

Vaka Brown: The Historicized Geography/ Geographic History of an Immigrant

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Demetra Vaka Brown is neither the only, nor the first female immigrant author whose works, written exclusively in English, were celebrated by the American reading public. Anzia Yiezerska and Mary Antin, both writing and publishing at roughly the same time as Vaka Brown, are examples of other female immigrant authors whose immigration narratives legitimized their voices within the frame of early American modernism. In fact, Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* (1912) ultimately became a school textbook, promoting the ideal of successful assimilation for immigrants in the United States. What differentiates Vaka Brown from the tradition represented by Yiezerska and Antin is that she was mostly anthologized among American, rather than ethnic women writers. Grant Overton's plea in the 1925 edition of *The Women Who Make our Novels*, "Give us romances, Demetra Vaka, give us the East; stay with us, write for us novel after novel," illustrates Vaka Brown's lionization by the American reading public as a novelistic authority, addressing the Eastern question through the romance genre (Overton 1925: 290).¹ The fact that Vaka Brown initially published her works as Mrs. Kenneth Brown obliterated, at first, their ethnic content in the eyes of American readership. Rather than allowing her status as a female immigrant author to place her in the periphery of mainstream American culture, Vaka Brown defied spatial, cultural, political, ethnic, as well as identity, boundaries and experimented with the ambiguity of her hyphenated identity.

She established herself on the liminal ground of this hyphen, avoiding any *single* specific identification that would exclude the plurality of her Greek, Byzantine, Ottoman, European, or American identifiers. Ultimately, Demetra Vaka Brown's hybrid identity, established in the constant juxtaposition of distinct cultural traditions, suggests transcendence, as well as fusion, of boundaries and results in the formation of a space *between* them: a space which, by allowing these traditions to form and inform each other, can give rise to such an identity.

Demetra Vaka Brown was born in 1877 on the island of Prinkipo, off the Asia Minor coast. She was the daughter of a Greek official who was working for the Sultanate. Her family's socio-economic status allowed her to pursue studies in Paris, which she had to interrupt, due to the sudden death of her father and subsequent financial difficulties faced by her family. She immigrated to the United States at the age of 17, as the governess of the children of the Ottoman government's appointed consul to the U.S., a man of Greek descent. Vaka did not follow the consul when he returned to Constantinople, but decided to stay in the U.S. with the purpose of studying, a goal she ultimately had to abandon due to financial hardships. Before becoming fluent in English, she worked as a copy editor, writing in Greek, for the national daily Greek newspaper, *Atlantis*. In 1904, she married the author Kenneth Brown with whom she co-authored some of her works. Following a career in journalism, she soon became a correspondent for and regular contributor to *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Asia*, *The Century*, *The Delineator*, *Colliers Magazine*, and *The Outlook*. By the time of her death in 1946, she had written over a dozen romances and personal narratives, two of which appeared posthumously. Almost all of her works were exclusively published by Houghton and Mifflin.²

The work of Vaka Brown has been approached from several

critical perspectives. Yiorgos Kalogeras has examined her texts as the metaphoric "fare" the author had to pay for her transatlantic crossing, texts that function as mediators between the discourses of the host culture and the ethnic. The critic sees both discourses as forming and informing the autobiographical narrators' identities, since they function as legitimizing agents for the author's identity as an American, without silencing Vaka Brown's essential allegiance to her ethnicity.³ He has also argued for a *polyphonic construction* underlying Vaka Brown's writings: a construction that establishes processes, rather than essences, at the basis of the author's cultural identity formation. In Vaka's project, these processes result from her position *between empires*, a position, Kalogeras claims, that undermines the colonial concept of cultural independence.⁴ Reina Lewis, through the prism of gender studies, has placed Demetra Vaka Brown in the context of Orientalism and Orientalization, so as to illustrate the dynamics between the author's Orientalness and America-ness, an Americanness that the critic believes cannot be attuned to the nuances of her Greek-Ottoman identification.⁵ Due to the problematics of this identification, Lewis contends that Vaka Brown resorts to claiming authenticity on double grounds: both feminine (experiential) and masculine (objective). She asserts that these grounds, contradictory by convention, invalidate the canonical Oriental stereotypes that, otherwise, would have constituted a threat to the author's idiosyncratic performance of Orientalness. The same context of multiple processes of identification that surfaces in the criticism of both Kalogeras and Lewis also becomes an issue for Ioanna Laliotou who considers Vaka Brown's life-story, as narrated in her fictional as well as non-fictional works, an example of "early twentieth century female diasporic subjectivity."⁶ Laliotou criticizes Vaka's proposed form of subjectivity as *superficially* modern, because, rather than being a gesture of emancipation, it

was a conscious performance of historical conditionality. According to Laliotou, because of its dependence on the author's disengagement from traditional, monolithic concepts of nationhood, migrancy, and womanhood, such a performance ultimately remains conditional, contradictory, and incomplete.

My discussion of Vaka Brown's ambiguous identification process, as is illustrated in her non-fictional texts,⁷ is based on space studies.⁸ I claim that the ambiguity of her identity, which is rendered problematic in an ethnic, gender studies, or purely historic frame, is resolved if Vaka Brown's texts are contextualized in space studies. Beyond the constraints of an intellectually hegemonic historiography and an intellectually subordinated geography, the non-fictional writings of Demetra Vaka Brown can be read as the work of a literary historian/hybrid social geographer, who viewed and, subsequently, mapped the spaces in which she lived or which she visited in the context of both historical developments as well as social relations and practices. It is this creative interplay between both the physical and the social spaces – spaces that the author inhabits in life, spaces that her autobiographical narrators *map* in writing – that, ultimately, allows her to embrace and exemplify fluidity of identity: a necessary precondition of the modernist tradition within which she operates. Vaka Brown's experienced and fictionalized travels, in the course of which the author constantly crossed spatial, cultural, political, ethnic, and identity boundaries, record the way in which she manipulates spatiality and temporality in a modernist gesture of unifying the *world inside* her with the *world outside* her. Through this gesture, Vaka Brown becomes the prototypical modernist subject: a traveling *flâneur* who plays the role of a cultural mediator between worlds otherwise irreconcilable: the East and the West, the Old World and the New (America), or Greece and the Ottoman Empire.

As a modern *flâneur* – a strolling subject, who moves around, unnoticed in anonymity, observing and internalizing space – Vaka Brown collects the signs of the spatial and contextualizes them as social. Her gesture illustrates Walter Benjamin's contention that, "in the course of *flânerie*, far-off times and places interpenetrate the landscape and the present moment" (1999: 419). However, despite superficial parallels with Benjamin's theory on the *flâneur*, Vaka Brown's spatial conception transcends Marxist claims on the concept of space as related to history, by showcasing spatial relations and processes as essential social relations, albeit in the signifying shape of a specific geographical form. Instead, her view echoes Lefebvre's spatial theory that synthesizes the social and spatial in an inseparable whole of mutually affected and defined entities.⁹ Ultimately, the literary/human geography of Demetra Vaka Brown interrelates geography with historical as well as social development without subordinating one to the other. In this sense, her concept of spatiality transcends the binarism between that and temporality, as her transient literary conscience genders space, ethnicity, and nationalism, by interweaving social and personal history with spatial topography. Thus, Vaka Brown's spatio-temporal discourse introduces an alternative spatial concept, where space is not static, nor is time spaceless.

In the modern world which Vaka Brown's autobiographical narrators inhabit, mobility in physical space lies at the core of human existence and facilitates the connections the individual seeks to establish with his/her social space. The necessary precondition for these connections to be established is fluidity of identity. As Marshall Berman argues in *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, "in order for people, whatever their class, to survive in modern society, their personalities must take on the fluid and open form of this society.... They must learn to yearn for change...to delight in mobility" (1988: 5, 95). Demetra Vaka Brown's active pursuit of change, in both her

personal and social life, is mirrored in her eagerness to travel. At the age of ten, her father sends her to spend some time with one of her aunts in Crimea, thinking that the favorable climate there will help his daughter recuperate from a severe case of typhoid fever. In Vaka Brown's autobiography, "With a Heart for Any Faith," serialized in *Athene* magazine, the narrator remembers:

My regret at being separated from my father was mitigated by the anticipation of seeing Sebastopol, where Artemis had taken Iphigenia, after snatching her from the sacrificial altar, and substituting a doe for her. My father told me that Catherine the Great in enlarging the harbor had destroyed the temple, but the site was still there.... As we approached the Crimea the sky became cloudless, the air soft and caressing, the sea a dark blue mirror.... My eyes were fastened on the spot where the temple ought to have been. And there, between its beautiful marble columns, I could almost see Iphigenia, a fillet on her head, wearing a bright-colored tunic, and waving her hand to me (14, 15).

Interestingly, the autobiographical narrator is not intimidated by the idea of traveling at such a young age, even though she does admit to some sorrow at being separated from her family. Instead, she delights in this opportunity to relocate, and is able to establish an organic connection with the place she visits. To do that, she does not simply observe the site she sees, as the average traveler would, but, rather, frames the space she visits within her ethnic history by being conducted into what Benjamin terms "a vanished time" (416). That history is personalized and narrativized on the narrator's terms, as the traditionally heroic figure of Iphigenia is humanized and becomes the agent who allows the narrator to ground herself to the present by looking back to the past. What surfaces in the description of Vaka Brown's arrival in Sebastopol is her autobiographical narrator's active and generative process of framing the space she visits in a personalized, socio-historic

context. Through this process, her dream can be seen as signifying more than a childish fantasy: it can be seen as a catalyst facilitating her simultaneous movement in space, as well as in time. Arriving in Sebastopol, Vaka Brown's narrator not only reaches Crimea, her spatial destination, but also moves in a temporal dimension, by nature of her imaginative connection with her ethnic history. This organic connection – between the historical past and present – not only facilitates the autobiographical narrator's journey in geographical space, but also reveals that, in Vaka Brown's modern consciousness, enactment of the fantasized past presupposes spatial grounding.

The inadequacy of social history alone as a motivating force shaping human positionality is manifested early on in Vaka Brown's autobiography. While in high school, the narrator admits to the need of contextualizing the academic knowledge of history afforded to her by the Zappeion¹⁰ and her readings. Thus, she sets out on a series of Saturday afternoon walks around Constantinople, during which the events of one thousand years of Byzantine Greek history come alive, as they acquire spatial dimensions and are associated with specific landmarks that function as historic referents:

There was one great pleasure afforded me by "The Great School of the Race," as the men's college is called.... [T]he professors of that college, for the sheer joy of writing, since there was no monetary compensation, wrote monographs on the various aspects of the Byzantine Empire. The college published them very cheaply, to enable their students to study the history of the one thousand years, during which the Byzantine Greeks preserved civilization for Europe, after the fall of the Roman Empire. These monographs I read carefully, and on Saturday afternoons would go over to Stamboul and seek out the places described in them. And it was a delight to find the crumbling walls of the palaces that once had housed the men of my race when they were the greatest power in Europe. It brought history so close (18).

The narrator's closing statement echoes Walter Benjamin's definition of streets as "the dwelling place of the collective" (423). It is *in the streets*, rather than *on the pages* of historical books alone, that Vaka Brown's speaker seeks the records of social history. Strolling in the guise of a *flâneur*, the autobiographical narrator collects not only the signs of the spatial, but also those of the social. Her gaze and strolling around Constantinople are authorized by a variety of discourses that underlie her identity: the social, the ethnic, and the cultural. Seeking to uncover her ethnic history through visual perception of locality marks her modern experience of living in a chaotic, multiethnic metropolis that "buries" temporal associations under a palimpsestic evolutionary design. Nevertheless, strolling in search of historical landmarks, by allowing the narrator to establish spatio-temporal associations, even within the labyrinthine modern setting, effects her personalized appropriation of the space around her and experiential connection to it.

Flânerie marks the most significant transitional stages in Vaka Brown's narrated life: studying in Constantinople and Paris, immigrating to the United States, returning to Constantinople, as well as working as a U.S. correspondent in Greece.¹¹ Constantly strolling, the autobiographical narrator succeeds in collecting and subsequently amalgamating the signs of the spatial with those of the social – cultural artifacts and the human environment, respectively. When a student in Paris, the narrator experiences the city in the same way as she did Constantinople:

Not only the courses we followed, but the city itself, the monuments, the theatres, the museums, the libraries were an education. And the people who congregated here from all over the world, shared with each other their dreams and aspirations. And there were those delightful little open-air book-shops on the quais [sic], where for a few cents one could purchase priceless thoughts (18).

In Paris, her academic interest and study of the space around her are supplemented not only by the visual referents of buildings and monuments, but also by the human input offered by the interaction with her social network. Significantly, this mode of *flânerie* also shapes her experience of immigrating to the United States, an experience that is narrated in her autobiographical narrative, *A Child of the Orient*.¹² There, in recording her first impressions of New York, the narrator recalls:

That year away from school enabled me to poke around a lot, in all sorts of corners and by-corners of New York.... I also spent one entire night in the streets of New York.... The time between half-past eleven and five in the morning I spent in walking on Broadway and on Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh avenues.¹³ I took the Elevated train to the Battery, then up to Harlem, and down again by another line. New York at night is very different from New York in the daytime. It seemed to me that even the types which inhabited it [sic] were different, and I saw a great deal which was not pleasant to see (280).

The narrator's bold gesture of appropriating the space around her through walking is an utterly modern one, as *strolling* becomes the means of familiarizing herself with New York. As Urry contends, "the *flâneur* was the *modern* hero, able to travel, to arrive, to gaze, to move on, to be anonymous, to be in a liminal zone" (Urry 138). In this mode, Vaka Brown's autobiographical narrator experiences New York as a city of many surfaces: a city without limitations or boundaries, since she spends an entire night in the streets alone, and a city where she is free to "poke around" all corners as a stranger among strangers.

What is controversial in the discourse of theorists who discuss *flânerie*, such as Benjamin and Urry, is that they perceive it as an essentially *male* move. Urry asserts that "The *flâneur* was *invariably male* and this rendered invisible

the different ways in which women were both more restricted to the private sphere and at the same time were coming to colonize other emerging public spheres in the late nineteenth century, especially the department store" (Urry 138, emphasis added). Seen against this theoretic frame, Vaka Brown's modern gesture of *flânerie* acquires significant dimensions, if interpreted as a *female* gesture colonizing the *traditionally male*, public sphere. It is noteworthy that, in none of her books does she describe a visit to a department store – the female space of fascination, according to Urry – even though her psychology as a newcomer in the United States could justify a relative interest in that space, totally unknown to Old World women. Doreen Massey, in discussing the dualisms the terms of which are aligned with time and space, reveals that "where time is dynamism, dislocation and History, and space is stasis, space is coded feminine and denigrated" (149). Massey's observation unmasks the condescending attitude in which space was feminized by males and negative connotations were attached to it. In *The Sphinx in the City*, Elizabeth Wilson qualifies the same dualism with respect to modernism, and explains that the notion of stasis associated with both space and women is not the only attribute that has justified patriarchal feminization of the notion of space. Wilson proposes that the senses of chaos and disorder have also been associated with modern space and women and, consequently, presents the notion of city culture as evolving around men, with women posing a threat, given their freedom in a modern city context: "There is fear of the city as a realm of uncontrolled and chaotic sexual license, and the rigid control of women in cities has been felt necessary to avert this danger" (157). Indeed, Vaka Brown's contemporary male modernist writers of the early twentieth century, who saw city space as threatening and, therefore, fearfully portrayed city-street scenes, would have painted the author's late night stroll in New York in the darkest

colors.¹⁴ Still, in contrast to modernist male responses to modern city landscape, involving fear of its "moving chaos," and subsequent attempts toward its exclusive appropriation and demarcation, Demetra Vaka Brown joins the tradition of feminist writers, such as Virginia Woolf, who exult in the city's infinite potential (Berman 159). Her narrator's descriptions of walking around Constantinople, Paris, and New York deconstruct exclusive male claims to *flânerie* and disprove theories aligning space and the feminine with immobility, lack of temporality, and chaos.

Descriptions of the autobiographical narrator's first few months in the United States further testify to Vaka Brown's *female, synthetic* alternative to the dichotomy between space and time. These months disappoint the young immigrant, who had romantic, idealized preconceptions of the New World. Comparisons with the Old World are unavoidable and intensify her sense of disillusionment:

My imagination, inflamed by the words "new world," had created a city as clean as Athens, with wide avenues and splendid parks, and with dwellings surrounded by gardens, as befitted the greatest city of the new world [sic]. The reality – the narrow, dingy streets, the rows and rows of houses with monotonous brownstone steps leading up to the front doors, without a tree in front of them, were unfriendly and uninviting. Thick lace curtains barred the inside, and never did one see a face in the windows.... Our apartment was only a few blocks from the Hudson, and by its side we walked.... But the shores of that beautiful river, instead of being lined with cafes, and laid out in gardens, as they would have been in Europe, were polluted by railroads and dirt (25).

Apparently, the constant juxtaposition of landscape architecture in Europe with its equivalent in the New World illustrates the narrator's need, in her initial stages of acculturation, to map out spatial landmarks of the home

country on the host country. After all, identification with aspects of the host topography facilitates the transition from one spatial context to another. At this early stage, lack of the narrator's contact with the human element in the city hinders her acculturation process. In an interesting parallel to the autobiographical narrator's strolling excursions in Constantinople, when identification of historical landmarks caused an organic connection between the city's space and history, visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York function as her escapist outlets that, at the same time, assist appropriation of the host country's landscape:

One day while walking with the children in the park, I came upon the Metropolitan Museum of Art. We entered it – and life was changed. Discovering that there were days when one did not have to pay, I used to take the road to it with an anticipation comparable to a lover's tryst. Nothing could keep me from it on its free days. In the imperishable beauty within its walls I could forget the outside ugliness of New York (25).

Interestingly, "although museums are often seen...as important tools of modernization, as forces of resocialization of traditional peoples, and as reinforcers of modern values," in the case of Vaka Brown's speaker, the social status of the Metropolitan Museum of Art is weak with respect to her transition from the Old World to the New World (MacCannell 78). The narrator's confession that, while *inside* the museum, she momentarily forgets the ugliness of New York *outside*, reveals that these visits function as brief outlets that only initiate a series of attitude changes, without ultimately sustaining them. The museum's ineffectiveness becomes obvious when, much later, the narrator still looks at the New York harbor "creat[ing] a bond between it and the Sea of Marmara" and wondering "why people of this new world, incapable of creating beauty, should contaminate what God gave them" (51). In an insightful excerpt from *A Child of the*

Orient, the autobiographical narrator confesses to a utopian, feminist dream, in which she invests herself with the power to re-create the displeasing topography of New York: "...my dream comes back to me, to give trees all along the streets and all along the avenues, and shady open spaces to breathe in" (270). This vision vents her dissatisfaction with the ugliness of the city surrounding her, but testifies to more than an escapist tendency. Her dreaming vision explicitly places Vaka Brown's narrator in the position of a powerful creator of space, the imagination of whom metamorphoses the surrounding disturbing landscape, and creates a new, "soothing," personalized, and imaginative geography. From a feminist perspective, the narrator's dream is a statement on the female appropriation of public space: where her female predecessors could only lay claim to the space of procreation, Vaka Brown invests her narrator with the power of a modern woman, who can also lay claim to the space of creation by means of delineating her idiosyncratic geography.

Politics becomes the catalyst that assists the humanization and subsequent metamorphosis of the space around her. In the words of her autobiographical speaker,

Secretly I felt I could never become an American.... A seemingly minor incident changed this. One day, on returning from a lesson, I found Fifth Avenue filled with an election parade...in protest against Bryan's¹⁵ "free silver". They were the finest body of men I had ever seen, and the little foreigner watching from the side-walk was thrilled. New York might be dirty, it might lack splendid boulevards and public buildings, but so long as it had men willing to stand up for what they considered right, America would never perish...*these men...turned me into an American* (46, emphasis added).

Gradually, the bond Vaka Brown's narrator is able to establish with the space she inhabits, the bond that allows her to visualize herself as part of the landscape surrounding

her, relies on her comprehension of the country's history and appreciation of the quality of its human idiosyncrasy. Such a gesture echoes what Homi Bhabha terms *Western connoisseurship*: "the capacity to understand and locate cultures in a universal time-frame that acknowledges their various historical and social contexts only eventually to transcend them and render them transparent" (208). Homi Bhabha's definition highlights the Western tendency to identify similarities across cultures, so that a collective cultural frame can transcend and erase the differences historical causality effects. Similarly, Vaka Brown's autobiographical speaker projects traits she has associated with her "racial" history on the men she views as her cultural initiators. Moreover, reading history books, such as one by John Fiske, the narrator admits that being "the daughter of a race which had suffered recent defeat, [she] felt sympathy for the southern side" (23). Her drawing of parallels between the socio-historic context of her "race" and that of her host culture is necessitated by the discourse of assimilation she adopts. The narrator's rhetoric appeals to the notion of *a set of common societal elements*, in an effort to establish connections between the Old World, in which she is rooted, and the New World, where she needs to ground herself. Therefore, regardless of the differences in topography, climate, or aesthetics – differences that had constituted an obstacle in her assimilation process until then – it is her identification with certain aspects of the American societal idiosyncrasy, aspects common to the societies of both New York and Constantinople, which *turns her into an American*. Vaka Brown's cultural politics of diaspora thus conceived become meaningful, especially when considering her position as an immigrant writing for popular mainstream newspapers and magazines in the United States. Undoubtedly, the normative discourse of such publications necessitates connections between the home and host cultures. Such connections, that become feasible only through the *crossing*

and *transgression* that Vaka Brown's narrator advocates, are powerful enough to legitimize her narrative voice, by placing it in the context of the mainstream culture upholding cultural integration of minorities. The notion of accommodating different cultures within a universalist framework, although problematic by post-modern standards was viewed, at the time that Vaka Brown was writing, as guaranteeing the assimilation of minorities to "holistic and organic notions of cultural value," notions that lie at the basis of American mainstream culture (Bhabha 219). This is why *social space* on the basis of the similarities the young immigrant narrator draws between Old and New World societies and histories, motivates a consciousness in her that the *physical landscape* alone can not establish. In Vaka Brown's imaginative view, the ineffectiveness of the physical landscape's causality, stemming from the numerous differences between Old and New World geographies, is overcome by the socio-historic context of the New World and the normative, homogenizing discourse of assimilation that she adopts.

Geographic differences never cease to be an issue for the narrator, and surface again in *A Child of the Orient*, where Vaka Brown's return to Constantinople – six years after her emigration to the United States – is recorded. Not surprisingly, the method the autobiographical speaker chooses to survey her home city is that of *flânerie*, of strolling, again:

[I] was free to start on my pilgrimage; and as I walked up and down the main streets, and in and out of the narrow, crooked, dirty lanes, which lead [sic] one enticingly onward, – often to nowhere – , I was aware that my pilgrimage had a double aim. First, I wanted to recognize my old haunts; and second, to find that part of myself which had once lived within those quarters. Alas! if the streets were the same, I was not.... My eyes, Americanized by the progress of the New World, kept seeing things that ought to be done, and were left undone, for no other reason than that they had

been left undone for hundreds of years. The saddest of all sad things is when one begins to see the faults and failings of one's own beloved, be it a person or a country. I hated myself for finding fault with Turkey because she was clad in a poor, unkempt garb (CoO 288, 289).

The autobiographical narrator's belated view of Turkey solidifies contextualization of geography on the basis of personal history in two ways. Firstly, the word *pilgrimage* that the speaker chooses to qualify her tour of the city bears significant connotations. Pilgrimages constitute journeys to sacred places and are acts of devotion usually aiming at spiritual merit. Indeed, the author's narrated journey back to and through the streets of Constantinople is described in terms of a spiritual journey to self-fulfillment. The narrator presents herself as intending to juxtapose her new to her old self, only to re-discover and connect with the self she has lost to relocating. Her journey to self-discovery and fulfillment is, also, a journey through space, as the "two selves" are identified in terms of their geographic roots: her old self is associated with the streets of Constantinople, while her new self with the streets of New York. Therefore, once again, spatial topography and, this time, personal history are inextricably connected in the narrator's transient conscience. Secondly, the narrator's visual perception of Constantinople's streets, of which the photographic referent has probably remained the same during these six years, appears, nevertheless, culturally affected. These streets are now described as "crooked," "dirty," "unkempt" – all qualifiers that the narrator, prior to her Americanization, had attributed to the streets of New York. Obviously, the process of acculturation and assimilation has afforded the narrator a new way of seeing, the standards of which appear reversed: now, the idealized, nostalgic vision of the home country deteriorates when on a par with the host country's state of progress, and the concept of Old World's superior aesthetics

is undermined. Ultimately, it becomes obvious that, in the vision of Vaka Brown's narrator, spatial and aesthetic qualifiers such as "beauty" and "ugliness" do not have specific referents, but, rather, are ambiguously constructed on the basis of personal experience.

Vaka Brown's perception of history is diametrically opposed to critical theories upholding that "heritage history is distorted because of the predominant emphasis on visualization, on presenting visitors with an array of artifacts, including buildings (either 'real' or 'manufactured'), and then trying to visualize the patterns of life that would have emerged around them" (Urry 112). Indeed, the author alters the model of this essential "artifactual" history according to which the visual referents marking space are foregrounded to the social processes and historical developments. Conversely, she presents her readers with a model that simultaneously historicizes literary geography and visualizes temporal history. Such a model is flexible enough to allow for spatial metamorphoses embedded in a dynamic historical context. After all, as Doreen Massey explains, "One way of thinking about all this is to say that the spatial is integral to the production of history, and thus to the possibility of politics, just as the temporal is to geography" (159). Vaka Brown's view of the inseparability of time and space lies at the crux of her literary/human geography that transcends the polarized binarism of space versus time. Such geography performs two functions: first, it successfully maps the visual, spatial form in the frame of social relations and practices as well as historical developments, and, second, it visualizes this two-layered frame. Therefore, Vaka Brown's alternative geography allows readers a modern, multi-dimensional view of a cosmos, the constituents of which are interrelated and interdependent.

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NOTES

¹ More often than being included in anthologies of Greek-American literature, Vaka Brown was anthologized alongside American women writers. In addition to Overton's aforementioned edition, which places Vaka Brown in the tradition of American novelists such as Edith Wharton and Willa Cather, see also John William Leonard's *Woman's Who's Who of America: A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary Women in the United States and Canada, 1914-1915* (New York: American Commonwealth Co., 1914) and Doris Robinson's *Women Novelists, 1891-1920*. (New York: Garland Reference Library, 1984).

² Her works include: *The First Secretary* (1907), *Haremluk* (1909), *A Duke's Price* (1910), *In the Shadow of Islam* (1911), *A Child of the Orient* (1914), *The Grasp of the Sultan* (1916), *The Heart of the Balkans* (1917), *In the Heart of the German Intrigue* (1918), *In Pawn to a Throne* (1919), *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul* (1923), *Bribed to be Born* (1951), her autobiography serialized in *Athene* magazine (1948-1953), as well as a volume of modern Greek fiction, *Modern Greek Stories*, which she translated together with Aristides Phoutrides in 1920.

³ See Yiorgos Kalogeras, "A Child of the Orient as American Storyteller: Demetra Vaka-Brown," in *Working Papers in Linguistics and Literature*, ed. R. Parkin-Gounelas (Thessaloniki: Aristotle University Press, 1989), 187-193.

⁴ See Yiorgos Kalogeras, "Nationalism Unveiled: A Greek American View of the Harem," in *Women, Creators of Cultures. Perspectives*, ed.

E. Georgoudaki and D. Pastourmatzi (Thessaloniki: Hellenic Association of Am. Studies, 1997), 106-116.

⁵ Reina Lewis "Cross-Cultural Reiterations: Demetra Vaka Brown and the Performance of Racialized Female Beauty," in *Performing the Body, Performing the Text*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, (London: Routledge, 1999), 56-75.

⁶ see Laliotou (1998), chapter 3.

⁷ In this article, I am discussing Vaka Brown's autobiography serialized in *Athene* magazine and her autobiographic novel *A Child of the Orient*.

⁸ My discussion of Vaka Brown's work is informed by my research on the concept of *space* in literature. Since Foucault's (1986) assertion of the supremacy of space over time, critics have been debating the merits of literary geography over literary history. For instance, Foucault's proclamation has been supported by geographers such as Urry and Tuan, questioned by theorists such as Laclau, juxtaposing temporality and subsequent social effectiveness with spatiality and stasis, and extended by social geographers such as Edward Soja and Barbara Hooper, defying polarization between the temporal and the spatial.

⁹ Here, I have in mind Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*.

¹⁰ The Zappeion was one of the most esteemed public schools in Constantinople, open only to females, established and run on a private donation. However, because of the high tuition that the school charged – at a time when education was not free – mostly students from the upper-middle class and above attended it.

¹¹ In this paper, I will not be referring to Vaka Brown's journalistic records.

¹² I will use, where necessary, the abbreviation CoO to denote excerpts from *A Child of the Orient*, in order to differentiate them from excerpts from Vaka Brown's serialized autobiography.

¹³ Capitalization of street names is not consistent in Vaka Brown. Here, she does not capitalize "avenues," although elsewhere she does.

¹⁴ Marshall Berman extensively discusses such reactions by male modernist authors in *All That Is Solid* (see 159ff). Furthermore, consider Henry James's nervous reaction to the streets of New York as recorded in *The American Scene* (1905).

¹⁵ Given the historical context of the time, I think that "Bryan" is a typographic error, while the author actually refers to William Jennings Bryan.