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THROUGH IMPERIAL EYES: WOMEN, TRAVEL WRITING, AND THE "ORIENT" IN LATE-IMPERIAL AUSTRIA-HUNGARY[1]

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Abstract: This paper analyses the travel writing of Austrian authors Mara Čop Marlet and Kornelia Kardos about the "Orient" in the context of Austro-Hungarian Orientalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The aim was to explore how the authors, operating within a gender-bounded cultural system and under the influence of powerful imperial discourses, shape their own identity through the representation of the "Other" and negotiate between emancipation and belonging to the imperial order. The methodological approach combines feminist and postcolonial analysis, with an emphasis on the genre specificity of the feuilleton as a space for female self-affirmation. The research results show that both authors use Orientalist tropes to articulate the authorial voice within discursive power structures, partly destabilizing and reshaping these discourses from within.

Keywords: female travel writing, Austro-Hungarian Orientalism, Mara Čop Marlet, Kornelia Kardos, identity, "Orient", "Other"

Apstrakt: Ovaj rad analizira putopisne zapise austrijskih autorica Mare Čop Marlet i Kornelije Kardos o "Orijentu" u kontekstu austrougarskog

[1] At this point, I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Amila Kasumović for the inspiration and motivation to write this article; to my colleagues Ajdin Muhedinović and Amer Maslo for their comments and support in supplying the necessary literature; to my colleague Dr. Dženita Karić for her comments and suggestions for improving the paper; and to the editor Dr. Sabina Veladžić for her patience, support, and encourage.

orijentalizma krajem 19. i početkom 20. stoljeća. Cilj je bio istražiti kako autorice, djelujući unutar rodno ograničenog kulturnog sustava i pod utjecajem snažnih imperijalnih diskursa, oblikuju vlastiti identitet kroz reprezentaciju "Drugog" i pregovaraju između emancipacije i pripadnosti imperijalnom poretku. Metodološki pristup kombinira feminističku i postkolonijalnu analizu, s naglaskom na žanrovskoj specifičnosti feljtona kao prostora za žensku samoafirmaciju. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da obje autorice koriste orijentalističke trope kako bi artikulirale autorski glas unutar diskurzivnih struktura moći, djelomično destabilizirajući i preoblikujući te diskurse iznutra.

Ključne riječi: ženski putopisni zapisi, austrougarski orijentalizam, Mara Čop Marlet, Kornelia Kardos, identitet, "Orijent", "Drugi"

Introduction

Why are you in Africa?
Because I am an ethnographic writer!
And why are you an ethnographer?
Probably — I answered my interlocutor with a smile — because a great philosopher said that travel is a cheap way for average people to become famous. It is easier to gain fame through what you have seen than through what you have thought![2]

Travel to the countries of the "Orient"[3] experienced a strong expansion during the 19th century, thanks to technological innovations and political changes in Europe and beyond. The development of steamships, the expansion of the railway network, and the opening of the Suez Canal in

[2] Mara Čop Marlet, "Ländlich-sittlich", *Grazer Tagblatt*, No. 36, 6. 10. 1891, 2.

[3] Under the term "Orient" (an imagined European invention), different actors, as warned by the American-Palestinian literary theorist and creator of the intellectual coin *Orientalism*, mean different geographical areas. Edward Said, *Orijentalizam*, Belgrade: Biblioteka XX vek, 2008, 9. In this work, Austrian authors whose texts will be analyzed in the following chapters under "Orient" understood the area of Algeria, Palestine, Turkey, Morocco and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The latter, however, is more often discussed within the framework of concepts such as Balkanism (Todorova) and Ottomanism (Eldem). Also, experts in various humanistic and social fields who deal with *Orientalism* often equate the term with the area of the Middle East, therefore in some places it will also imply the imaginary area of the "Orient".

1869 significantly accelerated and facilitated travel to desired destinations. The French conquest of Algeria in 1830 and the subsequent occupation of the wider Maghreb, as well as the British presence in Egypt, provided the necessary security and logistical support for European travelers, while medical discoveries such as the use of quinine enabled longer stays in tropical regions.[4] Military expansion also played a crucial role: new forms of weaponry, such as the Maxim machine gun, symbolized the power and threat of the European powers, ensuring the expansion of imperial control and opening space for visits to "pacified" areas. The stability and safety of travel were additionally guaranteed by European trade branches, consular services and the first tourist organized tours, which made the "Orient" more accessible.[5] At the same time, the world was marked by great migrations, and privileged travelers – connected to imperial power, scientific research, and tourism – also left written testimonies.[6]

Women also benefited from these new advantages, as they traveled to the East in increasing numbers from the beginning of the 19th century, either alone or accompanied by their husbands – civil servants, missionaries, diplomats, etc. Many literally followed the motto "The East is a career"[7], using the "Orient" as a space for literary and intellectual self-affirmation, which is clearly illustrated by the introductory confession of the Austrian writer Mara Čop Marlet. But, compared to male authors, many female

[4] Ali Behdad, "Orientalism and Middle East Travel Writing", in: *Orientalism and Literature*, ed. Geoffrey P. Nash, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 194-195.

[5] The British travel agency *Thomas Cook & Son* organized tourist visits to Egypt, Syria and Palestine since 1869. During the 1880s, the Orient Express was launched, connecting Paris with Istanbul by rail.

[6] Scott C. M. Bailey, "Introduction: Global Travel, Exploration, and Comparative Study of Empire", in: *Journal of World History*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Department of History, College of Arts, Languages & Letters, 2023, No. 34, 5-6.

[7] A phrase used by the British politician Benjamin Disraeli in the novel *Tancred* (1843), seeing the East as a zone of interest for the West. The American-Palestinian literary theorist Edward Said will see in it the "Orient" as a construction of the West, that is, a concept that will enable Westerners to dominate the Eastern world by creating simplified and stereotypical descriptions of Eastern societies as exotic, mysterious and backward.

authors remained on the margins. Historian Billie Melman, using the example of British women's travel to the Middle East in the 19th century, argues that it represented a form of quasi-professional or proto-professional work: informal, individual, carried out from home, and rarely institutionalized, thus remaining within Victorian gender norms. Some women collaborated with scientific societies or wrote for professional audiences, while others wrote for a wider reading public through fiction or feuilletons. Although new disciplines such as anthropology and ethnography emerged, women's participation was largely limited to botany, entomology, biblical archaeology, and Egyptology, while fields such as geology or philology remained almost exclusively male. The categories of travel and writing were fluid and declared motives often concealed deeper ambitions. Although many claimed to travel for leisure, many systematically prepared for literary reconstructions of their travels, specializing in classical and biblical scholarship. Their "Eastern careers" followed two main paths: non-specialist literary travels and semi-professional, quasi-scientific activities related to biblical and oriental studies and missionary work.[8] At the end of the century, through writing and travels, the challenges to the existing gender order further intensified and took on new forms in the phenomenon of the "New Women" and the fight for women's suffrage.[9]

As Ulrike Stamm notes, by publishing their travel experiences – whether in documentary or fictionalized form – they broke through the double limitations imposed on the female role: "inventing" themselves as authors and, through their own mobility, challenging their focus on the private, domestic sphere. Thus, women's travel writing about the "Orient" necessarily took on a dual agenda: while participating in the European project of shaping binding notions of the "Orient", it simultaneously acted as a

[8] Billie Melman, *Women's Orient – English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion and Work*, London: Macmillan, 1992, 40. The career of the aforementioned Čop Marlet can be linked to a combination of both patterns, and that of Kornelia Kardos to the first pattern, which will be discussed further in the text.

[9] Robert Aldrich, "Gender and Travel Writing", in: *Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, ed. Nandini Das, Tim Youngs, London: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 522.

means of emancipation, expanding women's space for action and expression beyond traditional frameworks.[10] Stamm also warns that the questioning of norms of femininity in women's travel writing has always taken place in conjunction with the representation of ethnic-cultural difference. That is, as a form of "staging alterity", travel writing relies on comparisons and the drawing of boundaries between the self and the foreign. The writings of women travelers, therefore, constantly move between two interconnected binary patterns of difference: the one that separates Europeans and Orientals, and the one that shapes gender relations.[11] Similarly, Sara Mills emphasizes that precisely because of their anomalous position in the public sphere, "their writing can be seen as the traces of discursive struggles over the 'proper' place of women".[12] Women's travel writing, therefore, functions not only as a representation of the "Other", but also as a record of the tensions surrounding the redefining of female authorship and its social legitimation.

Furthermore, Stamm points out, the "other" culture does not function only as a frame of reference for defining identity and difference, but also as a space that allows women authors to at least partially overcome their marginalized position in the European context. Since the countries of the "Orient" had already been, to varying degrees, affected by Western hegemonic interests since the first half of the 19th century, European women found themselves in a different and significantly more privileged position there than their status as "women" at home. As authors, they thus occupy a central and marginal position at the same time. The relationship of self/other, male/female, superior/subordinate, and included/excluded becomes multilayered and produces complex representations of the self and the Other. Ultimately, Stamm concludes, if travel writing in general represents

[10] Ulrike Stamm, *Der Orient der Frauen: Reiseberichte deutschsprachiger Autorinnen im frühen 19. Jahrhundert*, Köln: Böhlau, 2010, 9-10.

[11] Ibidem, 10.

[12] Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*, London: Routledge, 1991, 106.

a literary genre in which the production and transmission of identity and difference are of crucial importance, in women's travel writing, precisely because of the intertwining of orientalist and gendered discourses, this dynamic proves to be more open to negotiation, but also more often contradictory.[13]

Following the above, this paper analyzes the travel writings of the Mara Čop Marlet and Kornelia Kardos, starting from Ulrika Stamm's insight into the specific position of women travelers and their depictions of Orientals. The analytical focus is on the shaping of the authors' identity positions through the staging of alterity, the ambivalence of their status between emancipation and subordination, and through the reproduction and reshaping of stereotypes.[14] Special emphasis is placed on the power produced by these discourses – the power of female authors to act as cultural mediators and bearers of knowledge – which is inextricably linked to the context of European, or Austro-Hungarian, *Orientalism*. In the late 1880s and throughout the 1890s, Mara Čop Marlet published ethnographic feuilletons about Algeria, in which she thematized the "distant" *Orient*, but also texts about women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus also covering the "close to home" *Orient*.[15] At the beginning of the 20th century, the tradition

[13] Ibidem, 10-11.

[14] A stereotype is a simplified and often negative image of a particular group, which serves to reduce a complex reality to general judgments, reinforce a sense of knowledge and confirm the superiority of the one who uses it, but it is inherently fragile and ambivalent. U. Stamm, *Der Orient der Frauen*, 42-44. In their texts, the authors also reproduce established stereotypes such as the *oriental despot*, *the fanatical Muslim*, *lascivious women*, *the noble Arab*, etc., but they too often become an "unintentional fascination", which leads to ambivalence in representation, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

[15] The mentioned dichotomy is applied by Johann Heiss and Johannes Feichtinger in the article "Distant neighbors: Uses of orientalism in the late nineteenth-century Austro-Hungarian empire" on the example of the use of *orientalism* in the discourses of Austro-Hungarian policymakers. In their case, Bosnia and Herzegovina represents the "close to home" *Orient,* seen as an opportunity to achieve a "civilizing mission", while Turkey (Ottoman Empire) represented the "distant" *Orient*, seen as an object of hatred and threat that cannot be civilized. As such, the authors conclude, *Orientalism's* were used to "underpin the empire's colonial mission and defend its political and cultural borders". Johann Heiss, Johannes Feichtinger, "Distant neighbors: Uses of orientalism

was continued by Kornelia Kardos, a now almost completely forgotten and marginalized Austrian author, whose oeuvre includes travelogues about Turkey, Palestine, Morocco, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as stories about a visit to the harem of Sultan Abdul Hamid II.

Feuilleton in this context does not appear only as a media space of publication, but as a specific form within the genre of travel writing. Its fragmentary, anecdotal and essayistic tone allows the authors to dramatize their own position between emancipatory gestures and subjection to the imperial imaginary. Precisely through the feuilleton form, the texts of Čop Marlet and Kardos open the space for negotiations between private and public, personal impression and cultural interpretation. In this way, they become places where gendered and *Orientalist* discourses cannot be separated, but in their interplay the identities of the authors, representations of *Orientals* and the discursive power of (Austro-Hungarian) *Orientalism* are shaped.

The methodological and theoretical approach of the work combines postcolonial and feminist perspectives, since both enable the analysis of identity formed in the permeation of gendered and orientalist discourses. Special attention is paid to the interaction of gender and the genre framework of travel writing, i.e. the way its genre features open space for the subversion of gender expectations and the affirmation of the cultural and imperial competence of female authors. Within this genre framework, the feuilleton is considered as a specific form, whose fragmentary nature, essayistic tone and attachment to the newspaper medium additionally shape representational strategies. With this approach, it is possible to see how the

in the late nineteenth-century Austro-Hungarian empire", in: *Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History. From Germany to Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. James Hodkinson, John Walker, Shaswati Mazumdar, Johannes Feichtinger, Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2013, 157, 159. Clemens Ruthner also mentions the name "Habsburg's Little Orient" for the Monarchy's relationship with Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1878 to 1918. See: Clemens Ruthner, "Habsburg's Little Orient: A Post/Colonial Reading of Austrian and German Cultural Narratives on Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1878-1918", available at: https://www.kakanien-revisited.at/beitr /fallstudie/CRuthner5.pdf (accessed: 20 August 2025).

discursive power of women's travel writing is shaped through genre and formative conventions, social norms and imperial contexts. In this context, the work is particularly innovative because it analyzes feuilletons as a form of women's travel writing, expanding the historiographical focus that until now mainly referred to book editions.[16]

Orientalism, Women, Travel Writing and the "Orient"

The publication of the seminal study *Orientalism* (1978) by the American-Palestinian literary theorist Edward Said established a theoretical framework for researching the ways in which the West constructs, represents and instrumentalizes the *Orient* as a cultural and political category.[17] It enabled a critical examination of colonial and imperial discourses and the introduction of a postcolonial perspective into the humanities and social sciences. Although Said's work opened a fundamental theoretical horizon for the study of colonial and imperial discourses, it soon encountered several criticisms. Among them, for example, is his understanding of the *Orient* as a monolithic category, which neglected the internal differences and dynamics within the *Orientalized* societies themselves. In addition, the focus on masculine

[16] Since the authors' texts were published in German and in German-speaking news media, it complements existing research within German studies on *Orientalism*. In addition to the already cited work by Ulrike Stamm, the following works stand out: Nina Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur 1900*, Stuttgart: M&P Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 1997; Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1997; Andrea Polaschegg, *Der andere Orientalismus: Regeln deutsch-morgenländischer Imagination im 19. Jahrhundert*, New York: De Gruyter, 2005; Susan Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009; Robert Lemon, *Imperial Messages: Orientalism as Self-Critique in the Habsburg Fin de Siècle*, Rochester: Camden House, 2011.

[17] Said, although he presents *Orientalism* as a single and coherent discourse of power, sets a fundamental framework for the study of European travel writing because he directs the analysis from the textual to the historical and political; understood as a changing network of representations. *Orientalism* is crucial for understanding European travel writing about the Middle East in the context of their geopolitical, cultural and economic settings. A. Behdad, "Orientalism and Middle East Travel Writing", 186.

representations and privileged Western male authors meant that the gender dimension remained in the background. These shortcomings encouraged further development of postcolonial theory: Homi K. Bhabha introduced the concepts of ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity, thereby destabilizing the binary opposition between the *Orient* and the *West*.[18] Feminist theorists such as Sara Mills, Alison Blunt, Reina Lewis and Mary Louise Pratt have introduced gender, class, religion and race into the analysis as key social classifiers, emphasizing that colonial discourse cannot be understood without their intersectional embeddedness.[19] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak further opened the question of the position of subaltern subjects of representation, problematizing whether their voice can even be heard within hegemonic discursive structures.[20]

The focus on Western European countries such as Great Britain and France and the USA has prompted criticism to consider research on *Orientalism's* in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, which shows that imperial discourses do not only take place in the context of classical colonial powers, but also within internal, regional empires such as Austria-Hungary. In smaller, peripheral imperial contexts, Orientalist narratives adapt to local political, cultural and ethnic circumstances and serve different purposes. There is also increasing emphasis on a functional approach to *Orientalism* which, as Johannes Feichtinger points out, "makes it possible to identify when, where, by whom and in what functional context the 'Other' became an 'Oriental' and what was defined as the Orient in each context; in short: how the Orient changed".[21] "The 'Orient' continues to

[18] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994.

[19] Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*, London: Routledge, 1991; Alison Blunt, *Travel, Gender, and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa*, New York: Guilford Press, 1994; Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation*, London: Routledge, 1996; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London: Routledge, 1992.

[20] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in: *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson, Lawrence Grossberg, Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988, 271-313.

[21] Johannes Feichtinger, "Komplexer k.u.k. Orientalismus: Akteure, Institutionen, Diskurse im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert Österreich", in: *Orientalismen in Ostmitteleuropa: Diskurse, Akteure und*

represent the 'Other'", Feichtinger continues, but "not an absolute, but a relative other, whose key feature is that it is constantly, under the influence of changing power relations, reconstructed, defined and functionalized".[22] Such an approach can prevent a detour into "methodological *Orientalism*", and is also suitable for the analysis of more complex variants of *Orientalism*, such as that in Austria-Hungary.[23]

From the mid-19th century until the end of World War I, Austro-Hungarian *Orientalism* developed as an institutionally and network-structured system, in which scientific, political, administrative and diplomatic institutions interacted, producing and legitimizing knowledge about the language, religion, customs and history of the "Orient", while at the same time serving the political, economic and cultural interests of the Monarchy. The perception of the "Orient" was shaped through education, museum collections, consular networks and administrative practices, while trade and economic ties further connected Austria-Hungary with these regions, enabling the flow of goods, capital and ideas and institutionalizing the economic interest of the Monarchy. New territorial acquisitions, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina after 1878 and its annexation in 1908, integrated into a wider network of power and influence, demonstrating how the space identified as the "Orient" could be flexible and fluid, expanding or contracting depending on discourse and function. Austro-Hungarian *Orientalism* had differentiated functions: it legitimized power, shaped its national identity, and served the self-evaluation of various actors – state, cultural, private, and commercial. Based on long-standing ties with the Ottoman Empire – wars, diplomatic exchanges, trade contacts, and later occupations – *Orientalism*, while adapted to the local context, served to maintain power over the relative "other." Feichtinger highlights three key functions of Austro-Hungarian *Orientalism*: identity strategy, civilization-missionary approach and participatory scientific

Disziplinen vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg, ed. Robert Born, Sarah Lemmen, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014, 35.

[22] Ibidem.

[23] Ibidem.

study of the "Orient", which shows that the Monarchy, unlike the Western European colonial powers, shapes *Orientalism* through institutionalized networks and multidimensional functions, whereby territories like Bosnia and Herzegovina, formally under Austro-Hungarian administration, illustrate how colonial control can be combined with cultural representation and economic interests, creating a specific locally adapted model of imperial action.[24]

We can also take this perspective into account when interpreting the travel writings of Čop Marlet and Kardos. Their representations of the *Orient* – including Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also Algeria, Palestine, Morocco and Turkey – can be read not as an individual act of cultural mediators, but as an articulation of the wider imperial framework of Austria-Hungary, in accordance with Louise Pratt's claim that statements in travel writing come "from an unknown site behind the speaking 'I' – behind the periphery of what is seen, from a seat of power that should probably be identified with the state".[25] Like Pratt, Rana Kabbani notes that travelers traveled on behalf of their homeland, acting as "the eye that sees" and "the voice that tells." Their journeys were often financially supported by official institutions, as travelogues ultimately served to shape the imperial picture of the world.[26] Furthermore, as Simour Lhoussain shows in her work on some British women's travel writing about Morocco, by entering the male-dominated sphere of colonial travel and exploration, women travelers acquired additional social capital. Their writings shaped racial and colonial beliefs, adopted imperial discourse, and emphasized the

[24] Ibidem, 36-63; See also: Robin Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism: The Habsburg 'Civilizing Mission' in Bosnia 1878-1914*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007; Leyla Amzi-Erdoğdular, *The Afterlife of Ottoman Europe: Muslims in Habsburg Bosnia Herzegovina*, Stanford – California: Stanford University Press, 2024; Stijn Vervaet, *Centar i periferija u Austro-Ugarskoj: Dinamika izgradnje nacionalnih odnosa u BiH od 1878. do 1918. godine na primjeru književnih tekstova*, Zagreb – Sarajevo: Synopis, 2013.

[25] Mary Louise Pratt, "Scratches on the face of the country; or what Mr. Barrows saw in the land of the Bushmen", in: *Critical Inquiry*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, No. 1, 126.

[26] Rana Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient: Divise and Rule*, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986, 6.

alleged physical, moral, and sexual inferiority of the *Other*, thereby legitimizing imperialism and resonating with British readers. British women's travel writings demonstrate how gender and racial notions structured their experiences and contacts across borders. These texts also served additional functions as women participated in the dissemination of knowledge about the colonies – from encouraging support for imperial expansionism to drawing attention to alleged abuses by natives or colonial officials. Their travelogues offered a specific perspective on the way metropolitan audiences imagined the "Orient" and its Otherness, contributing to the colonial imaginary. The travelers were aware of their own "temporary male position", and wrote about distant places within the framework of an *Orientalist* vision that combined exotic admiration with imperial ideology.[27]

The gendered discourses and *Orientalist* tropes used by Čop Marlet and Kardos cannot therefore be viewed outside the Austro-Hungarian imperial framework. Their travel writing practice, although seemingly individual and tied to personal experiences and literary ambitions, is shown to be part of an institutionally and culturally structured system in which the "Orient" is not an absolute category, but rather relative and functionally adaptable, as Feichtinger points out. That is, as Douglas Ivison sums it up precisely, "travel and its by-product travel writing were both enabled by and essential to, both cause and effect of, the project of imperial expansionism".[28] In this way, the travels and writings of these authors fit into a broader discursive mechanism by which the Monarchy constructs, defines and uses *Otherness*. The analysis of their texts therefore also seeks to reveal how women's travel writing, although expressing a gender shift and an exit from the private sphere, does not necessarily depart from "masculine" *Orientalism*;[29] in

[27] Simour Lhoussain, "Gendered Eyewitness in Narration: Imagining Morocco in British Women Travel-Inspired Narratives in Late 19th Century", in: *Anglo Saxonica*, Lisbon: University of Lisbon, Centre for English Studies – Ubiquity Press, 2020, No.1, 3.

[28] Douglas Ivison, "Travel Writing at the End of Empire: A Pom named Bruce and the Mad White Giant", in: *ESC: English Studies in Canada*, Ontario: Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English, 2003, No. 29, 200.

[29] Since Orientalist discourse is considered predominantly male, as Faron Wade-Lang points out, critics such as Pratt, Mills, and Lewis argue that women writers can expose its contradictions and

places where they can be original and authentic they often reproduce and adapt imperial narratives, participating in shaping a specific Austro-Hungarian variant of *Orientalism* that connects gender, cultural and political dimensions.

Understanding women's travel writing about the "Orient" in the Austro-Hungarian context requires insight into the tradition of *Orientalism*, the specificities of the female gaze, and the market conditions that made such texts possible. From the late 18th century, travel writing evolved from an amateur and exotic to an empirical and "scientific" genre, fueled by Enlightenment rationalism, positivism, and European expansion after the decline of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires. In the 19th century, three types of travelers emerged – the explorer, the romantic traveler, and the tourist – and mass tourism and guidebooks popularized Orientalist exoticism.[30] Conceptions of the "Orient" were already ingrained in European culture – from Crusade stories and art to translations of "One Thousand and One Nights" – creating a sensual, stereotypical image of the East. By the end of the 19th century in the German-speaking world, through the novels of Karl May, exhibitions, photography and popular media, the "Orient" was becoming a visual and commercial commodity.[31] Travel writing had become an important genre by 1800, but as the market grew, so did suspicions about authenticity. Women, who increasingly published travelogues from the late 18th century onwards, were often attacked for their alleged incompetence, although many – such as Pfeiffer, Bird,

open up space for counter-hegemonic perspectives. Yet, as Meyda Yegenoglu warns, these contradictions do not necessarily dismantle *Orientalism*, but rather reveal its adaptability. Women's travel writing can simultaneously challenge and reinforce Orientalist narratives, since even their privileged access to women's spaces (harems, bathhouses) can reproduce colonial knowledge. Thus, women's Orientalist texts can be both subversive and complicit within hegemonic discourse. See: Faron Wade-Lang, "White Women in Medina: Race, Gender, and Orientalism in Women's Travel Writing on Morocco", (MA thesis), Gueleph: The University of Gueleph, 2019, 9-10.

[30] A. Behdad, "Orientalism and Middle East Travel Writing", 190-200.

[31] B. Melman, *Women's Orient – English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion and Work*, 65-66; Suzanne Marchand, "Popularizing the Orient in Fin de Siècle Germany", in: *Intellectual History Review*, London: Taylor & Francis, 2002, No. 2, 180-201.

Kingsley and Bell – developed serious research careers.[32] Their letters, diaries and feuilletons gave them access to private and feminine oriental spaces, such as the harem, and allowed them to express themselves spontaneously and personally.[33] As Susan Bassnett indicates, women's travel writing in the 19th century demonstrates an ambivalence between self-affirmation and participation in imperial discourse. Compared to male authors, women emphasize personal impressions, social relationships, and humanitarian motives, while simultaneously avoiding the scientific apparatus. The texts combine the autobiographical, the anecdotal, and the ethnographic, seeking to redefine the identity and space of the female subject in public.[34] Finally, popular culture and the market, especially in the late 19th century, created a huge interest in travel writing and "women's travel," turning the exotic into a consumer fantasy. Publishers and travel agencies purposefully shaped content for a female audience, encouraging the first generations of mass travelers.[35]

[32] Ida Laura Pfeiffer (1797 – 1858) was Austrian travel writer, ethnographer and credited as World's First Solo Female Travel Writer. She traveled through Southeast Asia, the Americas' Middle East and Africa, and around the world from 1846 to 1855. She was also a member of both the Berlin and Paris geographical societies. Isabella Bird (1831— 1904) was English travel writer and photographer, known for her travels to America, Australia, Hawaii, China, Japan, Vietnam, Korea, India, Iran and Morocco. She was the first women to be made Fellow at the Royal Geographical Society. Mary Kingsley (1862 – 1900) was English traveler and writer who journeyed through western and equatorial Africa and became first European to enter parts of Gabon. Getrude Bell (1868 – 1926) was English historian, traveler, and one who help administer the modern state of Iraq with tribal leaders throughout the Middle East. Available at: https://womeninexploration.org/timeline (accessed: 20 August 2025).

[33] Carl Thompson, "Nineteenth-Century Travel Writing", in: *Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, ed. Nandini Das, Tim Youngs, London: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 110, 113, 119.

[34] Susan Bassnett, "Travel writing and gender", in: *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme, Tim Youngs, London: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 226-240; See also: Ulrike Brisson, "Discovering Scheherazade: Representations of Oriental Women in the Travel Writing of Nineteenth-Century German Women", in: *Women in German Yearbook*, Lincoln Mall: University of Nebraska Press, 2013, No. 29, 100.

[35] Diane M. Huddleston, "The Harem: Looking Behind the Veil", (Department of History – seminar paper), Monmouth: Western Oregon University:, 2012, 3-4; Jill Steward, "The 'travel romance' and the emergence of the female tourist", in: *Studies in Travel Writing*, London: Taylor & Francis, 1998, No. 2, 85-99.

This framework also includes the production of texts by Mara Čop Marlet and Kornelia Kardos, whose travel writings were published just before and during the heyday of women's travel writing about the "Orient" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their texts continue the tradition shaped by female authors from Central Europe, some of whom were their contemporaries, such as Marie Belli-Gontard, Ida Pfeiffer, Marie Schuber, Therese von Bacheracht, Ida Hahn-Hahn, Louise Mühlbach, Marie Esperance von Schwartz, Belane Mocsáry/Márie Fay, Ottilie von Bistram, Milena Mrazović-Preindlsberger, Marica Gregorič Stepančič, Ludmila Poljanec, Alice Schalek and Zofka Kveder.[36] These authors not only ensured the recognition of women's travel writing in Central European literary and journalistic circles, but also, with their diverse approaches – from sentimental and romantic to scientific-empirical and journalistic – paved the way for the generation to which Čop Marlet and Kardos belong. Their work can therefore be seen as both part of the continuity and as a specific echo of the market, cultural and genre conditions that enabled the establishment of women's travel writing about the "Orient" in the Austro-Hungarian and wider European contexts. Ultimately, this historical and cultural framework enables a better understanding of the specific strategies and genre choices of Čop Marlet and Kardos, as well as the way in which their publications participated in the wider market and discourse of *Orientalism* at the end of the 19th century. Before a specific analysis of their texts, their biographies, the texts that will be analyzed, and the media in which they were published will be presented.

[36] The authors are connected by the theme of their writing ("Orient"), the language area (German) in which they publish, and sometimes the form of publication. The works of authors from the first half of the 19th century (Belli-Gontard, Pfeiffer, Schuber, von Bacheracht, Hahn-Hahn, Mühlbach, von Schwartz) have been analyzed by the Ulrike Stamm, while the works of the remaining ones are still awaiting appropriate (re)evaluation.

Writing and Audience: Biographies, Texts and Media

Mara Čop Marlet (also known as Marie von Berks) was born on August 10, 1858 in Livorno to a Croatian-Austrian family. After a financial collapse, the family returned to Karlovac, the hometown of her father Anton Čop[37], in the early 1860s. It is assumed that, like most girls of the time, she was educated by the Ursuline nuns in Graz.[38] She appeared as an author in the early 1880s in the Zagreb newspapers *Agramer Zeitung* and *Agramer Tagblatt*. She married the French lawyer Charles Lenger Marlet, the son of a French senator, in 1886. She would accompany him to the French colony of Algeria, where he served as public prosecutor. Her stay there also served as an incentive for her writing, as evidenced by the introductory paragraph. She also lived in France, Italy, Greece and Egypt. In addition to the German in which she wrote her works, she also spoke Croatian, French and Hungarian. After the death of her daughter, she divorced Charles Lenger Marlet and returned to Croatia. She married for the second time in 1894, to the Styrian landowner and member of the Imperial Council, Hugo Knight Berks, with whom she lived between Vienna and Blagovna. After his death, she withdrew from public life, fell ill with tuberculosis and died in Gorizia in 1910.[39]

Her literary output was diverse: she wrote short stories, novels, plays, librettos, travelogues and ethnographic studies. Her works were performed and published throughout Austria-Hungary and abroad, and she translated and adapted Croatian authors (for example, Ivo Vojnović). As early as 1884, she published a study on Croatian theater in international journals. Her work is characterized by naturalistic elements and a penchant for

[37] Anton Čop (Antonus Jakobus) was born on January 9, 1827 in Karlovac as the son of Anton Tschopp and Magdalena née Bucht. He graduated from the engineering academy in Vienna, he had a pencil factory in Livorno, and after the financial crash he returned to Croatia, working as an engineer in the layout and construction of railways. He was also active in the political and cultural life of Karlovac. Slavica Žura Vrkić, "Prva hrvatska etnografkinja Mara Čop Marlet", in: *Ethnologica Dalmatica*, Split: Etnografski muzej, 2003, No. 12, 5-6.

[38] Slavica Žura Vrkić, "Život i književno djelo Mare Čop", (MA thesis – unpublished), Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 17.

[39] Ibidem, 7-20.

modern forms (internal monologue, film description), as well as ethnographic and folklore motifs. She was particularly interested in the position of women in society – from medieval Styria to the Balkans and Africa – and the role of marriage, family and moral norms in contemporary society. Her ethnographic works, also published in prestigious European journals, dealt with women of the Slavic South, African women and Roma, and she was a member of several ethnographic societies (among them the *Gypsy Lore Society*). She also wrote the book *Südslawische Frauen. Auf Höhen und Tiefen der Balkanländer* (1888), which was partially translated into French and Hungarian. She was associated with many intellectuals and politicians of her time – from Sacher-Masoch and Zola to Archduke Joseph, to whom she dedicated a collection. Despite recognition in international literary and theater lexicons, she encountered misunderstanding and criticism in Croatia, especially because she wrote in German.[40]

The corpus of her texts about Algeria and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is analyzed in this paper, includes feuilletons and articles that were published from 1887 to 1891, mostly in *Wiener Zeitung* and its subsidiary *Wiener Abendpost* and *Grazer Tagblatt*. The first one was a state's official newspaper that was distributed throughout the Monarchy and attracted probably significant readerships. The chapter on *ašikovanje* (courtship) customs in Bosnia from the book *Südslawische Frauen* is also considered. Text topics include social life and customs, religion and spirituality, family and private life, rituals and rites, culture and art, animals and nature, ethnic and religious communities, reflective texts, and fictional and autofictional narratives.[41] As Melman notes, and as can be applied to Čop Marlet and Kardos, the representation of another culture often functions on the

[40] Ibidem, 7-20.

[41] These are the following titles: "Ein Ball in Afrika", "Badeleben in Afrika", "Möglich", "Marabuts", "Afrikanische Hochzeitgebrauche", "Begrabniss in Afrika", "Der Fürst von Biskra", "Musik bei den Arabern", "Die Juden in Afrika", "Die Ehescheidungen bei den Arabern", "Das Kind bei den Arabern", "Die Gesellschaft bei den Arabern", "Die Fee der Metidja", "Lowenkämpfe in Afrika", "Der Trappisten in Afrika", "Fasching in Afrika", "Todesgedanke bei den Arabern", "Ländlich-sittlich" and "Bosnierin".

principle of synecdoche: the traveler or observer cannot encompass and represent the culture in its entirety, nor convey everything (s)he experienced at the moment of observation. Instead, (s)he isolates a single element – a custom, an institution, a ritual, or a particular group of people – and uses it as a symbolic representation of the whole.[42] Published as feuilletons – a form often reserved for women and placed "below the line",[43] these maintain the framework of entertainment literature with an ethnographic-anthropological, or scientific, approach. Čop Marlet used descriptive details, anecdotes, objective narration, fragmentary sketches, which allows the texts to simultaneously inform, entertain and fascinate the reader, creating a multi-layered narrative in which the author takes control of the depiction of cultural reality. However, even when they step outside this format, such narratives generally remain within the Orientalist discourse, reproducing dominant notions of the "Orient". Within the broader genre of travel writing, her discourses do not follow the classic structure of a diary in which she "discovers herself",[44] but rather become a space for the articulation of authority and identity through writing about *Others*. At the same time, writing about the customs of *Others* reflects the editorial demands of the time that determined the boundaries of gender acceptability and the market relevance of texts by female authors.[45]

Unlike Čop Marlet, Kornelia Kardos remained outside the public affirmation of the literary canon. Although she wrote more than 70 newspaper articles and feuilletons, there is no relevant biographical information about

[42] B. Melman, *Women's Orient – English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion and Work*, 102.

[43] Editorial offices considered it an advertising tool to attract readers, primarily women who are less educated and prone to dreams. It included love, adventure and touching stories of feminine taste and trivial patterns. They compensated for personal affective lack of life, broadened the image of the world and brought tension and uncertainty into women's lives. On the other hand, the upper part of the newspaper was reserved for gentlemen, where they discuss and build their world view. Vlado Obad, *Njemačko novinstvo Osijeka u promicanju građanske kulture*, Osijek: Njemačka zajednica – Zemaljska udruga Podunavskih Švaba u Hrvatskoj, 2014, 40-41.

[44] S. Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, 41.

[45] Ibidem, 94.

her. What is known from rare newspaper records is that she was the wife of the goldsmith Joseph Kardos from Vienna and that she had a daughter, Adrienne, a piano teacher. She also visited famous European resorts with her. In the early 1890s they, according to newspaper ads, likely settled in Abbazia (Opatija), where her husband had a goldsmith's shop.[46] As a significant author of newspaper articles, she is mentioned only fragmentarily in the previously mentioned monograph by the Croatian Germanist Vlado Obad from 2014. She also wrote for other German publications in the Monarchy, and some texts also appeared in Germany and North America. The articles are thematically related to Kvarner, Balkan folklore, the Austrian imperial family, various travels, and short stories. Obad criticizes her work for lacking originality and freshness, which is perhaps one of the reasons for the (in)visibility of her work in literary historiography.[47]

Travel writings about Turkey, Palestine, Morocco, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as fictionalized accounts of a visit to the harem of Sultan Abdul Hamid II were published between 1905 and 1918. However, she does not state the reasons for visiting these places nor the time of the actual visit. Some of them were published in repeated editions in different media or under different names.[48] These were also well-known newspapers and specialized magazines throughout the Monarchy: *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*, *Neues Wiener Journal*, *Neues Pester Journal*, *Wiener Sonn- und*

[46] See: *Hygiea*, 20.10.1893, No. 20, 15; *Curliste von Abbazia*, 1. 1. 1895, No.1, 2. She is mentioned as a "Reiseschriftstellerin" only in *Czernowitzer Zeitung*, 17. 6. 1909, No. 135, 4.

[47] V. Obad, *Njemačko novinstvo Osijeka u promicanju građanske kulture*, 124; Given the challenge and time-consuming nature of researching personal biographies, the paper will not be able to highlight the extratextual (biographical) contexts that the author manipulates for the purpose of constructing identity, as is the case with Čop Marlet. It will also not be possible to prove the authenticity of real journeys, although they are always subject to fictionalization, so the emphasis will be more on the textual construction of the author's identity.

[48] These are: "Das Heilige Land", "Ein Abend im Harem des Sultans", "Večer u sultanovom haremu", "Unsere jungsten Provinzen", "Der Sultan und die Frauen", "Im gelobten Land", "Äzahra", "Bilder aus Bosnien", "Gül Bahar", "Marokanische Kulturbilder", "Ein Abend in Harem Abdul Hamids", "Kulturbilder aus Tanger", "Ostertage in Jeruzalem", "Nach Jeruzalem", "Kaffee" i "Konstantinopol zur Verkundingung des Heiligen Krieges".

Montags- Zeitung, *Neuigkeits Welt-Blatt*, *Linzer Tages-Post*, *Dom i sviet*, *Die Drau*, *Czernowitzer Tagblatt* and *Adria*. The topics include itineraries of the mentioned locations, topos such as squares, mosques, bazaars, harems and streets, gender relations, religious and ritual customs, the biblical imaginary, the success of the "civilizing mission", and even the history of the ritual of coffee consumption. Some texts were published in the form of feuilletons, and some as long articles, thus temporarily leaving the "gender-acceptable" form, sometimes with the publisher's photos or their own.[49] They have elements of travelogue, reportage, cultural essay and anecdote. They are organized and sometimes titled as "pictures"[50], emphasizing the fragmentary nature in which historical-cultural and ethnographic approaches are sometimes combined. Unlike Čop Marlet, her texts emphasize subjective, or sentimental, storytelling, and despite scientific (ethnographic) details, they are closer to the romantic-tourist approach to writing, which will be discussed below.

[49] As Brigit Englert and Sandra Vlasta point out, visual elements can serve as confirmation of the authenticity of the traveler's experience and storytelling, thereby strengthening its credibility. At the same time, they direct the reader's perception and emphasize certain points of view, often more strongly than the text itself. They also participate in shaping differences, creating images of oneself and *others*, and contribute to the emergence of stereotypes and clichés. They are one way of emphasizing the traveler's subjectivity, and of claiming objectivity. Brigit Englert, Sandra Vlasta. "Travel Writing: On the interplay between text and visual", in: *Mobile Culture Studies. The Journal*, Graz: Karl Franzens University, 2020, No. 7, 7-8.

[50] Travel was often understood (and named) as an image, a precursor to the photographs that travelers would later bring back from their travels. Authors were aware of the subjective, "photographic" nature of these images, which they emphasized in the titles of their works. They often referred to motifs already familiar to readers, such as landmarks, works of art, or everyday scenes, thereby reproducing images that circulated among different travelogues and were transformed in the process. The illustrations in travelogues themselves can also be read as paratext – what Gérard Genette describes as an "accompaniment" to a literary work, but also a space of transition and exchange, a place of strategy and influence on the audience. They were most often chosen by publishers, not authors. Ibidem, 13-14.

Mara Čop Marlet as "Ethnographische Schriftstellerin"

Mara Čop Marlet's feuilletons are framed within an ethnographic framework, with the author attempting to establish the impression of an objective observer recording fragments of culture and everyday life in Algeria. The texts follow a consistent structure and style, in which romantic descriptions blend with ethnographic notes and reflections, producing a narrative that presents itself as credible and scientifically substantiated. They usually begin with an indication of the author's observational position, in which she assumes the position of a European subject – often physically elevated or outside the space of the event, for example from a balcony, stone wall or platform – which allows for a controlled view of the environment and confirms European civilizational superiority: "We Europeans would usually take a position on an elevated hill (...)", or "We observed from the balcony of the Boulevard de la République below, where that colorful crowd of people characteristic of African cities reigned."[51] Such a position allows the author to simultaneously fascinate and distance herself, building a subjective framework that legitimizes the interpretation of the *Other*.[52]

Romantic descriptions are also frequent at the beginning and permeate all the feuilletons: desert landscapes are described as "the boundless vastness of the desert itself is already the dream of eternity."[53] Cities and oases are shaped by fairy-tale scenes: "Biskra already lies in that dreamily beautiful, tropical region of oases", "waves of mist enveloped the traveler to the vast, dark parks of cypresses", or "a mosque grows from the wings of the night, fairy-tale illuminated"[54]. Such descriptive images not only exoticize the "Orient", but also provide a contrast with European norms and

[51] Mara Čop Marlet, "Begräbniß in Afrika", *Wiener Abendpost*, No. 74, 30.3.1889, 6; Mara Čop Marlet, "Ländlich-sittlich", *Grazer Tagblatt*, No. 36, 6. 10. 1891, 2.

[52] In literature, such a position or scene is also called a panoramic scene or "monarch-of-all-I-survey". See: M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation,*197.

[53] Mara Čop Marlet, "Begräbniß in Afrika", *Wiener Abendpost*, No. 74, 30.3.1889, 6.

[54] Mara Čop Marlet, "Der Fürst von Biskra", *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 99, 30.4.1899, 24; Mara Čop Marlet, "Die Fee der Metidja", *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 251, 30.10. 1889, 3; Mara Čop Marlet, "Fasching in Afrika", *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 40, 18.2.1890, 3.

landscapes, reinforcing the civilizational-political and aesthetic hierarchy. It is similar with the description of the population, which is often equated with nature, whereby ambivalence becomes more pronounced.

Topos are key to the depiction of alterity: harems, kasbahs, hammams, cemeteries, streets, markets, tents, and palaces serve as physical and symbolic frames for the depiction of social, religious, and ritual customs. Cemeteries, for example, are described in a romantic tone: "some ten thousand decaying graves in white ruins spread out, especially in the moonlight, in a ghostly scene", which simultaneously arouses fascination and underlines the difference from European customs.[55] Ritual moments – such as weddings, divorces, births, the celebration of adolescence, the purchase of wives (Khol), Ramadan, Eid, or lion hunts – allow the author to articulate gender and cultural differences and indirectly comment on European norms. For example, at the beginning of adolescence (around age 10), boys are sent to the *Taleb* to learn the Quran; in some tribes, a boy's maturity is marked by raising a cloth (*raia*) to the top of the tent, while a girl's transition to adulthood is only marked by bathing, cutting the hair on the back of her head and forehead, and making her first prayerful prostration.[56]

The portrayal of the *Other* is elaborated through a hierarchy of ethnic and gender figures. Arab men are often heroic, but also wild and violent: "The Arab gets along better with the African lion than with the European civilizer" and "the nomad almost becomes a murderer because of love frustration".[57] Women are depicted through the contrast between passivity and ritual power. Arab women in harems or through rituals are often exotic and fatal, while Jewish women are idealized and aesthetically valorized: "The faces of these women reveal the centuries-old lament of the persecuted Israeli people (...)" or "The Algerian Jewess has nothing submissive

[55] Mara Čop Marlet, "Der Todesgedanke bei den Arabern", *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 71, 27. 3. 1890, 4.

[56] Mara Čop Marlet, "Das Kind bei den Arabern", *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 214, 17. 9. 1889, 1.

[57] Mara Čop Marlet, "Löwenkämpfe in Afrika", *Wiener Abendpost*, No. 289, 16. 12. 1889, 5; Mara Čop Marlet, "Die Gesellschaft bei den Arabern", *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 221, 25. 9. 1889, 1.

about her, nothing of lively cunning or low debauchery."[58] The author envies Arab women, again, because their rights in certain ritual contexts – for example, in marriage and divorce – are sometimes better than those of European women: "women have rights that in some respects make them even better protected than their modern, civilized European sisters."[59] By this she means the dowry that is not given by Arab women, but by future husbands according to their appropriate social status. The author expresses a particularly ambivalent attitude towards Arab nannies, portraying them as noble and sensitive "good savages", whose natural maternal love is idealized and depicted with admiration – "because the love of another's mother for another's child – a savage for a civilized offspring – is even more sublime than the usual natural inclination of a woman towards her own offspring" – thereby attempting to soften the difference between Europeans and Arabs, transforming the subjugated woman into a touching symbol of maternal kindness, while at the same time highlighting their ability to adopt other people's children, often without compensation, while still portraying them as confined within the framework of their customs, for example, not leaving the house except on Fridays or to the bathhouse and not agreeing to European regulations, remaining exotic *Others*.[60] Children's figures, such as "naked or torn children" or "a richly dressed, little brown fairytale princess resting in the arms of a black woman", serve to demonstrate the exoticism, spontaneity and ritual organization of society.[61] On the other hand, Europeans (Trappists and colonizers) are presented as the bearers of civilization: "First the sword, then the hoe, and finally the cross", and their presence with European customs legitimize the "civilizing mission".[62]

Stereotypes and generalizations are an integral part of the portrayal of the *Other*: Arabs are "barbaric people", "fanatic", "children of the Orient",

[58] Mara Čop Marlet, "Die Jüden in Afrika", *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 148, 29. 6. 1889, 3.

[59] Mara Čop Marlet, "Die Ehescheidungen bei den Arabern", *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 168, 24. 7. 1889, 1.

[60] Mara Čop Marlet, "Arab Nounous", *Bosnische Post*, No. 81, 8. 10. 1892, 1.

[61] Mara Čop Marlet, "Das Kind bei den Arabern", *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 214, 17. 9. 1889, 1.

[62] Mara Čop Marlet, "Die Trappisten in Afrika", *Wiener Abenpost*, No. 10, 14. 1. 1890, 1.

but also noble; Jews are merchants and culturally adapted; women are passive, fatal, yet attractive and admirable; men are wild, but morally regulated; children are spontaneous, but within ritual frameworks. Ambivalence as strategy arises from the oscillation between fascination and repulsion, admiration and moral distance, such as these examples: "music is the most intimate voice of nature (...), the son of the wild", or "this anger hurts more than fills us Europeans with horror rather than compassion (...) the customs of the Sahara proclaim themselves to be more sublime than anything else".[63]

In the autofictional narrative "Ländlich-sittlich," one of the most striking scenes can also be read as a colonial performance[64]. Čop Marlet, who herself emphasizes that she collects "exotic treasures" but refuses to assimilate into local customs, adhering to her Austrian ones, confronts her French interlocutor, known for his eccentric imitation of Arab life.[65] In the first performance, or "ethnographic lesson," the author stages the dressing of a lawyer's wife in a costume from Miliana, thereby transforming the figure of the Arab woman into a caricature mask. The body of the European woman becomes a site of mediated representation of the *Other*, while the author, in the role of director, controls the meaning and reactions. The scene provokes an emotional transformation in the lawyer – from fascination to disgust – which reinforces the message of the impracticality and repulsion of the costume.

[63] Mara Čop Marlet, "Musik bei den Arabern", *Wiener Abendpost*, No. 122, 27. 5. 1889, 5; Mara Čop Marlet, "Begräbniß in Afrika", *Wiener Abendpost*, No. 74, 30.3.1889, 6.

[64] Performance, influenced by Judith Butler's theory of performativity, is read here as an act of identity construction and representation of the self and the *Other*. Colonial, on the other hand, denotes the ideological position from which the creator and performer of the performance exercise symbolic power over the *Other*.

[65] This behavior is known in the literature as "going native", and it refers to the way in which certain European travelers or residents adopt the clothing or customs of the colonized country and potentially identify with that culture. In this case, it has a negative connotation because "integrating and identifying with the colonized community was seen as 'letting the side down'." S. Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, 97.

The second example takes place on a balcony, from a typically colonial vantage point. The author describes the interlocutor Arab custom of carrying food in trousers they wear so that they can eat it more easily during Iftar, using the servant Said as a source of knowledge. The dramaturgically timed description evokes laughter and discomfort, and humor functions as a means of marking cultural distance and implicit European superiority. In both cases, the performance simultaneously disciplines the interlocutor and entertains the audience, transforming local culture into material for instruction, ironic criticism, and confirmation of European supremacy.[66] These scenes demonstrate how the text's representation of *Others* and the author herself is performed as a performative act, further complementing the layered dynamics of observation and representation.

The texts are permeated with both intertextuality and citation, which connects the European and Islamic cultural framework: the Quran, Muhammad, Azrael, Zahra, *One Thousand and One Nights*, folk songs, legends, folk tales, Jewish prophets, as well as the European symbols of Venus, tailcoats and balls, which create a layer of cultural and moral dialogue, but also the author's scientific competence. The voices of *Orientals* appear fragmentarily in the dialogues or are retold subsequently, often in Arabic filtered through the author's discourse: "Eat and drink!", or "You foreigners live as if you don't have to die", which confirms the primacy of European interpretative authority.[67]

Throughout her feuilletons, Mara Čop Marlet constructs her own authorial identity at the intersection of the European and female perspectives, with her gendered observation providing her with a specific insight into

[66] As Sara Mills observes: "... it is the informational order which has determined the structure of the text. Writers are constrained, since these narrator figures share the 'will to know'. The narrator is shown to be in control, and to be in a position of knowledge, superior to that of the inhabitants of the country". S. Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, 79. In this case, control over information enables the subversion of the patriarchal pattern – the authority over the representation of the *Other* is assumed by the woman, while the man becomes a passive observer.

[67] Mara Čop Marlet, "Die Ehescheidungen bei den Arabern", *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 168, 24. 7. 1889, 1; Mara Čop Marlet, "Begräbniß in Afrika", *Wiener Abendpost*, No. 74, 30.3.1889, 6.

the intimate and ritual spheres of the *Others*, inaccessible to male travel writers. Her position oscillates between fascination and distance: romantic descriptions of landscapes and exotic customs merge with ethnographic notes and moral judgments, creating a discourse that is both scientifically legitimizing and aesthetically exoticizing. The female characters – Arabs, Jews and girls – serve as key mediators of the author's interpretation, through which gender relations are questioned and European and Oriental norms are compared, while the male characters embody strength, heroism and threat. Through such narrative procedures, the author places herself within the broader framework of European civilizational supremacy, but at the same time uses the gender perspective to reflect on her own position within this hierarchy. The feuilletons thus function as a hybrid form in which ethnography, romantic description and the setting of cultural contrasts intertwine into a complex imaginary of the "Orient", and the author legitimizes herself as an observer who, through the *Other*, confirms and articulates her own European and female identity. At the same time, she does not necessarily escape the gender-conditioned journalistic and market demands of the editorial offices.

The texts that geographically refer to Bosnia and Herzegovina and that are analyzed below are thematically related to the representation of Christians and Muslims, with a special emphasis on women and courtship customs. In them, the author shapes her textual identity through a combination of romantic description, ethnographic documentation and moral judgment, while at the same time fascinatingly exoticizing the "Orient" and establishing a clear distance between the European and Christian perspective and those she calls *Orientals*. In her depictions of the landscape, she uses established romantic descriptive procedures: "Bosnia is orientally colorful, lively thanks to its wild and beautiful nature (...)" or "On our ethnographic journey we now arrive at the mysterious gates of the Orient."[68] What makes this world of color and apparent splendor, the glitter of weapons and luxurious laziness so attractive to the educated Westerner are the

[68] Mara Čop Marlet, "Die Bosnierin", *Neue Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. 43, 28. 7. 1889, 897.

riddles of harems and the „beautiful captives of Muslims", which create a picturesque and exotic atmosphere.[69] The observer's position is expressed by active presence in spaces such as the *konak*: "I remember one case when loud lamentations and weeping led me to a Muslim konak (apartment). I climbed the wooden stairs by the sound and became convinced that it was coming from a dark back room behind me", and the harem: "It was when I once left a very rich harem with a park in which there were deer and parrots in gilded cages, and with a small, luxuriously decorated exit door."[70]

Muslims and Muslim women appear in the texts under different names, which reflects a complex ethno-religious and historical perspective: Muslims are called "Bosnian Turk", "Slavic Turk" or "a Muslim who, at the fall of the Bosnian kingdom, accepted the faith of a powerful Asian despot for material gain", while "the poor people remained faithful to the cross of Christ and the dignity of their stolen freedom".[71] Such descriptions promote distrust towards a community that abandoned Christianity, and on the other hand, idealize the poverty of the Christian people, even though the Muslim population was also largely poor. Muslim women are called "Turkish women", "Oriental women" and "Muslim Slav women". This semantic diversity emphasizes the author's tendency to simultaneously exoticize the "Orient" and affirm the continuity of Slavic-Christian identity in Bosnia.[72]

Furthermore, Muslims and Muslim women are also portrayed through the topos of passivity, harem isolation or impulsive passions, with stereotyping: "He brings only one woman into his harem, which makes her captivity even sadder. That is why the Bosnian Turkish woman always takes

[69] Mara Čop Marlet, *Südslawische Frauen. Auf Höhen und Tiefen der Balkanländer*, Budapest: Carl Grill, 1888, 41.

[70] Mara Čop Marlet, "Die Bosnierin", *Neue Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. 43, 28. 7. 1889, 897.

[71] Ibidem. See also: Amer Maslo, Ajdin Muhedinović, "'Bracia czy obcy'. Słowiańscy muzułmanie jako 'Turcy' i 'poturczeńcy' na północno-zachodnich Bałkanach", in: *Prace Historyczne*, Kraków: Jagiellonian University: Institute of History, 2023, No. 150, 243-261.

[72] This discourse is also present in works of Czech authors who write about the Muslim population in the Austro-Hungarian period. See: Jitka Malečková, *"The Turk" in the Czech Imagination (1870s-1923)*, Brill: Leiden, 2021, 125-131.

an orphan, if she is denied the blessing of maternal joy, and her excessive tenderness towards the little being who means everything to her is touching. Otherwise, as a permitted pastime, she has nothing left but endless, meaningless rummaging through chests full of cold jewels, pearls and rich fabrics."[73] This generalization humanizes woman through sentimentality, but at the same time exoticizes her as a passive and idle figure confined to a harem. Stereotyping also extends to the depiction of women who do not remarry after their husbands' deaths, which the author interprets as a fanatical remnant of an "Eastern" tradition, comparable to the Indian custom of *sati*.[74] With this comparison, the author homogenizes Eastern cultures and gender practices, thereby reinforcing the dichotomy of West and East.

Christians, on the other hand, are portrayed as morally noble, hospitable and dignified: "No matter how poor the Christian Bosniaks were, none of them would deny hospitality to these knights of love…".[75] Such a binary opposition directly reflects the Austro-Hungarian civilizational rhetoric, according to which Muslims are interpreted as "outlaws" of Slavic origin, and the Christian paradise as the authentic bearer of cultural and moral values that need to be "liberated".

The custom of courtship (*ašikovanje*) further emphasizes these differences: among Muslim women, the throwing of a carpet over their head symbolizes the ritual taking over of the girl and the repeated stereotyping: "If the girl does not immediately take off the carpet and untie it, the Turk will grab her and she will be his forever", while among Christian women, their ceremonial appearance at the wedding is described by attributes – fez, gold, ducats and jewels.[76] In the poor Christian raja, ritual attributes – fez, gold ducats, jewels – are often absent, and the author, through her interpretation and addition of folk songs, poeticizes their experiences, depicting love happiness as vulnerable and endangered by Turkish incursions and

[73] Mara Čop Marlet, "Die Bosnierin", *Neue Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. 43, 28. 7. 1889, 897.

[74] Ibidem.

[75] M. Č. Marlet, *Südslawische Frauen*, 44.

[76] Ibidem.

threats. This creates a contrast between the morally noble, but offended Christian world and the dominant, but passive Islamic framework, with the author shaping ethnographically recorded customs into a literary and didactic narrative that emphasizes the need to preserve cultural identity and moral superiority.

Generalizations such as "Both the noble Muslims and the poor Christian rajas or slaves of Bosnia are Slavs" serve to standardize and simplify ethnic and cultural differences.[77] The author uses this depiction to emphasize the common Slavic roots of Muslims and Christians, which makes Bosnia "readable" to a Western European observer, but at the same time justifies the imperial project of integration into the "European" order. The homogenization of the population enables the legitimization of the "civilizing mission", as different religious and social groups are presented as part of a single cultural continuum that Austrian rule can civilize and direct.

The passage describing the Christian girl with the jug: "Isn't this young, gentle creature magnificent and admirable who chose to follow the raja – a thousand times unfortunate slave – into a poor, naked hut rather than step through the gilded doors into the luxurious, carefree life of a rich harem, where she would have to leave the cross of Christ behind her?", serves as a multi-layered example of the author's ability to articulate her authority and discourse of the "civilizing mission" through intertextuality, contrast, and moral judgment.[78] The description of the girl, brought to life through the accompanying pictorial representation by the Hungarian painter Georg Vastagh, is presented without oriental luxury and prestige – the visually exotic frame (oriental clothing, kettle, lattice on the window) contrasts with the inner, Christian character and moral strength of the poor raja: "in her gaze and demeanor one feels something stern, serious – the bitter but noble pride of poverty".[79] Ambivalent motifs clearly emerge here: the fascination with the exotic and the presence of Islamic customs ("oriental

[77] Mara Čop Marlet, "Die Bosnierin", *Neue Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. 43, 28. 7. 1889, 897.

[78] Ibidem.

[79] Ibidem.

clothing", "the lattice on the window") is combined with moral evaluation: "only one spark of spirit survived all that – thank God!".[80] Čop Marlet uses the contrast between the luxury of the harem and the simple life of a Christian girl to emphasize the cultural and moral superiority of the Christian community. At the same time, the depiction of everyday life ritual – a girl with a jug goes to fetch water – poeticizes and valorizes the simple activities of the poor raja, while the visual symbols of the "Orient" remain superficial, functionally exotic, but morally neutralized.

Quotations of folk songs by Muslim and Christian women serve as a semblance of an authentic voice of the *Other*, but they are always filtered through the author's moral and cultural interpretation.[81] Their function is multifaceted: they connect the present with the past, they evoke the memory of "Christian freedom" and loss under Turkish rule, and they act as a symbol of the permanent "Turkish danger" that threatens Slavic identity. In this way, the songs become not only an ethnographic record, but also ideological evidence that the people already bear traces of Christian continuity and latent resistance in their oral tradition.

Thus, the "Orient" is depicted as a space in which Islamic customs penetrate and shape everyday life, but Slavic-Christian tradition remains present and morally superior. The European observer – the author – gains a legitimate position for assessment, interpretation and intervention in the cultural life of the local population, at the same time fascinated by the exotic. This construction directly reflects the discourse of the Austro-Hungarian "civilizing mission", according to which the Monarchy takes on the role of the civilizer and political regulator in Bosnia, integrating the space into the "European" moral and cultural order.

The thematization of gender roles is also particularly emphasized in the texts – women are depicted as passive, vulnerable or idealized: "Poor, lovely little Oriental!", while men take an active or passionate position: "Young

[80] Mara Čop Marlet, "Die Bosnierin", *Neue Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. 43, 28. 7. 1889, 897..

[81] Ibidem.

men follow the girls' song, and in front of the house from which it echoes in many voices, Muslims gather like hungry wolves…".[82] It is through the gender framework that the author builds her own authority: the European traveler enters spaces closed to men, records women's voices, and thereby assumes the legitimizing position of a cultural interpreter.

Finally, both texts end in a discourse of liberation and cultural supremacy: Bosnia, in the author's vision, is a space in which "today the Turkish vilayet under Austrian protection is free again…", which fully resonates with the imperial rhetoric of the Habsburg Monarchy after 1878. The author additionally articulates an explicit didactic dimension: she points out that "civilization has penetrated through Bosnia towards the east", but that one cannot yet speak of "real cultural life in Bosnia". She advises that "Bosnian women should direct their vigilant spiritual efforts towards the past, before they dare to fly into the future", and that "the unfortunate sons of Bosnia must first be reminded that they are Slavs and Christians, that they once had a proud royal throne on whose ruins an Asian despotism arose".[83] The statement stereotypes women as guardians of tradition, and men as a people tied to the past, before they can step into the future. This moral and cultural lesson also articulates Bosnia as a space of hybrid, but profoundly Slavic and Christian substance that needs to be politically and civilizationally reaffirmed under the auspices of the Monarchy. Thus, the author's observations go beyond literary exoticization and ethnographic recording and become an instrument of legitimization of the Austro-Hungarian "civilizing mission", in which fascination and domination, empathy and condemnation work in the unique service of the imperial project.

Comparing the texts on Algeria and on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Čop Marlet uses similar strategies of exoticization and moral judgment, adapted to specific colonial and cultural contexts. In Algeria, the colonial discourse of the already established French system prevails, where the fascination

[82] Mara Čop Marlet, "Die Bosnierin", *Neue Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. 43, 28. 7. 1889, 897.; M. Č. Marlet, *Südslawische Frauen*, 42.

[83] Ibidem, 46.

with the "Orient" is intertwined with depictions of ritual, everyday life, and gender-specific scenes, while intertexts and cultural fragments reveal the resilience and complexity of local communities, introducing a subtle subversion of the expectations of the European reader. In Bosnia and Herzegovina in the late 1880s, where the Austro-Hungarian presence is just beginning, exoticization builds on narratives of Slavic origins and Christian moral superiority, shaping a liminal space – simultaneously Oriental and Slavic – and emphasizing slower and fragmented cultural progress.

In both contexts, the author shapes her identity through observing scenes that are otherwise inaccessible to male authors, combining ethnographic documentation, romantic description, and intertextual references. The gendered discourse, combined with the hybridity of genre and textual form, allows the author to clearly articulate her identity through the text. The ambivalent depictions of local communities, fascinating and problematic, morally noble and culturally inferior – produce a powerful interpretive position: the author defines values, interprets behaviors, and implicitly influences the reader's perception, both confirming and criticizing the behaviors and attitudes of Europeans who support colonial and imperial ideology.

Kornelia Kardos as "Reiseschriftstellerin"

Harem literature became increasingly popular and lucrative from the mid-19th century, as Reina Lewis points out: "There is no denying it – as a topic, the harem sold books".[84] The Tanzimat reforms allowed European women to enter the private spheres of the Ottoman Empire, and they used this to gain the status of "authentic witnesses".[85] Authors such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu demystified the harem by challenging male orientalist

[84] R. Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism. Women, Travel and Ottoman Harem*, 12.

[85] Thisaranie Herath, "Women and Orientalism: 19th century Representations of the Harem by European female travellers and Ottoman women", in: *Constellations*, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, No. 7, 33-34.

fantasies of the harem as a place of sexual passivity.[86] However, they often reproduced existing stereotypes, reflecting the gendered division of the public and private spheres. At the same time, Ottoman women themselves actively participated in shaping their representation by deciding what would be shown to visitors. From the second half of the 19th century, authors such as Melek Hanım, Zeyneb Hanım and Emily Said-Ruete entered the literary field by publishing memoirs in European languages. Their texts had to balance between criticizing gender constraints and correcting Western prejudices, while at the same time meeting the expectations of readers eager for exoticism, thus creating a "reverse discourse" that mixed Western and Eastern conceptions of gender.[87]

The popularity of this genre was also exploited by Kornelia Kardos in her texts about the harem of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, combining a romantic idealization of the "Orient" with the real experience of visiting the harem.[88] Although the story of the Sultan's Ramadan bride Gül-Bahar[89] is significantly fictionalized, the author emphasizes its authenticity already in the notes: "An episode from the life of Abdul Hamid, which the author personally learned from the mouth of one of the Sultan's favorites during her frequent visits to the harem."[90] In it, she builds a fairy-tale image of the

[86] See for example: Judith Still, "Hospitable Harems? A European Woman and Oriental Spaces in the Enlightenment", in: *Paragraph*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, No. 1, 87-104.

[87] R. Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism. Women, Travel and Ottoman Harem*, 15-18.

[88] It should be noted that the texts were published at crucial moments in the political life of Sultan Abdul Hamid II – from the attempted assassination of him, the Young Turk Revolution to his overthrow, which probably influenced the increased public interest in his private life. See, for example: Amer Maslo, "Echos of the News about the Attempted Assassination of Sultan Abdul Hamid II Among the Muslim Intelligentsia from Bosnia and Herzegovina Gathered Around *Bošnjak* Gazette", in: *ARCHIV ORIENTÁLNÍ*, Prague: Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, 2023, No. 91, 19-39.

[89] The same content appears in a story called "Azähra", which was published as a separate contribution. The author also includes three photographs that she obtained with "great difficulty". Some of them also appear in the story "Ein Abend im Harem". See: K. Kardos, "Azähra", *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. XVIII, 13. 9. 1909, 865.

[90] Kornelia Kardos, "Gül-Bahar. Ein Ramazanbraut Abdul Hamids", *Weihnachts-Beilage des Czernowitzer Tagblatt*, No. 2649, 24. 12. 1911, 1.

harem, in which the central topos of the "Orient" – exotic gardens, fountains, palm trees, minarets and Constantinople – merge with the heroine's emotional life: "Like fairy-tale creatures in love, the beauties of the harem walked through the wondrous gardens, among the pale, giant flowers of unusual plants…"[91] Women are idealized and sexualized, depicted through physical beauty and emotional sensitivity: "A pale face is wrapped in night-black hair – like a wondrous, strong flower in a sweet oblivion of all earthly things."[92] Polygamy is clearly highlighted through the relationship between Sultan Abdul Hamid and his favorites: "Moreover, as a favorite, she did not envy her rivals, but left them their happiness without jealousy."[93] The first wife, Sadia, is depicted as a mediator and emotional support in the harem hierarchy, roles that emphasize the social dynamics and role of women in the harem. The sultan possesses absolute power, but he is also portrayed through an emotional and protective dimension: "I will be your father and mother and I will create for you Allah's heaven on earth."[94] The text abounds in intertextual references to fairy tales and Islamic rituals, such as the Ramadan ceremony where the sultan's new wife is chosen.[95]

In the second story, "Ein Abend im Harem"[96], authenticity is further enhanced by the author's personal entry into the harem and insight into the daily life of women and harem rituals. The descriptions include the appearance of the women, dancing, musical performances, scenes of smoking and food preparation, the appearance of the women's chambers, depicting the harem as a complex, ritualized and aesthetically organized space. Kardos

[91] Kornelia Kardos, "Gül-Bahar. Ein Ramazanbraut Abdul Hamids", *Weihnachts-Beilage des Czernowitzer Tagblatt*, No. 2649, 24. 12. 1911, 1..

[92] Ibidem.

[93] Ibidem.

[94] Ibidem.

[95] Ibidem.

[96] The story was reproduced several times from 1906 to 1918 under the titles "Ein Abend im Harem des Sultans", "Der Sultan und die Frauen" and "Ein Abend im Harem Abdul Hamids" in *Neues Wiener Journal*, *Neues Pester Journal*, *Wiener Sonn- und Montags- Zeitung*, *Dom i sviet* (in Croatian), *Nebraska Staats-Anzeiger und Herold, Die Drau* and *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*.

records in detail the smells, light and arrangement of the *mindars* and halls, thereby attempting to justify the actual presence: "The room was intoxicatingly permeated with the scent of fragrant Indian woods, rose oil and fine cigarette smoke. The entire floor was covered with luxurious carpets from Smyrna. Along the walls, which were decorated with beautiful stuccoes resembling delicate lace fabrics, stretched *mindars* of white silk interwoven with gold, with fashionable, colorful cushions. On them sat and lay numerous young ladies, dressed in luxurious silk fabrics embroidered with gold and with veils of gold gauze. Their exposed breasts were adorned with precious jewels, their foreheads were adorned with pearl necklaces, and their bare feet were in lovely, embroidered slippers."[97] Given that the harem was mainly a space where both women and children resided, this kind of exhibitionism is less likely to have been present.

Women are depicted through a stereotypical code of beauty – "thick, black hair fell in countless, tiny braids around a pale face, in which large, dark eyes shone" – thus constructing the harem as a space of physical attraction and aesthetic processing of the female appearance, reducing their identity to visual appeal and reinforcing the exoticized, objectified representation typical of Orientalist discourse.[98] The aestheticization of the body is particularly evident in dance performance: "young ladies walked on their bare toes, while their gold jewelry on their wrists and ankles jingled rhythmically," while "at the same time, with their fingers, adorned with rings, they played a three-stringed guitar and sang songs of praise."[99] Dance is not only a collective artistic scene, but also an arena of female rivalry: "The Nubian Diania wanted to overshadow the Circassian Halima, the Syrian Amina watched the beautiful Greek Asta with malicious glances, trying to outdo her in dance."[100] In this way, Kardos confirms the widespread stereotype of the harem as a place of competition in beauty and

[97] Kornelia Kardos, "Ein Abend im Harem", *Wiener Sonn- und Montags-Zeitung*, No. 35, 2. 7. 1907, 9.

[98] Ibidem.

[99] Ibidem, 10.

[100] Ibidem.

grace, and the interethnic composition of the dancers further enhances the exotic impression. The musical dimension emphasizes the hybridity of the cultural space: while "oriental" instruments dominate, the harem also has a piano, thus presenting the "Orient" in contact with the West. The performance is followed by a series of everyday actions that demystify the harem, but at the same time sensualize it: the women "lit cigarettes and sipped sherbet", the slaves served dinner in "countless silver bowls", and the harem ladies showed a penchant for sweets, while distancing themselves from champagne. The most valuable part of the experience for the narrator, however, is access to intimate spaces — "the bedrooms of the harem part of the palace… each had a low, wide divan-like bed, with a canopy of white silk" and "a bathroom with an oval basin and tent-like dressing alcoves".[101] These descriptions combine ethnographic details with the exotic aesthetics of silk, light, and marble, with which Kardos seeks to confirm the authenticity of the testimony, while also reproducing the Orientalist imaginary of the harem as a luxurious and sensual space. The final scene of the garden – "in the moonlight a scenic image of theatrical magic developed: beautiful, luxuriously dressed women walked arm in arm… gathered around a bubbling fountain" – transforms everyday life into a theatrical spectacle, where the narrator's real experience is translated into a romantic image of the "Orient".[102] But such descriptions of harems are also anachronistic, dating back to the 16th century. Women who lived in them, such as Emily Said-Ruete, described daily activities such as prayer, needlework, childcare, reading, studying, and so on. Foreign women never actually saw a real harem, but rather official rooms decorated in a European style. As Brisson warns, oriental women were selective about what they would show visitors and kept information private to preserve privacy. In other words, they used the same strategies to sensationalize the behavior of European women that European women used to criticize their own culture.[103]

[101] Kornelia Kardos, "Ein Abend im Harem", *Wiener Sonn- und Montags-Zeitung*, No. 35, 2. 7. 1907, 10.
[102] Ibidem.
[103] U. Brisson, "Discovering Scheherazade", 103-106.

The author also expresses her nostalgia for this image of the "Orient", or Constantinople, in the feuilleton "Konstantinopel zur Verkündigung des Heiligen Krieges" from 1915. The text opens with a clear placement in the political context of the war, emphasizing that "since November 12, 1914, when the sultan declared the Holy War and called on all Muslims to fight against the Entente powers, the eyes of the whole world have been fixed… on the Ottoman Empire", thus setting the theme of war, traditionally perceived as masculine, as a framework.[104] The author, however, moves away from war reports, focusing on the depiction of Constantinople and its cultural and religious rituals. Numerous intertexts and references appear in the text: "an Arab writer" is quoted who calls Istanbul "the queen of all the cities of the Orient", the sultans of the past are invoked – "the Murads, the Selims and the Mohammedans" – and Osman II and his tragic end in Mecca are mentioned. The travel itinerary begins with the steamer entering the Bosphorus, then leads through the city's districts (Divane Street, Grand Rue de Pera, Kasımpaşa, Ejüp or Yedi Kule), and ends with a description of a caravan leaving Istanbul on a pilgrimage to Mecca. A whole series of romantic descriptions contribute to the exotic impression: the city emerges "like a theater backdrop" and "like a relief map", while at night the Bosphorus shimmers in a "fiery river of light", and the boats turn into "fiery ghost ships". Such scenes also carry a tone of nostalgia for the "Orient" because it is emphasized that "Western influence is increasingly penetrating Islamic traditions, and typical oriental phenomena are increasingly erased, so much so that the physiognomy of the former residence of the caliph can barely be recognized", and that in certain districts one can still feel "the most conservative Islam" and "medieval asceticism".[105] In contrast to this evoked "old spirit", signs of change and modernization stand out: modern trams, cars and carriages have replaced the oriental murmur, harem ladies "delightfully imitate Viennese women", despite their airy *ashmak*, go out

[104] Kornelia Kardos, "Konstantinopel zur Verkündigung des Heiligen Krieges", *Beilage der Linzer Tages-Post*, No. 61, 6. 3. 1915, 17.

[105] Ibidem.

unaccompanied by eunuchs and ride in cars or carriages, and the pilgrimage itself is now carried out by steamers via Port Said and Jeddah instead of desert caravans. However, some districts, such as the Grand Rue de Pera, despite signs of modernity and their status as a symbolic gathering place for Europeans, have not yet experienced the desired transformation into a true "European center of elegance".

The text also reproduces stereotypes: conservative Muslims are described as "fanatics", women as "harem flowers", and opium enthusiasts (*gasashiri*) as exotic decadents. Through this, the usual topos about Constantinople are recognized: the city as "the center and connecting point of all the charms of the world", luxurious court scenes and colorful bazaars. A special place is given to the court ceremony marking the revelation of the Quran in the Hırka-i Şerif Odası, where the sultan pays homage to relics, while "the procession is led by horsemen in colorful robes", and the harem ladies, observed through the windows of their carriages, give the impression of "gentle spirits of fragrance". The most impressionist scene, however, is the farewell of the caravan to Mecca, in which "a green, flag- and carpet-draped, jewel-encrusted, towering structure carried by a camel" carries the sacred shroud (*kiswa*), while "tambourines groan, a company of dervishes howl, and the faithful raise their prayers at the top of their voices: 'Allah hu! Allahu Akbar!'."[106] The author singles out these two ritual scenes because she recognizes them as moments in which the "romance of former royal glory", "miraculous authenticity" and the invocation of an "oriental fairy tale" are permeated, thereby implicitly fulfilling the expectations of the reader – an audience that still seeks fascination with the "vanishing Orient", the spectacle of the exotic and the illusion of contact with an imperishable tradition.

She also tried to attract readers, especially women, with a cultural essay on coffee. In the text, she acts as a cultural mediator between the Ottoman-Oriental and European cultural spaces, translating the customs,

[106] Kornelia Kardos, "Konstantinopel zur Verkündigung des Heiligen Krieges", *Beilage der Linzer Tages-Post*, No. 61, 6. 3. 1915, 18

history and social significance of coffee into a language understandable to the reader of a Viennese newspaper. Although she refers to the personal statements of Arab scholars, she emphasizes her own role as a researcher and guide from the very beginning, positioning herself as an authority who clarifies the Oriental phenomenon "from the inside": "When I visited Constantinople, I felt prompted to investigate the historical sources of our favorite beverage, which is closely connected with culture, and I believe that it might be of general interest to obtain a somewhat more extensive explanation of its development."[107] The text begins with a series of Oriental topos like bazaars and cafes which introduce the European reader to the exotic world of the "Orient", but at the same time stereotype it as a space of discomfort, isolation and passive contemplation. She writes: "The Oriental knows no clubs or other societies. His gathering places are bazaars and coffee houses (...) sitting curled up on his mindar (...) with a stool on which is written 'kaffa' and 'findschan' (...) he devotes all his thoughts only to the smoky clouds of his pipe and that precious, pearly-glittering drink."[108]

Kardos builds the story of the origin of coffee through a genealogical sequence, starting with Mufti Dhabani and his discovery of the bean in the early 16th century, through the ban in Mecca in 1511, and continuing through the spread of the beverage in the Ottoman Empire and its arrival in Europe in the mid-17th century. She uses toponyms such as Aden, Shoa, Kas, Mecca, Constantinople, and Aleppo, as well as precise chronological references (1508, 1511, 1648, 1672, 1683), which gives the reader a sense of historical reliability and linear development. Her position as a cultural mediator is further strengthened by her references to scientific authorities: she particularly highlights the account of the German travel writer and physician Leonhard Rauwolf, whom she directly quotes in describing his encounter with coffee in Aleppo. In doing so, she places her text within a wider network of Orientalist sources and enhances the credibility of her own narrative.

[107] Kornelia Kardos, "Kaffee", *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. XXIII, 24. 5. 1914, 923.

[108] Ibidem.

Her mediation is not neutral: while on the one hand she describes coffeehouses with fascination as melancholic and pleasant places of oriental everyday life, on the other hand she discredits "Islamic" peoples by depicting them in a state of cultural and moral neglect. This ambivalent view is further emphasized by the description of the fanaticism with which Muslim rulers and ulema declared coffee a "devil's drink" and subjected its drinkers to persecution and even martyrdom. Kardos dramatizes the historical development of coffee to the point that she even introduces Avicenna as an authority with whom an attempt was made to challenge the ban and demonstrate the legitimacy of the drink. This tension between exotic appeal and civilizational disparagement clearly reflects the narrator's orientalist perspective and reinforces her function as a cultural mediator who interprets and disciplines world of the *Other* for the European reader.

In the further course of the narrative, Kardos shows how coffee, from an oriental beverage, gradually became a European cultural asset. She traces its journey from Mecca through the Ottoman Empire to the court of Louis XIV and the first coffeehouse in Vienna at the end of the 17th century, making coffee a symbol of cultural transfer between East and West. She also dramatizes the social significance of the drink through anecdotes that connect the intimate and political spheres: from harem stories in which the lack of coffee could be a reason for divorce, to diplomatic rituals in which the serving or denial of coffee marked the level of relations between the Ottoman Empire and Western powers. Kardos includes an ethnographic element in the narrative, describing in detail the preparation of Turkish coffee. She explains that roasted and finely ground coffee is used for each cup, and sugar is optionally added, and the drink is heated several times before serving, during which it is poured into cups together with the grounds. With this practical description, she further strengthens her role as a cultural mediator, as she conveys to readers concrete knowledge about the preparation, along with historical and symbolic context. Although she emphasizes that coffee remains a "characteristic of Orientals," she also universalizes it, presenting it as a common good of the entire world, thus

making what was once exotic and "other" part of the common cultural heritage.[109] By combining ethnographic details and universalization, Kardos demonstrates the gendered aspect of her storytelling: the recipe, traditionally associated with the feminine sphere, is transferred from the private to the public space, while the ritual of preparing coffee, primarily male, becomes a space of female appropriation and inclusion in the discourse of cultural history, confirming her role as a cultural mediator between the intimate and the universal, the private and the public.

During the 19th century, Ottoman Palestine, and Jerusalem in particular, became the center of European religious, cultural, and political imagination. Travel to the Holy Land combined piety and colonial interest, shaping an Orientalist image of a place that was both exotic and sacred.[110] Following the opening of the British Consulate (1838) and then the Suez Canal (1869), Jerusalem became a center of diplomatic, missionary, and tourist activity. Travel arrangements by travel agencies such as Thomas Cook's brought in thousands of pilgrims and tourists, while European powers such as Germany vied for political and economic influence.[111] By the end of the 19th century, Palestine had become a crossroads of religion, tourism, and imperial ambition.

The appeal of the center of three monotheistic world religions, as well as the romantic fascination with the "Orient", was probably both a tourist and literary inspiration for Kornelia Kardos. In her texts about Palestine published at the beginning of the 20th century, the author takes on the role of a tourist guide (like Baedecker or Cook), leading the reader on a journey, but instead of practical instructions, she offers literary descriptions of landscapes, historical sites and spiritual impressions, combining itinerary,

[109] Kornelia Kardos, "Kaffee", *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. XXIII, 24. 5. 1914, 923.

[110] Paolo Maggiolini, "Images, Views, and Landscapes of the Holy Land. Catholic and Protestant Travels to Ottoman Palestine during the 19th Century", in: *QUEST. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, Milano: Fondazione CDEC, 2013, No. 6, 20-22.

[111] Hasan Ali Polat, Aytuğ Arslan, "The rise of popular tourism in the Holy Land: Thomas Cook and John Mason Cook's enterprise skills that shaped the travel industry", in: *Tourism Management,* London: Elsevier Ltd, 2019, No. 75, 232-235.

biblical references and a sensitive perception of space.[112]

The description of the itinerary begins from Port Said and Jaffa to Jerusalem, Bethlehem and the surrounding holy places, mentioning the journey by ships, trains and carriages, and the hotel accommodation where Europeans stay, which contrasts with the local everyday life in its comfort. The texts often use the first-person plural, which suggests that the author experienced the journey as part of a pilgrimage group, conveying not only the presence in the group but also the collective memory and feelings of pilgrimage – the awe, spiritual inspiration and emotions that arise when visiting holy places. The topos of biblical and holy places dominate the texts and form the core of the itinerary: the valley where David killed Goliath, the Mount of Offense where Solomon offered sacrifices to pagan gods, the tombs of Absalom and Jacob, the Way of Passion along the Mount of Olives, the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, the Dome of the Rock, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Chapel of the Ascension and the Jordan River.[113] Kardos not only describes the geographical layout, but also powerfully conveys the emotional experience of the traveler at each of these places: "The thought that from this narrow space the history of humanity received an impetus that extended to all the countries of the world is so strong that no one can resist it."[114] A visit to the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, the Dome of the Rock, and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem further deepens the emotional experience, where the author describes in detail the rituals and piety of the pilgrims: "In the hall is a marble slab on which the body of Christ was once laid and anointed," and the pilgrims "stand shoulder to shoulder in the church halls, chapels, and crypts, where they impatiently await that

[112] These are: "Das heilige Land", *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. XIV, 23. 4. 1905; "Im gelobten Land", *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. XVIII, 11. 4. 1909; "Ostertage in Jerusalem", *Neuigkeits Welt-Blatt*, No. 66, 20. 3. 1913.

[113] The same itinerary was also offered in Cook's tourist guide. See: H. A. Polat, A. Arslan, "The rise of popular tourism in the Holy Land", 234.

[114] Kornelia Kardos, "Ostertage in Jerusalem", *Neuigkeits Welt-Blatt*, No. 66, 20. 3. 1913, 21.

solemn moment."[115] Romantic descriptions of nature and landscape, such as the Mount of Olives, the Judean Desert, and the Jordan Valley, serve as an emotional framework for the experience of biblical places: "Herbs of all kinds emit intoxicating fragrances, and a deep peace overwhelms us upon entering this beautiful place", thus combining the geographical and spiritual dimensions of travel.[116]

Kardos records in detail the diversity of the population and social dynamics in Palestine, with particular emphasis on the censuses of Jaffa (20,000) and Bethlehem (10,000). In Jerusalem, she describes Arabs, "curly-haired" Jews, veiled harem women, soldiers, Turks, foreigners, officers on horseback, camels, mules, while in the Easter processions, Muslims, Jews, Maronites, Copts, Greeks and Romans are mentioned.[117] In Bethlehem, the author notes alleys and shops that resemble those in Jaffa in their uniformity, while the only particularly developed industry is the production of religious objects – crosses, amulets, rosaries and similar accessories for pilgrims. At the same time, the Jewish poor are present, and the author also mentions half-grown boys as guides or street vendors, as well as Bedouins, Ethiopians, Persians, Moroccans and harem ladies, which shows the colorful and vivid social mosaic of Palestine in the early 20th century. Such demographic recording shows the author's tendency to document the social and ethnic layers of the area through which she travels, and she is particularly fascinated by the Arabs, whose everyday activities and the external appearance is depicted with a mixture of admiration and exoticism – from the robes and headscarves to the way of participating in processions and everyday life.

She refers a couple times to Goethe's work "Kindred Spirits", from which she highlights the indicative quote: "It is inherent in nature to communicate", thereby attempting to interpret the space of Palestine in an introspective and subjective manner, through the prism of inner feeling and

[115] Kornelia Kardos, "Das heilige Land", *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. XIV, 23. 4. 1905, 747.

[116] Ibidem.

[117] Ibidem.

aesthetic contemplation.[118] Goethe's thought reflects one of the central principles of Romantic poetics – the understanding of nature as a medium of inner expression, a mediator between the outer world and the inner life of the traveler. In this framework, the author also invokes the figure of the "sensitive traveler" – perhaps herself – who becomes "enchantedly attached to this land, and the imagination tirelessly seeks to satisfy its thoughts, either by returning to the past or by anticipating the future. However, these momentary restless diversions are only the consequence of the strong ability of this region to leave a deep impression."[119] This intertextual connection testifies to the application of romantic poetics in her writing: Kardos combines the sensitive perception of natural and historical landscapes with the emotional response to biblical and religious places, creating a literary experience in which personal emotions merge with ethnographic and religious observations, while Palestine becomes a space where subjective experience and documentary precision harmoniously intertwine.

In the feuilletons about Morocco, similarly to the text about Constantinople, Kardos begins with a political framework: Morocco "has often been before our eyes and has become closer to us due to political events in recent times."[120] In this she alludes to the circumstances of the acquisition of the French protectorate over the country (1912). However, here too she distances herself from political, masculine writing and instead chooses to present "small, lesser-known cultural sketches and glimmers of light – intended to illuminate the world of the Orient even more deeply for us".[121] This puts the female domain of experience and sensibility in the foreground, focused on everyday customs, rituals, people and intimate scenes of life in Tangier.

Arriving at the port evokes romantic and intertextual comparisons: "(...) mountain peaks emerge from the colored morning mists, the sunlight

[118] Kornelia Kardos, "Im gelobten Land", *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. XVIII, 11. 4. 1909, 655.
[119] Ibidem.
[120] Kornelia Kardos, "Marokkanische Kulturbilder", *Linzer Tages-Post*, No. 205, 8. 9. 1912, 18.
[121] Ibidem.

flickers like a filigree embroidery over the green peaks of the mountain masses whose oblong terraces gradually descend all the way to the sea – as if the landscape wants to become a fantastic fairy tale, reviving scenes from the fairy-tale world of Harun al-Rashid."[122] But as soon as she steps into the city, Kardos emphasizes the contrast and generalization: "(...) in the rose bushes are the rotting carcasses of dead animals, and piles of garbage, bones, ashes and ruins obstruct the passage, in the most interesting places you can see the corpses of dogs and cats, or live, starving specimens creep around them, wandering among the garbage – scenes of misery that can only be found in the Orient."[123] *The Orient*, as she constantly calls it, is a place of contradiction in her feuilletons – a fairy-tale exterior contrasted with decay, unhygienic conditions, and fanaticism.

The center of Tangier is the Souk-el-Barra square, also a fairground where: "There is no more picturesque picture than the colorful human chaos that stirs and rolls up and down there during the weekly markets. What life and bustle spread through these peculiar trading houses!"[124] Kardos also describes a kaleidoscope of folk types: "large Bedouins with double keffiyehs, Moors with white turbans, picturesquely draped in flowing linen or silk haiks, dark bronze faces of the Shilluks, Turks, thin Berbers and dark-skinned black Africans; among them push and haggle the kermashies (carpet sellers), maskets (large spice merchants), Persians with high hats from the Shiite prophetic cities and Luria merchants from the caravanserais; but there is no shortage of warrior figures in this crowd: soldiers with long rifles over their arms and curved daggers at their belts – foot soldiers or horsemen – fighters for the faith of the prophets."[125]

She particularly emphasizes sacred space and religious customs. Mausoleums and tombs are presented as places of faith in healing power: "... pieces of clothing are often found on stone tombs – torn robes – because it is

[122] Kornelia Kardos, "Kulturbilder aus Tanger", *Die Drau*, No. 20, 25. 1. 1913, 1.

[123] Ibidem.

[124] K. Kardos, "Marokkanische Kulturbilder", *Linzer Tages-Post*, No. 205, 8. 9. 1912, 18.

[125] Ibidem.

believed that a sick part of the body can be healed if it touches the cloth of the grave."[126] Because of such beliefs, the European traveler "does not feel much attraction to these places." The figure of the Wali, the holy beggar, is grotesque – "a skeleton with a silver beard", "full of amulets", "with a gaze blurred by hashish", whom the faithful approach kissing the torn robe.[127]

The celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad is described as the pinnacle of popular life, but also as a chaotic, almost threatening scene. Kardos describes this "Fantasy" in detail – riders in colorful uniforms who shoot off volleys at full gallop, while "gunpowder and smoke spread like black clouds over a sea of white turbans".[128] Delighted by the masses, she feels disgust at the same time: "Nowhere does Islam show such repulsive fanaticism as in Morocco. Here the religion of hallucinations and persecutory fervor reigns".[129] The sound of drums and oboes, "howls that tear the night like the groans of the tortured dead", completely determines the atmosphere of the festivities.[130]

The most gruesome scene, she considers, is the ritual of the Aissaoua brotherhood. Dervishes fall into a trance, "one man wraps a snake around his neck and bites its tail, while the crowd roars in religious frenzy."[131] Kardos repeatedly calls this scene "repulsive," emphasizing that here the "Orient" is exposed in its most terrible fanaticism. She also emphasizes the element of cruelty in other customs – for example, in the circumcision procession, the boy is "more a victim than a celebrant," sitting in a saddle, and at the head of the procession, he is followed by men dancing and "letting out wild cries and firing rifle shots."[132]

[126] K. Kardos, "Kulturbilder aus Tanger", *Die Drau*, No. 20, 25. 1. 1913, 2.

[127] Ibidem.

[128] K. Kardos, "Marokkanische Kulturbilder", *Linzer Tages-Post*, No. 205, 8. 9. 1912, 19.

[129] K. Kardos, "Kulturbilder aus Tanger", *Die Drau*, No. 20, 25. 1. 1913, 2.

[130] K. Kardos, "Marokkanische Kulturbilder", *Linzer Tages-Post*, No. 205, 8. 9. 1912, 19.

[131] K. Kardos, "Kulturbilder aus Tanger", *Die Drau*, No. 20, 25. 1. 1913, 2.

[132] K. Kardos, "Marokkanische Kulturbilder", *Linzer Tages-Post*, No. 205, 8. 9. 1912, 19.

The position of women is illustratively marked by the image of confinement, imprisonment and stereotyping. In the wedding procession, the bride is hidden by a palanquin: "a temporary cage, which is only transferred to another cage to please her master, for a year or two at most, and then gives way to another".[133] Women in Tangier appear as "silent and veiled shadows, always closed, always hidden".[134] Kardos also draws a comparison with the European context here: "The mysterious nightlife of large cities is often described, with horrific scenes of love crimes and broken hearts. But an oriental place does not have to be a metropolis to give rise to similar images at every turn, because under the Moroccan sky a woman's heart is deprived of happiness in love."[135]

Despite the constant expression of aversion to fanaticism and unhygienic conditions, positive descriptions in a lyrical vein occasionally appear. At Cap Malabit, where the European colonial quarter is located, everything is "framed by southern vegetation", where "far from the dear homeland, one daydreams on a terrace covered with plants, surrendering to the magic of Moorish evenings."[136] At night, a mandolin is heard, and "the hand that plays the instrument is clearly not oriental, because the singing is too warm and the chords too harmonious" – which introduces a moment of beauty and longing, but also of difference.[137] In this way, Kardos clearly draws a line: fairy-tale beauty and harmony belong to European culture, while the "Orient" remains a space of "mysticism, superstition and fanaticism".

As a traveler and cultural mediator, Kardos shapes an ambivalent identity position in her texts about the "distant Orient" in which a romantic-tourist approach to writing intertwines with an attempt at ethnographic documentary and personal introspection. Her descriptions of harems, holy places in Palestine, Constantinople rituals and Moroccan customs rely on exotic

[133] K. Kardos, "Kulturbilder aus Tanger", *Die Drau*, No. 20, 25. 1. 1913, 2.

[134] K. Kardos, "Marokkanische Kulturbilder", *Linzer Tages-Post*, No. 205, 8. 9. 1912, 19.

[135] K. Kardos, "Kulturbilder aus Tanger", *Die Drau*, No. 20, 25. 1. 1913, 2.

[136] K. Kardos, "Marokkanische Kulturbilder", *Linzer Tages-Post*, No. 205, 8. 9. 1912, 19.

[137] K. Kardos, "Kulturbilder aus Tanger", *Die Drau*, No. 20, 25. 1. 1913, 2.

motifs of luxury, sensuality and fanaticism, but at the same time include factual details and subjective impressions that make her voice authentic and distinctive. It should be emphasized that some texts are explicitly marked as travel memories, which makes their credibility difficult to prove and additionally emphasizes the dimension of fictionalization, unlike, for example, the more realistic documentary tone in some texts by Čop Marlet. As a woman who enters public space, Kardos builds authority precisely through gender-coded registers of the intimate and aesthetic, and her emancipation does not exclude subjection to social expectations but rather intertwines with them. Thus, a discourse emerges in which fascination and distance, exoticization and critical observations function simultaneously, confirming but also reshaping the Orientalist imaginary and revealing the complex, hybrid position of the female travel writer in the late Austrian cultural space.

After the Congress of Berlin (1878), when Austria-Hungary took over Bosnia and Herzegovina, tourism became a means of political and cultural legitimization of the new government. The Austro-Hungarian administration sought to change the perception of the country as "wild" and dangerous, promoting it as a desirable, safe and modernized destination.[138] During the administration of Benjamin Kallay, tourism developed as part of an economic and ideological project – through the construction of railways, hotels, and the publication of travelogues that portrayed Bosnia as an oriental-romantic, but civilized country.[139] The establishment of the Bosnian Herzegovinian *Tourist Club* (1892) and promotional publications confirm that tourism promotion played an important role in the Habsburg strategy of justifying the occupation, Europeanization and cultural representation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.[140]

[138] See: Edin Hajdarpasic, *Whose Bosnia?: Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840-1914*, Ithaca – New York: Cornell University Press, 2015, 189-192.

[139] See: Ross Cameron, "'An Oriental Holiday': constructing Bosnia and Herzegovina as a destination in British tourist literature, c. 1890-1914", in: *Journal of Tourism History*, London: Taylor & Francis, 2023, No. 15, 236-237.

[140] See: Sonja M. Dujmović, "Osnove i smjernice razvoja turizma u Bosni i Hercegovini do 1914.",

Kornelia Kardos's texts on Bosnia and Herzegovina can also be viewed through the lens of promoting a "new tourist country". In the article "Unsere jungsten Provinzen" (1908) and the feuilleton "Bilder aus Bosnien" (1910), Kardos presents Bosnia and Herzegovina as a space that is simultaneously an exotic "Orient" and an imperially modernized tourist destination, with the years of publication symbolically linked to the political context. The year 1908 symbolizes the annexation and legitimization of the "civilizing mission" through railways, hotels and health resorts: "Since, however, the first impetus for cultural development was given, and since this country also received its railways and comfortable hotels, a new life has begun, so to speak – and Bosnia has become a new domain for pleasure-seeking travelers, a new tourist country."[141] On the other hand, 1910 marks, after the emperor's visit, a further confirmation of imperial authority: "Since our monarch has visited Bosnia, our new provinces are currently arousing ever greater interest."[142]

The description of the travel itinerary (Ragusa–Mostar–Sarajevo–Ilidža–Jajce–Banja Luka) is structured around the railway and modern roads, with the means of transport symbolizing progress and civilizational intervention. Nature is depicted with melancholy, with classic Romantic tropes of picturesque landscapes and topos such as mosques and minarets emerging as "light paintings from past times", thus affirming Bosnia as an exotic "Orient". The author presents Mostar as a "peculiar mixture of old Oriental life with true Asian neglect", where the visually impressive "Roman bridge" contrasts with dilapidated mosques, dirty alleys and shacks.[143] Kardos also describes it as a starting point for further experiences: from here the journey continues towards Sarajevo and its panoramic

in: *Historijska misao*, Tuzla: Odsjek za historiju Filozofskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Tuzli, 2024, No. 10, 65-111.

[141] K. Kardos, "Unsere jungsten Provinzen", *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. XVIII, 22. 11. 1908, 197.

[142] K. Kardos, "Bilder aus Bosnien", *Die Drau*, No. 187, 18. 6. 1910, 2.

[143] K. Kardos, "Unsere jungsten Provinzen", *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. XVIII, 22. 11. 1908, 198.

views from the muezzin's balcony, towards Jajce and its Pliva waterfall, and through Banja Luka and its Trappist monastery.

Comparisons of the Bosnian mountain landscape with the Austrian or Swiss Alps facilitate the reader's identification with familiar landscapes but also imply the inclusion of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the European political space. Kardos also emphasizes topos such as the cemetery and the bazaar as a synecdoche of the "Orient". The panoramic view from the muezzin's balcony allows for contemplation and at the same time sublimates the entire landscape: "All around are lush, fertile plains green and fragrant (…) when the view encompasses the entire picture of Sarajevo (…) only one thought arises: what must it have looked like here before the occupation?"[144]

Historical depictions of cities connect space with specific personalities and events. In Jajce, Stjepan Tomašević, the last Bosnian king executed in 1463, is mentioned, which gives the city symbolic weight as the seat of royal history and natural wonders. Mehmed-pascha Sokolović, Omer-pascha, Husein-captain Gradaščević and Gazi Husrev-bey appear in Sarajevo, highlighting the continuity of the Islamic elite and local authorities in shaping urban and cultural history, but through the perspective of an Austro-Hungarian observer who exoticizes the city and justifies imperial intervention. Stereotypes of religious fanaticism and "oriental semi-culture" provide cultural and political legitimization to the Austro-Hungarian intervention. The ambivalence of the depiction is evident in the description of Islam and temples: the simplicity and modesty of mosques contrast with the expectations of the European visitor, which ensures exoticism and fascination, while at the same time justifying "civilizational" interest.

Women's spaces and objects, such as the *mindar* and *muscharabi*, are particularly described, where the exoticism of private life is depicted through the contrast between inner intimacy and invisibility to the outside, while the public space of the bazaar and cultural landmarks allows for the observation of the "original" way of life and tourist attraction: "Whoever

[144] K. Kardos, "Unsere jungsten Provinzen", *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. XVIII, 22. 11. 1908, 198..

today feels the desire to travel there (...) can now indulge in the passion of travel in the most comfortable way possible and fully enjoy that experience."[145] Ilidza and its bathing life further illustrate the combination of Western and Oriental elements, and natural phenomena, such as the Pliva Waterfall in Jajce, emphasize the spectacular beauty of Bosnia and the potential for tourist enjoyment.

Romantic poetics permeate the text through melancholic landscapes of mountain massifs, rivers, waterfalls and cities such as Mostar, Sarajevo and Jajce, while nature and historical motifs evoke sentimental reflection and a sense of eternal changeability: Goethe's quote further legitimizes the perception of natural grandeur and the imperial mission: "Nature is everything. – Past and future do not exist for her. – She is a whole, and yet unfinished – and the present is her eternity."[146] Both texts thus function doubly: as romantic tourist guides and as propaganda texts of imperial culture, oscillating between fascination with landscape, historical continuity, exoticism and imperial legitimation.

In conclusion, it can be said that the identity of Kornelia Kardos in the texts is shaped through the perpetuation of existing orientalist discourses, the ambivalence of the depiction of the *Other,* but also the imperial rhetoric of the Austro-Hungarian "civilizing mission". Specifically, the author balances between emancipation and submission to social and imperial norms, but while the "distant Orient" remains incompletely tamed and inaccessible, the "close to home Orient" appears as a space that can be civilized and in which it is possible to intervene through infrastructure, education and cultural policy, confirming her cultural authority and loyalty to the Monarchy.[147] The power of such discourses lies precisely in their

[145] K. Kardos, "Bilder aus Bosnien", *Die Drau*, No. 187, 18. 6. 1910, 2.

[146] Ibidem, 5.

[147] In this case, similarities can be seen with the views of the Austro-Hungarian policymakers on the "distant" and "close to home" *Orient*, which were mentioned earlier. See: J. Heiss, J. Feichtinger, "Distant neighbours: Uses of orientalism in the late nineteenth-century Austro-Hungarian empire", 157, 159.

ability to connect the fascination with exotic and aesthetic pleasure with the ideological legitimization of imperial presence, while simultaneously shaping the hybrid position of the female travel writer who balances between apparent criticism and ideological loyalty.

Conclusion

The travel writing of Mara Čop Marlet and Kornelia Kardos developed in a period of intense mobility, media expansion and imperial self-representation of late Austria-Hungary. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Austria-Hungary emerged as a regional power with a strong interest in the South-Eastern and Mediterranean areas, and the process of modernization, colonial expansion and journalistic professionalization opened new, but also limited, opportunities for public activity to women. Technical progress – the steamboat, the railway, popular guides and photographic technology – made travel more accessible, while the feuilleton became one of the forms of cultural communication and shaping the imagination about "other" spaces. In this framework, they are authors who use the genre of travel writing and the form of feuilleton as a space of self-affirmation and exit from the private sphere, but also as a means of participating in the imperial discourses of knowledge. Their texts, published in prominent Viennese and regional newspapers, function within a network that simultaneously shapes a female audience, popularizes the idea of the *Orient*, and legitimizes the "civilizing mission" of the Monarchy. In this complex socio-cultural and media context, Mara Čop Marlet and Kornelia Kardos travel, observe, and write – as women, as Europeans, and as participants in the imperial project of representing the "Other."

The analysis of their travel writing showed that their (textual) identities were formed at the intersection of gender, culture and imperial power. Their texts reveal a process of constant negotiation between personal emancipation and belonging to the dominant European discourse, within which women gain public visibility through the act of traveling and writing. For both

authors, travel writing functions as a space of self-affirmation and cultural legitimation – a means through which they can assume the role of observer, interpreter and mediator between cultures. In this sense, their texts not only construct images of the *Orient*, but also the figure of the author – a woman who observes, interprets and produces knowledge. While the "distant Orient" – Algeria, Turkey, Palestine and Morocco – remains fascinating, but distant and partially inaccessible, the "close to home Orient" – Bosnia and Herzegovina – enables the authors to intervene, encourages their legitimation of the cultural and political mission of the Monarchy, and confirms the authority of observers and interpreters. Both employ strategies of exoticization and moral judgment, adapted to local and temporal contexts.

The identity that emerges from these texts is not stable, but hybrid and multi-layered: it is created at the intersection of the private and the public, of criticism, empathy and distance. The authors simultaneously use existing orientalist tropes and repurpose them to articulate their own voices within the male intellectual and cultural sphere. In this way, their writing functions as a double discursive act – participating in the imperial project and reshaping it from within. The authors' identity is formed through the gaze, but also through the awareness that this gaze is determined by gender and cultural boundaries. Through the feuilleton form – at once personal and public, fragmentary and reflexive – Čop Marlet and Kardos shape themselves as subjects of knowledge and experience, confirming that female travel writing in the Monarchy was a space of self-affirmation within socially prescribed gender boundaries, which simultaneously limited and encouraged their authorial position.

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IMPERIJALNIM OČIMA: ŽENE, PUTOPISNI ZAPISI I ORIJENT U KASNOIMPERIJALNOJ AUSTRO-UGARSKOJ

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