imagery is recreated once again, but this time the stress is placed on possible sexual gratification and deprivation, a feature unknown to *Haremlik*. However, this time the Oriental exoticism becomes a direct threat to the West, because it is used as a means of revenge, finally leading to the death of the Western character.

While *Haremlik* introduces the reader to the Ottoman Greek expectations about the future of the Empire, *Unveiled*, on the other hand, is a direct appeal for intervention. The situation has changed dramatically. The Turks Demetra meets and presents to her readers are no longer dreamy, sensual Orientals as they were in *Haremlik*; they have become militant nationalists who openly threaten to exterminate the entire Christian, mostly Greek, population

of Asia Minor.[154] The danger which the Orient represents now is personalized in the story of Azize Hanoum, who in cold blood uses her Oriental seductive charm to manipulate the desires of her French husband as the means retaliation for the murder of her family.

In both books, Demetra basically presents the Orientals as "little children" which need guidance[155] because they are in fact incapable of rational reasoning. Therefore, they can be educated and enlightened (in fact, manipulated) according to the need of the West. Nevertheless, she constantly reminds her readers that the Oriental is not ready for a direct exposition to the West without a cultural mediator in this process, thus again stressing her own role as an "objective", universally accepted interpreter.

In addition, by presenting the possibilities of prospective commercial enterprise in the Middle East, Vaka-Brown actually invites America as the newly emerging world power to interfere in the affairs of the Middle East, which is not able to help itself, thus expediting the Greek interest in Asia Minor as well. Europe is presented as being completely powerless, quarreling over the carcass of the Ottoman Empire.

To sum it up, both texts clearly represent the author as a representative of Orientalism in American literature who uses her Orientalist privileged knowledge of the East, based on the multifaceted identity of both the narrator and herself, to rouse America to intervention for the Greek cause in Anatolia.

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[154] See *Unveiled* 260, quoted on page 41.
[155] see pages 47-50

Résumé

Tato magisterská práce je věnována osobnosti americké spisovatelky a novinářky řeckého původu Demetry Vaka-Brown (1877 – 1946), která se narodila v Istanbulu a neustále se ve svých dílech vracela k Turecku. Vaka-Brown je mimo jiné autorkou dvou fiktivních cestopisů *Haremlik – Some Pages from the Life of Turkish Women* (1909) a *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul* (1923), jimiž se v detailu zabývám. Mým záměrem je představit autorku na základě tezí shrnutých Edwardem Saidem v jeho díle *Orientalism* jako reprezentantku amerického orientalistického kulturně-společenského a politického diskurzu, jehož cílem je především podpora řeckých národních a politických zájmů v Malé Asii.

Ve své práci analyzuji některé okolnosti autorčina života, které mě dále vedou k zamyšlení nad problematikou identit autorky a její vypravěčky, které obsahují americké, řecké i osmanské prvky. Na základě analýzy těchto smíšených identit docházím k závěru, že jak autorka sama, tak i její vypravěčská projekce konstruují na základě své polyfonní identity svůj nárok být nepochybnou autoritou v problematice Východu, a tak zcela v duchu orientalistického diskurzu moci a vědění interpretovat Východ a jeho kulturní a společenské instituce západnímu čtenáři.

Vaka-Brown a její literární projekce často hovoří o Turcích jako „o malých dětech, které potřebují vedení.“ Pomocí exotické symboliky i přímých výpovědí však také zdůrazňuje nebezpečí, které nejen Západu, ale i křesťanským, převážně řeckým menšinám žijícím v turecké Anatolii, hrozí z rodícího se tureckého nacionalismu. Dílo autorky, která navíc popisuje Turecko jako zemi otevřenou možnostem amerických obchodních zájmů, tak celkově vyznívá jako výzva Americe zasáhnout do poměrů na Blízkém Východu, což by dle přesvědčení Vaky-Brown mimo jiné zachránilo i existenci křesťanských menšin v Malé Asii.

Summary

The scope of this MA thesis is to present Demetra Vaka-Brown (1877 – 1946), the American writer and journalist of Greek origin who was born in Istanbul and wrote extensively about Turkey, and the author of two fictional travel narratives *Haremlik – Some Pages from the Life of Turkish Women* (1909) and *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul* (1923), as an American representative of the socio-cultural and political discourse of Orientalism, the aim of which is the support of the Greek political and ethnic cause in Asia Minor. My argument is based on the definitions of the Orientalist discourse described by Edward Said in his influential book called *Orientalism* (1978).

The thesis also analyzes some relevant facts of the author's life, paying special attention to the problem of both the author's and her narrator's identity, composed of American, Greek and Ottoman layers. I conclude that by representing themselves as valid participants in both American and Ottoman cultures, both the narrator and the author claim a knowing and undisputable authority to interpret the East and its institutions "truly" to the West, which is one of the basic elements of the Orientalist discourse of the power of knowledge.

In my thesis, I come to the conclusion that Vaka-Brown tries to rouse America to a political intervention in the Middle East, which would also expedit the nationalistic Greek cause in Asia Minor. In order to do so, the narrator, stressing her *a-priory* Orientalist "knowledge" and cliché assumptions about the Easterners, often describes the Turks in a rather racist and condescending way, such as "the children that need guidance." In order to support her appeal, Vaka-Brown also represents Turkey as a country which is open to American business interests. Moreover, she combines exotic, Orientalist symbolism and direct quotations of the opinions of the Turks she meets to point out the dangers of nascent

Turkish nationalism both to the West and to the mostly Greek Christian minority of Asia Minor.

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