

*Mapping the Ottomans: Sovereignty, Territory, and Identity in the Early Modern Mediterranean.* Palmira Johnson Brummett.

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In *Mapping the Ottomans*, Palmira Brummett presents a rich and beautifully written examination of early modern European representations of the Ottoman Empire. Using maps, travel accounts, compendia of knowledge, and other materials, she sifts through the inherited perceptions, rhetoric, and personal experience that blended together in individual sources. In the process she reveals the complex dialogue that mapmakers, artists, and writers created as they sought to present an authoritative view of the Ottomans.

Maps, which occupy the focal point of this investigation, were far from simple representations of territory, created to the best of their makers' knowledge of geography and current boundaries. As Brummett states, "In the early modern era, mapping was both a pictorial narration of territory and events and a process by which events were subordinated to history, memory, and desire" (2). Her in-depth analyses reveal how much wishful thinking and imagination went into cartography. Nor was this a linear process by which the Ottomans shifted in the European imagination from "terrible" in the sixteenth century to "domesticated" in the eighteenth. Rather than view European perceptions of the "Turks" as one of simply impact or difference, she argues for a "complex picture of permeable borders, overlapping interests, and shared societies" (3).

Brummett, indeed, takes the reader beyond the paradigms of difference and impact, showing how tense engagements, no less than peaceful ones, were meeting points that offered exchange of information. Accounts by travelers and even former captives revealed moments of consorting and exchange: "For those experiencing the 'Turk' close up . . . fraternization was both a distinct possibility and a perceived threat" (53); this could be seen in the actions of mutinous lords on both sides on the Ottoman frontier. Over time, even the most distant Europeans developed surprising familiarity with the Ottomans by means of news, printed texts, and images.

Brummett's careful readings of maps and texts show how imagined borders began to collapse in the process: one could no longer equate all of Europe with Christianity, nor were all Muslim polities regarded as enemies, with rulers like the Persian Safavids being courted as potential allies. At the same time, the Holy Land was often treated as an "annex of Europe" (110). Maps and drawings showing both Ottoman and Venetian fortresses could reveal the diversity and integration of the local inhabitants of different faiths, with a mix of churches and mosques, and the roads that linked them. Brummett aptly calls this a "conversational space" (159). While many writers lamented the perceived destruction of the classical past, others, like Robert Bargrave, proved just as keen to learn about and praise the Ottomans who ruled the Greek East.

This does not mean that the general picture was always peaceful or congenial: maps depict battles, fortresses lost or gained, embattled religious iconography, and poignant images of enslavement and death — the most visceral being beheadings, flayings, and the longed-for humiliation of the Turk by removal of his turban. Difference, moreover, was clearly noted even under tranquil circumstances. European travelers were conscious of boundaries and how it felt and looked to cross them, noting variations in dress (especially that of women), customs, and power dynamics. There is little doubt that European writers, mapmakers, and their audiences viewed the Ottomans with a mix of fascination, dread, and incomprehension, even as they sought to learn more. Brummett presents a host of intriguing examples, such as a seventeenth-century English rhyming dictionary with a "list of suitable synonyms and epithets for 'Turk'" (49), or Richard Chandler's equation of dervish rituals to bacchanals, showing how the classical lens offered a comforting but distorting medium (310).

This book is a welcome corrective to the stark choice of viewing relations between Ottomans and Europeans as a static picture of either separation and antagonism or peace and understanding. With her broad variety and impressive number of sources (over 100 plates), Brummett presents a fascinating vision of early modern “rhetorical dichotomies” of “similarity and difference, war and peace, past and present, fear and conversation” (326). An additional strength of this study is Brummett’s use of several Ottoman sources — visual and written — revealing the shared tendency to view self and other through the “prisms” of history, travel, war, and the sacred (35).

While other studies have employed both visual and written sources, few to my mind succeed as well as Brummett’s. Devoting equal time to both genres, she offers nuanced close readings of human figures, motifs, boundaries, and map legends, as well as rhetoric and cross-textual references, showing how images and words informed each other. The result is a complex yet accessible narrative of Italian, French, English, and Ottoman viewpoints. Brummett deftly weaves these threads together into a single tapestry that will prove helpful to scholars and students alike as they examine their pieces of the puzzle.

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