

Lesser of Two Evils? Slavery in a Comparative Perspective in 19th Century American Travel Narratives of the Ottoman Empire

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Abstract Nineteenth century travels of Americans from various backgrounds to the Ottoman Empire resulted in abundant literature which largely went unnoticed by scholars of American literature in the following centuries. Genre of travel provides the authors with opportunities that are manifold. The most essential of these opportunities were usually the most obvious: representation of self, the young nation; representation of the other (the Ottoman Empire) and a comparative approach, the result of which would either be reassurance of the audience of the superiority of the nation or self-critique. The comparative approach was presented regarding many subjects but one of them was not as easily tackled by the authors as the rest: institution of slavery, its practices and repercussions in both lands. This paper presents a limited survey of this particular comparative approach in nineteenth century American travel narratives by revealing its presence as well as absence in the authors' discursive preferences.

Keywords: travel, Orientalism, slavery, representation, metadiscourse

1. Introduction

1.1 Discursive Background

At first glance, the lack of colonial entanglements between the author (American travel writer of the 19th century) and the subject matter (Ottoman Empire) appear to emancipate the critic from the exhausted realm of binary oppositions of East/West, civilized/barbarian, real/imaginary etc. Granted, metadiscourse¹ of the critic in this case, is not destined to be an emulative analysis of any other analysis of a variant of any other travel narrative rich in imagery and poor in accuracy. When the American domestic framework with its Anglo-Saxon cultural inheritance, its unique productions of American exceptionalism, essentialism, manifest destiny, and frontier experience is taken into consideration, metadiscourse of the critic will avoid an exhausted realm. Nevertheless, it will delve into an uncharted territory (not conceptually but in terms of the context they are applied in). Even after recounting the nation-specific discursive elements and the tendencies that shape these elements, the critic will have to reappropriate many terms that have been used and came to be identified with French/British Orientalisms. And this constant struggle for differentiation and justification of the contemporary literary critic mirrors a similar struggle 19th century American travel writer of our primary sources might have gone through. Author will appreciate or at least acknowledge (in a direct manner like Nathaniel P. Willis or in a satirical manner like Mark Twain) the European cultural, literary, artistic heritage but his admiration will not supercede his

¹ Metadiscourse was originally coined by the American linguist Zellig Harris in his 1959 work, *Papers in Structural and Transformational Linguistics*, after which it was redefined by many scholars among which were J. M. Williams, Avon Crismore, Paul J. Beauvais, and W. J. Vande Kopple. It refers to a discourse about a discourse or an utterance that makes the existence of the author apparent. I am using it not to demarcate a formal aspect but simply to identify the task of the literary critic in analyzing the primary travel narrative which has Orient as its subject matter. It might be useful to question and problematize the metadiscourse of the critic in addition to the discourse of the primary text.

design for originality.

This “anxiety of influence” (Bloom, 1997) yet a very specific one, is prevalent in most 19th century American travel narratives. It naturally increases when the writer is an author or a journalist by profession. With each new preface, there is a promise of authenticity either in terms of sub-genre or content. Thus, the fundamental underlying factor that determines the discursive strategy the author is going to employ depends on the stage of psychosocial development of the young nation. The insecurities that accompany the national identity formation reflects on the national genre as well. After all, in 1820, English reviewer Sidney Smith (1839) could write:

In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue? What does the world yet owe to American physicians or surgeons? What new substances have their chemists discovered? or what old ones have they analyzed? What new constellations have been discovered by the telescopes of Americans?—what have they done in the mathematics? Who drinks out of American glasses? or eats from American plates? or wears American coats or gowns? or sleeps in American blankets?—Finally, under which of the old tyrannical governments of Europe is every sixth man a slave, whom his fellow creatures may buy and sell and torture? (p. 16-17).

Smith was not entirely wrong, at least in two of his observations which are of interest to this chapter the most: the first and the last. Between 1790-1837, *Robinson Crusoe* had 33 editions which was followed by Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* with 19 editions between 1791-1827 (Gross & Kelley, p. 443) which incidentally was not followed by an American book either. As the data of the census was collected and evaluated a year after his publication, Smith takes the census of 1810 into account. According to the U.S. Census of 1820 too, however his estimate was precise. The total population of U.S. was 9,625,734, whereas the slave population was 1,531,436 (U.S. Department of State, p. 18). The accuracy of his informed estimates aside, Smith points to two vitally vulnerable aspects for the travel writer. One is the occupational attempt at positioning oneself within the realm of American literature and a sub-genre of travel literature. The other is the burden on the self-righteous narrator in his unavoidable comparative perspective which has to reiterate the sagacity of U.S. national culture. How will the travel writer of the young republic refute Smith?

Real/imaginary binary, by encompassing geography, people, customs, history and events that are recounted in the text extends to a wide spectrum from fantasy to accuracy. It is very tempting for contemporary scholars of history, anthropology, literature, philosophy to sift through the den of fantasies and weed out the rare items of accuracy. At the risk of trivializing the primary sources one can be induced to retrieve the historicity of the texts and put the rest to rest. As one moves forward from one century to the next however, as the truth or the opportunity of comparison between a variety of sources gradually becomes more accessible to the average reader, the fabrications either remain subtle or else they do not survive. With all their in/consistencies marked by ambivalence or a strict sense of coherence, in or among themselves, the ideological standpoints or even fantasies are invoked by the personal and historical context that no critic or historian would venture to disregard. On the one hand, travel is considered to be a consortium of genres rather than merely a non-fictional account and analyzed in an interdisciplinary manner, on the other hand, its preferred subgenre is given priority over the nature of its main genre. Percy G. Adams has done an extensive study on the travelers' fabrications in the 17th and 18th centuries. He explains the reasons for the gullibility of the readers of the 18th century as such: “Because the eighteenth century was so avid in its search for data about man and his physical surroundings, it was inclined to be gullible and fall victim to facts that were not facts and to travel books that were partly, even completely, false” (Adams, 1980, p. viii). This is one aspect that is not left unsettled by 19th century American travel writers who include their observations about slavery in their accounts. There is an harmony among these writers with regard to their treatment of the subject of slavery at least on a basic, descriptive level. And the abundance of speculation that usually accompanies the subject matters such as cultural norms or gender dynamics is absent from the portrayals of slave-markets. This harmony extends to literally all the travel writers who travelled to and wrote about the Ottoman Empire as well as pertaining to the question of slavery at home and/or in the Ottoman Empire. Because the study is on a discursive level, it can by no means be conclusive, but “all accounts” refer to all of the travel accounts that are published in the 19th century which partially or specifically deal with one or more parts of the Ottoman Empire and either allude to or discuss the subject of slavery at home and/or in the empire. This chapter will seek to scrutinize the common and contrasting discursive practices of 19th century travel writers applied when dealing with the issue of slavery at home and abroad while documenting their travel

experiences in the Ottoman Empire.

In the first decade of the 19th century, only one travel narrative the subject matter of which is the Ottoman Empire was published, in the second decade, only three. Around 200 travel narratives that included Ottoman Empire as a destination were published in the 19th century, more -53- were published in the 1880s than any other decade. The reason for this concentration is the relative affordability of a transatlantic voyage starting from the second half of the preceding decade. By the 1860s, “transatlantic steamship services became cost-effective” (Rodrigue et al., 2009, p. 48). Moreover, traveling was simply easier with the world’s railroad increasing from 5500 kilometers to 130.500 kilometers in the three decades between 1840-1870 (Mathias & Todorov, 2005, p. 50).

2. American Orientalism and Slavery

The theme of slavery was curiously prevalent in or absent from the travel narratives in question. Its prevalence can be scrutinized in two consequential discursive strategies. One is the intricateness of “belated” American Orientalism to the essentialist discourse on slavery and the latter is the national identity formation via either self-critique or self-appraisal through a comparative approach to American and Ottoman practices of slavery. For instance, in the travel narrative of Commodore David Porter, the first charge d’affaires to Constantinople who resided there during the last 12 years of his life, there is only one reference to the institution of slavery in the Ottoman Empire whereas he is eager to repeatedly compare the Mexican cities, people and norms to their Ottoman counterparts in by no means a positive light. There are occasional references to Armenians as slavlike, along with his dislike for all minority groups in general. He writes of the Ottoman slave market: “It is a miserable place, and not worth the time and trouble of visiting it...There is nothing to be seen there, but negroes, ugly white women, and small children of the ages of from eight to ten years, the refuse of other markets, exhibited for sale” (Porter, 1835, p. 55-56). This lack of reference to slavery does not prevent the reader from predicting his racial ideology. Driven by unequivocal patriotism, he poses no social criticism at American society. Although biographical analyses are essential in determining the author’s discursive preferences, Porter’s narrative does not require one merely because of the discursive consistency and uniformity in his volumes of residency/travel. A self acclaimed connoisseur of beauty, Porter does not dwell on what is not pleasing to the eye; moreover, his national fervor redeems American shortcomings before a process of comparison comes into play. On the other hand, public speaker and author George William Curtis was a proponent of the anti-slavery movement during the second half of the nineteenth century. Having witnessed the passage of the “devil’s navy” (Curtis, 1851, p. 55). as he calls the slave boats, he concludes: “In Egypt and the East generally, slavery does not appear so sadly as elsewhere” (Curtis, 1851, p. 56). This double-edged sentiment is a common motif in the travel narratives of the 19th century which at times reveals itself as ambivalence towards the local culture the author encounters.

Interestingly, in the travel narratives written in the antebellum period, there is rare or no reference to slavery at home and/or abroad. The references multiply during the postbellum era in direct proportion to the increase in the number of travel narratives themselves. As this is not a comparative study of American and Ottoman slaveries, I will not go into comprehensive descriptions of the two institutions; however, it is useful to take a glance at their structure before I proceed to the specific discursive treatments of these institutions. Ottoman slavery, expectedly is hard to define and its system is more complex. Ehud Toledano lists four main types of Ottoman slavery. The first one is the *kul* system which is a military-administrative type of servitude. The second one is the harem system, which is most prone to fabrication at the hands of travelers, the third one is domestic slavery and the last and the least frequent one is agricultural slavery (Toledano, 1993, p. 479). Toledano (1993) agrees with Gibb and Bowen that *kul* type of slavery is a much more moderate type than conventional type of slavery and that it is best to convey that “for much of Ottoman history, powerful, highly honored personages throughout the army and the civilian bureaucracy, in Istanbul as well as in the provinces, labored under certain legal conditions that amounted to a status resembling servility” (Toledano, 1998, p. 13). White slaves (mostly Circassian) and Ethiopian slaves were also sold as concubines or wives and manumitted when they bore children from their masters. Children of a slave women from her master was also free and inherited the father’s property as well as freedom. Agricultural slavery is most similar to serfdom in that war prisoners and

² The term belongs to Ali Behdad as used in his *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

conquered peoples were settled on government land, provided with the means of labor and could keep the half of the crop (Erdem, 1996, p. 12). The arbitrary treatment of slaves, the biographical information available about the slaves make the distinctions blurry. American slavery, too is maimed by arbitrariness albeit on a different level. American chattel slaves were used both for domestic and plantation labor. It remained to be a major component of American economy until the Civil War. Slaves were at the mercy of their owners, being their property, their actions were limited by the will of their masters. They did not hold any rights, did not under any circumstance become family members. At times, they were allowed by their masters to marry (Phillips, 1985, p. 5). They were rarely manumitted and social mobility was a minimal possibility. American Anti-Slavery Society was founded in 1833. The abolitionist movement however had its roots deeper in time. Despite having held only four meetings, the first abolitionist society called The Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Held in Bondage was founded in 1775. Before the Civil War started the approximated number of slaves in U.S. was 4 million.

In the light of this preface to the institutions of slavery in two cultures, the expectations of a reader of 19th century travel literature will not be defied to a great extent. What I mean by harmony in content is the inner consistency of a single narrative and the consensus of multiple narratives on a specific issue. This is a rare occurrence even as late as the 19th century, since genre of travel borders on the autobiographical and is marked by purposefulness. Be it cultural norms and practices, gender dynamics, religion or architecture, the particular literary/occupational background and the targeted audience of the author determines the way in which the aspect of the society is presented. And the presentation is more of than not denoted by the common feature of ambivalence. Homi Bhabha expands on this ambivalence as the ambivalence of the colonial presence or in Justin Edwards' words it "depends upon a fluctuation between wanting one thing and its opposite: a simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person, or action" (Edwards, 2001, p. 46). It seems that the absence of colonial interaction and the presence of its reflexes are not mutually exclusive.

2.1. Religion and Slavery

William Goodell, a dedicated missionary who arrived in Beirut in 1823, spent many decades within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. The ambivalence of attraction and repulsion is apparent in his observations of the Turkish character: "They [Turkish people] are hospitable, but ceremonious; very easy and dignified in their manners, but if report be true, vicious and beastly in their habits; extremely kind to their domestics, and especially to their slaves..." (Goodell, 1876, p. 154). It is one uninterrupted remark despite the impression it gives the reader. Cyrus Hamlin, a Congregational missionary, a contemporary of Goodell, after quoting the civil code book by book, tended to agree with Goodell on the treatment of domestic slaves: "The slaves are chiefly house servants, and are not, in general, badly treated" (Hamlin, 1878, p. 337). Goodell however was not always ambivalent in his depictions, with the help of his extensive experiences in the empire and insight into the lives of the Turks he was familiar with their grounds for maintaining certain practices and institutions. Henry Wikoff, known as an adventurer and a professional gossip, published the narratives of his travels four years after Goodell's was published. Wikoff met Goodell in Turkey whom he thought to be a "careful observer of men and things" (Wikoff, 1880, p. 275) and posed a number of questions at him about Turkish life and habits. While conversing about the progress of missionary activities in the empire, after an humble prelude, Goodell elaborates on the hindrances to his endeavors: "If I were to assail polygamy or slavery, it would be regarded as an outrage on their sacred book, the Koran, which approves of both. If I insisted that they must be saved by their works, they would point to the doctrine of predestination taught by the Koran, and the assurance of paradise with its black-eyed houris to all believers." (Wikoff, 1880, p. 275). Slavery, is not only an epithet used for kul/harem, domestic or agricultural slavery in its literal sense as Goodell remarks here. Wikoff, among many others, refer to Greeks as slaves under the yoke of the Ottoman Empire. Philhellenism reached its peak particularly during the Greek War of Independence during the 1820s. Greece had been formally independent for a few decades by the time Wikoff published his account. He wrote of the Greeks: "Though nominally Christians, the unfortunate Greeks had been so long the slaves of the heathen Turk, that they were little better, perhaps worse. What sort of a place would the United States become after some centuries of Turkish rule?" (Wikoff, 1880, p. 311). Aside from the Greeks under the Ottoman rule, one other instance where the epithet of slave or enslaved is reappropriated is for non-Christians who are slave to a wrong faith and enslaved by superstition and are in need of missionary initiative. Slavery is also used to denote a sense of equality in an ironic sense. Susan E. Wallace, a well-read daughter of an influential family who had written 6 books and many other literary works in

magazines in her life including her travel account of Turkey, published at the end of the 19th century is more interested in criticizing a despotic government rather than the institution of slavery which she finds to be only nominal in the Ottoman Empire. On watching the ceremony on the “Feast of Bairam” at the Dolmabahçe Palace, initially expresses nostalgia for the feasts in the past when the costumes and garments were not Europeanized. It is a common phenomenon of the American travelers of the 19th century to express this sense of nostalgia for the Orient which they had not witnessed but had read or heard about. The frustration lends itself to satisfaction once the route digresses from Constantinople and Smyrna. “The Sultan is both Pope and Emperor; below him all men are slaves, which accounts for the jet-black officials on an equal rank (the equality of slavery) with white men” (Wallace, 1898, p. 30). The possible impact of religion as well as an appraisal for the an alternative social stratum is omitted from her description. Rev. Henry M. Field, an acclaimed clergyman and editor of *The Evangelist of New York* for forty years is not disconcerted to find an haven of equality among the two races.

I have at last found one country in the world in which the distinction between black and white makes absolutely no difference in one's rank or position. And this, strange to say, is a country where slavery long existed, and where, though suppressed by law, it still exists, though less openly...slavery in Turkey is of a mild form, and as it affects both races (fair Circassian women being sold as well as the blackest Ethiophian), the fact of servitude works no such degradation as attains the race. And so whites and blacks meet together, and walk together, and eat together, apparently without the slightest consciousness of superiority on one side, or of inferiority on the other. No doubt this equality is partly due to the influence of Mohammedanism, which is very democratic, which recognizes no distinction of race... (Field, 1877, p. 311).

Rather than conveying a sense of ambivalence in representing the foreign culture, Field explicitly tackles an ambivalent issue in the culture he is observing. Unlike Wallace, he elaborates on a possible reason for the egalitarian structure of the society and the way slavery is practiced. Moreover, even if the members of the race are not given a voice, he remarks on the reciprocity of racial dynamics by not representing them in a binary framework of subject-object relationship.

2.2. Secular Interpretations

Samuel S. Cox, congressman and later U.S. ambassador to the Ottoman Empire for two years would also disagree that Islam had only negative effects on the Ottoman society's institutions. He reflects that “it is the religion which softens the harshness of the institution, and makes it a shadow” (Cox, 1859, p. 246). Cox's treatment of the Oriental subject and the societal norms defy a discursive paradigm and the metadiscourse that dominates that paradigm now. Regarding American Holy Land travel writing, Brian Yothers lists American Orientalism under three³ most common categories: one contains the works of the “intellectual strand” which consider the Oriental culture as intellectual stimuli, second are the works of the “popular strand” which feeds on the mysterious and the mythical, the third is the “pious strand” which entails the missionary narratives (Yothers, 2007, p. 15-16). Due to his inquisitive nature, Cox does not qualify for any of the categories listed above. Instead, to countermand the misunderstanding about the institution of slavery in the Ottoman Empire, Cox consults the American consul in Constantinople, Francis Daniese and shares his conclusions with the readers.

The slave markets of Constantinople have drawn forth a great deal of sympathy, from the ladies especially. The idea of white women, almost naked, being sold in the public market, has excited much horror. This is all superfluous. To be sure, slavery is bad enough in its best form. But the slave of the Turk is not the slave of the planter, by a good deal. Here, it signifies a person purchased to be the adopted son or daughter of the owner. The market for white slaves is alone open to Turks, who purchase two classes of persons; one for wives, the other for servants. The former are sent by the best families of Georgia and Circassia to the Commissioner, who takes care that no insult of the slightest nature is offered. They are glad to go. All is voluntary. The females have the absolute right to refuse to be sold to anyone whom they dislike. Ladies in America sometimes do not have as much accorded to them. Once bought they become the wife of the Mussulman...there is one redeeming feature in Turkish slavery, and that is, that the mother becomes free on the birth of a child who is also free. There is no hereditary slavery... The male slaves have every chance to rise in the world, because they rise with their masters. Merit and mind rise above the institution (Cox, 1859, p. 244-245).

³ Yothers talks about a fourth, less frequently encountered trend which includes works concentrating on the archaeological remnants of sacred sites.

He addresses one essential facet that rarely escapes the attention of American travelers and uniquely discards it as “superfluous.” The facet entails more than one sensitive aspect to it: Whiteness, femininity (to stretch it half a century back, femininity which represents the values intricate to Republican Motherhood) and hereditary slavery. Then he proceeds on to comparison of plantation slavery and domestic slavery in the Ottoman Empire as well as the condition of white female slaves in the empire and the de facto social rights of American women. Instead of searching for a source of approval and reiterating it in favor of American society, Cox chooses to turn his observations and the knowledge he acquired from reliable sources into a social critique of American society. He draws a very distinct border between his discursive strategies and those chronologically preceding him who had opted for national self-appraisal. So in an inverted metadiscourse, it should be asked why Cox did not try to prove otherwise and reflected sales of female slaves in such a positive light. After all, slaves did not at all times have the right to refuse sale and went through a degrading and detailed inspection before the sale. Even after it was banned for the concubines to be sold to non-Muslims, the trade clandestinely continued (Parlatir, 1984, p. 818-819). Whether mythical or real, social mobility constituted a cornerstone of 19th century American culture as well as of the everlasting idea of exceptionalism. Therefore, merit and upward social mobility as a result also does not escape 19th century American travelers. Number of lynchings in the South reaching 160 in 1892 (Wayne, 2007, p. 118), America under reconstruction could not yet talk about the social mobility for former slaves.

What goes hand in hand with the admiration for upward social mobility by merit is a distrust for nobility. The complex web of sentiments towards British culture and nobility reflects on the narratives. Cox, in his account published 28 years after *A Buckeye Abroad*, is concurrent with his past experiences and opinions: “The boatman, porter, slave or groom may not only be eligible to be called Pasha, but there is no exclusive clique or caste to render them ineligible to any office in Turkey” (Cox, 1887, p. 496). Without referring to the frequency with which this potential is realized he continues, “In Turkey, any one, even a slave, can become a Marshal of the Empire, or the Grand Vizier. There are no hereditary or other titles of nobility” (Cox, 1887, p. 560). The objectiveness with which Cox tried to portray the empire would cause him to be included in another diplomat, Charles K. Tuckerman’s category of “Philo-Turkish” (Tuckerman, 1895, p. 275) travel writers. Another comparison he makes is pertinent to the actual condition of the sales of the slaves. After a description of the slave market, he concludes: “It [the slave market] is not, in comparison with the old slave mart of America, that which we could reproach the Turks. There is no cruelty –no insult to the slave” (Cox, 1887, p. 541).

Not all authors were as tactful about the reliability of their sources and the portrayal of what they acquired as Cox was. Although most authors maintained a discursive consistency about the institution of slavery if not the racial dynamics in their accounts, some were overwhelmed by the lurking sentiments of ambivalence. This is not to argue that the discursive tendencies were singlehandedly arbitrated by psychosocial backgrounds of the authors. An account published in the antebellum era affirms the contextual impact of dealing with sensitive issues at home and abroad.

John Lloyd Stephens, a lawyer by training, explorer and traveler by choice and the pioneer in the study of the Mayan civilization of Central America, he was known as the great American traveler during his lifetime. On his last day in Constantinople, he visits the slave market accompanied by his dragoman and two Americans Dr. N. of Mississippi and his son whom he met in Smyrna. After an elaborate description of the surroundings, he is struck by the coexistence of white and black slaves in the slave market. “Bad, horrible as this traffic is under any circumstances, to my habits and feelings it loses a shade of its horrors when confined to blacks; but here whites and blacks were exposed together in the same bazaar” (Stephens, 1839, p. 52). As he does not share the clear conscience his successors do, he redirects his narration homewards and points to the contradictory nature of slavery with his most valued institutions in America. These sentiments however are aroused in Russia.

I respect the feelings of others and their vested rights, and would be the last to suffer those feelings or those rights to be wantonly violated; but I do not hesitate to say that, abroad, slavery stands as a dark blot upon our national character. There it will not admit of any palliation; it stands in glaring contrast with the spirit of our free institutions; it belies our words and our hearts; and the American who would be most prompt to repel any calumny upon his country, withers under this reproach, and writhe with mortification when the taunt is hurled at the otherwise stainless flag of the free republic. I was forcibly struck with a parallel between the white serfs of the north of Europe and African bondsmen at home.

While voicing his abolitionist stance, Stephens still pays heed to slaveholders with their vested rights.

However, his acknowledgment remains as one of the rare instances of expression of overt feelings of shame and repulsion about slavery at home because of its conflicting ideological nature rather than its immoral or inhumane attributes. Stephens was a dedicated reader of other works of travel and he carried with him Volney's *Travels*. He extensively quoted other works to corroborate his arguments and support the validity of his observations. The traveler of the 19th century does not bear the burden of public expectations of the preceding centuries. Zweder von Martels asserts that Columbus "in order not to endanger his position and future expeditions" had to "embellish the truth" (von Martels, 1994, p. xvii). Stephens is confident both because of his occupation and the accumulated literature of travel (which also functions as the source of anxiety previously mentioned) by the time he is penning his travels. His confidence in his knowledge frequently extends to a confidence in the capabilities of his nation.

A moralizing speech similar in tone to Stephens' self-critique was made in 1847 by Charles Sumner, an abolitionist politician from Massachusetts which was later published as *White Slavery in the Barbary States* in 1853. After a comprehensive historical and philosophical discussion about Algerian enslavement of whites, he goes on to draw a comparison between American slavery and slavery in Algeria. By quoting other authors, he presents a convincing case against slavery. However, he is in a way preaching to the choir unlike Stephens. Joe Lockard, the author of *Watching Slavery: Witness Texts and Travel Reports* argues that despite the essence of his message, in Sumner's speech there appeared "an implicit ranking of civilizations...that condemned 'civilized Euro-American' slavocracies for behaving worse than 'uncivilized' societies" (Lockard, 2008, p. 82). This however would be a vital aspect in addressing beyond the choir which Stephens succeeds in doing.

3. Conclusion

Many more references to slavery at home and abroad could be enumerated for analysis.⁴ However, their numbers are not as many as a 19th century scholar of travel literature might predict. I have tried to outline some of the reasons as to the self-censorship or avoidance by drawing on the national sensitivities and the need for reformulations in a century of national identity formation. It is not possible to determine the reasons in their entirety since as previously pointed to, the absence of the discussion of the question of slavery can be explained by the limited number of narratives published in the first few decades of the century. In the few examples of the antebellum period, writer and orator George William Curtis, politician and diplomat Samuel S. Cox, and writer and explorer John L. Stephens explicitly voiced their abolitionist sentiments through their observations in the empire. Diplomat and navy officer David Porter was the exception to the rule of consistency in this period. Having resided in Constantinople for more than a decade he avoided problematizing the question slavery or engaging in any other discussion which would inevitably lead to a comparison which in turn would bring a dispute against the young nation's reputation. In the period after the Civil War, more narratives were published with extensive discussion of slavery in a comparative manner. Clergyman Henry M. Field, missionaries William Goodell and Cyrus Hamlin concurred that slavery in the empire was a nominal institution. Field further expressed a pleasant surprise on racial equality and the reciprocity with which it was maintained in the empire. Writer Susan E. Wallace, and cosmopolitan author Henry Wikoff chose to reappropriate the concept of slavery and use it to denote the Ottoman ruling body and public and Greece under Ottoman rule respectively. The reappropriation of the term abounds in other accounts which are not included in the list below as well, particularly to allude to the condition of non-Christians.

Genre of travel, while providing the author the freedom of self-reflection by a sense of displacement also poses a dilemma of making foreign into familiar for the reader and the will to refrain from becoming the detached observer which would obstruct the promise of originality. But as one reassures the nation of its preeminence compared to the object of attention, he inevitably remains a detached observer. Despite recurrent latent orientalist representational preferences in the narratives, the overall harmony among them with regard to the issue of slavery might as well be considered outside the habitually applied framework of self/other dichotomy. The fundamental distinction between the authors'

⁴ The list of the accounts which relatively extensively disclose opinions on the issue and not referred to in this chapter is as follows: Susan Haight, *Over the Ocean, or Glimpses of Travel from Many Lands* (New York: Paine & Burgess, 1846), E. Joy Morris, *Notes of a Tour Through Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Arabia Petraea, to the Holy Land* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1842), Stephen Olin, *Greece and the Golden Horn* (Boston: Phillips, Samson & Co., 1854), Joseph W. Revere, *Keel and Saddle* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1872), Charles Dudley Warner, *In the Levant* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1894), Thomas W. Knox, *Backsbeesh or Life and Adventures in the Orient* (Hartford, Conn.: A. D. Worthington & Co. Publishers, 1875), Nathaniel Parker Willis, *Pencilings by the Way* (New York: Morris & Willis, Publishers, 1844), Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad; or the New Pilgrim's Progress* (Hartford, Conn.: The American Publishing Company, 1869).

treatment of Oriental paraphernalia and the question of slavery depends on the fact that when the travel is at an end, the latter does not become a distant nostalgia but rather a fact of the present for antebellum narratives and a painful aftermath for the rest.

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