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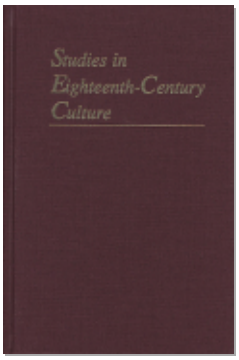
Angelina Del Balzo



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At first glance, Daniel O'Quinn's new monograph, *Engaging the Ottoman Empire: Vexed Mediations, 1690–1815,* seems like a departure from his previous monumental work in eighteenth-century theater history. O'Quinn here eschews discussion of any of the myriad of plays set in the Ottoman Empire from the Restoration and eighteenth century, such as William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* and Voltaire's *Mahomet*. Much scholarship looking at English-Ottoman relations focuses on the representation of the Turks, and nowhere was this transcultural fascination more prominent than on the stage.[1] As O'Quinn states in the introduction to *Engaging the Ottoman Empire*, eighteenth-century imperial thought was comparative, and the empires in question were both European and non-European.[2] As both Bridget Orr and O'Quinn's previous work has shown, the theater of the period was central to that comparative analysis.[3] Plays dramatized empires from around the world, including Rome, the Americas, and China. Europeans did have extended, real-life interactions with the Ottomans, unlike some of these other empires, and *Engaging the Ottoman Empire* focuses on materials that mediated these interchanges, such as paintings, maps, architectural plans, costume books, letters, and antiquarian illustrations. But despite the lack of theatrical texts as objects of study, O'Quinn's methodology owes as much to performance studies as it does to cultural studies. Paradoxically, by moving

away from conversations around the representation of the Ottoman Empire onstage, O'Quinn has made a compelling argument for the importance of theater scholarship to literary study beyond questions of representation. *Engaging the Ottoman Empire* applies performance theories of embodiment to printed media.

This analytical move is especially evident in the book's first chapter, "*Theatrum Pacis:* Mediating the Treating of Karlowitz," in which O'Quinn's performance approach leads to more nuanced readings of often familiar tropes. O'Quinn's intention is "to use this informational archive, especially the interaction of text and image, to understand a repertoire of particularly auspicious intercultural performances—performances that quite literally changed the world" (40). Here, he specifically evokes the language of Diana Taylor's field-defining *The Archive and the Repertoire*, which moved the critical conversation away from the written/oral dichotomy in order to deprioritize cultural studies' emphasis on the textual and reframe the modalities of analysis as "the archive of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)."[4] In order to do this, Taylor substitutes for the text, as the site of analysis, the scenario, which adds new concerns, like gestures and other corporeal communicative systems, to traditional objects of literary analysis, such as narrative and setting. As O'Quinn does here, Taylor uses the scenario to interpret the performance of a major geopolitical point of contact: the initial conquest of the Americas by Spain, in which "performing the act of possession makes the claim; the witnessing and writing down legitimates it."[5]

Engaging the Ottoman Empire contextualizes Karlowitz within the familiar corpus of Ottoman/Oriental texts from the period through its reading of the Ottoman procession, a state performance described in Madeleine de Scudéry's romances, Paul Rycaut's *History of the Turkish Empire*, Antoine Galland's *Les mille et une nuits*, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters*. The procession is often interpreted as an occasion for the European reader's scopophilia, but O'Quinn argues that it is a "spatialization of power relations" (66) that not only required measured viewing, but also relied on the spectators' familiarity with previous performances in order to be correctly interpreted. The power of the procession lay not just in Ottoman exoticism or the material promise of empire, but in recognizing repeated visual signifiers. For Rycaut, this new state of international relations is celebrated through the British Embassy's own procession, in which "rather than cavalry and sword bearers—the appropriate props of the sultan—we have the dragomans, secretaries, and *giovane di lingua* (interpreters) employed by the British embassy—the very embodiments of mediation

in both senses of the word" (69). The Ottomans may be mediated through European writing, but the British are equally mediated in their use of a visual language perfected by the sultans in order to communicate their own position. Developing that language was important for both the historical actors and later scholars, conveying meaning in a way that could be understood across cultures and time. Given the language barriers often hindering truly global scholarship, reading the procession as a performance genre introduces an object of analysis without having to rely on text or speech.[6]

The procession is the most recognizable performance discussed in the chapter, but O'Quinn uses the "repertoire" to reframe one of the most important moments in the history of Ottoman-European relations. *Engaging the Ottoman Empire* begins with the 1699 treaty as the end of the Ottomans' western expansion, which "set the terms for phantasmal oppositions between 'Europe' and 'the East'" (13), a juxtaposition that would be at the foundation of late eighteenth-century Orientalism. The English and Dutch ambassadors to the Ottoman Empire, Lord William Paget and Jacobus Colyer respectively, served as mediators between the Holy Roman Empire and the Ottomans. As the first treaty negotiated by civil servants, Karlowitz arguably marks the beginning of modern diplomacy. There are thus two mediations under discussion in this chapter: this new form of negotiation itself and the ways in which it was broadcast and communicated, as Karlowitz was quite literally a performance of diplomacy.

Central to O'Quinn's exploration is an anonymous engraving, *Theatre de la paix entre les Chrestiens et les Turcs* (c. 1704), depicting the exterior and interior of the "maison des conferences." The *Theatre* is not only a metaphor for the process of peacemaking, but also an actual theater where a performance took place. O'Quinn supplements his analysis of the *Theatre de la paix* with the written archives of Paget and the Venetian delegation.

Through his use of Taylor, O'Quinn's analysis moves beyond the standard two poles of literary discussions of performance: representation, which uses the play text as the primary (and too often sole) source of analysis, and performance or the performative as metaphor. O'Quinn instead considers performance as a site of embodied enactment. This is fundamental to the field of performance studies, but O'Quinn shows how crucial this methodology should also be for the study of material culture, travel writing, and military history. The *Theatre de la paix* shows how the site was consciously designed as a venue for performance: it was purposely built on neutral ground with extra doors to avoid conflict over precedence. The relatively plain adornment of the tents and *maison* reinforces how these structures were hosting an embodied performance; they are not the primary locus of meaning. Included in the engraving are smaller inserts showing the Austrians, Ottomans,

and mediators at various moments in the discussions, seated together on cushions and chairs. The treaty is enacted through the "small gestures and words only discernible through intimate contact" (65), and the print shows writing implements on display, but untouched, so as to de-emphasize the role of writing in the actual negotiations.

At the same time as he reads Karlowitz as a performance, O'Quinn also makes a formalist argument for the ways in which theatrical conventions shape the written archive. In the assistants' notes on the negotiations, the Austrian and Ottoman delegates are represented by dialogue written in direct speech, as in a script, while the mediators' contributions are narratively described, giving the English greater agency in the process: "Put bluntly, the various delegates make proposals and counterproposals, but Lord Paget makes things happen" (76). By staying attuned to the scenario, we can see where the archive deviates into alternative, more literary forms, and what the implications are for that change. Here, the Englishmen give themselves the privilege of narrative agency in an event in which they are not the primary actors.

Reading Karlowitz as a scenario also allows O'Quinn to move away from an ahistorical reading of the treaty as the "beginning of the end" for the Ottomans, given that they remained in power for more than two centuries afterwards. The Ottomans arrive on equal footing to the negotiations (often from a position of strength, despite their defeat in battle). The pictorial representation of the *Theatre de la paix* privileges the oral negotiations in the moment over their written communications after the fact. Indeed, O'Quinn argues that the contemporary culture of conversation was integral to imagining a peaceful and cosmopolitan world order "where two Ottomans, an Englishman and a Dutchman, and two Austrians and their multilingual secretaries communicate orally at table" (65). And this is at the crux of Karlowitz: both the event and the treaty are indicative of the commonalities between the Ottomans and the Austrians, bordering empires that would later become exemplars of drastically opposed "Western/Christian" and "Eastern/Islamic" worlds. Despite their geographic proximity, they were estranged by language and religion, and this ideological divide would only widen as the imperial balance of power shifted over time. *Engaging the Ottoman Empire* shows how performance studies does not just offer a way of supplementing the written record with the repertoire, but also provides a mode of analysis that reframes and nuances our understanding of that archive.

Notes

1. See, for example, Esin Akalin, *Staging the Ottoman Turk: British Drama, 1656–1792* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2016); Emily M. N. Kugler, *The Sway of the Ottoman Empire on English Identity in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); and Daniel Viktus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570–1630* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

2. O'Quinn, *Engaging the Ottoman Empire: Vexed Mediations, 1690–1815* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 5. Subsequent citations will be made parenthetically.

3. Orr, *Empire on the English Stage, 1660–1714* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); O'Quinn, *Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London, 1770–1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005) and *Entertaining Crisis in the Atlantic Imperium, 1770–1790* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

4. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

5. Taylor, *Archive and the Repertoire,* 62.

6. Ottoman history offers additional challenges to comparative analysis by nonspecialists. The replacement of the Ottoman Turkish alphabet with the Latin-based modern alphabet in 1928 has required additional training for even Turkish scholars to read untranslated primary documents.