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What Is and What Was: The Ottoman Empire According to a 19th Century American Diplomat

Alfredo Gonzalez

The world of the nineteenth century was one of dramatic changes and events throughout the world. The United States of America had wrested independence from the British Empire less than two decades before in 1783. The Napoleonic Wars were raging and engulfing Europe until Napoleon Bonaparte's defeat and final exile to St. Helena in 1815. Earlier, Napoleon had invaded and conquered Egypt, bringing with him over a hundred scientists, scholars, engineers, and artists. These specialists were brought with the hopes of studying and producing knowledge about Egypt, which also coincided with the political goals of conquest. The French were forced out of Egypt in part by the naval superiority of the British Empire, and pressing losses in Europe. The British took possession of the many Egyptian artifacts and antiquities, including the Rosetta Stone. The conquest of Egypt spurred a massive interest in the study of Egypt, and significantly led to the creation of Egyptology. Not only did it spark empirical study, but also artistic representations of the Middle East, influencing painters and writers such as Jean-Léon Gerome.

In the midst of these events, the Ottoman Empire was significantly affected and influenced. The Ottoman Empire had become to many, "the sick man of Europe" steadily losing the economic and political superiority of the eastern Mediterranean and southeastern Europe. The province of Egypt was able to break from the empire, and while it was retaken following the French retreat, it was eventually wrested from the Ottoman administration by the military commander Mehmet Ali. Ali took major steps in modernizing the Egyptian army, navy, and economy, becoming one of the first nations to industrialize. The apparent weakness of the Ottoman Empire worried many within the upper echelons of government, and as a result they embarked upon a string of political, military, social, and economic reforms; this period would later be known as the Tanzimat period.¹

The United States at this time felt a similar pressure to modernize and implement similar policies. Memorable debates in the nation's history erupted over how the United States would define itself and its economy, most notably the debates between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton wished to emulate the British industrial model, whereas Jefferson envisioned a predominantly agrarian society. Aside from economics, as a fledgling nation, the United States had to establish itself among the much older nations and empires of the world politically, which was accomplished in part by the establishing diplomatic relations with these much older nations. Aside from the political dimensions, the United States and its people had to create a sense of self, an identity that distinguished it amongst the numerous nations of the world. This is the world that David Porter (the younger) was born into.

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David Porter (the younger) was born in Boston, Massachusetts on February 1, 1780 to David Porter (the senior) and Rebecca Henry. Porter's family was heavily involved in both the British and American navies, with his paternal grandfather Alexander Porter serving as a merchant marine captain for the British in the earlier part of the 18th century.² His father, David Porter, served as a midshipman to admiral John Barry, and at one point commanded a 32 gunned ship during the American Revolution. With this connection to the navy, Porter was practically groomed to follow in his family's footsteps, which he of course did.

At the age sixteen Porter was taken on a voyage with his father aboard the merchantmen *Eliza*, which was attacked by British privateers on its way to the West Indies.³ While the crew were able to fend off this attack, Porter had similar incidents with the British navy from 1796-1798. According to his son, David Dixon Porter, David Porter had been attacked a second time by the British navy on the way to Santa Domingo. Porter's captain surrendered the ship, but Porter was able to avoid capture by having friendly British soldiers smuggle him off the ship to the shore.⁴ However, with no money, he worked as a common laborer on a Danish ship sailing to Copenhagen, and the same on an American ship to finally arrive home.⁵ Supposedly a third ship he was stationed on was also pressganged by the British, which Porter escaped from once again. Each major work of Porter's life shows evidence in some way or another similar to these incidences as understanding Porter's hatred of the British, and later of the French (due to the American-French Quasi War, during which he became a midshipman on the USS Constitution).⁶

When peace was established with the French on March 3, 1801, the United States Army and Navy were severely reduced by the policies of the Democratic-Republican executive and legislative wings of the government. In place of large vessels with several cannons, many officers were reassigned to small gunboats with only one cannon. Porter was no different, and voiced his displeasure of these conditions, "Burn the wretched gun boats and build more sufficient vessels..."⁷ Porter was later appointed to the USS Enterprise, which had been ordered to protect American trade ships in the Mediterranean from British and Barbary attacks.

The Barbary States had been assaulting and ransoming American ships and sailors as early as the 1780s, even though the United States had signed treaties with the four major nations of Morocco, Tripoli, Algiers, and Tunis; despite this, American ships still found themselves consistently at risk of being pressganged.⁸ The reality of this situation prompted the expansion of the United States Navy by Thomas Jefferson, and eventually the carrying out of the Barbary War, which Porter took part in as officer aboard the USS Philadelphia. Unfortunately, the ship was attacked while patrolling the coast of Gibraltar by a Tunisian fleet. The crew was summarily captured and imprisoned, with officers such as Porter being allowed comfortable accommodations with limited movement, but were provided with a few comforts such as bedding and reading material. It was during his nine-month imprisonment that Porter is believed to have received much of his traditional education. During this time, he was believed to have read numerous books on history, mathematics, geography, and even learned to read and write in French.⁹ Porter and that of his crew's ransom was eventually paid by the United States government where they were returned home, but Porter reenlisted instantly and took part in further campaigns until the end of the conflict.

Porter would later go on to command his own ship, the USS Essex during the War of 1812, which he predominantly was stationed in in the West Indies to raid British naval bases and trade routes.¹⁰ He also took part in a large expedition that would require he and his crew to sail to the Pacific Ocean in an effort to disrupt British interests in the region. When he and his crew arrived in the Marquesas Islands, they

established a naval base and town founded as Madisonville, which technically made this the United State's first colony, however it was abandoned in 1814.¹¹ Porter's raids are believed to have been a significant factor in the war, and to the global economy of the time as they severely damaged British whaling which allowed the United States to remain the leading whaling industry for the remainder of the nineteenth century.¹²

David Porter found himself sailing toward Constantinople as the United States' newly appointed Charge'd Affairs in 1831. Porter had been a naval officer who served in the War of 1812, the Barbary Wars, and patrolled the West Indies against pirates for several years.¹³ During his twelve year stay in Constantinople Porter aided in the negotiations between the Ottoman and US governments over a commercial treaty that opened greater trade relations between the two nations, but he also wrote extensively. Porter sent over a hundred letters to the State Department's four Secretaries of State during his diplomatic tenure.¹⁴

In the earliest years he wrote even more, sending letters to his friend James K. Paulding. In these letters, he focused more on his thoughts and perceptions of the Ottoman people and the city of Constantinople. Paulding eventually convinced Porter of the importance of these letters and published them into a two volume book titled *Constantinople and Its Environs*.¹⁵ Through these writings it will be revealed that they highlight and give a point of reference to some of the intellectual currents that were being disseminated throughout much of the nineteenth century world. Despite Porter being a single man, more specifically a single white Anglo-American, his writings do reveal inklings of thought that can be attributed toward the United States of America.

Since Porter's death in 1843, there have been only three major works that have written on his life and exploits. The first was written by his son, David Dixon Porter, who wrote his own memoirs and included an extensive biography of his father within them.¹⁶ The second was David F. Long's *Nothing Too Daring*, which is by far the most sweeping of any biography on Porter, chronicling his life from birth to death in great detail. Long focused on several major incidents of Porter's life including his involvement in the War of 1812, his invasion of Puerto Rico, and subsequent court-martial.¹⁷ The final years of Porter's life as an ambassador to several Middle Eastern nations were also covered in this extensive piece. The most recent, *The Shining Sea* written by George C. Daughan paid attention toward Porter's time as the commander of the USS Essex during the War of 1812, and the subsequent battles he was involved in, also revealing Porter to be the first American imperialist with his establishment of a colony in the Marquesas Islands in 1813.¹⁸

While each work offered a great deal of information regarding Porter's place in the context of great events in history, reflecting a modernist historical perspective, none of them gave sufficient attention toward an intellectual history of Porter. Again, while each work did offer Porter's importance within larger events in history such as the War of 1812, they merely expanded his place in history, but had not offered any changes to Porter himself. Within his own historiography, Porter has not changed dramatically, and little to no consideration has been given as to how Porter saw the world; what were the intellectual currents circulating during his life that informed his perspectives and understandings of the world? Of that, there has been extensive and extremely significant works written in the context of the intellectual currents being constructed in the 19th century. This research is in part, a narrative of Porter's time in Constantinople from 1831-1834; however, it is also an analysis of Porter's analysis, as a means of extrapolating and understanding how he was guided by intellectual frames of his time, and

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how he made sense of them. To do so, much study has paid attention toward scholarship that dealt with cross cultural interactions, the study of historical texts, and travel writings.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* written in 1978, highlighted how eighteenth and nineteenth century European writers, artists, and academics constructed knowledge of the Middle East as a means of creating their own identities opposed to that of the "barbarian" or "the Orient".¹⁹ Implicit within this objective was also creating an artificial history that portrayed the Middle East as a space that required European intervention, setting the stage for later European colonization in the region.²⁰ Said's analysis was heavily influenced by postmodernist thought, and significantly post-structural writers such as Michel Foucault who used literary analysis as factors in their research. In 1988, Peter Novick, in a similar vein, wrote *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession*, which challenged the modernist understanding of historical objectivity, with emphasis toward American education by analyzing letters from hundreds of American historians.²¹ Novick's work analyzed how American historical thought was influenced in the nineteenth century and how that came to influence American educational institutions, as well as political institutions and policies. In 1994, Larry Wolff authored *Inventing Eastern Europe*, which borrowed from Said's *Orientalism* to illustrate how a similar intellectual project had been undertaken by Western European writers to construct Eastern Europe.²² The philosophes of the Enlightenment period, especially French writers such as Voltaire, aristocratic travelers and merchants, seen as "Western European" and their writings were utilized as a means of explaining how Eastern Europe was both similar to the West, but retained barbaric characteristics. This was coined by Wolff as "demi-Orientalism" which grasped the intellectual and physical geography of Eastern Europe as a land between the Occident and Orient, between progress and barbarity.²³ While these works cannot sufficiently encapsulate the entirety of intellectual historical scholarship, they do provide a useful means to demonstrate that there have been major upheavals in understanding the world.

We then return to Porter, an American diplomat freshly arrived in the Ottoman Empire in the year 1831 of August. Porter had only four months ago been left stranded without a post due to the French conquest of Algiers, which Porter had been made consul-general to the Barbary States.²⁴ The papers giving Porter such authority were addressed specifically to the "Bey" of Algeria, but no such position existed after the French take over, and Porter required a new position. In April, the government offered the position of Charge'd Affiars to the Ottoman Empire, and Porter accepted, knowing he would be engaged in the drafting of a heated trade proposal between the United States and the Ottoman government.²⁵ The letters he began to Paulding in 1831 show an ethnographic approach to his outlook of the Ottoman Empire's people and surroundings, as he appears to judge them based off of his own knowledge, that is primarily beholden to a Western intellectual tradition.

On August 4, 1831, in what he described as a "pilgrimage to Troy" during the first year of his post, Porter's writing was rich with an almost existentialist air.²⁶ He detailed aspects of the site with such gravity and awe, recalling sections of Homer's *Iliad*, and heroes such as Hector and Achilles, revealing as well his literary education. Porter believed entirely that the area he visited had been the ancient city of Troy. When he came across a seemingly ancient ruin with a Turkish block house atop it, he questioned his Turkish guide as to what that ruin was meant to be. The guide responded that they were "Genoese ruins", which Porter instantly rejected and derided the Turkish people as having "no idea of a higher antiquity than when the Genoese occupied part of Turkey..."²⁷ Porter had only an understanding of his own history, that being a "Western" understanding of what he believed was Troy, and instantly rejected and belittled the Turkish people for having a counter understanding.

His accusation that the Turkish did not have an understanding of history before the Genoese occupied the land would imply that Turkish history did not begin until around the 1200s when the city-state of Genoa controlled what was once Smyrna (today Izmir).²⁸ When Porter argued that the ruins were actually dismantled to build Constantinople, claiming literally, that the foundation of Constantinople (Istanbul) was Troy, he argued by extension that the foundation of the Ottoman Empire was ancient Greece.²⁹

Similar episodes were recorded by Porter as he spent more time in and around the surrounding area of Constantinople. Porter described the village of Buyucdere, which was his residence and that of many diplomats at that time. He gave insight into the geographic point of this village, positioning it “ten miles from Constantinople, and five from the entrance into the Black Sea.”³⁰

According to Porter, it was a “Christian town” and housed many of the diplomats and officials from Christian nations. As it was described by Porter:

It is inhabited entirely by Christians, and is composed chiefly of the palaces of the ambassadors of the European courts, and of other diplomatic agents, and of the houses of the attaches and those who supply their wants.³¹

Porter continued to describe the sights around this village, naming it “one of the most beautiful villages in the world” and doing his best to find some point of comparison in the United States of America.³² He asked his reader to imagine New York or New Jersey, but with so many embellishments that one would not be imagining the same place. This illustration followed:

...imagine the bay of New-York stretched out to an immense sea studded with magnificent islands, covered with towns; shipping, and boats, moving in every direction; castles, places, watchtowers, forts, a long line of villages touching one another for another nine or ten miles on each the river, hills crowned with trees reaching to heaven; in the back ground mount Olympus with his snowcapped head appearing through an atmosphere as clear as ether.³³

After this grand description Porter furthered that “To say that the scene is magnificent is to say nothing; imagination cannot depict, and words cannot express what it is: to conceive it, it must be seen.”³⁴

Within the same extensive letter, a man named Candalir requested that Porter join him and his family of a gathering of many families in “the Valley of the Sweet Waters of Asia” noting the beauty of the sight.³⁵ When he arrived at his destination Porter found several carriages pulled by oxen and “each of those carriages contained from six to eight Turkish ladies dress in oriental richness...”³⁶ These women were described as being “from fifteen to three or four-and-twenty” of age and Porter himself confessed to be entranced by the spectacle of several “hundred Turkish women amusing themselves variably.”³⁷ Of particular note is the following passage that Porter wrote to describe this scene:

Their carriages were drawn up in lines near them; the oxen, under the charge of the keeper, were grazing on the smooth green lawns which was in the centre of the grove; the children, richly clad and beautiful as angels, chasing the butterflies and grasshoppers, while bands of wandering minstrels, generally Greeks, enchanted with their music and love songs groups of “lights of the harem” here and there a wandering Bohemian, or Hungarian, recounting some love adventure, or an Egyptian fortune teller examining palms, and exciting the hopes of some believing fair one. Among other exhibitions for the amusement of the domestics and the children was a large grisly bear which had been taught to dance, to wrestle, led by a savage from the north, more wild and grisly than his companion.³⁸

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In the same letter, Porter illustrated a particularly striking incident in which the author and a group of friends enjoyed a picnic under a tree laden with a blanket, forks, knives, and napkins in the “European style.”³⁹ He commented that a crowd of Ottoman citizens quickly surrounded him and his retinue and were utterly amazed at what they had witnessed. As Porter described it:

This was a subject of wonder; groups collected around us, and everything appeared astonishing to them; eating with the spoon instead of the fingers! Cutting the meat instead of tearing it...and above all, the gentlemen waiting on, and helping the ladies, instead of making the ladies wait on them!! It was wonderful; many among them exclaimed, “Mash allah,” God is Great!! Dancing bear, Greeks, Bohemians, Hungarians, and Gipsies were all deserted to go and see Christians eat.⁴⁰

The author’s description of the event also had an almost dream-like feel, and with the employ of several exclamations, was hyper-charged with excitement. To Porter, the crowd around he and his retinue were the most interesting that they could have ever seen, and he noted in striking detail the diverse ethnic groups within the Ottoman Empire.

Porter’s observation was not restricted to anything he found of note, some of them dealt in great part with the women of the Ottoman Empire, significantly the Turkish and Armenian women he came across. After the crowd began to dissipate, Porter and his company found themselves introduced to a new group of people as they were on the way to Porter’s residence. He noted that he spent several hours with these people and claimed it was “a day of real enjoyment” and that he “got into an entire new world.” He had seen the Turkish character from his own perspective, through his own observation, and “not as described by others.”⁴¹

He revealed that this revelation and new found discovery of the Turkish identity was actually reserved to the women. He wrote:

The Turkish women are as free as any women in the world; they do not receive the attentions of the men it is true, and perhaps they do not wish their presence would subject them. They have their customs, we have ours. They conceal their faces; our women expose those parts which modesty should cover.⁴²

Similarly, Porter described a meeting between himself and two young Armenian women at the christening of an American missionary’s son. He stated that he “had never before seen them [Armenian women] in their national costume, without the broad cloth cloak and veil...”⁴³ He went on to note that “the dress of the Turkish and Armenian women is in every respect precisely the same” however, he did note that Armenian women appear to wear a turban and red slippers as opposed to the Turkish women. Porter was taken aback by the beauty he saw from these turbans and stated that it made these women so beautiful that it was “very difficult to describe.”⁴⁴ With that being said, Porter continued to write of the seemingly otherworldly beauty of these young women:

I was struck with astonishment at the truly oriental richness they displayed. Their faces, which were of a rare beauty, expressed wonder at everything they saw, for they were not aware of the concourse which had assembled. It appeared as though this was the first time they had ever been in public.⁴⁵

Porter’s analysis of these women did not cease, as he carried on in describing the minute details of their dress; although it seemed that these women were wearing the exact same garment as there was little distinguishing between the two. His gaze finally abetted, but he wrote:

I had read of the richness of dress and of the beauty of the oriental females, but never before had a correct idea before. I have hardly given a sketch of them, for I was so surprised at their unexpected appearance, so much like a vision, that I was somewhat bewildered, and so is my

description. I imagined confusedly something about Lallah Rookh, pride of the harem, or some such sort of things, and could hardly believe their presence real..."⁴⁶

His reference to "Lallah Rookh" is of particular note, seeing as it referred to the stories written by the Irish poet Thomas Moore. Written in 1817, this work was a collection of four narrative poems that detailed the imagined travels of a poet named Feramorz, who was hired to entertain the Indian princess Lalla Rookh as she traveled to her wedding.⁴⁷ This work must have been read and disseminated by many as it went through twenty editions through Moore's lifetime, and with his death in 1852, Lalla Rookh went through forty editions in thirty-five years.

This brief reference, offers a point in which we might form an understanding of the literature that Porter might have consumed aside from the classical Greek works, which must have influenced Porter's understanding to some extent. As noted by himself, the piece had inadvertently influenced how he "saw" and understood those Armenian women, and the understanding from that work and his own physical experience seemed to meld in some ways, as he described his "confused" state. This offered a point in which the pervasive discourse of Orientalism that can be realized. As mentioned in past research, the writings of romantic Orientalists were not simply imaginings or fictions; they created within the minds of their readers an image of a land that became very real, although there might have never existed such a land in the reality of anyone within that geographic or cultural zone.⁴⁸

In a letter dated August 3, 1831, Porter wrote that he was with several ministers from the United States to finally ratify a treaty that had been many years in the making. This treaty had been negotiated between the American and Ottoman officials years prior, and many more minor issues would be brought up even during Porter's own tenure in Constantinople. These ministers were placed in small boats or "kaicks" and crossed the Bosphorous between the village of Buyucdere to Constantinople. A hailstorm began, and large balls of ice began raining down upon the area, but how Porter described the scene was rather charged. As he saw it:

We had got perhaps a mile and a half on our way, when a cloud rising in the west, gave indications of an approaching rain. In a few minutes we discovered something falling from the heavens with a heavy splash, and of a whitish appearance. I could not conceive of what it was...but soon after discovered that they were large balls of ice falling. Immediately we heard a sound like rumbling thunder, or ten thousand carriages rolling furiously over the pavement. The whole of the Bosphorus was in a foam, as though heaven's artillery had been discharged upon us and our frail machine.⁴⁹

From this storm, several men in Porter's company were injured, himself included, some with crushed hands, legs, shoulders, and much devastation on the surrounding area. The scene lasted around "five minutes" but for Porter "it was five minutes of the most awful feeling that [he] ever experienced."⁵⁰ When the storm passed, an Ottoman official asked whether Porter was still affected by the storm, to which he replied he was not, and they continued on after a brief respite. The validity of this statement proved to be false when the rest of Porter's letter is analyzed, with a shaken Porter describing:

Up to this hour, late in the afternoon, I have not recovered my composure; my nerves are so affected as scarcely to be able to hold my pen, or communicate my ideas. The scene was awful beyond all description. I have witnessed repeated earthquakes; the lightning has played, as it were, about my head; the wind roared, and the waves have at one moment thrown me to the sky, and the next have sunk me into a deep abyss. I have been in action, and seen death and destruction around me in every shape of horror; but I never before had the feeling of awe which seized upon me on this occasion, and still haunts, and I feel will ever haunt me.⁵¹

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This event was a stranglehold upon Porter's mind, as he continued to depict the scene, and seemingly knowing the fantastical nature of the story, he stated that "You may think this romance. It is true as Gospel..."⁵² and months later on January 28, 1832, he defended this tale. "I think I must have sent you enough, if you have any inclination that way, to have made a tolerable good Turkish tale, but I have sent you no romance; yet I have been afraid sometimes that you would think there was romance in the hail storm."⁵³

The fact that Porter felt so strongly and deemed it necessary to defend his story and description of the hailstorm reveals much more than it might seem. Porter used "romance" to describe this event, or in the case of what it wasn't, and to him this term implied a great deal of falsity toward his account. When citing "romance" it can be assumed that he meant in the same tradition of the many works produced at that time, including the one he mentioned when engaged with the Armenian women. While many works cite the Romantic period's peak around the 1800-1850s, it appeared that Porter was in some ways resistant toward being associated with it, or acknowledging its influence on his writing. With that being said, Porter appeared to believe that he was above the influence of this movement, but his letters were heavily indicative of such writing, and in some ways appeared to contribute greatly toward this literary period.

After his obsession with the hailstorm, Porter depicted his encounter with the Reis Effendi during the formal recognition of the treaty between the United States and the Ottoman Empire. When he approached the Reis Effendi's residence he was surprised at its modest nature, and spoke to his reader "You would imagine that it was in the midst of wealth and oriental splendour...The world has been greatly gulled by travellers, who for the reasons mentioned in a former letter, were to deal in the marvelous."⁵⁴ However, it was in fact, "a very ordinary old red wooden house, so near the water in the village Candalie as to step from the boat into his door."⁵⁵

After pleasantries were had and conversation of the hailstorm were concluded, the ministers dispensed with the giving of diplomatic gifts. To the Sultan, two lavish gifts were offered "consisting of a snuff-box about \$9000, and a fan which the minister paid about \$5000 for."⁵⁶ With the exchange of gifts over, the Turkish and American treaties were taken in hand by their respective ministers, and then passed over to one another. While observing the treaties, Porter noticed the writing on the Turkish treaty, "The endorsement on the treaty is in the following words, in Turkish of course. This is the Imperial ratification of the treaty between the noble and glorious possessor of the world, and the noble chief of the United States of America."⁵⁷

The exchange and ratification of this treaty had been a very long process, even before Porter's appointment as Charge'd Affairs. Jackson and his administration had been negotiating for a treaty with the Ottoman Empire since Mediterranean trade opened up after the signing of the Treaty of Ghent.⁵⁸ Since his appointment as president, Jackson was enthusiastically devoted to the expansion and reform of the United States' Foreign Service and its policies. Jackson had greatly expanded the ability to appoint ministers, consuls, and charges beyond any executive before him; sending them to Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia.⁵⁹ What spurred this desire to expand trade was complex, but influenced by political, economic, and ideological concerns.

To Jackson, expanding American trade would not only develop the nation's economy, but also its standing amongst the more established nations in Europe (Britain, France, and Spain). The interest in the Ottoman Empire was also quite complex, and in large part informed by their connections to trade routes in India and the rest of Asia. The United States had actually been trading with the Ottoman

Empire as early as 1785, but they had to do so through the English Levant Company and pay the British tariff, and also provide compensation to the company for its services.⁶⁰ In the 1820s the United States sent a minister to negotiate paying the French tariff instead, and it was very clear to the US government that a personal treaty was very valuable for American trade interests.

Like many of the European nations at this time, the outlook on the Ottoman Empire was antagonistic, but paradoxically in support of Ottoman control of the eastern Mediterranean world. To many Western governments, the fall of the Ottoman Empire would mean chaos in the region, disrupting trade and causing the many regions of the Ottoman Empire to slip into prolonged points of conflict. However, the British and the French were eyeing these same territories, mostly Egypt as a potential point of access to the all too valuable trade routes to India and East Asia.⁶¹ Russia had become a major enemy of the Ottomans as they furiously sought to expand their influence in southeastern Europe and areas around the Black Sea.

In 1821, the Greek War of Independence was underway, and it received wide support from many Europeans, and even some Americans. According to Langley, the emergence of independence caused some Americans to label it a “crusade” against the “heathen Turks.”⁶² Belohlavek similarly claimed that “...the Greeks, brandishing their ancient culture, democratic traditions, and Christianity, arose against the Moslem Turk, inspiring the romantic soul of many Europeans and Americans who sought to aid their cause.”⁶³ This caused Britain, France, and Russia to contribute ships for the Greek’s revolutionary cause. Subsequently causing the Ottomans to send their navy to Navarino, which was handily destroyed by the modern European navy.

It was under these conditions that the United States first became significantly involved in diplomacy with the Sublime Porte. Jackson sent a diplomatic team of three experienced men, David Offley, John Biddle, and Charles Rhind in September 1829 to secure a favorable trade agreement. Much energy was devoted toward keeping this mission a secret from the British ministry, as it was feared that they would attempt to sabotage the talks to maintain their relative monopoly in the region.⁶⁴ While talks were relatively smooth, the diplomatic team promised too much and when they returned to the United States caused a great uproar. The largest issue was that they had agreed to allow the Ottoman navy to rebuild its ships with American shipwrights, and included that the wood required would also be provided by the United States. Secondly, the diplomats had accepted three horses as diplomatic gifts, which went against the conduct of US diplomats, and they were quickly appropriated by the government for auction.⁶⁵

The promise of American aid in rebuilding the Ottoman navy greatly disturbed Jackson and Congress as it went against long-held policies of non-intervention in the affairs of Europe. Renegotiating this clause became paramount to Jackson, and he sought to appoint a Charge’d Affairs to aid in the final negotiations and ratification. The first candidate was George Washington Irving, but he held a great disdain for Constantinople and the Ottoman Empire and blatantly refused, instead taking the position of Minister to Denmark.⁶⁶ It was at this point that Jackson offered the position to Porter, who had become stranded in North Africa. Porter’s naval experience suited the job very well, and in spite of the United States’ refusal of the shipbuilding clause, Porter’s naval expertise was seen as a sufficient consolation.⁶⁷ These developments were what eventually led to Porter’s arrival in Constantinople, and the later agreement of the treaty between the United States and Ottoman Empire.

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After the ratification of the treaties, Porter and his fellow ministers continued to engage in conversation with the Ottoman dignitaries. At one point they began speaking exceedingly of the “Indian population...the nature of their government, their relations with the United States, their progress in civilization...”⁶⁸ The nature of this conversation focused on several more topics including the number of Native American peoples, the governments continued interest in them, whether schools would be created for them, and how the United States would “promote their civilization”.⁶⁹

When all the questions were answered by the American resident, the Effendi responded with what Porter labeled as a “truly Turkish question: Could not the United States do all this better, and in much shorter time, by sending an armed force?” The answer given by the minister was that the policies of the government was “one of benevolence” claiming partial responsibility in the present state, it was the duty of the United States to aid them and they were “entitled to our charity...”⁷⁰ The Ottoman official continued to claim that such policies could not have been very effective, but was seemingly convinced with this account:

When the minister told him that such was the veneration and reverence of these wild men of the woods for the President of the United States, that they called him their “great father,” he was struck with astonishment, and the expression of his countenance indicated that he thought our policy the wisest and best.⁷¹

Such a picture of the United States’ relationship with the Native American peoples may not reflect many opinions by most scholars today, but according to these officials the relationship between these two peoples was one of mutual respect, and in some ways, veneration on the part of the Native Americans. After talk of the Native Americans, the Effendi further inquired about the nature of the houses and the layout of cities in America, claiming that plans were underway to better emulate them after the approval of the Sultan was achieved. Remarking the experience of the day Porter wrote “The spirit of improvement is wide awake here and I foresee that if his life spared, the Commodore is destined to do much good here.”⁷² In a post script Porter reassured his reader that he would continue to send more letters on his thoughts and experiences. “I shall give you what I see. I shall not quite musty old authors long forgot. I shall not scrape up the rubbish of antiquity to look for what Constantinople was. I shall show you what it is.”⁷³

When giving brief biographies of “several living and recently dead distinguished Turkish dignitaries” Porter noted that all of these men with exception of one (the Hali Pasha) all had “risen from the lowest ranks...”⁷⁴ At this Porter exclaimed:

Thus you see how extremes meet in governments as well as in everything else. In our Republic, certainly the freest country in the world, distinctions of birth weigh nothing, and any man may aspire to honours and office. It is the same thing in Turkey, one of the purest despotisms on the face of the earth. The cause, however, of this apparent similarity is as different as day and night. In the United States, this general eligibility to office, is owing to the universal equality recognised in the laws and the constitution: in Turkey, there is the same equality in the eye of the Sultan, who is placed at such an immeasurable distance above the rest of mankind, that they all appear to him like pigmies of the same size and dimensions.⁷⁵

While the social mobility in the United States was influenced and seeped in the tradition of 17th century enlightenment thinkers, this was not the case for the Ottoman Empire according to Porter. The Ottomans obtained this equality not from ideas of natural rights or equality, but from the relative insignificance of the common people in relation to the Sultan.

Between the first and second volumes of *Constantinople and its Environs*, there is nearly a two-month long break from June 1, to July 27, 1832. The reasoning behind this was given by Porter as having the “blue-devils.” He wrote to Paulding, “I have not been able to write, not that I have been sick, but that I have been not well.”⁷⁶ He continued to list his ailments:

I have been just in the state when a man is fit for nothing under heaven...except to sleep and lounge about. I have been bilious, and had not the courage to take the proper medicine. A light sickness of the stomach, a dull stupid feeling in the head, an absolute laziness of the body and mind. To tell the truth, I believe I had the “blue devils.” It is admoniable, and serves only to reconcile one to death. If I had been in England, I should have hanged myself, or done something equally ridiculous.⁷⁷

According to the American Psychiatric Association, and the National Institute of Mental Health, the symptoms of depression can range from: feeling sad or having a depressed mood, change in appetite, trouble sleeping, fatigue, difficulty in thinking, thoughts of death or suicide, and persistent physical symptoms, including stomach aches, headaches, and indigestion.⁷⁸ The relevance of this lends itself to Porter’s condition affecting his mental state to a particular degree, as he exhibited symptoms of depressive episodes throughout his writings.⁷⁹

Richard Francaviglia took notice of a similar event in his work *Go East Young Man: Imagining the American West as the Orient*. Francaviglia referred to the travels of Mark Twain in the 1860s, of which Twain fashioned his own travel book titled *Innocents Abroad*, paying attention to his thoughts and reactions toward the people of the Middle East. Twain suffered from frequent physical maladies, and as he came closer and closer to the Holy Lands he became more critical of the people and region.

Francaviglia remarked that:

This reminds me that one’s state of mind, and even health, can determine how one sees and recounts the Orient. When all is right with the world and one’s health superb, the Orient can be a glistening, magical place. But when a traveler is nearly doubled over with intestinal cramps, the Orient’s people and landscapes can suffer his or her prose, poetry, and memories.⁸⁰

This also seemed to apply to Porter, because these depressed states were not restricted to a single incident, in fact, they were rather frequent. On February 16, 1833 Porter told his reader that he felt “as if the whole world, and all that is in it, were indifferent to me.” However, he ended this letter very abruptly claiming he didn’t want to “tire you with my glooms...” but not before stating that his current residence was an “abominable place, and there is an abominable set of people in it.”⁸¹ Again, this was not a new occurrence, as Porter exhibited similar letters and moods as early as 1832, some even claiming to end his letters outright for fear that his reader lost interest in he and his experiences.⁸²

On July 27, 1832 Porter remarked at the “progress of civilization” in the Ottoman Empire, while describing an extravagant party held by Sultan Mahmud. He noted that the Turkish aristocrats were dressed and danced in the “Frankish style...”⁸³ He furthered that many parties were held by the Turkish elite in the same fashion, and that they were “exceedingly fond of our society and of imitating our manners...”⁸⁴ When referring to “our society and manners” it is difficult to grasp who exactly Porter is referring to, whether it is the United States, or some greater category. His use of the term “Frank” may add more evidence that he refers to a greater categorization.

However, Porter may not have been referring to this large category at all, as he believed the Europe of the nineteenth century was no longer the pinnacle of civilization. When referring to the state of Europe

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as opposed to that of the Ottomans he claimed that Europe was fighting against the progress emanating from “the new world” as the Ottomans were steadily embracing it.⁸⁵ He stated at one point:

...the universal spectacle of Europe is that of Christian monarchs, using every effort of their power and policy, to stem that mighty torrent which rising in the forests of the new world, is now rolling from kingdom to kingdom, and from one quarter of the globe to another...⁸⁶

If Porter is not referring to Europe or European ideals, then he must be addressing that the United States at this time had become the new source of civilization in the world at that time. Europe belonged to a tradition that spanned from the Ancient Greeks and the Roman Empire, but were mere intermediaries from the past to the present where the United States could then fulfill the history of progress within Western discourse.

This experience mirrored a similar episode documented by Wolff in his work that illustrated the views of a French diplomat named Segur in Russia during the 1790s. Segur saw a similar incident while attending a fete filled with Russian aristocrats and found that:

...after a half-century everyone had become accustomed to copying foreigners, to dress, and lodge, and furnish, and eat, and meet, and greet, and do the honors of a ball or a dinner, just like the French, the English, and the Germans.⁸⁷

This represented a fundamental aspect of demi-Orientalism, the presence of a half civilized, but half barbaric or Oriental. When faced with the Turks adopting anything remotely European, they ceased to be Orientals for Porter. Furthermore, Porter was no longer in the Orient, but in Eastern Europe, which had earned a new identity for some European travelers as “the end of Europe”.⁸⁸

Charles-Marie de Salaberry, a former French aristocrat who fled Napoleonic France, wrote “*Voyage to Constantinople*” from 1790-1791 and published it in Paris eight years later.⁸⁹ This work illustrated his emigration to the east, his travels through Hungary, and his eventual arrival to the Ottoman Empire. Wolff made a point to contrast the reasoning and mindset of Segur and Salaberry, stating that Segur served as an ambassador, while Salaberry, a forced “émigré”, was disgruntled and “clinging in bitterness to the sense of his own superior civilization.”⁹⁰ When Salaberry arrived in the Ottoman Empire he felt no love or excitement for “Turkish manners” and found a land of “the most disgusting uncleanness (mal-proprete).”⁹¹ When denied entrance to a mosque, he found solace in asserting that all mosques looked the same while also damning Islam and the Prophet Muhammad.

At the end of his journey through Constantinople and facing the Bosphorus straits connecting Europe to Asia, Salaberry was overcome with the gravity of his location. It was at that point where Salaberry acknowledged that he was in the process of leaving Europe, when finally across he stated, “When I regard Europe which I have just quitted, and Asia which I see at my feet, my eyes and my spirit are struck with a completely new admiration.”⁹² It was at this point after traveling through Eastern Europe and then to Asia, that Salaberry apparently understood what defined Europe, that being “the resemblance of passions, of tastes, of manners, of faults, of habits, or of vices.”⁹³ The Turks (the Ottoman Empire) were excluded from this grouping and while Salaberry admitted that each society might find itself superior to others “the more or less of civilization hides or reveals this universal fault.”⁹⁴ He went on that, “This land here gives to Europe the air of those works of steel, of which the worker has neglected to polish the extremity.”⁹⁵

Salaberry’s account offered an interesting point of analysis, and Wolff noted, his journey ultimately aided in his defining of Western and Eastern Europe, and thereby defining himself within the context of this constructed dichotomy. It is still to be seen as to whether this can be applied toward Porter and his

own writings. Also, whether we can extract anything that might give insight into whether Porter saw the Ottoman Empire as the “the Other” or as something more akin to Eastern Europe; a place and people that were in some ways “like us”? To do so, further analysis of Porter’s work is necessary to discern all of these thoughts and questions.

On October 11, 1831 Porter was invited to observe several hundred new recruits into the newly organized “Turkish Army”. While examining the new recruits Porter wrote:

There were about two hundred of all sorts, all sizes, all ages and colours, from the grave and melancholy man, who from his manners and appearance you might suppose had a family, a history, and many misfortunes, to the laughing boy of seven, the vagabond and offcast of society, and the negro scarcely human.⁹⁶

These men were examined and relegated as either musicians, infantry, cavalry, or artillery, and sent to their respective barracks. There, they were instructed by “officers skilled in European tactics” who drilled them incessantly on their respective duty. What caught Porter’s attention was that of the uniforms distributed to and worn by the newly trained soldiers. To this Porter commented:

Their dresses and accoutrements are not dissimilar to the pioneers of France and other countries. When I first came her the dress of the troops of the Sultan had an *outré* appearance. It was not Turkish, nor was it strictly Christian. It was something between the two.⁹⁷

The dress of the Ottoman soldiers was one way that Porter identified the geographic and cultural point of the Ottoman Empire, that being something between Christian (Western European) and Turkish (The Orient) which again, is a characteristic that defined Eastern Europe. While Porter never explicitly stated this, his analysis points toward an understanding of this, and did not merely apply to Ottoman military dress, but to even more aspects.

Much of Porter’s letters after focused on how the Ottoman government and society were steadily incorporating European styles and aspects. His time in Istanbul may have offered him the means in which to see the people and government as more than Orientals; perhaps they could become more “civilized.” Despite this, we cannot forget that this belief relied heavily upon Porter’s notion of “civilization.”⁹⁸

This notion must have been generated by Porter’s lifelong experience and education, of which there is a limited amount of information documenting his formal education.⁹⁹ According to the memoirs of his son, David Dixon Porter, he was educated by his mother Rebecca Porter, and this education focused primarily on religion.¹⁰⁰ There is nothing else to indicate specifically what Porter read or learned during the formative years of his life; however, taking into consideration his life from the late eighteenth century to nineteenth century, we can assume that he received an education in the classics, namely, ancient Greece and Rome. Porter also had experience with the Arab World prior to obtaining his position by being involved in the Barbary Wars, and later a prisoner for nearly a year.¹⁰¹

On November 1st, 1832, Porter sent an extensive letter of his travels through various districts in and around the greater area of Constantinople. He drew up a week long appendix and description of his sights, with a great deal of focus on the architectural structures, both at that time still in use or the ruins of ancient Constantinople. The structures in question were in large part ancient Roman and Byzantine palaces, baths, columns, and other such things, of which he pondered “What has become of all these splendours?”¹⁰² He noted that much of the old Constantinople was destroyed by the Turks during their capture of Constantinople in 1453, including a statue of Constantine the Great, which was later melted down and used to make a cannon.¹⁰³ While much of these ruins and artifacts had once been very

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difficult to observe by scholars, Porter acquiesced that the policies of the current sultan had allowed “any Christian” to safely investigate these sites.¹⁰⁴

After his week-long excursion through many of these ancient structures, Porter constructed a division of the regions of Constantinople based largely upon the information he could obtain “ACCORDING TO THE ANCIENTS.”¹⁰⁵ In doing this, Porter undertook a project that he himself acknowledged was very much out of character from much of his previous writings. He assured his reader that almost entirely throughout his writings that he had never referred to any books when analyzing “Constantinople, its people, or its vicinity” and that it had always been purely from his own thoughts. Noting all of this, he stated that he could “never convey a suitable idea of what Constantinople was in the days of its splendor; and by contrast give to the reader what it is”.¹⁰⁶

To do so, Porter referred to a number of books and writings, none which he explicitly named or exposed, but expounded that despite that they were all written in “different eras”, every one of them said virtually the same thing. He stated that:

I have placed before me, and on examination, I find that the knowledge of one, is freely made use of to fill the pages of another; and if the more modern writers have introduced any thing into their books which may bear the appearance of novelty, or a claim to investigation, it will be found generally, to consist more in a change of words to express the same thing, than an addition of facts or circumstances.¹⁰⁷

The history of Constantinople, from it being the capital of the Byzantine Empire, the Turkish siege of 1453, and the successive sultans since then, had, according to Porter, been copied over and over again by both traveler and historian alike, until nothing more could be said or written on.¹⁰⁸ As a traveler, Porter saw it his responsibility to relate exactly what he saw, “with fidelity,” and not to merely replicate what “any student might learn in his library...”¹⁰⁹ To make the distinction between a historian and a traveler even further pronounced, Porter wrote that, “The duty of the traveler is, I conceive, to relate what *is*. The duty of the historian is to relate what *was*.” With that, Porter proceeded to create a sweeping itinerary of the many regions of Constantinople and assuming the role of the historian in recreating the districts of Constantinople since its antiquity.¹¹⁰

What is particularly striking in this limited section of Porter’s writings are his thoughts on Ottoman history and this distinction between the traveler and the historian. Porter claimed that much of the history of the Ottomans had not changed between different eras, and that there was little to say about it that had not already be done or said. This thought could be pointing toward an understanding of Ottoman history as somehow static, unchanging, and known to the furthest extent that the historian could find. Also, embedded in Turkish and Ottoman history, is their relation to the Byzantines, and in some ways, that is when Ottoman history begins to Porter, but perhaps he meant this only in regards to Constantinople, which for the most part, would be accurate. However, even more enticing were his thoughts on what it meant to be a traveler and what it meant to be a historian. Porter’s notion of a historian appeared to be entirely focused upon their connection to the past, which a historian is of course heavily invested in. Does that mean though that the historian must stay in the past, focusing only on what “*was*” and only the traveler may offer insight into what “*is*”?

In the span of several weeks, Porter continued to construct his itinerary on the regions of Constantinople, but he also spent a great deal of time writing not just on the architecture and political institutions of the Ottoman Empire, but also paid particular attention toward the people of Constantinople, from various social, religious, and political classes and divisions. He noted four rather

distinct groups, noting their place in Ottoman society, religion, occupations, manners, customs and dress. These groups were the Turkish, Greek, Armenian, and Jewish residents of Constantinople, and in his analysis and study of these people there were inherently Orientalist notions, perspectives, and assertions, but also demi-Orientalist.

On January 6, 1834, Porter wrote in large part about Sultan Mahmud II, with whom he shared a close relationship. Sultan Mahmud came to trust Porter in advising how best to modernize the Ottoman navy, and acted as an invaluable unofficial advisor until the death of the Sultan in 1839.¹¹¹ Porter wrote extensively on the virtues of Mahmud, noting in particular, the abolition of the Janissary Corps in 1826. The Janissaries were seen as major obstacles in the modernization of the Ottoman Empire, in some instances controlling emperors as puppets and constantly ensuring their own power base in the empire.¹¹² Sultan Mahmud responded with brute force against the Janissaries, killing thousands and wiping out many of their leaders.

For this act, Porter compared Mahmud to the likes of Peter the Great, "A more daring and difficult task was scarcely ever conceived and executed, and the history of modern times affords but one parallel, in the destruction of the Strelitzes by Peter the Great."¹¹³

This comparison is especially striking, because it spoke to the gravity of the event in Porter's mind, and to what he believed the Ottoman Empire was becoming. Porter was drawing a parallel between the Sultan and his Ottoman Empire at present, with recent history, and the recognition Americans largely gave to Peter the Great for leading Russia into the civilized world in the eighteenth century.¹¹⁴ Even so, for Porter, Russia was never European, but Eastern European; it still was half civilized and half barbarous.

Salaberry's writings also hinted at the connection between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in the mind of a Western traveler. According to Wolff, as Salaberry traveled to and through Constantinople and Ottoman Empire, he also "cultivated a parallel prejudice against Russia on the same trip, though it was not on his itinerary."¹¹⁵ Furthermore, the Russians to Salaberry were comparable to the Turks in their "...ferocity, indiscipline, ignorance, superstition, and fanaticism..." Traveling to either St. Petersburg or Constantinople were so connected in the minds of eighteenth century travelers that they could both be "superimposed, and traveled together at the same time."¹¹⁶ Porter's connection between Peter the Great and Sultan Mahmud does seem to exhibit that even for him, Russia and the Ottoman Empire shared a connection, not in their barbarity, but in a leader emerging to aid in their nation's modernization. Porter's comparison in his writings hints at the acknowledgement that the Ottomans were no longer barbaric, and were steadily becoming something more valued.

As an American, Porter may have had a very different understanding of the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East than that of a European. Past research openly acknowledged that "Americans will not feel quite the same about the Orient..."¹¹⁷ Americans were more likely to equivocate the Orient with the people and lands of the "Far East" or Asia, while Europeans identified it with the Middle East.¹¹⁸ Edward Said claimed that America did not see the Middle East in an Orientalist light until the 1940s when it became the dominant power in the world and subsequently intervened in the Middle East as an imperial power. While that is noted, it cannot be underscored that European Orientalist writings and ideas had permeated in the United States by the early nineteenth century.¹¹⁹ This differed greatly from that of "European Orientalism" which was used as a means of justifying European constructions of knowledge about "the Orient" to eventually dominate and control it.

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The nineteenth century featured the expansion of European powers into the Middle East and North Africa; events Porter himself witnessed. Before being appointed to Constantinople, Porter was originally sent to the Barbary States as Consul-General; however, by the time of his arrival the French had occupied Algeria. French desire of the Maghreb was in part informed by their construction of a history of North Africa as the “granaries of Rome”.¹²⁰ This relied heavily upon the reconstruction of the Maghreb as a lush agricultural space when inhabited by the Romans, but a desolate landscape under Arab control. The colonization of North Africa was supported by the French desire to “save” the once proud lands of Ancient Rome and to bring civilization back to the area, which has had extremely negative effects on the North African environment to this day.¹²¹ Bearing this into mind, the question surfaces as to whether we can truly attribute Porter’s writers and thoughts toward European, American, or demi-Orientalism? Further analysis of Porter’s work is necessary to engage with this pertinent question, particularly the remaining letters of Porter’s work, which, again, focused almost exclusively on Sultan Mahmud II.

Porter argued that Sultan Mahmud had carried out acts and policies that were in fact, much more sweeping and was able to carry them out much faster than previous enlightened despots. The culprit that had derailed Ottoman progress was not an uncivilized leader, but the citizens of the empire. “And let it be remembered that almost all the obstacles to the immediate success of this glorious plan, exist in the prejudices of the subjects of Mahmoud, not in his own.”¹²² Porter furthered that the Ottoman people had “lived so long in darkness that as yet they cannot bear the smallest ray of light...”¹²³ Such a statement was mirrored perfectly again in what Segur saw in the Russian peasants, “half-naked Scythians and Tartars.” In Wolff’s model of demi-Orientalism the aristocracy or members of the political sphere were becoming civilized, but the people were a constant reminder that the land was still somehow between Europe and the Orient.¹²⁴ The “savage” peasant served as a reminder they were in Eastern Europe.

Porter was not only influenced by his understanding and exaltation of Peter the Great, but also by a more hidden discourse. This discourse at the time can be identified as that of the “Great Man” theory, codified and attributed to Thomas Carlyle. In 1840, Carlyle published one of his major works *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* on May 4 1840, which upheld that history was ultimately made and shaped by individual men who acted or influenced world events.¹²⁵ These “Great Men” included Odin, Shakespeare, Muhammad, Napoleon, and Martin Luther. These men represented the various forms that particularly exemplary men might emerge, whether in religion, politics, or literature, among others.¹²⁶ Despite the fact that this work was published six years before Porter’s letters, which would later become a two volume series, the influence of this “great man theory” is very much present.

Porter’s analysis paid large attention toward Mahmud and his contributions toward the modernizing efforts of the Ottoman Empire, and seemed to lay them firmly on the sultan. He never saw that the people of the Ottoman Empire were somehow influencing change or progress in their society, which might have been due to the fact that the Ottoman government was still ruled by a monarch. However, Porter placed much value in the figure of the Sultan, almost seemingly characterizing him as a “Founding Father” figure and as a man who laid the groundwork for what the nation was going to become. The influence of this “great man theory” is not hard to imagine within the mind of other Americans of the nineteenth century, even today in some sense. At this time, the figures of the American Revolution held a special place in the minds of Americans, perhaps more so due to the mere decades separating them from the event. Independence and the foundations of America were set by wealthy, educated, white men such as Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, and Franklin; in lieu of this figure, Porter created a

symbol that many Americans could identify with, that of a Western European educated Turkish man who like Peter the Great, was leading his people toward civilization.

The final letter sent from Porter in 1834 ends with a rather interesting set of statements, which were neither Orientalist, nor demi-Orientalist. As a means of summing up his experiences while traveling Porter claimed:

I have found that there is not that vast disparity of wisdom, intelligence and virtue, between the different nations of the earth, which the vanity of every people imagines, while it arrogates to itself the superiority...I have found that as one man's meat is another man's poison, so those who set themselves up as the standards of excellence, and as models to all nations in every circumstance and situation, are for the most part supremely ignorant blockheads, or arrogant coxcombs.¹²⁷

When presented with this passage, one of Porter's biographers disregarded this statement as merely "philosophical" and really held no meaning, claiming Porter had never exhibited anything like this before, and could not mean it then. This work would disagree with that notion to a particular degree, as it fails to comprehend the nuance of Porter's time in Constantinople. While Porter did indeed present many analyses that appeared problematic for many more reasons, namely the colonial air, and superiority he appeared to grant "Western" culture and practice, the statement remains. Rather than utterly dismiss it, it should be analyzed for what it is; a statement made by a man who had at that point stayed several years in a land where he initially saw as the Orient, then perhaps an extension of Eastern Europe, and now that may not be entirely clear. Perhaps as he saw the Ottoman Empire embarking upon a social and political transformation, he himself had undergone some kind of change.

This research is left to ponder and expand on what that change may have been, and whether it is significant. As Porter began his correspondence abroad, he exhibited thoughts and word choice that reflected an Orientalist frame of mind when regarding the Turkish people, culture, and government. It may be tempting to imagine that he operated entirely on a binary model, with the West encompassing Euroamerica, and the East or the Orient, encompassing all of the rest. However, when analyzing his letters as a whole, this supposition does not hold much weight; rather they reveal a complex man.

Porter's overall work was one of many of the thousands of travel books and various other forms of travel literature at the time. Nineteenth century America was by far the largest producer and consumer of travel literature, and some sources have found that approximately 1800 travel books were published in the United States by 1900, with the mid-nineteenth century as the peak of this interest in tales of exotic people and lands.¹²⁸ The enthusiasm for this literature was spurred in part by the American desire to know itself, to be able to identify and distinguish what made it different from all the other nations of the world. To do that, many travelers journeyed to Europe; although the US was politically separated from Europe, "it had yet to sever the undeniable emotional and intellectual ties to its European ancestry."¹²⁹ As Foster Rhea Dulles in his work *Americans Abroad: Two Centuries of European Travel*,

The spirit in which these travelers sought out Europe was nostalgic and sentimental. Theirs was a romantic return to the past, a devoted search for the wellsprings of their own culture. They viewed with enthusiasm the sites and scenes that they associated through history or literature with their European heritage.¹³⁰

By journeying to the Old World, American travelers and their readers could at the same time revel in their past, but then affirm "that America was the land of the future; Europe, of the past."¹³¹

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Porter, who likened himself as a “traveler”, was no exception to this tradition. The thing that stands out is his location from where he wrote, that being the Ottoman Empire. Porter had not chosen to go to the Ottoman Empire, and according to the preface of his work, he never intended to publish any of his findings, but despite that, he wrote on the Ottoman Empire in this tradition. However, as this research has highlighted, his analysis of the Ottoman Empire and its people was extraordinarily complex, and it is still quite difficult to ascertain if he saw the Ottoman Empire as the Orient or as Eastern Europe. However, note again that to Porter, this was not a land that was “decaying” like much of Europe, but it was in fact progressing and modernizing just as the United States was. Porter had denounced European hostility toward the Ottomans, and criticism of Mahmud II as a “a barbarian...” and claimed what contributed toward friendly US-Ottoman relations was that the United States had “never been parties in inflicting injuries and having on all occasion manifested a desire to respect the laws and customs of a faith professed by four millions of human beings...”¹³²

The ancient injuries which renders the Turk vindictive towards other people, does not extend to the United States, and I am satisfied never will, provided they continue to pursue the policy they have adopted towards the Sublime Porte. The prejudices of the Turks are in a great measure confined to the old world, and as yet do not extend to one from which they have received neither insult or injuries.¹³³

Going back to Porter personally, we must acknowledge that his views and thoughts are not entirely indicative of a generalized conception of “American” perceptions toward the Ottoman Empire. Two large issues emerge, many others as well, but in this case, the notion of “American” as a general concept, and following that, the issue of representation. The idea of “American” or what it means when applied to people, is a highly contested zone, filled with it numerous responses and oppositional opinions. As it is used at times, it can be attributed more toward a national identity, so when categorized or identified as “American” it holds a political meaning. The personal identity is combined with the political, or the national, to create a hybrid personal-political identity that can be assumed to represent all who reside within the spatial borders of the nation.

With that being said, it cannot be taken for granted that Porter grew up with an upper-middle class background, which provided him access to socio-economic and political routes unobtainable by many Americans in the 19th century. He was also, as the use of pronouns imply, a man, or at least visibly identified as male, which provided him numerous more avenues of power in the patriarchal society of America. His racial and gender identity, that of a white male, also afforded him certain levels of privilege, which numerous immigrants from across the world, and African slaves in the South, did not benefit from at all, and in fact, suffered from this constructed racial hierarchy. Further, his place in the world, the United States, facilitated his accumulation of European knowledge, which the influence of European ideas and knowledge cannot be taken for granted when thinking of America.¹³⁴ Porter could be seen as one who knew the world more similarly with a European, particularly a “Western European” and could never find any similarities between himself and the Ottomans, the East, or the Other.

Knowing all of this, it becomes difficult to purport that Porter’s analysis can in actuality represent anything more than himself; carrying with it his own prejudices, experiences, biases, and views of the world, with the multitude of communities and individuals that it incorporated at that time. With that said, Porter’s writings, and his beliefs, may offer some insight as to what was informing what he thought, knew, and saw of the Ottoman Empire and its people, and, to a lesser extent, how was what he sent back to America perceived, perhaps it is possible to obtain small inklings of the “American mind” at that time.

The United States for the first century of its existence was searching for a sense of identity, as past research has revealed, but it was also defined and labeled by Europeans. To many Europeans the United States held a similar status as that of Russia, Poland, and the Ottoman Empire as a land that was paradoxically enlightened, but also barbaric. After his service under George Washington in the American Revolution, Segur was sent to the court of Frederick the Great of Prussia. Frederick inquired on his return to Europe from America and asked, "How could you for so long forget the delights of Paris in a land where civilization is just beginning?"¹³⁵ Ray Allen Billington's book *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise*, revealed that Europeans saw "America as a vast, uncharted frontier where savagery and civilization mingled and where East and West were one."¹³⁶ While the United States was intellectually connected to Europe, it seemed that it held more in common with the Ottoman Empire, at least in how it was thought of by Europeans at the time.

Through Porter's writings and thoughts, we are given insight into the complex intellectual frames that were perpetuated between the United States, Europe, and the Ottoman Empire. When faced whether Porter had been an Orientalist, who later became a demi-Orientalist, or even an American Orientalist, this is not at all clear. Implicit in Orientalist thought is the construction of "the Other" as a means of reinforcing the identity of a seemingly competing society. However, Porter never at any point relied on this binary understanding of the United States and the Ottoman Empire; in fact, he commented on the shared similarities at several points in his work. As Porter's work began being read by Americans, magazines such as *The American Monthly* urged that the Turks "have evidently been entirely misconceived by us, although the fallacy of our conceptions has been shown by several preceding writers, who have invariably set down as fabling romances or vain poetical enthusiasts..."¹³⁷ While this research would not claim that Porter's writings ended Orientalist thought in the United States, it does appear that they offered a point in which more meaningful forms of cross-cultural communication between two nations and societies that had originally thought to be fundamentally different could take place.

What is left is to question is how our history of representation by men like Porter has affected us today, and also what does Porter's writing impart? What is the significance? American history being identified by only a particular community, that being white European descendants, has led those who don't fit the model into precarious zones. Further research into the histories of disregarded communities is required to reframe what is to be an American. Also, in contemporary times, there is no questioning if the United States is "Western"; not only is the United States Western, but they are "the West", or at least an integral part of it. This research would like to ponder, and encourage others to question; when did the United States become "the West"? Finally, Porter was very much influenced by the ideas and knowledge being circulated around his time, and they influenced how he saw the Ottoman Empire to a great degree. These were not entirely antagonistic outlooks, in fact, as he claimed before, the United States was seen as friend to Ottoman Empire, and much of the Middle East. His outlook could be attributed to a far more intricate understanding of American Orientalism, which very much requires a reconfiguration of how we believe we have understood ourselves and others in the world.

¹ M. Sukru Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 1-18.

² David F. Long, *Nothing Too Daring: A Biography of Commodore David Porter 1780-1843*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1970), 12-13.

³ Ibid., 16-18.

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⁴ David Dixon Porter, *Memoir of Commodore David Porter, Of the United States Navy*, (New York: Harper and Bros, 1875), 26.

⁵ Ibid., 23; Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 19-20.

⁶ George Daughan, *Shining Sea: David Porter and the Epic Voyage of the U.S.S. Essex during the War of 1812*, (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 3-4.

⁷ Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 22.

⁸ Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, (New York: Hill and Wang, January 9, 2007) 45-46.

⁹ Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 29.

¹⁰ Daughan, *Shining Sea*, 77-78.

¹¹ Ibid., 92, 115.

¹² Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, i.

¹³ Ibid., 1-40.

¹⁴ Ibid., 288-289.

¹⁵ The title in its entirety is "Constantinople and its Environs In a Series of Letters: Exhibiting the Actual State of the Manners, Customs, and Habits of the Turks, Armenians, Jews, and Greeks as modified by the policies of Sultan Mahmoud" The editor in the preface makes clear to the reader that nothing was altered in order to uphold the letters in their actual state as they were originally written.

¹⁶ David Dixon Porter, *Memoir of Commodore David Porter, Of the United States Navy*, (New York: Harper and Bros, 1875).

¹⁷ Long, *Nothing Too Daring*.

¹⁸ George C. Daughan, *The Shining Sea: David Porter and the Epic Voyage of the USS Essex During the War of 1812*, (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

¹⁹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

²⁰ Ibid., 7-12.

²¹ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and The American Historical Profession*, (London, Cambridge University Press, September, 1988)

²² Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

²³ Ibid., 32-35.

²⁴ Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 287-288.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ David Porter to James K. Paulding, United States Ship John Adams, Dardanelles, August 4, 1831. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter I.

²⁷ Ibid., 18.

²⁸ Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, (London, I.B. Tauris, 2006), 56.

²⁹ David Porter to James K. Paulding, United States Ship John Adams, Dardanelles, August 4, 1831. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter I.

³⁰ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Buyucdere, September, 9, 1831. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection, Letter II, 20.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 21-22.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 24.

³⁶ Ibid., 25-26.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

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- ³⁹ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Buyucdere, September, 9, 1831. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. 30.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 30-31.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 32.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Buyucdere, September, 26, 1831. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. 37.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 38.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ "Thomas Moore, from *Lalla Rookh: An Oriental Romance*," The Norton Anthology of English Literature, accessed 03/17/16, http://www.wnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_4/moore.htm
- ⁴⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 1-34.
- ⁴⁹ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Buyucdere, September, 26, 1831. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter IV, 44.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 45.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 46.
- ⁵² Ibid., 47.
- ⁵³ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Buyucdere, January, 28, 1832. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter VII, 78.
- ⁵⁴ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Buyucdere, September, 26, 1831. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter IV, 49.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 51.
- ⁵⁸ L. D. Langley, "Jacksonian America and the Ottoman Empire," *The Muslim World*, Vol 68, Issue 1: 46–56. 1978, accessed 02/19/16, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=71e36449-b75b-4f4f-a8c5-61ab459ffa92%40sessionmgr4003&hid=4208>
- ⁵⁹ John M. Belohlavek, *"Let the Eagle Soar!" The Foreign Policy of Andrew Jackson*, (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1985) 9.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., 129.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., 130.
- ⁶² Langley, "Jacksonian America and the Ottoman Empire".
- ⁶³ Belohlavek, *"Let the Eagle Soar!"*, 128.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., 130.
- ⁶⁵ Langley, "Jacksonian America and the Ottoman Empire."
- ⁶⁶ Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 238.
- ⁶⁷ Belohlavek, *"Let the Eagle Soar!"*, 131.
- ⁶⁸ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Buyucdere, September, 26, 1831. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter IV, 52.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid.
- ⁷¹ Ibid.
- ⁷² Ibid., 53.
- ⁷³ Ibid., 53.

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⁷⁴ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Buyucdere, September, 26, 1831. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter VIII, 79.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Kadi Kieuy, July 27, 1832. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter XXII, 5.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ National Institute of Mental Health, "Depression" last modified March 2016, accessed February 18, 2016, https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml#part_145397;

American Psychiatric Association, "What is Depression?" last modified unknown, <http://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression>

⁷⁹ Porter exhibited symptoms of depression in multiple letters throughout the published collection. He also related that he had goiters in his neck, which could also point to hypothyroidism, which can cause depression.

⁸⁰ Richard V. Francaviglia, *Go East, Young Man: Imagining the American West as the Orient* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2011), 4. <http://www.questia.com/read/122753872/go-east-young-man-imagining-the-american-west-as>.

⁸¹ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Pera, February 16, 1833. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter XXV.

⁸² David Porter to James K. Paulding, Buyucdere, January 11, 1832. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter VII.

⁸³ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Kadi Kieuy, July 27, 1832. In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter XXII.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1994) Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

⁸⁶ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Pera, January, 6, 1834, In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter XXXIX.

⁸⁷ Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 22-23.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 93-94.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 38-49.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 48.

⁹³ Ibid., 49.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Buyucdere, October, 11, 1831, In *Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter V, 56.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 59.

⁹⁸ According to the three major works on Porter, there are no reputable or discernable documents that give any indication as to what he learned in his young years.

⁹⁹ Daughan, *The Shining Sea*, 36.

¹⁰⁰ Porter, *Memoir of Commodore David Porter*, 3-4.

¹⁰¹ While a prisoner of the Barbary States, as an officer Porter was granted relatively comfortable accommodations. He spent this time reading and teaching himself history, mathematics, French, and geography.

- ¹⁰² Porter, David, *Constantinople and Its Environs: In a Series of Letters, Exhibiting the Actual State of the Manners, Customs, and Habits of the Turks, Armenians, Jews, and Greeks, As Modified by the Policy of Sultan Mahmoud Vol. 2*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1835) 88-90.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 92.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 93.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 94.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹¹ Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 72.
- ¹¹² David Porter to James K. Paulding, Kadi Kieuy, June, 1, 1832, *In Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter XXI; Suraiya Faroqi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, (London, I.B. Tauris, 2006); Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- ¹¹³ David Porter to James K. Paulding, St. Stephano, September, 16, 1833, *In Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter XXXIV.
- ¹¹⁴ Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 116.
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid., 48.
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, 4-5.
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁹ Naomi Rosenblatt, "Orientalism in American Popular Culture" *Penn History Review*, Volume 16, Issue 2, Spring 2009. <http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=phr>
- ¹²⁰ Diana K. Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007).
- ¹²¹ Ibid.
- ¹²² David Porter to James K. Paulding, Pera, January, 6, 1834, *In Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter XXXIX.
- ¹²³ Ibid.
- ¹²⁴ Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 52.
- ¹²⁵ "Great Man theory" accessed 04/10/16, <http://www.stoa.org.uk/topics/history/Great%20Man%20theory.pdf>
- ¹²⁶ Ibid.
- ¹²⁷ David Porter to James K. Paulding, Pera, January, 6, 1834, *In Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter XXXIX.
- ¹²⁸ Jeffrey Alan Melton, "Touring Decay: Nineteenth-Century American Travel Writers in Europe," *Papers on Language & Literature* 35, no. 2 (1999), <http://www.questia.com/read/1G1-56959272/touring-decay-nineteenth-century-american-travel>.
- ¹²⁹ Ibid.
- ¹³⁰ Foster Rhea Dulles, *Americans Abroad: Two Centuries of European Travel*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964) 31.
- ¹³¹ Ibid.
- ¹³² David Porter to James K. Paulding, Pera, January, 6, 1834, *In Letters from Constantinople*, reprinted by University of Michigan Libraries Collection. Letter XXXIX.

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¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, (New York: Vintage Books, March 2, 1993).

¹³⁵ Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 17.

¹³⁶ Ray Allen Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise: The European Image of the American Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985) 29.

¹³⁷ Long, *Nothing Too Daring*, 299.