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Carla Serena (1824-84): A Solo Western European Woman Traveller and Her Multifaceted Easts

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Abstract

Carla Serena (Antwerp 1824 – Greece 1884) was a Belgian born woman married to a Venetian merchant, who was based in London. At the age of 50 she left her family in London and took a six-year long solo journey in the Ottoman Empire (1874-75), in the Russian Empire (1874, 1875-77, 1878-79, 1881) and in the Persian Empire (1877-78). After her journey she published a variety of scientific articles in the geographical journal *Le Tour du Monde* and her memories in the volume *Mon voyage. Souvenirs personnels*.

Her point of view as a Western European solo woman traveller is interesting in several ways. On the one hand, her scientific essays differ from her memories in terms of orientalist stereotypes, the latter being more straightforward and anecdotal. On the other hand, Carla Serena's writings display a wide range of different Easts, from Islamic barbarian Persia to France-like Poland, differentiated in terms of religious and ethnic prejudices, placement of people along the civilised-savage continuum and personal attitudes towards the regions she visited.

In addition to the analysis of orientalist elements in Carla Serena's work, I will show how boundaries between West and East are arbitrarily defined in her writings, and how the Caucasus displays a peculiar status, being considered both as Europe and Asia. In particular, my paper focuses on the analysis of her travels in Eastern Europe, at that time part of the Russian Empire.

Key words: Carla Serena, woman traveller, solo traveller, travel writing, Russian Orientalism

Introduction

This essay is concerned with travel writing studies and aims at analysing the idea of East in the works of Carla Serena, a woman who travelled in the Ottoman, Russian and Persian Empires in the Seventies and Eighties of the 19th century. Given the relevance in terms of time spent travelling (her longest trip lasted six years) and places visited, her idea of East is by no means unitary and the interplay between Carla's European background and her experiences is definitely complex.

Before analysing to what extent a multifaceted East is created in Carla Serena's works, I will briefly introduce her life and clarify some methodological issues.

Carla Serena, European background and solo travelling

Caroline Hartog Morgensthein was born in Antwerp in 1824. In 1847 she married Leone Serena, a Venetian merchant and patriot, and changed her name into the Italian version Carla.ⁱ Because of their political commitment and connection with Daniele Manin, in 1849 the couple was exiled and moved to Marseilles, Paris, Belgium and then to Londonⁱⁱ, where Carla set up a *salon* for Italians and Britons called *Société de l'anti-etiquette*ⁱⁱⁱ (Anti-etiquette Society). Although already correspondent for the Belgian journal *Le Précurseur d'Anvers*, Carla's first international experience as a travel writer was the World Exhibition in Vienna in 1873.

A radical change happened in her life on 1st August 1874, when Carla left London and her family to start a six-year journey. It is still not clear why a woman in her fifties – old according to the Victorian society – decided to abandon her home for such a long period of time. In the preface of her memory *Mon voyage* Carla states she planned a short trip because she was “souffrante” (indisposed),^{iv} but circumstances brought to a long journey.

Jules Gros, a journalist contemporary to Carla Serena, noted in his *Journal des Voyages* article on October 3, 1880^v that Carla travelled for health reasons, pushed by her doctor. A more recent and entangling explanation is suggested by Daniela Pizzagalli^{vi} and by Anna Vanzan,^{vii} who noticed that Carla's relationships with local power, her journeys in the places touched by the Great Game and several diplomatic troubles she had can be explained by assuming that Carla Serena was a spy for Britain.

During her long trip she visited Sweden, Russia, Moldova, Istanbul, Egypt, Jerusalem, Lebanon, Greece and then the Caucasus, where she spent about two years travelling in Abkhazia, Kakheti, Karabakh, Guria, Mingrelia and Samurzakano before leaving to Persia after the Ottoman Turkey and the Russian Empire declared war in 1877. There she spent wintertime, before coming back to the Caucasus, where she witnessed the atrocities caused by war in that

region. On her way back to London she stopped in Astrakhan, Moscow, Warsaw, Vienna, Rome and Paris. After her return in 1879, Carla Serena wrote one article about the district of Shusha^{viii} for the Austrian Geographic Society, two articles in the geographical journal *Le Tour du Monde* – one focused on Imereti,^{ix} the other on Mingrelia^x – and two volumes of memories published by Dreyfous – the first on her journey to and back from Caucasus,^{xi} the second on her winter in Persia.^{xii} Willing to publish an illustrated version of her journey to Kakheti and Abkhazia, in 1881 Carla Serena took a second trip to the Caucasus, where she had the opportunity of taking pictures of those regions that had never been photographed before. Two illustrated essays on the journal *Le Tour du Monde* followed.^{xiii} Henceforth little is known about her last years. We know that she became member of the French, German and Spanish Geographical Societies and in 1882 was given a golden medal by the King of Italy for her geographic and ethnographic credits,^{xiv} although she refused to hold a lecture on her journeys at the Italian Geographic Society. We know she continued her publishing activity on the journal *Le Tour du Monde*,^{xv} on the journal *Globus*^{xvi} and as author of two volumes printed by Charpentier – one about the Kalmyk and Kyrgyz people^{xvii} and the other about Persia.^{xviii} She died in Greece in 1884. So far it's not clear what was the reason of her death and where she was buried.

Methodological remarks

As noticed in the previous section, Carla Serena's production is large and concentrated in a period of time shorter than a decade, from 1879 to a posthumous publication in 1885. In order to analyse the representation of the East in her works, it is relevant to clarify their textual typology and the audience they address to.

A first criterion is the distinction between books and articles in journals. The volumes *Mon voyage. Souvenirs personnels* (vol. 1 and 2), *Seul dans les steppes* and *Hommes et choses en Perse* belong to the first category. The articles in journals are shorter and appear in three journals: in French on *Le Tour du Monde* ("Excursion dans le Caucase. De la mer Noire à la mer Caspienne – L'Iméréthie, province du Caucase", "Un tour en Mingrèlie", "Trois mois en Kakhétie", "Excursion au Samourzakan et en Abkasia" and "Voyage au Caucase"), in German on *Mittheilungen der kais. und kön. Geographischen Gesellschaft in Wien* – the Bulletin of the Austrian Geographical Society – ("Der District Schuscha in Transkaukasien") and on *Globus* ("Reisen in Gurien und am oberen Kur").

A second criterion to classify Carla Serena's works is style, which is highly affected by the audience she addresses. On the one hand, the essays in German and the book *Hommes et choses en Perse* display a distinctive scientific tone, with a large use of geographical and ethnographical notes. On the other hand, *Mon voyage. Souvenirs personnels* (vol. 1 and 2) are characterised by narration and by the extensive presence of Carla's personal comments on her emotional conditions. This is clear by comparing *Hommes et choses en Perse* and *Mon voyage. Souvenirs personnels. Une européenne en Perse*, the first displaying absence of the narrating I and the second being narrated in third person, but with a strong presence of personal comments;^{xix} the clash is evident because the two books are both engaged with the same topic, i.e., Carla's trip to Persia in winter 1877-78. A mixed style is introduced in the other works. The French geographical articles and *Seule dans les steppes* offer a combination of scientific information, such as ethnographic details, and private elements, engaging the audience in a continuous shift between personal adventure and systematic knowledge.

A final criterion is given by the geographical distribution of the reported journey. *Mon voyage. Souvenirs personnels. Une européenne en Perse* and *Hommes et choses en Perse* deal with the Persian Empire. "Der District Schuscha in Transkaukasien", "Excursion dans le Caucase. De la mer Noire à la mer Caspienne – L'Iméréthie, province du Caucase", "Un tour en Mingrèlie", "Trois mois en Kakhétie", "Excursion au Samourzakan et en Abkasia", "Voyage au Caucase", "Reisen in Gurien und am oberen Kur" and *Seule dans les steppes* are set in the Russian Empire, only the latter not being exclusively devoted to the Caucasus. A peculiar case is provided by *Mon voyage. Souvenirs personnels. De la Baltique à la mer Caspienne*, which describes Carla Serena's first trip to the Ottoman Empire and to the Russian Empire; the section related to the Persian Empire, to which the whole 2nd volume of *Mon voyage. Souvenirs personnels* is dedicated, here is completely omitted, creating a chronological narrative break between the Caucasus preparing for war and the Caucasus after war.

The following textual analysis will be based on the investigation of the contexts in which the words linked to the opposition East/West are used in Carla Serena's production. In particular, I will consider the words *ouest* (west), *occidental* (western), *européen* (European) juxtaposed to *est/orient/levant* (east), *oriental* (eastern), *asiatique* (Asian) and several ethnonyms, like *les Arabes* (the Arabs), *les Abkases* (the Abkhazians), *les Russes* (the Russians), etc.

The following analysis is thus based on words defining boundaries. Their use together with the contexts in which they are introduced will be sources of investigation for Carla Serena's orientalist stereotypes and their overcoming.

Defining boundaries, deconstructing stereotypes

A first topic to be examined in Carla Serena's written production is the definition of geographical boundaries between East and West and between Europe and Asia.

When in the first part of her journey Carla visited the Ottoman Empire (i.e., Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon and Turkey), she often declares absolute statements about the East, evidence of a unitary and stereotyped view of the Orient. For

instance, Carla states, “the Orient is immutable”,^{xx} after having noticed that the Bible is still a good travel guide for visiting the Holy Ground. Again in Jerusalem, she witnessed an important man followed by a grand crowd that leads her to state, “in Orient, the rank of a celebrity is measured by the size of his cortège”.^{xxi} The inductive mechanism underlying her claims consists of providing examples of significant tableaux that meet her biases and prejudices, whose scope is then widened to the whole East.

Another aspect that sets Carla’s travel reports in a geographic and culturally homogeneous Orient is the idea of sensuality, represented in the following passage by the sultan’s harem in Constantinople. Here her bias is not confirmed, and Carla is disappointed because the European influence has spoiled the sensuality she was looking for.

In general, among the illuminate Turks who spent some years in Europe, the practice of having multiple wives has reduced. [...] Whether in presence of Europeans the Turks adopt our habits, when alone, among themselves, they take their national traditions back. I was disappointed of having not found in those scenes of intimate oriental life subjects zesty enough to attract me.^{xxii}

In the previous passage the opposition between *us*-European and *them*-Turks is crucial and defines a cultural perspective that is completely Western-centric. In line with Said’s orientalist categories,^{xxiii} the Ottoman Orient depicted by Carla is immutable, sensual and charming, and its representations of power are despotic and majestic. However, Carla Serena is a traveller and her perception of reality grows in complexity as her journey develops. Although affected by the *topos* of a chaotic but charming Orient, Carla’s first impression of Constantinople displays how her attitude towards the East is somehow dynamic.

At a first glance, the East attracts for its novelty. As a whole, this novelty is composed by a lot of details contrasting with the ideas and the habits of the Europeans, who consider it first of all as chaos. Little by little, by analysing it, the eye discovers in this ensemble some salient points that attract and seduce it. Once acquainted with that, he cannot contemplate it, he begins to love it.^{xxiv}

Whereas the terms “Asia” and “Orient” are often used by Carla when she describes the Ottoman Empire, as well as the Persian Empire (where she spent a winter in 1877-78), it is more problematic when dealing with the Caucasus. From a geographical point of view, Carla indicates the Caucasian mountain chain as the natural border between Asia and Europe. In *Le Tour du Monde* she writes,

I said it and I repeat it, when facing the significant differences between Caucasian types, you cannot hide a feeling of curiosity, admiration and even fear for this giant mountain chain, which raises as frontier between Europe and Asia and is supposed to be the birthplace of humankind.^{xxv}

This boundary seems to be less defined when Carla writes her memories. In Tbilisi, Georgia, she states, “for a freak of fate, in that moment I found myself in Asia and not in Europe”,^{xxvi} but when sailing from Absheron peninsula, nowadays Azerbaijan, to Persia in 1877, her words are “Leaving the *Grand-Duc-Michel* [a ferry], I said farewell to Europe”;^{xxvii} what is the reason why Carla Serena often considers the Caucasus as part of Asia, but Europe on her way to Persia? A plausible explanation is provided by applying a sort of *theory of relativity* to Carla’s perspective. Persia is considered Far East by her, as in the passage, “After an excursion in the Caucasus, she went to Persia, country of poets and roses, also called the France of the Far East”.^{xxviii} Whereas compared to Carla’s homeland the Caucasus is Orient, when related to the ultimate Oriental Persia, it is perceived as a European land. In addition, the Caucasian region is part of the Russian Empire, and Russia is always referred to as Europe.^{xxix} This is clear when Carla arrives in Moscow and states, “while getting off the wagon, I saw myself surrounded again by all the signs of western civilisation”.^{xxx} However, in Carla’s view, Russia has a second border between Asia and Europe that passes through Astrakhan, “junction point between Asia and Europe”.^{xxxi} This frontier city has a double nature. From a cultural perspective, it is without a doubt European, as shown by Carla’s record, “in Astrakhan, fallen in a completely European circle, I had to take back the styles abandoned for a while”,^{xxxii} and again in the following passage, where Carla states she is no longer used to the European habits.

In the Caucasus I was asked about Europe, as much as in Astrakhan I was asked about the lands I had just left. I was surprised that in this region its inhabitants know such a little about a country in constant relation with theirs. [...] In the Caucasus I was regarded with curiosity because I came from Europe; in the region that is vestibule of Occident and Orient, it was the same because I came from Caucasus. As for me, I realised all the things around me weren’t familiar anymore.^{xxxiii}

From a demographic point of view, because of its position and its ethnic melting pot, Astrakhan is a city where Asian elements mix with European ones, as suggested by Carla in the following passage.

In Astrakhan the Orient has sown a multitude of its races that have almost remained without mixing and haven’t lost their distinctive features; in the meanwhile the Occident has inhabited a part of the city, where it has introduced its customs and habits. At every pace you take in the city of Astrakhan, particularly interesting for the multitude of its contrasts, you can see Asia touching Europe.^{xxxiv}

Whereas Asia and Europe have two boundaries, one in the Caucasus and the other along the river Volga, Europe has

no internal border between Eastern and Western Europe. Carla's stay in Warsaw, on her way back home, provides interesting insights on the topic. Although Warsaw is described as "the boundary of the western civilisation in Europe",^{xxxv} its position in the heart of Europe is stressed, being a core element in a centre-periphery relation^{xxxvi} with the lands previously described. The following passage highlights the strategic position of Poland, and particularly Warsaw, with a prophecy that nowadays sounds tragic in the light of contemporary Polish history.

Its position in the heart of Europe is excellent for commercial trade; it seems destined to become the warehouse between the Occident and the Orient. That's its possible future if nothing obstructs it, and that might happen.^{xxxvii}

The importance of Poland is also stated in relation to its similarity to France. Talking about Warsaw, Carla notices that the city "lacks completely the Russian stamp"^{xxxviii} and "the type and character of its population are much closer to the French"^{xxxix} than the German.

Apart from such national specifications, Carla Serena usually gives a unitary vision of Europe in several ways. Her complex European background – she was born in Belgium, got married to an Italian man and lived in Italy before moving to France, Belgium and then England – is mirrored in the title of the already mentioned second volume of memories, *Une européenne en Perse* (A European Woman in Persia). She never refers to herself as Belgian, Italian, French or British: she is just European. This choice was also affected by the fact that in Persia Carla was called *Frenghi*,^{xl} a term designating any European, irrespectively of their country of origin, as stated in the first page of her book.

The Persians call all the Europeans with the name *Frenghi*. Little inclined to geography, they don't know the different countries of Europe, which they call Frenghistan.^{xli}

The omnipresent term *Frenghi-European* in *Une européenne en Perse* is not the only instance of "Europeanness" in the book, which devotes a large section to the Europeans living in Persia. Those people are described by Carla herself as a unitary group, rarely defined by their specific country of origin. At a closer look, the severe words used to depict the Europeans living in Persia shed light on Carla Serena's attitude towards the East. The first quotation describes the mean behaviour of the Europeans to the detriment of local people.

The Europeans are privileged and have more benefits than the locals, they don't pay any toll and tax; furthermore, they take advantage of it and often assume rights harmful to Persians.^{xlii}

The second passage depicts the Europeans living in Persia as people who pretend being noble only because of their European origin.

Here you can meet Europeans who, under the title of Pasha and Khan, often dissimulate a name for which oblivion is necessary. On this stage far from the western civilisation, those who are humble stooges on the western one, here play an important role. If the Orient dispenses its smiles to those oppressed by fate in their countries, those aristocrats by accident, by wearing the adorned dress label of their nobility, take a parade tone. [...] In Orient, those parvenus become strongly arrogant.^{xliii}

A negative judgement on European people living in the East was also introduced in the first volume of *Mon voyage*, after Carla's visit to a Prussian family in Kédaleg (nowadays Gədəbəy), near Elisabethpol (nowadays Gəncə - Ganja). Once again her comment refers to the Europeans' overconfidence juxtaposed to despicable brutality of their actions. Such conduct against human beings leads Carla to state the lower level of the Europeans compared to Eastern people. Whereas in the following passage the Orientals are always called Muslim, the Europeans are first mentioned as Prussians, then Christians and finally Europeans, maybe because of the national, moral/religious and eventually wide-ranging nature of her comments on the Europeans living in the East.

According to Prussians, the civilisation of their countries is the most advanced in the world. Some other nations may deserve some respect; but Prussia holds the first place. I don't know it much and I ignore whether they are right. [...] In Orient I was often disappointed by the lack of concern in which Christians supported their civilised reputation only with their brutality against the locals, inferior to them. Muslim people are humans, if not their brothers. Such title should be enough. However, the Europeans in Orient get served by using horsewhips, kicks, sticks and canes they would hardly use on a stubborn dog. This conduct places them lower than those they abuse in this way.^{xliv}

Carla's sympathy towards the abused locals, called brothers, reveals an unexpected detachment of Carla from the aforementioned European unity. One can read in Carla's call for brotherhood a mild criticism towards the Europeans living in Persia. Unlike their Muslim counterpart, "In Teheran the Europeans know each other too closely to love each other".^{xlv} Not to be missed is a negative remark made by Carla on the Europeans' lack of taste in fashion, a topic often treated in her writings with a peculiar humour. In Jerusalem she noticed,

In Orient, the Europeans take liberties even in their outfit, causing more than one lese-majesties to fashion. Everybody deals with it according to their fantasy without worrying about 'what are they going to say?', a terrible obstacle in their countries.^{xlvi}

Although Carla blames the Europeans' arrogance towards the Eastern people, the conclusion of her memories is surprising. The next words are the very last ones of *Mon Voyage* (vol. 1), following her return to Europe after six years far from her home and family.

Europe was my point of departure. In Europe I have returned, happy about having realised my goal. To Europe all the things created, invented and accomplished by the human spirit converge. To Europe, queen of the thinking world, flock the creations by superior intelligences and humble work. Europe, supreme centre of civilisation, resembles the wide sea into where the thinnest trickle of water flows just as well as the tribute of a magnificent river. Everything finds place here. To Europe, then, I present my poor journey. May it be accepted by Her, just as the humble rivulet is in the vastness of seas! My story will tell Europeans that I received many gratifications. But here I admit the most vivid thought was to see my fireplace again, because that's the authentic place for the woman. Women, stay there and there read *Mon Voyage*.^{xlvii}

First of all, it is an ode to Europe, the centre of the world and the point of departure and arrival, being both a biblical alpha and omega and a secular forge of science and craftsmanship. Europe is a queen; although here without subjects, its monarchic representation can be read as a configuration of dominating power, a typical relation that is taken for granted in the western world.^{xlviii} Europe is also a land that can provide everybody with opportunities, irrespectively of their background, an ideal that in the following century shifted to the United States with their American dream.

The very last words of Carla Serena's memories are astonishing. The woman who left her family to travel alone in remote places, the one who is admired for her courage, who blames European men for being hypocrites and disrespectful of Eastern people, she states that women shouldn't leave their fireplace, as if their nature could be fulfilled only by their duty of mothers and wives. We don't know the ultimate aim of these words and the underlying ideology. She might have desired to discourage other women to follow her paths, or prevent her books from being censored as feminist or, maybe, she simply wanted to emphasise the importance family and home had in her life.

Conclusion

When dealing with Carla Serena's works, the reader can be surprised by the coexistence of a peculiar sensitivity towards humankind and germs of modern sensibilities, such as feminism, together with bigotry and orientalist elements; this may lead to postulate that Carla Serena had a straightforward attitude on the one side and a dull desire of classification on the other. However, at a closer look, different attitudes are shown in different texts.

Focusing only on the interplay between East and West in Carla's work, a first remark is that her geographic articles mention Asia and Europe only from a geographical point of view, identifying the Caucasian mountain chain as the natural boundary between the two continents. Apart from few occurrences of the terms "European" and "Oriental" introduced in marginal comments about traditional dress, the geographic articles concentrate on landscape and ethnographic elements, in which orientalist comments would have been out of place. A completely different perception of the Eastern and Western features is found in Carla Serena's books and memories. Firstly, geographic boundaries are vague, as in the Caucasus, considered both Asia and Europe, or simply noticing that Astrakhan is described as western, whereas Constantinople is eastern. Secondly, the terms related to Europe/West and Asia/East acquire cultural, political and evocative meanings.

Different stages of her journey display different densities of the abovementioned terms. When Carla travels in the Ottoman Empire (1874-75), the word "Orient" and orientalist comments are everywhere; here reality is chaotic, immutable and seducing, power is despotic and women are subjugated to traditions. A less stereotyped Orient is described in the Caucasus (visited in 1875-77, 1878-79, 1881), where Carla tends to describe local culture and habits beyond the label "oriental"; boundaries melt and the focus on single peoples and their customs overwhelms her European prejudices. A strong juxtaposition between East and West is introduced again when Carla visits Persia (1877-78), considered Far East. Orientalist stereotypes and unsympathetic comments towards the Europeans living in Persia are dominating in the autobiographic book *Une européenne en Perse*, less in the more scientific *Hommes et choses en Perse*. When Carla Serena is in Astrakhan (1879), again a geographic frontier between Europe and Asia, her description of Asian elements in a European context, such as the Buddhist Kalmyk community, are characterised by a genuine ethnographic interest; far from the orientalist stereotypes shown in the Ottoman and Persian Empires, Carla's account given in *Seule dans les steppes* has a descriptive and rather aseptic tone. Moving to Russia, in general, and Poland, Carla describes a European surrounding, never mentioning that this part of Europe is eastern compared to the part of Europe she comes from. On the contrary, the Europeanness of Poland is stressed in its central and strategic position and in its inhabitants' French-like character.

Hence the idea of East in Carla Serena's production cannot be considered unitary. Her construction of a multifaceted East, varied according the part of Orient she considers, has its origin in her complex European background, in her curious attitude towards new people and in the variety of adventures she experienced during her six-year long solo journey. This latter aspect provides an interesting insight on the mechanism of prejudice deconstruction. What led a western woman full of orientalist prejudices to change her mind on people previously considered barbarians and primitives? Let's consider the following passage.

In Europe we believe too much that all the other people are barbarian. By visiting remote countries, where people with different habits and religions live, you find that they are not disadvantaged because of those qualities that civilisation

seems to claim exclusively.^{xlix}

The educational value of travelling is thus based on experience. The traveller encounters people and lives among them; such meetings change her/his mind. Carla Serena herself questioned Europe and its idea of civilisation, struck by what she considered different and inferior and turned into the object of her longing for knowledge.

The author

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ⁱ Carla Serena always signed her writings with the Italian version of her name. For this reason she was often mistaken for being of Italian origin, as in Marie Dronsart, *Les grandes voyageuses*. (Paris: Hachette, 1898): 85, Bénédicte Monicat, *Itinéraires de l’écriture au féminin: voyageuses du 19e siècle. No. 107*. (Amsterdam – Atlanta, A: Rodopi, 1996), 45 and in Janine Neboit-Mombet, *L’image de la Russie dans le roman français, 1859-1900*. (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2005), 72. Penelope Tuson. *Western Women Travelling East. 1716-1916*. (London – Oxford: The Archadian Library and Oxford University Press, 2014), 237 suggests she changed her name Caroline into Carla because the latter one is more masculine-like sounding.

ⁱⁱ Uberto Limentani. “Leone and Arthur Serena and the Cambridge Chair of Italian, 1919-1934”, *The Modern Language Review* (1997): 878.

ⁱⁱⁱ Carla Serena, *Mon voyage. Souvenirs personnels. Vol. 1. De la Baltique à la mer Caspienne*. (Paris: Dreyfous, 1881), 84.

^{iv} Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 4.

^v Jules Gros, “Une odyssée féminine”, *Journal des Voyages*, October 3, 1880, 202.

^{vi} Daniela Pizzagalli, *Il viaggio del destino. Carla Serena da Venezia al Caucaso*. (Milano: Rizzoli, 2006), 224.

^{vii} Anna Vanzan, “Viaggiatrici italiane e Orientalismi diversi: le donne dell’Islam attraverso gli occhi di Amalia Nizzoli e Carla Serena,” in *Segni, Spazi, Parole. Percorsi di viaggiatrici italiane*, ed. Federica Frediani et al. (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2012), 75.

^{viii} “Der District Schuscha in Transkaukasien”, *Mittheilungen der kais. und kön. Geographischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 22 (1879): 468-472.

^{ix} “Excursion dans le Caucase. De la mer Noire à la mer Caspienne – L’Iméréthie, province du Caucase”, *Le Tour du Monde* 40 (1880): 289-304.

^x “Un tour en Mingrêlie”, *Le Tour du Monde* 41 (1881): 385-416.

^{xi} *Mon voyage. Souvenirs personnels. Vol. 1. De la Baltique à la mer Caspienne*. (Paris: Dreyfous, 1881).

^{xii} *Mon voyage. Souvenirs personnels. Vol. 2. Une européenne en Perse*. (Paris: Dreyfous, 1881).

^{xiii} “Trois mois en Kakhétie”, *Le Tour du Monde* 43 (1882): 193-240; “Excursion au Samourzakan et en Abkasie”, *Le Tour du Monde* 43 (1882): 353-416.

^{xiv} The medal reads: *A Carla Serena, benemerita degli studi etnografici, esploratrice coraggiosa delle regioni Caucasee*. (To Carla Serena, meritorious in ethnographic studies, courageous explorer of the Caucasian regions).

^{xv} “Voyage au Caucase”, *Le Tour du Monde* 47 (1884): 385-416.

^{xvi} “Reisen in Gurien und am oberen Kur”, *Globus. Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder - und Völkerkunde* 47 (1885): 1-38.

^{xvii} *Seule dans les steppes. Épisodes de mon voyage aux pays del Kalmoucks et des Kirghiz*. (Paris: Charpentier, 1883).

^{xviii} *Hommes et choses en Perse*. (Paris: Charpentier, 1883).

^{xix} Tuson, *Western Women Travelling East*, 242

^{xx} « L’Orient est immuable. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 50. Henceforth, my translations.

^{xxi} « En Orient, le rang d’un personnage se mesure d’après son cortège plus ou moins grand. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 46.

^{xxii} « En général, parmi les Turcs éclairés ayant passé quelques années en Europe, l’usage de la pluralité des femmes diminue. [...] Si en présence d’Européens, les Turcs adoptent nos coutumes, seuls, entre eux, ils reprennent leurs usages nationaux. Je fus désappointée de n’avoir pas trouvé dans ces scènes de la vie intime orientale, des sujets assez piquants pour m’intéresser. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 80.

^{xxiii} Muslim sensuality and unchangeable Orient, as in Edward Said, *Orientalism*. (New York: Pantheon, 1978): 96.

^{xxiv} « Au premier coup d’œil l’Orient attire par sa nouveauté. Vue en masse, cette nouveauté se compose de tant de détails contraires aux idées, aux habitudes de l’Européen, qu’il la considère tout d’abord comme un chaos. Peu à peu, en l’analysant, l’œil découvre dans cet ensemble des points saillants qui l’intéressent, le charment. Familiarisé avec ce que d’abord il ne pouvait contempler, il vient à l’aimer. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 38 – 39.

^{xxv} « Je l’ai dit, et je le répète, à l’aspect des types si divers du Caucase, on ne peut réprimer un sentiment de curiosité, d’admiration, d’effroi même, pour ce mont géant qui se dresse à la frontière de l’Europe et de l’Asie et qui passe pour avoir été le berceau du genre humain. » Serena, “Excursion dans le Caucase”, 293 – 294.

^{xxvi} « Au caprice du sort, je venais de me trouver à ce moment en Asie et non en Europe. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 87.

^{xxvii} « En quittant le *Grand-Duc-Michel*, je dis adieu à l’Europe. » Serena, *Hommes et choses en Perse*, 5.

^{xxviii} « Après une excursion au Caucase, elle se rendit en Perse, pays des poètes et des roses, nommé aussi la France de l’extrême Orient. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. Une européenne en Perse*, 2.

^{xxix} The idea that Russia is Europe is by no means trivial. The debate on the position of Russian in the Eurasian context is complex. For a clear account provided with a detailed bibliography on the topic, see Mark Bassin, “Russia between Europe and Asia: the ideological construction of geographical space,” *Slavic Review* 50 (1991): 1-17.

^{xxx} « En descendant de wagon, je me vis entourée de nouveau de tous les signes de la civilisation occidentale. » Serena, *Seule dans les steppes*, 322.

^{xxxi} « Point de jonction entre l’Asie et l’Europe. » Serena, *Seule dans les steppes*, 37.

^{xxxii} « A Astrakhan, retombée en plein cercle européen, j’eus donc à en reprendre les formes abandonnées quelque peu. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 314.

^{xxxiii} « Autant j’avais été questionnée au Caucase sur l’Europe, autant je le fus à Astrakhan sur les contrées que je venais de quitter. J’étais stupéfaite que dans cette contrée les habitants connussent si peu un pays en relation constante avec le leur. [...] Au Caucase

on m'avait regardée avec curiosité parce que je venais de l'Europe, dans la région qui est le péristyle de l'Occident et de l'Orient, il en fut de même parce que je venais du Caucase. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 313.

^{xxxiv} « L'Orient a semé à Astrakhan plusieurs de ses races, qui sont restées presque sans mélange, et n'ont pas perdu leur caractère distinctif ; tandis que l'Occident a peuplé une partie de la ville, où il a introduit ses mœurs et ses coutumes. A chaque pas que l'on fait dans la ville d'Astrakhan, surtout intéressante par la multitude de ses contrastes, on voit l'Asie touchant l'Europe. » Serena, *Seule dans les steppes*, 30.

^{xxxv} « [Varsovie est en quelque sorte] la frontière de la civilisation occidentale en Europe. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 335.

^{xxxvi} «The centre-periphery (or core-periphery) model is a spatial metaphor which describes and attempts to explain the structural relationship between the advanced or metropolitan 'centre' and a less developed 'periphery'», definition in Gordon Marshall, *A Dictionary of Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

^{xxxvii} « La position au cœur de l'Europe est excellente sous le rapport commercial, et semble destinée à un entrepôt entre l'Occident et l'Orient. C'est l'avenir probable si rien ne s'y oppose, ce qui serait possible. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 335 – 336.

^{xxxviii} « Le cachet russe lui manque complètement » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 335.

^{xxxix} « le type et le caractère de sa population se rapprochent davantage des Français. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 335.

^{xl} From the Persian *فرنگی* – farangy (European), originally used to designate French and Christian people in general.

^{xli} « Les Persans désignent les Européens par le nom de *Frenghi*. Peu versés en géographie, ils ne connaissent point les différents pays de l'Europe qu'ils appellent le Frenghistan. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. Une européenne en Perse*, 1.

^{xlii} « Les Européens sont très favorisés, et jouissent de plus de privilèges que les indigènes, ne payant aucun impôt, aucune taxe; aussi, ils en abusent, et s'arrogent souvent des droits au détriment des Persans. » Serena, *Hommes et choses en Perse*, 209.

^{xliiii} « On y rencontre des Européens qui, sous les titres pompeux de Pacha, Khan, cachent souvent un nom auquel l'oubli est nécessaire. Sur cette scène éloignée de la civilisation occidentale, jouent un rôle important ceux qui chez eux sont d'humbles comparses. Si à ces opprimés du sort dans leur pays, l'Orient prodigue ses sourires, ces aristocrates du hasard, en endossant l'habit galonné étiquette de leur noblesse, en prennent le ton de parade. [...] En Orient, ces parvenus deviennent fort arrogants. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. Une européenne en Perse*, 33 – 34.

^{xliv} « Pour les Prussiens, la civilisation de leur pays est la plus avancée du monde. D'autres nations peuvent mériter quelque estime; mais à la Prusse revient la première place. Je la connais peu et j'ignore s'ils ont raison. [...] En Orient j'ai été souvent frappée de l'insouciance des chrétiens à soutenir leur réputation de civilisés autrement que par leur brutalité envers les indigènes, leurs inférieurs. Les musulmans sont des hommes sinon leurs frères. Ce titre devrait suffire. Pourtant les Européens en Orient se font servir à coups de cravache, de pied, de bâton, de verge, ce qu'ils feraient à peine à un chien récalcitrant. Cette conduite les met au-dessous de ceux qu'ils maltraitent ainsi. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 222.

^{xlv} « ATéhéran les Européens se connaissent de trop près pour s'aimer beaucoup. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. Une européenne en Perse*, 164.

^{xlvi} « En Orient, les Européens prennent bien des licences, aussi pour la toilette, il y a plus d'un lèse-majesté à la mode. Chacun s'arrange à sa fantaisie sans souci du « qu'en dira-t-on », terrible frein de leur pays. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 47.

^{xlvii} « De l'Europe j'étais partie. En Europe je suis revenue, heureuse d'avoir réalisé mon but. A l'Europe afflue tout ce que l'esprit humain crée, invente, exécute. A l'Europe, souveraine du monde de la-pensée, sont présentes les créations des intelligences supérieures et tout modeste labeur. L'Europe, centre suprême de la civilisation ressemble à la vaste mer où arrive aussi bien que le tribut du fleuve grandiose le plus mince filet d'eau. Tout y trouve place. A l'Europe donc je présente aussi mon faible travail. Puisse-t-il être agréé par elle, de même que l'humble ruisseau dans l'immensité des mers ! Mon récit apprendra aux Européennes que bien des satisfactions m'ont été données. Mais ici j'avoue que la plus vive est la pensée de revoir mon foyer, car c'est la vraie place de la femme. Femmes, restez-y et lisez là *Mon Voyage*. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 358.

^{xlviii} Said, *Orientalism*, 5.

^{xlix} « Vraiment on croit trop en Europe que tous les autres peuples sont des barbares. En visitant des contrées lointaines, où vivent des populations de mœurs et de religion différentes, on trouve pourtant qu'elles ne sont pas déshéritées pour cela des qualités que la civilisation semble réclamer exclusivement. » Serena, *Mon Voyage. Souvenirs Personnels. De la Baltique à la Mer Caspienne*, 51 – 52.