

**THE ORIENTAL TRAVEL JOURNEY IN LITERATURE AND ARTS
- A VISUAL INTERPRETATION OF FEMININE BEAUTY -**

**LE VOYAGE ORIENTAL EN LITTÉRATURE ET ARTS
- UNE INTERPRÉTATION VISUELLE DE LA BEAUTÉ FÉMININE -**

**JURNALUL CĂLĂTORIEI ORIENTALE ÎN LITERATURĂ ȘI ARTĂ
- O INTERPRETARE VIZUALĂ A FRUMUSEȚII FEMININE -**

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Abstract

Beginning with the 19th century, la femme orientale becomes a metaphor of the East. Literature and arts embark on an attempt to change the traditional values of the Arab world, promoting Western thinking. The parallel study between contemporary literary texts and works of art highlight the common attitude of the Western world towards the East, whose problems related to gender relations, represented a cause of a continuous astonishment.

By making reference to the literary travel journeys of Julia Pardoe, Beauties of the Bosphorus, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Middle Eastern letter journal, as well as to a set of works of art by Jean-Étienne Liotard, Jean-Léon Gérôme, or Ingres, the present iconological study tries to bridge the gap between mentalities, regarding woman's status in society.

Résumé

À partir du 19^{ème} siècle, la femme orientale devient une métaphore de l'Est. La littérature et les arts se lancent dans une tentative de changer les valeurs traditionnelles du monde arabe, en faveur des mentalités occidentales modernes. L'étude parallèle entre textes littéraires et oeuvres d'art contemporains soulignent l'attitude commune du monde occidental envers l'Est, avec des problèmes liés aux relations de genre qui représentent une cause d'étonnement continu.

Avec l'aide des voyages littéraires de Julia Pardoe, Beauties of the Bosphorus et le journal de lettre du Moyen-Orient écrit par Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, mais aussi avec l'aide d'un ensemble d'œuvres d'art signées par Jean-Étienne Liotard, Jean-Léon Gérôme, et Ingres, cette étude iconologique tente de combler le vide entre les mentalités sur le statut de la femme dans la société.

Rezumat

Începând cu secolul al XIX-lea, la femme orientale devine o metaforă pentru analiza Orientului, în general. Literatura și arta se îmbarcă într-o încercare de schimbare a mentalităților și valorilor lumii arabe, promovând un mod de gândire și stil de viață occidental. Analiza comparată a textelor literare și a operelor de artă evidențiază atitudinea comună a occidentului față de orient, ale cărei probleme legate de diferențele de gen au reprezentat un continuu motiv de uimire.

Cu ajutorul jurnalelor de călătorie ale Julie Pardoe și Lady Mary Montagu, precum și bazându-ne pe opere de artă ale unor pictori precum by Jean-Étienne Liotard, Jean-Léon Gérôme, sau Ingres, prezentul studiu iconologic încearcă să unească mentalitățile privind statutul femeii în societatea epocii.

Keywords: *Romanticism, exoticism, Orientalism, experimental aesthetics, iconology*

Mots-clés: *Romanticism, exoticism, Orientalism, esthétique expérimentale, iconologie*

Cuvinte cheie: *Călătoria romantică, Montesquieu, călători egipteni in Europa, exotismul feminin*

Introduction

The East represented for the Romantics a new challenge for bringing to the front scene pieces of life that seemed *different*, a new geographical space where the individual was dressed in unusual attire, characterized as exotic, while the woman was dressed in long and vaporous gowns, with the face covered in veils, producing an aura of mystery over her personality.

Either if we talk about the Far East, or the Mediterranean region, the trip towards those realms meant for the Europeans, a new lifestyle, a process of agglutination of specific traditions and rituals, which will be further away adapted to the local specific, restructuring and revalorizing the old behavioral models.

The paper studies the exoticism interdisciplinary, with a focus especially on the problem of the representation of femininity, and less on the philosophical systems on which the analysis of orientalism was built along the years.

Paintings do not explicitly refer to the literary texts chosen, but suggestively illustrate scenes, or even fragments from the literary texts selected. I have tried to underline the resemblance between the text and painting, not only from the thematic point of view, but highlighting the narrative component of the picture, which plays an important part in action completion, based on the theory of transposing the atmosphere of specific literary texts into the plastic language.

18th century inherited the travel journal, which is now connected with the Grand Tour, understood as an initiating experience for many Europeans, whose destinations were, Berlin, Wien, culminating with the experience of self-discovery in Italy. Actually, these travels were totally dependent on a certain aesthetic model, imposed by the literary trend.

Romantic exploration literature gives a new meaning to the figurative term of *travel*, focusing both on the inner trip and the outdoor travel experience, placing the spiritual one in a position of superiority. We should also highlight at this point, the fact that the romantics were the first to explore the analogies between the real trip and the experience of the travel induced by hallucinogenic substances, such as the opium, which was the preferred drug, during that period. As Jennifer Speake suggests: “travelers passionately seek novelty and intensity in their encounters with the unfamiliar, and one way this is achieved, at least in early romanticism, is through a strong emotional and aesthetic response to landscape”. (SPEAKE, 2003, p.1022)

The social context of the appearance of the literary and artistic travel journal

The travel was understood as an evasion and initiation, stimulating young artists to discover the architectural elements, traditions, customs and rituals, as well as daily life elements, of the newly found place. The Alps, Highlands or the Mediterranean, become part of this fascination for primitivism, during the Romantic period.

The present comparative study focuses not only on emphasizing the geopolitical context of the appearance of the travel literature, but also on highlighting the intellectual and psycho-social context of the appearance of the need for evasion, discovery and illumination, for an entire generation of writers and artists, mostly men but also women, for the first time in history.

Romanticism coincided with the territorial expansion, with the discovery and colonization of territories from India, Africa, or the Indian Ocean, and thus travel literature becomes an inevitable discursive means of communication, both in an attempt to achieve more power, but also to justify the occupation, most of the time abusive, and supported by the military power.

As a result of the scientific developments, of the extended railway infrastructure and the development of the maritime transport, the travel loses its strictly landscape description value and focuses more on rendering the inner states of the writer, who suffers a real culture shock, when viewing the exotic spaces, belonging to a totally different culture.



Figure 1. Eugène Delacroix, *Arabs Playing Chess* (1847), National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.

An example in this respect is Eugene Delacroix's painting entitled *Arabs Playing Chess* (1847), a dynamic composition, realized through the superposition of two perspectives, which offer two contradictory states of mind. On the one hand we have the woman with the jug, almost incapable of observing the two men's activity, and in a second plan, the two chess players, whose contorted faces are extremely suggestive for the general state of mind offered by the composition.

From the point of view of the artistic composition, it is dominated by vertical lines, represented by the feminine character and the architectural silhouettes from the plan behind, which intersects with the horizontal lines of the pavement.

The main point of interest is represented by the two men, whose power lines converge into an equilateral triangle. The color gamut is represented by a variety of brown and copper tones, detaching on the clear blue of the sky, a *mise en scene* releasing intensity, allowing at the same time the decoder of the visual text to feel the atmosphere of the place, dominated by aridity.

Delacroix's paintings are probably the most suggestive in the epoch, for the power of décor, exotic character description, customs and traditions, which he is able to decipher through a personal system of symbols. Thus, during the Romantic period, we are dealing with an interpretable message, excessively affected, which is an essential requirement of the public reader. At the same time, beginning with this moment, we have the possibility to analyze texts about totally different cultures, having nothing in common with the Western world, apart from the need for exploration, of the element of novelty and the need for differentiation.

As Chloe Chard suggests, the two main purposes of the travel literature are, on the one hand, language manipulation and imaginative seduction, and on the other hand the need to order one's thoughts. On the crossroads between these two purposes is created an entire network of theoretical and rhetorical strategies, which could lead to an understanding of the terms "imaginative topography or imaginative geography". (CHARD, 1988, p. 10)

Grand Tour – initiation into an exotic world

Travel literature, genre specific for the 17th and 18th century, was invested along the centuries with different types of discourse: from enumerating a series of tourist spots, architectural monuments, customs and traditions, to 1st person narrative, travel journal, personal notes, philosophical theories, poems, etc.

Beginning with Romanticism, we can observe a shift in travel literature, which merges now with fine arts, when rendering exotic spaces, belonging to distant realms. The comparative approach focuses on the new aesthetics and cultural attitude, associated for example in the English environment with poetic figures such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Byron, Shelley or Keats. (THOMPSON, 2007, p.159)

17th century travel literature differs from the Romantic one in the sense that the first one is marked by the past history that pursues the present moment, while the romantics feel the pressure of history in all their achievements, being able to convert the historical time into a personal time. (CHARD, 1988, p. 21)

Most of the travel writings are in fact non-fictional works of art, being justified by the need to answer the archeological and ethnographical curiosities, which Nigel Leask opposes to the texts focused mainly on rendering the missionary activities, botanical evidence collection or texts related to captivity and slavery. (LEASK, 2002, p. 4)

After the year 1800, travel literature answers an inner need of the writer, to satisfy his personal need to evade into a space that had been exploited literary in the past, from an opposite perspective. This new travel literature interprets differently geographical spacing, individuals' reactions, and their interaction with the society, the ability to adapt to a new environment, or simply inability to fit in a set cadre.

For the Enlightenment, *grand tour* becomes an indispensable tool for the education of the French and English rich, high class, young generation. We will limit the discussion only to these two nations because a comparative approach of such magnitude would require a vast research into the problem, while we are mainly interested in understanding the bases that determined, during the Romantic period, the appearance of the exotic theme, which propelled the writers to explore secluded spaces and the territorial limits touched by the romantics in their encounters.

France is by far the best represented with regard to travel journeys: Alphonse de Lamartine with *Voyage en Orient* (1835), Gerard de Nerval with *Voyage en Orient* (1851), Gustave Flaubert with his travel journals and letters, as well as his novel, entitled *Salammbô* (1862).

For the English space, the most important traveler seems to be Lord Byron, whose path towards the Levant seems to have been opened by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), the wife of the British ambassador at Constantinople, between 1716-1718. Here, she had access to the women's community belonging to the Turkish high class of her times, her *Turkish Letters*, published in 1763 – a rich field material – playing a key role in Byron's future developments, whose appetite for this exotic space of the Asia Minor was opened after reading these letters. Having the advantage of belonging to the same social class, Byron followed Lady Mary Montagu's steps, visiting the same places, accumulating and disseminating personal experiences, so that finally Byron to feel that Greek islands would become his real country, that of the soul, where he would feel the need to find his end.

Among the renderings of the life of the Arab woman, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's narratives are among the most accurate, as she was the only one in the epoch to have access into the Istanbul harem, before the year 1800. The accuracy of the accounts and the interest that she shows is reflected in the amount of texts in this respect. Mohammed Sharafuddin, a key specialist in Romantic Orientalism believes that Mary Montagu's accounts are a combination of vague and exotic elements, sometimes naïve, of hedonism and wish to shock the conventional society, but last but not least, filled with realism (Sharafuddin, 1994, p. 219).

Among the English painters who transpose on canvas the Asia Minor environment we can mention Charles Eastlake, who in 1833 presents at the Royal Academy a painting entitled *Greek Refugees*, as well as William Allen who, under the impression of his trip in Greece and at Constantinople, during the year 1830, he accomplishes the masterpiece entitled *Slave Market, Constantinople* (1838).



Fig. 2. Sir William Allen, *The Slave Market, Constantinople* (1838), National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.

The painting is a complex composition, populated by a large number of characters accomplished on shadow and light zones. The shadowy lateral parts converge towards the point of interest, represented by two characters, the one on horse, and the other one dressed in Turkish attire. White is dominant in the dressing style, to create a strong contrast between the dark complexity and the clothing.

Grand Tour was understood at the beginning, not necessarily as a pleasure trip, but mostly as an initiation, as an indispensable means of education for the high class. As mentioned before, it could have been the trip to Italy, with a short stop in Switzerland, or a short trip at the foot of the Alps, the return home being made through Germany and Low Countries. Such a European tour usually lasted around three years, under the supervision of a tutor, who had the role of language teacher, but he also had the ability to guide the young aristocrat towards other fields of interest such as literature, arts, sciences, solidifying the education.

Turkish harem in literature and arts

The element that played a major role in the delineation of a travel literature, whose final destination was the heart of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople, was represented by the political context which led to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, during the second part of the 16th century, up until the end of the 18th century, the climax, when the Turkish society becomes associated with terms such as: “absolute despotism”, influencing the general opinion upon Islam in general.

Lady Mary disseminated all the contradictions of the 18th century, which the East disclosed. “Her feverish creation was caught between passion and reason, between romanticism and pragmatism, between the adventurous spirit and the need for order. She surrendered unconditionally to the oriental charm, maintaining however her English noblesse” (CROUTIER, 2014, p. 178). The year she spent in Istanbul was extraordinary, because she had the opportunity to experience direct contact of as Western woman with this world.

The harem is, by definition, a sacred space, an inviolable environment, where access is limited, even forbidden to those who do not belong to the restricted social group which constituted

it. Along the centuries, the meaning of the harem was restricted from that of the sultan's residence to a space exclusively destined to the Arab woman.

In the 126th century, in the Ottoman Empire, the harem was sacred. As Leslie Pierce mentions, Mecca and Medina were the two venerated harems of the Islamic world. After 12517, the Ottoman sultan becomes *hadun ul-haremeyn ül-şerifeyn* (master of the two noble sanctuaries). The third religious center of the Muslim world, Jerusalem, was also known under the name *harem-i şerif* (noble sanctuary). For the interior court of the mosque, the sanctuary, the Ottomans also used the meaning of *harem*. (PIERCE, 1993, p. 5)

Initially, the harem was exclusively the residence of the sultan, but towards the end of the 16th century he organizes a second sacred harem, inside the imperial court, destined exclusively for women and children, the heirs of the royal house, which he calls *harem-i hümayun*, the imperial harem, because he was the only man to have access inside the gates of this harem.

After the second half of the 17th century, the harem is invested with a negative connotation, when the western world puts an equal sign between the harem and the promiscuity of the Arab world. Obviously this meaning is wrong, and it is due to a misunderstanding of the inequalities between sexes in that part of the world, of the inaccuracies accruing between the East and the West, upon matters such as sexual differences, social space or political order or the inability to understand that the diagonal masculin-feminin is less important than sacred-profane or common-privileged.

The error of the Western world, even towards the end of the 19th century, is the misunderstanding of the harem, as a space of segregation, where the woman does not have access to information, culture or the element of civilization. The notion of private space, belonging to the family was misinterpreted by the European traveler, who saw the harem as a closed circle, where access is forbidden, due to an interpretation literally of the word of the Quran.

A. [33:33] *And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance. And establish salah (prayer) and give zakah (charity) and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification. (QURAN, 33/33)*

The quote from the Quran is extremely revealing for the status of the woman, subjected and merciful, whose only function is to listen to her man's word and the Prophet's word, which is in contrast with the developing society of the Western world of those times, when the woman gains more independence, rights and freedoms.

At this moment we should also observe the discrepancy between the real image of the Arab woman, as she appears in her daily life, shrouded in vaporous, long clothes, covering her ankles, and the entire literary and artistic representation, where the woman appears briefly dressed, bent over the bathtub, in a daring position, sending an encoded message of a dominating mentality, with symbolic implications.

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867) is an example of a Western painter who never travelled to the East, but who felt the need to translate his own ideas into the canvas, filled with eroticism, where the exotic woman represents the main character. The researcher Christine Peltre suggests the fact that Ingres probably read Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters from the period 1716-1718, in a French translation dated 1805, where the author renders her visit at the public bath in Istanbul.

As in the case of many artists whose exotic theme is recurrent, Ingres sought the credible element in his sources of inspiration, thus the painting can render a possible world, anchored in the immediate realities of the world represented. On the other hand, we have to admit that the compositions contain an element of sensuality, which is a personal print of the artist. This characteristic of his works of art come in direct contrast with the real world of the eastern women, which is characterized by decency and total lack of sensual connotation. Generally speaking, French

painting, starting with the 18th century, abounds with scenes where women are captured in moments of maximum intimacy, while bathing, during the sauna, or accompanied by their female servants.

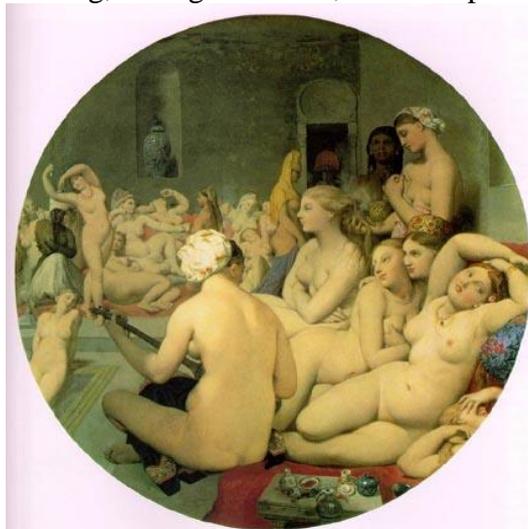


Figure 3. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres *Le Bain turc* (1862), Louvre Museum, Paris.

The painting entitled *Le Bain turc* (1862) combines oriental meditation, being accomplished through the superposition of different plans, where women are represented in different situations, lying on sofas, hugging, around the coffee table, accompanied by musical instruments. Finished in 1862 the painting is in fact a sublime composition, the result of many years of experimentation, ending up in changing the frame from rectangular into round, with the purpose or reinforcing the differentiating element, that *different*, but also to flatter the eye of the Western colonialist. (MAHON, 2005, p. 45)

Ingres uses the distance technique, specific for the 19th century painting, which creates the impression that the twenty feminine characters that appear in the composition seem as if they do not interact with each other, as if they belong to different plans of the painting, but which finally create a “unified coherent image”. (MAHON, 2005, p. 46)

From the point of view of the technique, the composition combines drawing with oil painting, taking over some elements of his previous works of art, as the case of the woman with the lute in the foreground, who is the focal point of the entire painting, and which is a processing of a previous painting, entitled *La Baigneuse* (1808), also known after the name of its owner, Valpinçon.



Figure 4. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres *La Baigneuse dite Baigneuse de Valpinçon* (1808), Louvre Museum, Paris

Very interesting is the theory according to which Ingres creates only a *mise en scene* of an inaccessible world (ALLOULA, 1987, p.26), which is related more to the inner structure of the exotic woman, whom Ingres alters into an erotic representation of the erotic western woman.



Figure 5. Charles Jervas, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, after 1716, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin

However, in 1717, Lady Mary Montagu is the first to affirm that the Muslim woman is not subject to a strict code, her status being one filled with respect. Here is a fragment, from a letter dated 1st of April, 1717, where Mary Montagu shares her impressions about the Turkish bath, and which could be the source of inspiration for Ingres' canvas:

"It was full of women (...) without any distinction of rank by their dress, all being in the state of nature, that is, in plain English, stark naked, without any beauty or defect concealed. Yet there was not the least wantom smile or immodest gesture amongst them. They walked and moved with (...) majestic grace, which Milton describes our general mother with. There were many amongst them, as exactly proportioned as ever any goddess was drawn by the pencil of a Guido or Titian – and most of their skins shiningly white, only adorned by their beautiful hair divided into many tresses, hanging on, their shoulders, braided either with pearl or ribbon, perfectly representing the figures of the Graces. (...) to see so many fine women naked, in different postures, some in conversation, some working, others drinking coffee or sherbet, and many negligently lying on their cushions, while their slaves (generally tretty girls of seventeen or eighteen) were employed in braiding their hair in several pretty fancies, in short, it is the women's coffee house, where all the news of the town is told, scandal invented etc."

(MONTAGU, 1837, 231)

As, later on, with the case of photography, exotic painting focusing on the representation of the Arab feminine beauty, behind the closed doors of the harem, represents an aesthetic point of view, a category answering the needs of the Western audience, eager to listen to frivolous tales, that can stimulate the imagination of the receiver.

We can also talk about a set of Western clichés, which are visible mainly in the visual representations, but also in literature, where we have the same plot: the relationship between the

colonizing male, soldier or sailor, having. Relationship with the local woman, whose beauty is able to lure and shock the poor young inexperienced westerner. The Arab woman is opulent through her dressing code, in her *habbara*, if she belongs to the high class, or in *khamiss*, if she is a normal woman. She is beautiful, wearing golden jewelries on her wrists and ankles, she walks barefoot, unveiling here and there her ankles, while sometimes even her arms can be seen, coming out completely from the wide sleeves. (NERVAL, 1977, p. 101)

Among all stories about the life of the Arab woman, those rendered by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu are probably the most truthful, as she was the only one, before the year 1800, to have direct access into the women's harem in Istanbul. The accuracy of the stories and the interest she shows is reflected in the huge amount of texts, in this respect. Sharafuddin believes that her stories are "(...) a combination of exoticism with ambiguous, often naïve, hedonism; of irreverence, the wish to shock the conventional; and realism, the attempt to strike a blow against idealistic pretence". (SHARAFUDDIN, 1994, p. 219-220)

Lady Mary Montagu is the first one to introduce the Turkish attire into the English environment. Her tradition will be continued by an entire series of ladies from the British higher class, who will order portraits in which they appear dressed in exotic attire. It is the case of Lady Philippa Elizabeth Dorothea Rooper and Lady Sunderlin, whose portrait is realized by the famous painter Sir Joshua Reynolds.



Figure 6. Sir Joshua Reynolds *Portrait of Lady Sunderlin wearing a "Turkish" costume* (1786), Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

Even if, after the year 1770, the fashion of the Turkish influences in the westerners' lifestyle loses its intensity, the East remains a source for the decorative elements, of the emplacements in which Europeans are placed in oriental attire: mameluke tunics, caftans, turbans, cashmere shawls, tufted hoods, also known as *a la Levantine*. (THORNTON, 1994, p. 10)

In *Lady Sunderlin's* portrait, the remoteness of the landscape surpasses the flat character of the canvas, and this is part due to the eye of the observer, which is able to empower the work of art with an emphasized depth. (ARNHEIM, 1995, p. 73)

Lady Sunderlin indicates the feeling of nature, an excruciating feeling of melancholy, related both to landscape and the appearance, characterized by an indefinite *pathos*. We can talk, without any exaggeration, about an insertion of the sublime element, which foreshadows the Romantic taste of nature and restlessness.

This mature work of art proves a deep understanding of the feminine sensitivity. The painter carefully studies the states of consciousness of the character, who looks uneasy, with her chest in pain, the veil rustling at the same time with her body, while moved by the calm wind of the surrounding fall. The tones of ocher and pearl of her dress are in tune with the decomposing nature, with the warm sunset of the early autumn.

Besides the color symbolism, an important role is played by other symbols, such as the tree – a symbol of the cosmic life – purposefulness, evolution, perceived as regeneration, turn the tree into a symbol of inexhaustibility, thus of eternal life. We can observe an abundance of the chiaroscuro, the uncertain tones, contrasts of light and darkness, all these exciting effects offering the composition a feeling of restlessness.

The oil painting has the ability to bring to light even the darkest corners of the painting. This unique technique is *the oil*, which can be found in all chromatic pigment particles. They offer a profoundness in which the eye of the viewers immerses, in order to feel the infinity. Watercolors, on the other hand, lack the depth, in the aquarelle or tusk, the infinity is dull, almost dead. The colors are in tune with the states of mind, while the significance of color is universal

But the key element of the present study is represented by the feminine beauty of the exotic woman, as she appears in the visual and literary representations of Lady Mary Montagu or in Julia Pardoe's journal, while the element of novelty is represented by the adaptation of a visual narrative analysis model to the literary text.

The study opposes the image of the status of the Arab woman, to that existing in the West, supported by Montagu's rendering, but also by Gérard de Nerval, whose *Turkish letters*, will be published in a volume in 1851, under the title *Voyage en Orient*, where the East is represented as a combination of dream and reality, phantasy, plagiarism, popular tale and legend.

Before Mary Montagu and Julia Pardoe's narrative of Oriental harem, the approach towards this secluded world was mainly promiscuous, like an extension of the legendary *1001 Arabian Nights*. Now, the new sources can be considered authentic, bringing to light daily life realities, ethnographic proof, totally opposed to the sexuality suggested by the artistic representations, such as Ingres' *Turkish Bath* or his other painting entitled *Grand Odalisque*.

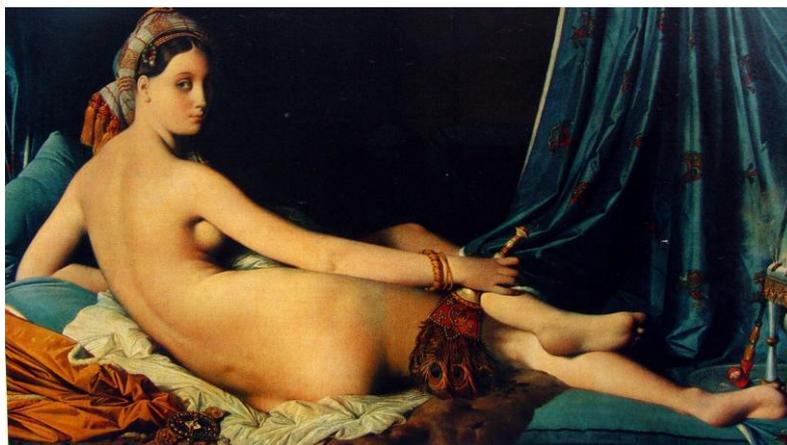


Figure 7. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres - Grande Odalisque (1814), Louvre Museum, Paris

Lady Mary Montagu is the first to affirm that the Muslim woman does not have to obey a secret code, on the contrary, being respected by the other members of the society. We should not forget that during those time the Ottoman Empire was still subject to the matriarchate. Here is a

fragment from a letter dated April 1st, 1717, where Montagu shares her impressions about the Turkish bath, and which we are convinced that Ingres has read, as being one of his sources of inspiration for his famous work of art.

Starting with the year 1832, William Henry Bartlett (1809-1854) travels all over Europe, in an initiating cultural journey, that will be rendered in his engravings and etchings reproducing architecture, but mastering light and shadow.

Bartlett visits Middle Eastern countries, goes to Beirut, Tripoli, the Island of Rhodes, Turkey, the climax being a set of 83 metal etchings rendering Constantinople lifestyle, that will be published in Julia Pardoe's volume entitled *Beauties of the Bosphorus* (1839).

Bartlett's book illustrations and engravings represent more than simple topographical and architectural elements. They contain the emotional component able to decode the meaning of the literary sign that Pardoe transmits to the reader through the written word. In fact, the works of art are a sort of *analogon* of Julia Pardoe's travel writing.

The fact that the two of them have traveled together around the Balkans, allowing to the delineation of a double reference, which leads to a unity of discourse. The trip which lasted for eight months was a sort of pilgrimage towards the borders of the Ottoman Empire, including different stops along the Danube River, in Serbia, Bulgaria, Moldova and Bessarabia, resulting in a series of 83 etchings. We can talk in this particular case of a travel journal, about a total unity between text and visual elements, the illustration translating in a way the travel experiences of the author, interpreting and completing from a different perspective, the two key elements of the visual sign: reality and text.

Conclusions

The romantic approach to travel during the period meant an understanding of the human experience as a form of personal adventure, as a result of which the writer, and now the female writer, for the first time, goes beyond the usual geographical limits, gets in touch with a new world, different, filled with risks but also able to offer literary and artistic accomplishments.

I have started from the possibility of existence of a semantic unit between literature and arts, the literary composition offering the possibility of a wider freedom of interpretation, while painting simply decodes the secret message of literature. I attempted to interpret the way in which Romantic artists select their exotic subjects, so as we can talk about a specific pressure, from the external world, a specific order, or we can simply talk about the personal interpretation of specific events and realities, contemporary to the respective artist.

I have tried to offer a personal interpretation to the relationships between the verbal and visual modes of communication, and the general conclusions acquired had as a result the idea that beginning with the Romantic period, painting is no longer simply copying reality. The synchronic approach starts from the idea that we can talk about a set of visual rules and *non-visual principles* (VRÂNCEANU, 2002, p. 47), which lay at the basis of a narrative image, beyond the limits of the Romantic period.

In fact, it bridges the gap between the artistic and literary modes, in the sense that the first becomes capable of influencing communication, while the literary one becomes an aesthetic factor. Through the union of the two modes we reach a literary text characterized by total plasticity, Nerval's *Voyage en Orient*, or Julia Pardoe's *Beauties of the Bosphorus* becoming perfect literary compositions. But connecting them with certain works of art, such as Jean-Léon Gérôme, Ingres or Delacroix's works of art, the two components – text and image – will have the same ability to render emotions, complementing each other, translating each other, and even establishing a report of *dialectic interdependence*.

The reading and rereading of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) represented the spring that drove the entire gear of the study, helping first at drawing a clear comparison between the two terms – *orientalism and exoticism* – and offering, at the same time, an answer to the “multiple identity

problem” (Said, 2001, p.193) which is supported by the complex system of oriental clichés: *harems, princesses, princes, slaves, veils, dancers, sorbets, oils, etc.* (Said, 2001, p.200)

The paper places the research of the exotic world between Said’s theory on orientalism, perceived as a complex relationship “of power, domination and hegemony, in different degrees of complexity” (Said, 2001, p.5) and that of J.J. Clarke, referring to the debt of honor of the Western man, to the East. (CLARKE, 1997, p.17)

The paper studies the exoticism interdisciplinary, with a focus especially on the problem of the representation of femininity, and less on the philosophical systems on which the analysis of orientalism was built along the years, because the fascination exerted by the exotic world upon the Western man was the trigger of an entire generation of writers and artists, poets and drawers, that completely changed the mentality that we have today.

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