*Commentary*

# Menace as Metaphor: The Traumatic Memory of Ottoman Encounters

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Johann Pezzl's account of Vienna in the 1780s was conceived from the perspective of an enlightened supporter of Joseph II. Pezzl divided this account into numerous small sections, including one on "The Twelfth of September," the date of the defeat of the Turks outside Vienna in 1683. As Maureen Healy notes, the new austerity of Joseph II, who did not favor excessively ceremonial occasions, moderated the annual celebration of that date. However, for a whole century, the religious commemoration of the date 12 September (which was also the festival of the Holy Name of Mary) preserved the historical memory of the liberation of Vienna in a manner that is more often associated with modern (rather than early modern) commemorations.

Such a modern spirit of commemoration was certainly evident by 1883, in the Viennese bicentennial celebrations described by Maureen Healy; but in 1783, as in many other manifestations of the 1780s, the spirit of commemoration was ambivalently transitional. By the 1780s, in the reign of Joseph II, it was possible to begin to conceive of the occasion as a modern political commemoration with religious implications, rather than as an early modern religious festival with political implications, and this shifting balance was certainly evident in Pezzl's articulation of the significance of the date:

> What a day that was in the year 1683! It was also a Sunday—the most remarkable, the happiest Sunday in the annals of Vienna. As soon as the first rays of sunshine lit up the summit of the Kahlenberg, you could see the armies of the Christian allies on the move. They advanced down the mountainside; the Turks were soundly trounced, and Vienna was freed forever from their attacks. I witnessed the last celebration commemorating that perilous day in 1783, the centenary year, and in fact the cowards of Istanbul are no longer worthy of the gunpowder exploded in their memory.[1]

Pezzl could still visualize the military movements of 1683, one hundred years later, and offered testimony to the fact that there was indeed a fully centennial consciousness of the date in 1783, not just the awareness of an annually recurring religious festival.

Pezzl believed that such occasions were valuable for the modern, secular, and political reason that they focused public attention on the "fatherland," though he nevertheless supported Joseph

[1]Johann Pezzl, *Sketch of Vienna*, in H. C. Robbins Landon, *Mozart and Vienna* (New York, 1991), 86–87.

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in reducing the number of such expensive celebrations, which were to be consolidated in the celebration of New Year's Day.

> The last remaining gala day! Under Emperor Francis and Maria Theresa there were still many such days and under Charles VI and Leopold too many. For my part, I am personally convinced that the monarch of a great, rich, and mighty country should encourage the splendor of his court. In this way he infuses a certain warmth in the hearts of his subjects, by treating his fatherland as important, prosperous, and deserving of respect.[2]

There was something sentimentally valedictory about Pezzl's farewell to the festival of 12 September ("I witnessed the last celebration commemorating that perilous day")—but also something emphatically rational about the implicit affirmation that a hundred years of celebration was enough, that the Turks were "no longer worthy of the gunpowder exploded in their memory." He therefore suggested that the commemoration could be eliminated inasmuch as the Turks themselves were no longer politically significant.

Pezzl, born in 1756, was the exact contemporary of Mozart; and the great music scholar H. C. Robbins Landon translated and republished Pezzl's account for the Mozartean purpose of better understanding Mozart's Vienna, perhaps even Mozart's contemporary appreciation of Vienna. There seems little doubt that Mozart, who came to Vienna with the entourage of the archbishop of Salzburg in March 1781, must have witnessed the 12 September celebrations in 1781 and 1782, precisely the years that Mozart was conceiving, composing, and presenting his Turkish opera, *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*): conceived in 1781 together with the librettist Johann Gottlieb Stephanie, first performed at the Burgtheater in July 1782. Mozart was visiting Salzburg in September 1783 and would therefore have missed the centennial occasion described by Pezzl. Nevertheless, one must consider the possibility that the *Abduction from the Seraglio* was intended, in part, as a centennial work, especially since it was initially envisioned as an entertainment for the anticipated Vienna visit of the Russian Grand Duke Paul, at a time when Russia was at war with the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, Pezzl's suggestion that the Turks—"the cowards of Istanbul"—were no longer enemies of sufficient significance to merit a public occasion was perhaps consistent with Mozart's conviction that the Turks could be presented to Vienna in the spirit of operatic comedy.

Before coming to Vienna, in 1780, Mozart was working on a serious Turkish subject—the never completed *Zaide*—that Mozart put aside because, according to his letter of 18 April 1781, "here they prefer comedies."[3] This preference applied even to Turkish subjects and even at a time when 12 September was still being celebrated as a solemn religious and patriotic occasion. Mozart offered a fully comical conception of the Turkish overseer Osmin, whose Ottoman menace was expressed in threats of horrible tortures ("erst geköpft, dann gehangen/dann gespiesst, auf heissen Stangen"), which were altogether undermined by the comic presentation of the character himself. Osmin's fury proved to be entirely impotent by the end of the opera, and he was humiliatingly frustrated in his attempts to destroy the young Christian lovers. Furthermore, the Pasha Selim, who initially seemed to represent Ottoman menace with his sexual ultimatums to the heroine Konstanze in the seraglio, turned out in the end to be completely magnanimous in liberating Konstanze and sending the young lovers home together.

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[2]Ibid., 87.

[3]18 April 1781; *Mozart's Letters, Mozart's Life*, Robert Spaethling (New York, 2000), 244.

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Both the buffoonery of Osmin and the magnanimity of Pasha Selim suggest that, for Mozart and Stephanie, and for their intended Viennese public, the Ottomans were not truly menacing in the early 1780s. In fact, the *Abduction from the Seraglio* did not necessarily offer a straightforward representation of its Turkish figures. There is every reason to believe that the concluding vaudeville celebrating the magnanimity of Pasha Selim ("Wer so viel Huld vergessen kann/Den seh' man mit Verachtung an!") was actually intended to honor Emperor Joseph II himself, who was in the audience for the first performance. Likewise, the mean-mindedness of Osmin was surely intended to reflect upon European court functionaries whom Mozart had known and despised. Later in the 1780s, the Habsburg monarchy would actually go to war against the Ottomans; and though there would be no military threat to Vienna itself, the economic consequences of the war were probably serious enough to play some role in the downturn in Mozart's professional fortunes before his death in 1791.[4]

If the Ottomans were less menacing in the eighteenth century than they were in the seventeenth century, at the time of the siege of Vienna, they were certainly less menacing still in the nineteenth century, when the Ottoman state was often described as the "Sick Man of Europe"—a phrase that supposedly originated with Tsar Nicholas I around the time of the Crimean War in the 1850s. When Cardinal József Mindszenty was making reference to the Ottoman menace in the 1940s, the Ottoman Empire no longer existed. In the three contributions of Maureen Healy, Paul Hanebrink, and Patrick Patterson, modern attention to the Ottoman menace—in nineteenth-century Vienna and in twentieth-century Hungary and Yugoslavia—notably occurred at times when that menace might have appeared safely in the past. In fact, one striking aspect of these contributions is that they all illustrate metaphorical ways of remembering the Ottoman menace by means of ahistorical application to modern circumstances. Healy, following the cultural reasoning of Carl Schorske, suggests that the real menace of 1883 had nothing to do with the Turks, but was much more significantly concerned with the rise of mass politics and parties—what Schorske called "politics in a new key." Hanebrink analyzes the ways in which anti-communist ideology made use of the Ottoman analogy, so that, especially for Catholic figures, like Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli in Budapest in 1938 and Cardinal Mindszenty in 1948, the antireligious menace of Soviet-style communism conjured the menacing historical memories of Ottoman rule in Hungary in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Finally, in a remarkable rhetorical achievement, the Croatians in twentieth-century Yugoslavia, according to Patterson, were able to cultivate their own Serbian-style complex of Ottoman victimization in order to equate Ottoman menace with Serbian domination in Belgrade! These far-flung metaphorical implications—the Ottomans as Schönerer's Pan-Germans, as the Belgrade governing class of interwar Yugoslavia, as the Soviet-backed Hungarian Communists—suggest how little the actual Turks must have mattered in these various rhetorical contexts.

Yet, even if the Ottoman menace in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could represent metaphorically a variety of other menaces, there were nevertheless some distinctly Ottoman—and even post-Ottoman—issues embedded in the contemporary discussions. The bicentennial commemoration in Vienna in 1883 followed very closely on the Congress of Berlin of 1878, where the so-called Eastern Question of the Ottoman Empire had been fully aired, where Gyula Andrássy, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, played a leading role in shaping European policy toward the Ottomans, and where the Habsburgs received European confirmation for their fateful occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

[4]Volkmar Braunbehrens, *Mozart in Vienna 1781–1791*, trans. Timothy Bell (1986; New York, 1989), 312–16.

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R. W. Seton-Watson, in his classic study of *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question*, explored the ways in which the very existence of the Ottoman Empire, and especially its imperial power in southeastern Europe, was made into a public political issue in Victorian England during the late 1870s. As framed by the great rival statesmen Disraeli and Gladstone, the central question was whether the Ottoman state should be preserved as a part of the international status quo (as sustained by Disraeli, who sought to check Russian aggrandizement) or whether the Ottomans should be driven out of southeastern Europe ("bag and baggage," in Gladstone's famous phrase)—particularly from Bulgaria ("the province they have desolated and profaned") after the "Bulgarian atrocities" of 1876. Seton-Watson demonstrated that the Eastern question had a powerful resonance with the British public, right up to Gladstone's triumphant Midlothian campaign of 1879–1880.[5] Accordingly, one might see the bicentennial commemoration of 1883 in Vienna as not merely commemorative, but as a part of the public airing of contemporary perspectives on the Ottoman Empire.

On the one hand, Andrassy at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 played a part in creating the Disraelian-Bismarckian settlement that, revising the Treaty of San Stefano, restricted autonomous Bulgaria to a more limited territory and hence sustained the Ottoman Empire in southeastern Europe to a relatively greater degree. On the other hand, Andrassy obtained for the Habsburgs the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an occupation with Gladstonian implications for the removal of Christian (as well as Muslim) subjects from (allegedly oppressive) Ottoman rule. The commemorations of 1883 must also be seen as implicitly Gladstonian inasmuch as they represented a (retrospectively) negative view of the Ottoman Empire, dramatizing the military, political, and sexual menace of Kara Mustafa, while celebrating the liberation of Europe from the Turks, beginning with Vienna itself.

In fact, the immediate aftermath of the raising of the Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683 was entirely relevant to the Eastern Question of the nineteenth century, for the relief of Vienna led directly to the taking of Buda and Pest from the Turks in 1686, with Prinz Eugen pressing on to his victory at Zenta (today in Vojvodina, in Serbia) in 1697, before the peace of Carlowitz in 1699. Carlowitz signaled the first rolling-back of Ottoman rule in southeastern Europe, and the historical commemoration of the 1680s was therefore entirely relevant to the contemporary international issues of the 1880s. It would be interesting to consider any analogous commemorations in Budapest in 1883, marking the bicentennial of the siege, and especially any commemorations in 1886 to mark the bicentennial of the liberation of Hungary from the Ottomans—which could also be considered the conquest of Hungary by the Habsburgs. With the Habsburg defeat of the Rakoczi uprising and the imposition of the Peace of Szatmar in 1711, the Habsburgs to some extent displaced the Ottomans as the alien ruling presence in Hungary. This perspective allowed for some ambivalence in the Hungarian national view of "liberation" from Ottoman rule, and therefore implied some corollary ambivalence concerning the Ottoman "menace." It should be noted, with reference to Hanebrink's contribution, that the ideological anti-Ottomanism of the 1930s and 1940s in Hungary, invoked by Pacelli and Mindszenty, came from a very specific, and perhaps limited, Roman Catholic perspective on Hungarian nationhood.

The same possibility of ambivalence is evident in Patterson's contribution on Croatian perspectives. Patterson notes that Bishop Josip Strossmayer, corresponding with Gladstone in 1877, was fully attuned to the Ottoman menace as an aspect of the Eastern Question, asking

[5]R. W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question* (1935; New York, 1972), 74–76, 545–50.

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"whether it is possible that Christians should remain under the rule of the Koran and its fanatical followers." Yet, one generation later, in 1911, Frano Supilo remarked that "it cannot be known which was worse for the freedom and the rights of Croatia: the Turks, or the Vienna–Graz bureaucracy." The Viennese bicentennial celebration of the defeat of the Turks in 1683 was perhaps all the more emphatic in view of the fact that the Habsburg state needed to emphatically deny the moral equivalency of Ottoman and Habsburg rule in southeastern Europe: whether in Hungary, Croatia, or Bosnia. R. W. Seton-Watson himself, who wholeheartedly embraced the Gladstonian anti-Ottoman perspective, was in fact no less hostile to the Habsburg state as an imperial entity in southeastern Europe. During the First World War, Seton-Watson played a significant role in advocating the dismantling of the monarchy, and he would certainly have celebrated with Gladstonian enthusiasm the disappearance of Habsburg rule—"bag and baggage"—from the lands of the then future (and now former) Yugoslavia.

Patterson notes further complex ambivalence in the writings of Ante Trumbić, who, like Frano Supilo, served on the Yugoslav Committee in London during World War I and collaborated closely with Seton-Watson. Trumbić exclaimed over the disaster—"the most damaging in its consequences"—of the Turkish invasions for Croatia, but nevertheless noted (or even gloated) that "while the sultan's banner was flying in Buda," at the same time, "an Ottoman foot never trod on the soil of the main city Zagreb." Trumbić might further have noted that the Ottomans never set foot in his own native city of Split, which was part of Venetian Dalmatia right up until Napoleon handed it to the Habsburgs at the treaty of Campo Formio in 1797. Indeed Split not only failed to suffer the "most damaging consequences" of the Ottoman invasions, but it also actually profited greatly in the sixteenth century (as noted by Fernand Braudel) as the endpoint for the Ottoman caravan trade from Istanbul, across Ottoman Bosnia, to the Venetian Adriatic.[6] Caravan cargos from the east arrived first in Split, where they were quarantined in the lazaretto, before being shipped across the Adriatic to Venice. In the 1930s, disillusioned with the Yugoslavia he had helped to create, Trumbić drew the distinction between Serbia—which had truly endured "Turkish domination"—and Croatia where "we here lived under the influence of the West." In this view, Ottoman domination appeared to Trumbić not so much as the actual tragedy of Croatian history but, rather, as the tragic metaphor for living under Serbian domination in Yugoslavia.

There even appears to have been some element of competitive self-traumatization in the Croatian emphasis on Turkish disaster, which was, after all, as Trumbić conceded, more strikingly evident in the history of Serbia after 1389 and became one of the traumatic central themes of modern Serbian national identity. The Croatian testimony to Turkish tragedy, assembled by Patterson, suggests that national history in southeastern Europe almost depended upon a narrative of extreme victimization—and perhaps the oppressions of Habsburg rule were not quite sufficiently extreme! Patterson notes that Franjo Tudjman himself, with his extreme brand of late-twentieth-century Croatian nationalism, was violently hostile to the Ottomans (among others) and that historian Ive Mažuran, writing in Tudjman's Croatia in the 1990s, particularly emphasized the "catastrophe" of Ottoman rule. "While Croatia was bleeding profusely and passing through the fateful moments of its historic drama," Mažuran wrote, "in the European West a middle-class revolution was successfully carried out in the Netherlands, England underwent its sudden rise, the Spanish

[6]Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds, 2 vols. (1949; New York, 1976), vol. 1:286–88.

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style of dress was in fashion, the Church undertook reforms, it was the time of the early Baroque, of the literary creativity of William Shakespeare." Yet, in Dubrovnik, in the sixteenth century, Marin Držić wrote Renaissance comedies that could be seen as having some literary affinity with Shakespeare, and in the seventeenth century the Baroque poet Ivan Gundulić further developed the tradition of South Slavic literature, writing great poetry that also addressed the Ottoman menace. In the Croatian case, as Patterson suggests, the Ottomans could be variously invoked according to a purposefully selective view of history. In the Hungarian case, Hanebrink notes the "Turanian" aspect of national culture, suggesting a similarly interesting level of ambivalence and ingenuity in historical views of the Ottoman presence in Hungary. The beautiful Ottoman baths, for instance, continue to play a part in the recreational life of Budapest—whatever the retrospective view of early modern Ottoman rule.

In the 1990s, the Central European University in Budapest sponsored an academic project entitled "Triplex Confinium," which sought to understand the complex frontier culture of the Croatian, Bosnian, and Dalmatian territories in the region where the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Venetian empires had common borders during the early modern centuries. There were, in fact, common aspects of culture and society on the frontier, where the three empires were most intimate even when they were actually at war. The nuances of this early modern intimacy were forgotten in the modern conjurings of the Ottoman menace, whether in Vienna in 1883, in Budapest in 1948, or in Zagreb in 1998. By then, of course, neither the intimacy nor the menace was actually still meaningful.

Iver Neumann has argued that the "Turkish Other" was of foundational significance for modern European identity, dating back to the Renaissance.[7] The contributions of Healy, Hanebrink, and Patterson all suggest that some sort of Turkish Other was still sufficiently important to be shifted into different shapes when the authentic Ottoman menace could no longer be honestly invoked. The Sick Man of Europe in the nineteenth century constituted a new role for the Turkish Other, whereas the figure of the *Gastarbeiter* loomed large in the second half of the twentieth century. In the 1930s, Seton-Watson in England was still channeling Gladstone's horror at Turkish atrocities, even as Cardinal Pacelli in Hungary was still affirming Christian civilization against the Ottoman crescent. Gladstone's archrival Disraeli envisioned a different Ottoman menace: the danger of Ottoman collapse leading to extreme geopolitical instability in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, a sort of anticipatory post-Ottoman menace. At the beginning of the twenty-first century—contemplating the political circumstances in such formerly Ottoman spaces as Iraq, Israel, Bosnia, and Kosovo—one might feel that the perils of the post-Ottoman era still menacingly persist.

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[7]Iver Neumann, *The Uses of the Other: "The East" in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis, MN, 1999), 39–63.

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