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ORIENTALISM AND THE EASTERN EUROPEAN PERIPHERY

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Abstract

This paper starts by discussing the specific use of Orientalism in the Romanian culture. Focus is laid upon the Romanian scholar Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723), the first Christian historian who was allowed to use the Ottoman archives for his work. Then Ienăchiţă Văcărescu or Kelemen Mikes offer alternative Orientalist discourses. Unfortunately, Said's seminal essay neglects everything that is East of Vienna in terms of Orientalism. Criticizing the binary opposition West-Orient, in fact Said reiterates it in his work by neglecting the Eastern European periphery. The conclusion is that Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) offers interesting examples of Orientalisms where the power relationships are constructed differently.

Keywords: *Orientalism, Said, Dimitrie Cantemir, periphery, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).*

PROLEGOMENA

Undoubtedly, Edward Said's essay *Orientalism* is one of the most seminal essays in literary theory and cultural studies. This, however, does not mean that Said cannot be challenged and that he was not challenged. Probably, one of the most interesting theorists who started from Said and then, somehow, turned against him, enriching his work is Aijaz Ahmad. Ahmad's collection *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* raises the problem of the Orientals' resistance to the imperialist discourse, the appearance of the notion of "third world literature" being one such literary and political strategy.

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Said's orientalism can be particularly interesting when we analyse the Balkans – a periphery that was not even perceived to belong to Europe in the eighteenth century when the Orientalist discourse appeared in the West. Maria Todorova's idea that the Balkans are a geo-cultural area that is partially orientalised, as well as Milica Bakić-Hayden's notion of nesting Orientalisms are interesting and well-known contributions from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to the study of Orientalism as an instrument of ideological and symbolical power.

EDWARD SAID[1]

According to the well-known definition by Edward Said, Orientalism is a discourse of power, a way of containing the Other. Orientalism is a sort of corporate institution that includes discursive practices meant to install a Western authority capable to give a certain understanding of the Orient, a certain dominion over the Orient. A first objection to Said's definition has to do with the geographical structure of the Orient. Said is not able to use the map; he does not distinguish between, for instance, the Middle East and the Far East, although the discrepancies between these areas are immense. Conversely, overwhelmed by the harsh realities of his roots, Said always has in mind the Middle East when he refers to the Orient. Criticizing the imperialistic perspective of the West, Said reproduces the same unilateral way of producing knowledge. He wrote his essay from a bipolar perspective: the Orient and the West. The space that exists west of Vienna and east of Russia does not exist for Said. The bibliography that he uses in order to define the West includes only French, British, German, Italian, and Russian sources. Said's Orient is looked at with imperial eyes. Actually, Said refers to Eastern Europe only once, very briefly, in the final part of his essay, when he drags his demonstration to the contemporary post-World War II world. The opposition East/West is clear-cut in Said's essay work. The complex, in-between position of Eastern Europe is not dealt with at all, nor is it understood. Arguing against Western impositions, in fact Said reproduces them. Said's gaze is the imperial gaze that is only attracted by the grand discourses, by the grand oppositions. Said's Orient is passive to the imposition of Euro-Atlantic subordinating discursive practices. While pretending to talk for the Orient, Said actually talks for the Centre mimicking a marginal position.

Even a superficial historical overview can reveal that the Orientalist discourse owes a lot to the inside-out perspectives of the Eastern Europeans, the

[1] Fragments from this chapter were published in "Orientalisms", Dictionary *of Literary Biography: Orientalist Writers*, vol. 336. Ed. Coeli Fitzpatrick and Dwayne A. Tunstall. Gale, Cengage Learning, 2012, pp. 340-343.

Europeans who were the first to get in touch with the adversarial East, the Ottoman Empire.

ORIENTALISM WITHOUT SAID

The Romanian scholar Mircea Muthu relies only on Todorova in his contribution to what he calls "Balkanology", a term very much in use in Romanian scholarship. In a complex triadic analysis of Oriental and Orientalized discourses in the Balkans and their influence upon Romanian literature, Mircea Muthu defines the Balkans as a "descriptive and categorical" (79)[2] area, a space particularly closed, an "adiabatic" (81) system whose historical connection with Byzantium is fundamental for its understanding. Although Muthu's study came out years after Said's seminal essay, the Palestinian scholar is not mentioned and his essay does not appear in the bibliography. The only explanation should be found – in my opinion – in the reluctance of many Romanian scholars to step into what is viewed as a dangerous research space: the connection between post-colonial studies and periphery studies. Although power is the basic force that forges these spatial divisions, many Romanian scholars prefer to see themselves and their culture as an indestructible part of the West instead of realizing their much more complex position in relation to a West that is certainly hegemonic, but not uniform. In fact, in Mircea Muthu's otherwise very comprehensive study, the term Orientalism is mentioned only in a quotation from Al. Duţu who recommended that we understand Byzantinism as "a mixture of *Orientalism or Balkanism*" (I, 83). This "impurity" of the Balkans situates them somehow outside a clear-cut opposition between the Occident and the Orient, where the Orient is Baroque, structural fatalism, a-temporality, non-productive contemplation, stillness, ornamentation, descriptiveness, lacking verb and action[3]. While differentiating the Far East – China, for instance – and the Arabic-Islamic space, Muthu insists on the specificity of a South-Eastern space that was under Ottoman influence. The Romanian scholar realizes, in the conclusion to his essay, that

> "the intended or incidental equivalences between *Balkanism*, *Byzantinism*, and *Orientalism* come, on the one hand, from the distorted knowledge of South-Eastern and Oriental history, and, on the other hand, from the Eurocentric mechanisms…" (87).

[2] All Romanian quotations have been translated by Mihaela Mudure.
[3] See Muthu, I, 85.

Without referring to Said, Muthu hovers on the Palestinian scholar's critique of Orientalism as a Eurocentric instrument of power. At the same time, he insists very efficiently on the existence of a specific Orientalism in the Balkans.

DIMITRIE CANTEMIR[4]

The positionality of Romanian culture in connection to the West and the East is not a new issue. Probably one of the most complex answers to this question was already given in the eighteenth century by Romanian prince and scholar Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723). If we look at the scholarship produced on Cantemir since 1979 when *Orientalism* was published, (Dragoş Moldovan, 1997; Adriana Babeţi, 1998; Dan Horia Mazilu, 2001; Nicolae Dascălu, 2003; Ecaterina Ţarălungă, 2004; Cimpoi, Balmuş, Korolevski, 2008; Andrei Eşanu (ed.), 2008; Angela Botez, 2011; Tudor Dinu, 2011; Bogdan Creţu, 2012; Ovidiu Pecican et al., 2012; Manuela Tănăsescu, 2012; Maria Gheorghian, 2013; Ştefan Lemny, 2013; Petre P. Panaitescu (ed.), 2014; Elvira Sorohan, 2014; etc.), we can surprisingly find out that it mainly analyzes Cantemir's work from a historical, literary or philosophical perspective. No connection between Cantemir and the nascent Orientalist discourse of the eighteenth century is made.

Said does not mention Dimitrie Cantemir as one of his sources. However, the English version of Cantemir's *History of the Ottoman Empire* was extremely popular in the West. During the eighteenth century and turn of the nineteenth century, Cantemir was the main source of Oriental information for the Western general public and specialists or statesmen. The study was so influential because it presented an insider's perspective of this disquieting neighbour of Europe: the Ottoman Empire. How did Cantemir come to offer this perspective? What are the main lines of his Oriental ideological construct?

Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723) was the younger son of Constantin Cantemir, the then prince of Moldavia. In 1688, at the age of 15, Cantemir was sent to Istanbul according to the customs of the epoch. Although treated with utmost respect, Cantemir was, in fact, a political hostage. His presence in Istanbul was meant to guarantee his father's political loyalty towards the Ottoman Empire. Intelligent and thirsty for knowledge, Dimitrie Cantemir did not waste his time in Istanbul; he studied at the Academy of the Orthodox Patriarchy and got immersed into Turkish culture. He became fluent in Turkish and studied Arabic. Cantemir made good contacts with important officials from the Ottoman court and got

[4] An earlier version of this chapter was published in Mihaela Mudure's article: "Dimitrie Cantemir' Orientalism: A Specific Centre/Periphery Paradigm" *Centre(s) et pérphérie(s). Les Lumières de Belfast à Beijing. Centre(s) and margins. Enlightenment from Belfast to Beijing*, ed. Marie-Christine Skuncke. Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003, pp. 93-100.

permission to study the Turkish archives. It was the first time that such favour was granted upon a Christian. Europe could finally pry into the secrets of the Ottoman Court. Although Cantemir was not allowed to take notes and had to memorize the information that he gathered in the archives, his credibility overpassed all the other previous sources about the Ottoman Empire. Cantemir later used this information in his famous history of the Ottoman Empire (*Historia incremenatorum atque decrementorum Aulae Othomanicae*). The access to Ottoman sources explains the success of Cantemir's *History* in the West, as well as its enduring fame. The discourse of power of Orientalism was supported by the discourse of authenticity that an Eastern European scholar could offer much more easily because of his cultural and geographical proximity to the Oriental Other.

Cantemir's Orientalism would evolve from the level of philosophy and patterns of thought in his essay *The Divan, the Wise Man's Squabble with the World or the Judgement between the Soul and the Body* to attitudes and metaphors as expressed in his *Hierogliphic History* to scientific premises in *Descriptio Moldaviae* and in his *History of the Ottoman Empire* or in *The System and the Structure of the Muslim Religion*, his presentation of Islam. It is an evolution in accordance to the spirit of the age, confident that science can give solutions and the scientific discourse is the most truthful. Cantemir's most important Oriental and Orientalizing work is his *History of the Growth and Decadence of the Ottoman Empire*. This study was written from 1714 to 1716 while Cantemir was a political exile in Russia. After becoming the Prince of Moldavia with Ottoman political support, Cantemir made an alliance with Peter the Great against the Ottoman Empire. In the juridical lexis of the time, he became a "villain". In the battle of Stănileşti (1711), Peter the Great and Cantemir were defeated by the Ottomans. Cantemir had to leave the country in disgrace, actually hidden in a wine barrel. For the remaining years of his life (1711-1723) he would be Peter the Great' s Orientalist thanks to his excellent knowledge of Turkish and Arabic but he would never be allowed to approach the boundaries of Moldavia again. Not even when he wanted to meet incognito his brother, Antioch, who had come to meet him. Cantemir wrote his work while in exile in Russia and tried to convince the Western world about the weakness of the Sublime Porte. For Cantemir, it was imperative to prove the decadence of the Ottoman Empire because in this way he both served his great and impetuous Russian host and he could hope to come back to power in his own country, Moldova, this time with Christian help. His study records the growing decadence of the Ottoman Empire and the increasing superiority of Europe. Cantemir's hidden message is that freedom was possible for the smaller peoples that momentarily were in the orbit of the Ottomans.

Cantemir's description of the harem and its rules, the privileges of the sultan's mother or the position of the sultan's numerous concubines imply the

superiority of European mores. It is impossible even for a doctor to see a female patient from the harem (457-458); the gender prejudice is more powerful even than the patient's good health. The description of the Ottoman judicial system (584), Ottoman official clothes (610), finances (613), entertainments or medicine, the details about the Ottoman etiquette at court (737) or the anecdotes about the sultans make up a picturesque image of the Other. Humour gives a pleasant touch to a discourse with a hidden political agenda. See, for instance, the anecdote about Sultan Suleiman the Great who was unable to distinguish between a cake and a fish (634). Cantemir's authorial idea is to give an informative picture and surreptitiously pass attitudes about the ignoble Other that deserves, of course, to be defeated and thrown away from the forefront of global geopolitical power. Very important from the point of view of military strategy and tactic is the information that Cantemir gives about the Ottoman army.

Historical records are enriched by episodes where the author's personal participation enlivens the atmosphere and humanizes the Other. For instance, Cantemir talks about his personal friendship with Hasnear Ibahim Pasha whom he often invited to his house to enjoy a cup of wine, an enjoyment otherwise severely forbidden by Islamic rules (465). A position of superiority is also implied here: drinking wine is one of those absurd attitudes that only a backward, illogical people, like the Oriental peoples could forbid. The picture Cantemir gives of the Ottoman Empire is amazingly rich, due to his own personal contact with Ottoman politics and way of life. But there is always a political agenda behind the knowledge that Cantemir shares with his readers. Firstly, the Ottomans are less strong than the Western World thinks they are, secondly, the moral fallible nature of the Ottoman should be a moral justification for the Western world's intervention against the Ottoman Empire. The Turks are gullible, debauched, and naïve in their religious beliefs. Consequently, they bury their dead without waiting for the three days to lapse between the day of death and the day of the burial, which points to a culture where a possible murder could be hidden more quickly. According to Cantemir's description, the Ottomans are superstitious, treacherous, not to be trusted in personal matters, they always violate the treaties they sign, they give mocking names to all the other peoples, they always add a mocking name to the Christians they have contacts with, they are lazy, money is their only true God, they mock at the disabilities brought about by old age, they have bad feelings towards the sultans who enjoy hunting.

The episode about Saint Parascheva's relics being fetched to Moldavia is highly significant for Cantemir's Orientalism and his use of cultural clichés. For money the Ottoman would do even what is forbidden by their religion. The Ottoman rule forbids the transportation of a corpse more than three miles, but the right number of plump gold purses filled with gold solves the problem (see 542) and Saint Parascheva is safely brought to Iași, the capital of Moldavia.

In all of Cantemir's *History* there is only one negative episode concerning Western Christians. In 1203 the Venetians, "otherwise the most cultivated in Italy" (557) destroyed ancient remains in Athens. Cantemir deplores this lack of respect for the past, which he explains by the antagonism between the two branches of European Christianity, the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox. Cantemir's Orientalism shrewdly combines fear, respect for the Ottoman imperial religious policy and Romanian ethnocentric pride under the mask of humility towards the Ottoman sovereign power. "Thus we should thank the good willing providence that the Ottoman Empire so strong and fearful (which forcibly submitted all the lands once conquered by the Romans in Asia, not a small part of Europe, which contained Hungary and Serbia, and Bulgaria, and many other countries, and submitted the shrewd people of the Greeks) could not force such an uneducated and weak people [as the Romanian people] to submit and whenever it dared to fight against the yoke it had received willingly, [the Ottoman Empire] did not change its civil or religious practices" (792). Cantemir appreciates the fact that forced conversions to Islam did not happen in Moldavia. At the same time, yielding to the Ottoman power is the wisest policy, from the Romanian perspective. A very diplomatic position!

Descriptio Moldaviae, Dimitrie Cantemir's next study, was written from 1714 to 1716, at the request of the Academy of Berlin. This work is significant for the cultural models common in the Balkans. *Descriptio Moldaviae* is an ethnographic presentation of the Moldavian lands for the Western eye. It is the description of a margin of Christianity under the Ottoman hegemony and influence. *Descriptio Moldaviae* presents a *no man's land* under Ottoman hegemony. Cantemir's perspective on the Turks is adversarial. The imagery constantly opposes the Ottomans (notice that their human representation melts into their plurality) to the bull, an emblematic representation of Moldavia, signifying bravery and untamed force. Cantemir discreetly praises the Moldavians' bravery and diplomacy which enabled them to resist the Ottoman Empire. These Moldavians might deserve some support in their assault against this despicable Orient whose only merit is that it does not enforce its religion upon its subjects of other faiths.

Dimitrie Cantemir, one of the most important Romanian scholars and writers of the eighteenth century, can also be considered as one of the founders of Orientalism. His extremely informative history of the Ottoman Empire was one of the first works responsible for what Edward Said would much later call Orientalism. It is interesting that Dimitrie Cantemir identified with the Western gaze while he himself was politically and symbolically torn in between two Eastern empires: the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire. Cantemir's Orientalism hides a political agenda typical of the Balkan cultures. He delineates

the Orient as a decadent Other in order to spur a military offensive to help his own people. Dimitrie Cantemir practised Orientalism as a distribution of global geopolitical awareness, as a desire to belong to Europe, and as an empowerment strategy.

IENĂCHIŢĂ VĂCĂRESCU[5]

Another eighteenth-century Orientalist of Romanian origin was Ienăchiţă Văcărescu (1740-1797), a gifted and prolific writer, a historian from an important aristocratic family. An admirer of Turkish and Arabic culture, Văcărescu would also become a political partisan of the Ottoman Empire. He viewed the Turks as a lesser evil because they allowed Romanian Principalities a certain amount of administrative autonomy and avoided any interference into religious matters in exchange for heavy taxation (the Turks never built mosques north of the Danube, namely in Walachia and Moldova).

Văcărescu plotted against Mavrogheni, another prince of Walachia, and consequently he was sent on exile first to Nicopole, in present-day Bulgaria, and then to the Isle of Rhodes in the Mediterranean. It is during this exile that Văcărescu wrote his *History of the Ottoman Empire*. Although much less known than Cantemir's *History*, it has, however, its own historical importance because it spread a certain image of the Ottoman Empire in Christian milieus. Văcărescu's approach is also an inside-out perspective, like Cantemir' s, but much more benevolent because Văcărescu's political agenda was different. Cantemir's *History* was written in order to make the West aware not only of the power, but also of the weaknesses of the West, from the inside. Văcărescu's perspective on the possible solutions of his country's problems is different: not sheer force, but diplomacy, compliance to the Ottoman material demands in order to save the cultural and spiritual values of the country, in order to avoid any Ottoman intervention in the limited autonomy of the country.

In Văcărescu's book, the historian and the diarist meet. The historical discourse is interrupted by moral considerations about the fickle human fate. Ottoman Law is custom and tradition, and they both seem to rule even above the Sultan. Văcărescu's concern about the superiority of the Ottoman Law (even if idealized) echoes the Enlightenment debates on the relationship between the juridical and the political in a very Montesquieu-like style.

[5] An earlier version of this subchapter was published by Mihaela Mudure under the title: "Ienachiţă Văcărescu - A View on the East" in *The Image of the Other in the Eighteenth Century: Seen from Asia and Europe*, eds. Hisayasu Nakagawa and Jochen Schlobach. Kawai Shuppanhatsbai, 2006, pp. 263-281.

Văcărescu's Orientalism also allows space for multicultural appreciations of the spiritual space offered by Islam for the glorification of Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. Văcărescu insists that his *History*, although written in Romanian and primarily meant for a Romanian readership, also aims at offering a perspective on Islam because it is necessary to know something about "the ethics of the religion of the Empire" (192). He underlines the spiritual and moral values that Islam and Christianity share, the importance of Jesus Christ in Islam. In the afterlife it is Christ, and not Mahomet, who will judge the people's deeds. The competition between Islam and Christianity, if competition be, must be purely spiritual and not supported by political and military means, which Văcărescu considers a violation of the true values of the two religions. Consequently, Văcărescu invokes the positive features of some sultans. The courtier takes the pen from the militant historian. Sultan Mustapha, Văcărescu's contemporary, is a model of political intelligence, wisdom and spirit of justice.

Văcărescu becomes a real political analyst in the passages where he writes about the rising power of Eastern Europe: Russia. The *villainy* of some Romanian officials who played the Russian card instead of the Turkish one in the turmoil of those times is recorded with discretion and secret understanding (250). Nevertheless, the author does not forget to mention the bravery and the patriotic feeling of these *villains* even if they appreciated their country's chances differently.

Văcărescu's description of the Schönbrunn is an Orientalizing response to the descriptions of the sultan's palace. The splendour of the Viennese court that he himself had seen on his diplomatic missions abroad impressed him greatly but only in comparison with the splendour in which the sultans lived. Otherwise, his *History* shows him to be highly suspicious of the Austrian benevolence towards Walachia.

Very discreet about the numerous adversarial moments in the history of the Turkish-Romanian relations, Văcărescu' s Orientalism points to an otherness that might be benevolent, anyway more benevolent than mere Christian solidarity might imply. Both the interests of the country, as Văcărescu understood them, and his personal history obliged him to this perspective. When his father was killed, Văcărescu found refuge with the Turks. He himself was endangered by his fellow Christians. It was in Turkey that he found asylum. Having learnt the Turkish language and being acquainted with Turkish culture, he also tried to nuance his Orientalism with cultural concerns. One cannot understand the Ottoman Empire without having understood Islam and Ottoman culture. Văcărescu is more comfortable with the Oriental power than with any other potential Christian protector. In the political and diplomatic skirmishes among Austria, Russia, and Turkey, he sides with the Turks whom he finds, in the short run, less insidious in

Romanian culture and less pernicious, in the long run. Consequently, he gives religious and cultural reasonings for his political preference.

A short poem inserted in between his Turkish stories, a poem about the "friendly wars" is relevant in this sense. The friendly wars are an expression of the expansion of Christian empires under the disguise of "liberating" smaller countries, in fact only a change of the master.

CANTEMIR AND VĂCĂRESCU: COMPARATIVE ORIENTALISMS

The comparison between the two *Histories* shows the multiple nuances that the Orientalist discourse can get in Eastern European cultures which were primarily confronted with the Ottoman danger. Both Văcărescu and Cantemir wrote from an exilic perspective. Book writing was an escapist strategy and an attempt to find an indirect solution both for the country's problems and for their personal woes. Cantemir wrote his work while in exile in Russia and he wanted to convince the Western world about the weakness of the Sublime Porte. For Cantemir, it was imperative to prove the decadence of the Ottoman Empire. He even included the word “decadence” into the title of his history, but the discursive analysis shows that sometimes the author seems to neglect his own agenda. Let us not forget that Turkey is the country where Cantemir spent most of his childhood and adolescence. Therefore, values of Ottoman culture and civilization also appear in his account of an Ottoman history of increasing and decreasing power and aggression. It is as if the feelings took over the author who forgot about his own agenda while Orientalizing both for the empire that hosted him after he lost the throne of Moldavia and for his own people.

Both Cantemir and Văcărescu are historians and writers. With them history is not only documentation but also the transference of the document into the narrative. Both of them are aware of the lure of Orientalizing and they try to defend their *History* from any accusation of subjectivity. With both, there is some diaristic component in the historical discourse proper. Personal memory is more overtly presented and accepted by Văcărescu. Cantemir only acknowledges personal memories discreetly when he talks about Turkish customs and he admits using his recollections of the Turkish years of his life freely. The art of the portrait is remarkable with both writers. Sultans are not only leaders and historical personalities, but also humans whom the authors want to distinguish through their physical features, habits, tics, or anecdotes about their personal lives.

KELEMEN MIKES

The author of another Orientalizing exilic perspective on Turkey (and not only) was Kelemen Mikes of Zagon (1690-1761), a Hungarian aristocrat born in Szekely land, in present-day Romania, whose life ended in Tekirdag, close to Istanbul, in an exile protected by the Sultan himself. After decades of exile (1711-1761), although old and ill, and on his deathbed, Kelemen Mikes was not allowed by Empress Maria Terezia to return to his beloved Transylvania and die on the land of his Szekler ancestors. He was one of the followers of Prince Francis Rákóczi II, the leader of an important eighteenth-century Hungarian revolt against Austria which incorporated the independent Principality of Transylvania within its borders. The rebels were defeated in 1711 and after initially taking refuge in France, in 1717 they finally found political asylum in the Ottoman Empire led by Sultan Ahmed III. Kelemen Mikes spent the rest of his life in Turkey. For many years he lived in Tekirdag (Rodosto), on the shore of the Marmara Sea. In the last years of his life he was permitted to write to his family, but could not return to die in his ancestral home. Torn by melancholy, but fascinated by the new surrounding realities, from 1717 to 1758 Kelemen Mikes wrote 207 letters to an imaginary aunt, the only remedy he could find in his distress. The letters are not only wonderful examples of exilic sensibility, but also a contribution to the Oriental discourse from the epistemic position of one experiencing Oriental realities on a day to day basis. With Mikes, the Oriental difference becomes the picturesque. Curiosity, eagerness, and longing shape this Oriental discourse. Mikes pays special attention to the local customs, particularly to marriage ceremonies, the relationships between genders, and his Orientalizing eye has the acumen and the curiosities of an ethnographer's. A discreet, but never absent sense of superiority looms between the lines:

> Concerning the town, I may say that for these parts it can be called a fine town, not as broad as it is long. But whatever fine houses there may be here, they cannot seem beautiful, since they have no windows on the street side, especially the Turkish houses, so that their wives shall be unable to look out – what a marvelous thing jealousy is! The market-place of the town is very well supplied – all manner of fowl, fruit, and garden vegetables are cheap here – and before we arrived were all cheaper still. But if we have caused a little increase in prices, we have also brought peace; for the inhabitants themselves say that before we came to where we now live women and girls walked the streets in fear even in the daytime, and any that were discovered out in the evening were snatched away, and can you imagine in what condition they were released? There even

> used to be murders, committed by janissaries, Greeks and Armenians, but now there is not the slightest mention of them. Whoever goes out of an evening has nothing to fear. True, there are a goodly number of us, but if the least incident occurred the thirty janissaries at our doors would give a lesson to anyone that meant to indulge in evil-doing (Mikes, accessed 2020).

Like Cantemir and Văcărescu, Mikes is also interested in Islam and its attitude towards Christians. Having lived among Muslims for such a long time, Mikes prefers to talk about the values that the two religions share. Christianity gives the writer and his party a restrained feeling of superiority but on the whole his Orientalizing discourse is tactful and rejects blind animosity. In the end, the Muslims showed Mikes more understanding, generosity and mercy than his Christian fellows who obliged him to die in exile:

> I cannot end my account of the Turkish religion better than with a reference to their respect for Christ. It is untrue that they curse Him, as many maintain: for in this, one must have regard not to the common people but to the scribes. But if they are so unfortunate as not to believe in the divinity of Christ, they do at least revere Him as the Breath of God, as a great intercessor with the Lord. They agree that God sent Him forth to bring a law that is full of grace. But when they call us infidels it is not because we believe in Christ, but because we do not believe that Mahumet [sic] was sent from God. We are right in so doing. (Mikes, accessed 2020).

The East is instrumentalized in order to show the tragedy of political exile and the dire and never ending feeling of not belonging. The diarist insists on his feeling that this is the end of Europe. Even the beauty of landscape cannot overcome a sort of existential dizziness that will disappear only in death. On the one hand, the diarist gratefully admits that "nowhere could our Prince have been given a better living-place" (Mikes, accessed 2020). On the other hand, Mikes realizes with some awe and fear that he and the other exiles have reached the limit of the most painful otherness because the space in front of them is no longer Europe: "We are in fact on the very edge of Europe". If we are to compare his position to that of Lady Wortley Montagu, the wife of the British Ambassador to Istanbul from 1716-1718, and author of other famous *Turkish Letters*, the Orient is much more homely for Mikes. His Orientalization of the Orient is much milder because the Orient is the only place that can mean a safe home for those in exile due to the inter-Christian fighting for military power and political supremacy. At the same time, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu enjoys the protection of her diplomatic status – an ambassador's wife always shares the responsibilities of the job with her

spouse – hence she feels much more comfortable in the alienness of the Oriental customs, realities, and traditions because of the power she symbolically re-presents.

ORIENTALIZING IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE[6]

The Romanians and the Hungarians were not the only ones who orientalized their encounter with the Ottoman Empire trying to hide their own agendas while siding with the empire of the day. The Poles also had to confront the Ottoman Empire and consequently brought their own contribution to the Orientalizing discourses. Interestingly, the Orientalizing discourse was of no interest to scholars in other Central or East European cultures. Whereas Czech scholars and writers were more interested in (and affected by) the confrontations between the Catholics and the Protestants, the Bulgarians and the Serbians were more immersed in developing an Orthodox literature. Still they also produced self-reflective historical studies that aimed at creating a pan-Slavic solidarity, sometimes with Russian support, and also tried to clarify their own histories when encountering the Orient, especially the military Orient. Mention must be made in this respect of two Serbian scholars: Zaharije Orfelin (1726-1785) and Jovan Rajic (1726-1801). The former published, in 1772, at Venice, a biography of Peter the Great. The latter is famous for his *History of Bulgars, Croats and Serbs.* Vasilije Petrovic-Njegos (1709-1766), the prince bishop of Montenegro, published *The History of Montenegro*, at Moscow, in 1754. The Slovenians also were trying to clarify their connections with the ever more domineering German-speaking world: Marko Pohlin (1735-1801) published *The Carniolan Chronicles* in 1770, Anton Tomaz Linhart (1756-1795) authored *An Essay on the History of Carniola and Other Lands of the Austrian South Slavs* (volume I, 1788; volume II, 1791). Orientalization was not a survival cultural strategy that they envisaged.

Among the most interesting Polish contributions to the Oriental discourse mention must be made of the Polish writer Samuel Otwinowski (1575 or 1585-1650). As the Polish envoy to Istanbul, he got fascinated by Oriental literatures and upon his coming back to Poland he adapted Saadi' s *Gulistan* (*A Rose Garden*) in Polish prose, sometime between 1620 and 1640. Otwinowski is also the author of a *History of Turkey* (1629) that Orientalizes the Ottoman Empire under the Polish gaze. Otwinowski, the diplomat, realized the potential of Persia in the anti-Ottoman fight and nuanced his political discourse by mapping global power distribution in the Middle East in an interesting way. His Orientalism is obvious

[6] Segments from this subchapter were included in "Orientalisms", *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Orientalist Writers*, vol. 336. Ed. Coeli Fitzpatrick and Dwayne A. Tunstall. Gale, Cengage Learning, 2012, pp. 340-343.

in his effort to translate between cultures and languages. Otwinowski gets to know the Orient, but this knowledge is approximation and mitigation and linguistic taming of the original.

Also in the seventeenth century, another Pole, Samuel Twardowski (1600-1660), wrote a diary of his journey to Turkey. From 1622 to 1623, Twardowski was on diplomatic mission to Turkey as secretary of Krzysztof Zbaraski (1580-1627), one of his patrons. His diary, *Przewazna legacja J.O. Ksiazecia Krzysztofa Zbaraskiego* (*The Important Mission of His Grace Duke Krzysztof Zbaraski*) was written in verse and published in 1633. Twardowski offers a surprising and surprised, fresh look at the Orient, another inside-out perspective that hesitates between enmity and cooperation. The Polish mission was famous for its display of wealth. Twardowski was mute with admiration for his patron who paid most of the expenses of the mission. The Ottoman Other is orientalized by this display of wealth, the European superiority is proven by word and money in an arrogant gesture that does not admit any other type of conversation.

The mission also spent money ransoming some of the Polish prisoners taken during the battle of Cecora[7] in 1620. One of the Polish prisoners taken at Cecora was Marek Yakimowski (?-?) who was sold as a slave in Egypt. There he organized a slaves' mutiny and succeeded in conquering a galley. Yakimowski was lucky enough to be able to reach Italy with some other fortunate companions. There he married a former slave. The literary result of this adventurous existence is an Orientalizing slave narrative which also contains elements from another literary genre relying on othering exercises and practices: the captivity narrative. Entitled *A Short Description of the Taking Over of a First-Rate Alexandrian Galley*, Yakimowski's re-construction of an Oriental reality is meant to arouse pity and repulsion. European superiority is justified by the moral superiority and the inherent value of Christian ethics.

One of the most interesting eighteenth-century Polish Orientalists was Jan Potocki (1761-1815). In his romance *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa*, the author produced a combination of Orientalism and gothic horror which identifies the Orient with the fearful Other. The book has a very complex structure relying on multiple layers of narration framed by various other accounts. Oriental ambience, behaviour, and characters are sometimes Westernized in order to tame the reader's apprehensions of a strange reality that might threaten civilized Europe any time. One of the most interesting elements of this book is the picaro who orientalizes some of the spaces he crosses.

[7] Cecora is the name used in Polish sources. Actually, the battle took place at Ţuţora, near the Prut River, in Moldavia.

Potocki was not only a gifted writer, but also a tireless traveller. He travelled to Turkey where he adopted the local garb in order to hide his otherness. He also took a Turk, Osman, as his groom in order to blend in more easily. Potocki's travels to the Levant resulted in several travelogues: *Voyage dans l'Empire de Maroc* (1792); *Voyage en Turquie et en Egypte* (1788); *Voyage dans les steppes d'Astrakhan et du Caucase* (Paris, 1829). Potocki's Orientalist discourse includes sliding stories and unexpected changes of perspective that are amazingly modern from a rhetorical point of view. Thanks to his extraordinary literary talent, Potocki turned the strange-ness of the Orient into an attractive cognitive adventure.

CONCLUSION

It is obvious that Said' s definition of Orientalism is not able to encompass the variety of the Orientalist discourses as developed in Central and Eastern Europe. In our opinion, it would be more fruitful, from an analytical point of view, to consider that Orientalism is any approach to/assessment of an Eastern culture (Eastern being defined here from a Westernized Eurocentric perspective) that disguises a political agenda and negotiates with the political and military disparity between the East and the West in more or less aggressive and combative ways. Consequently, there are Orientalisms that avoid the aggressive black-and-white assessment of cultures. Orientalism may mean, therefore, not only submission, hierarchy, but also accommodation. The bridge-like, gate-like position of CEE comes from its in-between-ness. This area which seems to be East from the West and West from the East created Orientalist discourses that reflect its cultural ambiguity and strive to demonstrate their Westernization in ways that are not always adversarial, but often pluri-semantic, multiple, and many-layered.

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