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Disorienting encounters : re-reading seventeenth and eighteenth century Ottoman miniature paintings = Desoriënterende ontmoetingen : een herlezing van zeventiende- en achttiende-eeuwse Ottomaanse miniaturen

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CHAPTER 4: Portrait of a Sultan: Ornamentation at Work

In 1480, the Venetian painter Gentile Bellini painted a portrait of Mehmed the Conqueror (r. 1444-1446 / 1451–1481), whom the canvas' inscription identifies as the "Conqueror of the World" (*Victor Orbis*). Facing the viewer in a three-quarter facial view, Mehmed is framed by a Venetian-style arch and has been placed behind a parapet draped with a jeweled textile. Commissioned by the sultan himself, this painting is one of the most famous portraits of the Ottoman sultans painted by a European artist. [119]

Besides commissioning Italian artists to execute royal portraits in "foreign" media such as bronze medals and oil paintings, Sultan Mehmed II attempted to imbue the conventions of small-scale *Timurid* miniature painting on paper with a touch of realism inspired by Italian exemplars (Necipoğlu, 2000: 28). Around the time Bellini was working on his canvas, the Ottoman painter Şiblizâde Ahmed painted a miniature portrait of the Conqueror. In this miniature, "Mehmed's face, which resembles Bellini's oil portrait, is awkwardly appended to his seated body as part of a Timurid iconographic tradition" (Necipoğlu, 2000: 28). As Necipoğlu suggests, such culturally hybrid miniature portraits "seem to have been created in response to the sultan's wish to formulate a distinctively Ottoman idiom in portraiture that would stand out both Italianate and Persianate models" (29). Accordingly, Julian Raby argues that Şiblizâde's portrait "represents the ideological horizons of portraiture at Mehmed's court, away from exclusive dependence on Renaissance concepts to one that embraced Timurid and Turkic concerns" (2000: 71). These hybrid works were to be of substantial long-term significance for the development of Ottoman imperial portraits as determined, for example, by the sixteenth-century portrait series of Nakkash Osman, which brought forth a "synthetic mode of representation that no longer foregrounds foreign pictorial conventions," such as the traces of Italianate conventions of modeling and chiaroscuro introduced by painters like Bellini (Necipoğlu, 2000: 29).

The artistic tension manifested in Şiblizâde Ahmed's miniature portrait, which was later on erased by the authentic Ottoman style of Nakkash Osman,

[119] The painting is now at the London National Gallery.

resurfaces in the portrait series by Master Levnî entitled *Kebir Musavver Silsilenâme*. Although Levnî's work continued by and large to use the iconography traditionally associated with each sultan, it portrayed the sultans as "more solid, three dimensional figures, lending them a distinct fullness of figure" (Irepoğlu, 2000: 382). Moreover, Levnî introduced motifs, such as the voluminously draped curtains commonly used in the portraits created by the artists of the Vanmour School, that had never before been used in Ottoman imperial portraiture. By mixing different idioms, "Levnî set out to revive Ottoman painting, skillfully bringing innovation to figurative representation without undermining the essence of the genre, creating a style appropriate to this time of high artistic achievement and early western influence" (Irepoğlu 2000: 378).[120]

In this chapter, I focus on the tension between two different discourses on portraiture as it is manifested in Levnî's portrait of Sultan Ahmed III. This miniature depicts the sultan (accompanied by the prince) seated on a lavishly adorned throne placed in the rear left corner of the miniature plane. It diverges from the stylistic and compositional characteristics of other portraits in the *Silsilenâme* by displaying Ahmed III enthroned so as to present him as the reigning sultan of the time. While other portraits display single figures of the sultan, this portrait of Ahmed III includes the figure of the sultan-to-be, perhaps to emphasize the continuity of the Empire. Moreover, and more importantly, the miniature incorporates extensive ornamentation, which envelops the figures in a web of intricate floral and geometrical patterns; the outside of the portrait is embellished as well with golden floral patterns. This level of ornamentation in portraiture is not only singular in Levnî's oeuvre but also unique in Ottoman imperial portraiture.[121]

[120] The Flemish painter Jean-Baptiste Vanmour came to Constantinople in the entourage of the French ambassador, Marquis de Ferriol, in 1699, and worked there until his death in 1737. He had the chance to visit the *Divan* and the throne of the Topkapi Seraglio in the retinue of the Dutch ambassador Cornelis Calkoen and painted several ceremonial scenes. He left more than a hundred paintings comprising vistas of Constantinople, portraits of various state officials in their typical costumes, scenes from everyday life, and portraits of "ordinary" people. Most of these paintings are now at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

[121] The only exception is the portrait of Osman II by Levnî which has a similar composition to that of the Ahmed III miniature and incorporates similarly dense ornamentation. The portraits of Nakkash Osman and the works that followed his style also make use of this degree of ornamentation. However, in those miniatures, ornamentation never shadows the figures, as is the case for the portrait of Ahmed III.

According to Süheyl Ünver, Levnî's employment of excessive ornamentation reflects the decorative taste that has been called Ottoman Rococo (1949: 23; see also Irepoğlu, 2000: 380). Alternatively, the revival of ornamentation in portraiture "can be interpreted as an 'Islamicizing' trend in Ottoman visual culture, delineating its difference from its European counterpart" while the Empire was going through a systemic process of Westernization (Necipoğlu, 2000: 32). While keeping these two arguments in mind, I argue that ornamentation has a significant (imperial) function in this miniature in making it a portrait of a sultan.[122]

Richard Brilliant (1991) proposes that the Western genre of portraiture is fundamentally different from those of other art objects in the specificity and reality of its referent. Classical Ottoman sultanic portraiture, however, was conceptual (Necipoğlu, 2000: 34). Ottoman artists represented the sultans as "individualized types, combining mimetic physiognomic traits with generic elements dictated by iconographic convention" (34). Scholars such as Irepoğlu argue that the works in Levnî's portrait series, most notably the portrait of Ahmed III, are endowed with "lively facial expressions in order to express the individuality of each, so that the figures come closer to realistic portraiture" (Irepoğlu, 2000: 382). I shall argue that the ornamentation in the portrait in question challenges such a realistic reading of the image. The ornamentation turns what Irepoğlu deems a successful portrait in the conventional sense into a "productive failure" that allows us to reconsider the "truth" of portraiture.

To unravel the operation of ornamentation in this specific portrait, I first outline the discourse on the ornamental that promotes the binary opposition between essence and adjunct. Subsequently, I dwell on Jacques Derrida's mediation on Immanuel Kant's discussion of the notions of the *parergon* and the *ergon*. According to Derrida, the *parergon* is a constitutive supplement rather than an index of inferiority or something unnecessary tacked on to the work already complete in itself. Following Derrida, I argue that ornamentation in the portrait of Ahmed III functions as a *parergon* that comes to constitute the representational space of the miniature as that which the *ergon* would otherwise lack. However, this ornamental representational space is tainted by a peculiar instability. It reflects what Deepek

[122] Thinking of baroque as representing the architecture of space and of rococo as embodying a decorative style, Kuban calls the baroque period in Turkey "a period of Turkish rococo" (1954: 136). For a recent critique of terminology, see Peker (2002).

Ananth calls the "aesthetics of the carpet," which refutes "any hierarchy in the treatment of space as exemplified by the easy reciprocity and mobility between indoors and outdoors, background and foreground, center and margin" (1996, 157). Subsequently, I suggest that the miniature's ornamentation, taken to the level of *horror vacui*, treats the picture support as flat and opaque. However, the figure of the sultan and the throne break open the flatness in a manner akin to what might be called "reverse depth," a strategy used in modernist collage that, as elaborated by Clement Greenberg, was used to signify depth within the shallow surface of the painting.

The reverse-depth effect temporarily pushes the sultan close to the viewer and both plays upon the viewer's frustration and seduces her. The oscillation of the viewer directs me to question, through an analysis of the miniature portrait, what the "truth" of portraiture as a genre might be. The "successful" portrait allows the viewer to objectify the sitter and take hold of her/his unique personality. In these terms, the portrait of Ahmed III fails to be successful, even though it perpetuates the discourse of realism: it fails to transmit the uniqueness of the sitter to its viewers, as the ornamentation screens the viewer's eyes and gives her no access to the sultan's inner qualities. It establishes an auratic distance (as opposed to offering psychological closeness) that walls off the viewer.

In this capacity, I suggest that the miniature is successful as "a portrait of *the sultan*." It does not represent an individual—Ahmed III—but presents the sultan, conceptually, as an image. The viewer is not provided with *a* sultan, but is shown the meaning of sultan-ness. It does not "intend" to be a portrait in the conventional sense but rather seeks to be an idea or an event that affects its viewer precisely by keeping her outside, at a distance. This view concords with Gülru Necipoğlu's (2000) argument that the Ottoman sultan differs from his contemporaries by an irreconcilable invisibility that is epitomized by the architectural structure of the Topkapi Palace. In this sense, the miniature portrait reinforces the sultan's power to not be seen, or to be seen only as a silhouette that cannot be imbued with individuality.

Sultan Ahmed III Enthroned

Sitting solemnly on his imperial throne in Figure 21 is Ahmed III, mighty sultan of the famous Tulip Period (1718–1730), mentioned in the previous chapter in the discussion of the miniature series from *Surname-i Vehbî*. In that series, he was an inconspicuous figure among the janissaries, but here the sultan is revealed in all his glamour as the subject of the image. This depiction of Sultan Ahmed is the last in the portrait series of the sultans entitled *Kebir Musavver Silsilenâme* (Great Illustrated Genealogy), painted by Levnî around 1720. Even though it is entitled *Silsilenâme*, a generic name given to the illustrated manuscripts that carry the lineage of the Ottoman dynasty back to Adam, the book under consideration includes only the portraits of the Ottoman sultans.[123] Conventionally, *Silsilenâme*s consist of small portraits set in circular frames linked to one another by lines showing genealogical relationships and accompanied by brief explanations written around the roundels. In contrast, the 23 portraits collected in the book are full-page miniatures that are larger than any portrait executed beforehand. Additionally, the miniatures of the *Silsilenâme* were completed long before the book's text was written by the poet Munib in the nineteenth century, a first-time occurrence in this type of portraiture (Irepoğlu, 1999: 78; 2000: 380). In this capacity, *Silsilenâme* appears more like a portrait album than a typical genealogy.

Apart from the miniature portrait of Sultan Ahmed III, all figures are shown seated in three-quarter profile, turned slightly to either the left or right following the norms of *Timurid* imperial portraiture. The figures lean against large ornamental cushions (Figure 22 and 23). The seated portraits of the other sultans follow the iconography of classical royal portraiture, but the miniature in question follows a seventeenth-century novelty of portraying the reigning sultan of the time as enthroned. In its compositional difference from the book's other works and its divergence from the dominant conventions of portraiture, the Ahmed III portrait interrupts the visual continuity of the imperial portrait series. In this sense, it presents Ahmed III, who commissioned the book, as the distinguished reigning sultan of the time.

[123] For more on the notion of *Silsilenâme*, see Mahir (200b).

Figure 21. The Portrait of Sultan Ahmed III, *Kebir Musavver Silsilenâme*, Levnî, ca. 1720, Topkapi Museum, (A. 3109, f. 22v), 16.4 x 25 cm. Reproduced from Bağci, Çağman, and Renda, (2006: 262).

Unlike other miniatures, in which sultans had been depicted as sumptuously dressed, bulky figures wearing ostentatiously ornamented costumes, Ahmed III is portrayed as a delicately built man with a black beard. He is somewhat modestly dressed, his costume consisting of a silver-grey caftan with fur lining and a camel hair-colored under-robe. He wears a high turban, adorned with three fan-shaped jeweled aigrettes and a matching jeweled belt, and carries a dagger, the hilt of which we can see through his half-buttoned caftan. On the little fingers of both hands are rings that complete the stern royal outfit. We see, through the loosely opened skirts of his caftan folding out in layers of fur and clothes, the sultan's feet resting on a golden box with carved ornamentation on its corners.

Figure 22. Sultan Selim I (Grim), *Kebir Musavver Silsilenâme*, f. 9b.

Figure 23. Sultan Süleyman I (Magnificent), *Kebir Musavver Silsilenâme*, f. 10a.

Compared to the sultan's costume, the royal throne appears more exuberant. Vivid and minutely detailed floral ornamentation covers its every side and corner. In the background, tiles in a repeating pattern make up tilted squares within squares; the lower foreground consists of relatively large floral motifs arranged horizontally over a red surface. In front of the geometrically patterned background, to the left of the imperial throne, a small figure stands upright, wearing a buttoned camel-hair caftan over a grey gown and headgear with an aigrette sloping downward. His hands are folded on his chest; he and the sultan face in opposite directions. This figure is one of Ahmed's sons for whom the circumcision festivities discussed in the previous chapter were organized.

This is what the image shows, at first glance. But there is more to see: more than the sitter and his throne and the figure of the standing prince, and more than I can describe. The image is full of ornamental details filling every corner of the picture plane. Yet when it comes to talking about the ornamental figurations, words do not come easily. If description is a narrative form, one has difficulty even devising a coherent description of the ornamentation in the image that would allow the reader to visualize the motifs and patterns without seeing them.[124]

How would one describe the motifs that horizontally cut through the lower half of the miniature, patterns that seem to be linear repetitions of each other? One can refer to their distinctive colors—orange, light purple, light brown, dark blue—and curving, interlacing, knit-together lines. Or we can relate their forms to familiar objects so that the reader would imagine "something like" these motifs. We can say they resemble flowers—perhaps carnations—and different sorts of leaves, but this is not quite accurate.

There seems to be a gap between what we see and what we say about the ornamentation in this miniature. If my act of describing the miniature could be taken as an instance of *ekphrasis*, then my attempt to verbalize the visual falls short. This is a moment of what W.J.T. Mitchell calls "ekphrastic fear": "the moment of resistance or counterdesire that occurs when we sense that the difference between the verbal and visual representation might collapse and the figurative, imaginary desire of

[124] For a discussion of description as narrative, see Bal (1991), especially Chapter 6.

ekphrasis might be realized literally and actually" (1994: 154).[125] One way out of such a collapse is "ekphrastic indifference," in which the impossibility of *ekphrasis* is acknowledged in a way similar to the sentiment expressed in the sentence with which Mitchell opens his chapter: "I sure wish you [….] could see these pictures" (151). Alternatively, the resistance offered by the ornamentation could be taken seriously, with the hope of "giving voice to a mute art object" (155).

My aim, however, is not to overcome the estrangement of the image/text division, as Mitchell attempts to do. Instead, I will respect the resistance of the ornament and take its thwarting of description as a theoretical starting-point to understand what ornamentation does and what it means in this miniature. I do so in order to discuss the mode of looking that it evokes and imposes on its viewer. In the first part of my analysis, I will bring forth one of the most critical yet overused and abused terms in visual analysis, *parergon*, which has strong conceptual links with ornamentation. In the portrait of the sultan, as my analysis will demonstrate, ornamentation—long considered an addition to the work proper—functions, on the contrary, as a constructive supplement designating pictorial space.

Parergon: Ornamented Surfaces

> *Ornament*:
> 1. a. An accessory or adjunct, primarily functional, but often also fancy or decorative; (in pl.) equipment, trappings, furniture, attire.
> 2. a. Something used to adorn, beautify, or embellish, or that naturally does this; a decoration, embellishment.
> b. fig. A quality, characteristic, or circumstance conferring beauty, grace, honour, etc.

[125] In the chapter titled "Ekphrasis and the Other" in *Picture Theory* (1994), Mitchell argues that there are three instances of ekphrasis: indifference, hope, and fear, which he challenges from a semiotic point of view. He argues that ekphrasis is "stationed between two 'othernesses,' and two forms of (apparently) impossible translation and exchange: (1) the conversion of the visual representation into a verbal representation, either by description or ventriloquism; (2) the reconversion of the verbal representation back into the visual object in the reception of the reader. The 'working through' of ekphrasis and the other, then, is more like a triangular relationship than a binary one; its social structure cannot be grasped fully as a phenomenological encounter of subject and object, but must be pictured as a *menage a trois* in which the relations of self and other, text and image, are triply inscribed. If ekphrasis typically expresses a desire for a visual object (whether to possess or praise), it is also typically an offering of this expression as a gift to the reader" (164).

The entry for ornament in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, cited above, emphasizes two aspects of the term: it is an adjunct to something, and it beautifies the object to which it is added. Etymologically, the term comes from the Latin word *ornatus*, meaning dress, equipment, or embellishment, which stems from the verb *ornare*, meaning to provide with necessaries, to equip, to adorn, or to decorate. Therefore, Jenny Anger suggests, *ornare* can be understood as "providing either essential or inessential goods, for example, weapons to an army, which constitute *as army*, or flowers to one's hair" (2004: 16). Even though Anger raises the question of the necessity and essentiality of the act of ornamentation, in both instances ornament indicates an addition: it is spatially articulated to a material essence and temporally comes after that essence as a secondary act. This secondary nature of the ornamental constructs a hierarchical relation between ornament as form and object ornamented as matter, which leads to further ontological oppositions between what is external and internal, marginal and essential to the artwork.

In *Problems of Style* (1893), Alois Riegl gives a detailed survey of the historical development of ornamental styles and defines ornament as "a pattern on a surface."[126] The background squares, horizontal floral motifs, intertwined bouquets, and floating curves of leaves over the throne in the portrait should thus be called ornaments. However, the ornamental motifs *within* paintings appear to be different from those found on architectural surfaces or objects such as pots or plates. The problem of the spatial and temporal attachment of the ornament mentioned above seems to disappear when it comes to the ornamental within paintings. The ornamental motifs do not cover up a given surface with a separate materiality, as would be the case with wallpaper on a wall. Instead, the ornaments occupy the same material surface as the rest of the painting does—canvas or, in the case of miniature painting, paper. Similarly, the temporal secondariness of their rendering cannot easily be suggested. In the portrait of Ahmed III, for example, we may assume that the ornamental patterns had been applied after the figures were arranged as a

[126] In *Problems of Style*, Riegl discusses the progression of ornamentation from the Egyptian lotus ornament through the Greek *palmette* and the Roman acanthus tendril to the more recent Oriental arabesque with a thread. Although Riegl's definition of ornament is quite simple, his approach is problematic, since he assumes an uninterrupted continuity in the historical development of ornament, beginning with the Egyptians and ancient Greeks. Interestingly, Markus Brüderlin, in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue *Ornament and Abstraction*, continues Riegl's linear developmental history of the ornamental and asks whether it can "now be traced still further [….] from Runge via Post-Impressionism and Art Nouveau to modernist linear abstraction" (2001: 23).

composition and were drawn, perhaps by one of Levnî's apprentices, who carelessly forgot to fill in the empty space between the sultan's left arm and his caftan.[127]

With respect to painting, I propose that the ornamental brings about a problem on the semantic level. Ornamentation is not what makes the image an image—and more specifically, a portrait. Had the background of the image or the surface of the throne been left empty, the miniature would still have been a "meaningful" portrait of Ahmed III. In this sense, it can be argued that ornament within the miniature adds nothing to the image and could be removed without destroying the meaning and the function of the image as a portrait. As pure forms of line and color, which resist the cognitive act of description—and even interpretation—these ornaments can be considered mere decorations "in which the visual pleasure of form significantly outweighs the communicative value of content" (Trilling, 2003: 23). In such an understanding, the ornamentation within the miniature functions at most as a lure that optically attracts the viewer. Yet it directs her to the essence of the image—the figure of the sultan.[128]

Such an understanding of the meaning of ornament concurs with Oleg Grabar's discussion of the function of Islamic ornament in *The Mediation of Ornament* (1992). According to Grabar, the main purpose of ornamentation, and Islamic ornamentation in particular, is to beautify the object and enhance its effect. He argues that although ornament is non-art, it is an essential component of art; it asserts itself as an intermediate order between viewers and works of art as a carrier of beauty that transmits visual pleasure. In this sense, an artwork could physically exist without having ornamentation, but it would not be an object of beauty and thus would be uncommunicative in a fundamental sense.[129]

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[127] Texts that study the function and meaning of ornamentation within painting in depth are scarce. Riegl focuses on ornamentation in pottery, architecture, and textiles. So does Ernst Gombrich in his book *Sense of Order* (1979), although he expands the discussion to include tattooing. In *The Mediation of Ornament* (1992), Oleg Grabar discusses ornamentation in Islamic art, yet he only briefly mentions miniature painting. Similarly, James Trilling's *Ornament: A Modern Perspective* (2003) largely overlooks the functioning of the ornamental within painting. Works on the ornament in modern painting include Jenny Anger's *Paul Klee and the Decorative in Modern Art* (2004), which regards abstract painting as decorative and concentrates on paintings by Klee, Matisse, and Kandisky.

[128] In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer argues that the essence of all decorative art is double: "The nature of decoration consists in performing [a] two-sided mediation; namely to draw the attention of the viewer to itself, satisfy his taste, and then to redirect it away from itself to the greater whole of the context of life which it accompanies" (quoted in Anger, 2004: 9).

[129] Grabar's discussions, especially when he inquires into the ways contemporary viewers make sense of the ornamentation, are innovative in comparison to previous works on Islamic ornament, which

I would like to distance myself from such a conceptualization of ornament as a form or order, in which its function is merely to create a sense of beauty and bring about visual pleasure. This approach would, in its description of the viewer's encounter with the image, evoke binary oppositions such as essential/adjunct, form/content, interior/exterior, figuration/abstraction, representation/anti-representation, and intelligible/sensible. I will therefore introduce the concept of *parergon* so as to dismantle conceptual oppositions that have been used to describe what a "real artwork" is.

Parergon (Greek *para*: against, beyond; and *ergon*: work), as Victor Stoichita explains, is a concept that was adopted by writers of seventeenth-century art theory; in ancient rhetoric, the term denoted "the embellishments added to a discourse" and "according to Pliny, embellishments added to a painting" (1997: 23). Most famously, Immanuel Kant introduces the discussion of the term in his third critique, in which he investigates whether the faculty of judgment provides itself with an *a priori* principle. He begins the discussion of aesthetic judgment (or judgment of taste) with an account of beauty and the judgment of the beautiful manifesting itself in four unique moments (or its features), which also defines the proper object of the judgment on which it is based. Jacques Derrida's critique of Kant's third critique in *The Truth in Painting* (1987) makes the notion of *parergon* more relevant to critical analyses of artworks. It questions "what *intrinsically* concerns the value 'beauty' and what remains external to your immanent sense of beauty," a mode of inquiry which in turn organizes "all philosophical discourses in art, the meaning of art and meaning as such" (Derrida 1987: 45).

Derrida begins the discussion of *parergon* by quoting the famous fourteenth paragraph of the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), in which the structure of "the proper object of the pure judgment of taste" is delineated in relation to *parergonality*:

> Even what is called *ornamentation* [*Zierathen*: decoration, adornment, embellishment] (*Parerga*), i.e., what is only an adjunct and not an intrinsic constituent in the complete representation of the object [.…] in augmenting

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mainly concentrate on religious, social, and even racial factors. However, his analyses do not go beyond a demonstration of the pleasure principle and the experience of beauty as ornament's *raisons d'être*, which he fails to theorize in depth. For a critique of religious and racial explanations of Islamic ornamentation, including works by Alois Riegl, Louis Masignon, Titus Burckhardt, and Ernst Kuhnel, see Necipoğlu (1995), especially Chapters 4 and 5.

> the delight of taste does so only by means of its form. Thus it is with the frames [….] of pictures or the drapery on statues, or the colonnades of palaces. But if the ornamentation does not itself enter into the composition of the beautiful form—if it is introduced [….] like a gold frame [….] merely to win approval for the picture by means of its charm—it is then called finery [*parure*] (*Schmuck*) and takes away from the genuine beauty. (quoted in Derrida, 1987: 53)

Kant suggests that the ornament is an addition to the artwork that can or must enter into the composition of the whole only formally so as to augment the viewer's taste. If it fails to enter the work as an attachment, the ornament impairs the beauty of the object and falls into the world of simple objects, as in the case of the golden frame. Therefore, in Kant's formulation, the ornament as *parergon* is always in oscillation; it plays in a liminal space, where it can "either merge for the viewer with the object itself, making it greater than it would be alone," or it can "rapture the object, depleting it of its beauty" (Anger, 2004: 8). Yet, in either case, *parergon* is a secondary object, an excess or parenthesis—in short, everything the proper object or the work (the *ergon*) must *not* be.

This leads Derrida to define the term as what "comes against, beside, and in addition to the *ergon*, the work done [*fait*], the fact [*le fait*], the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside" (1987: 54). It is neither simply outside nor simply inside the *ergon*. Because of this in-between-ness, *parergon* comes to play against the limit of the proper artwork and intervenes in its inside "only to the extent that the inside is lacking" (56). By means of this lack, Derrida introduces the relationship of *parergon* to the *ergon*:

> What constitutes them as *parerga* is not simply their exteriority as a surplus, it is the internal structural link which rivets them to the lack in the interior of the *ergon*. And this lack would be constitutive of the very unity of the *ergon*. Without this lack, the *ergon* would have no need *of* a *parergon*. The *ergon*'s lack is the lack of a *parergon*, of the garment or the column which nevertheless remains exterior to it. (Derrida 1987: 59–60)

Here, ornament as *parergon* is neither a sign of inferiority, nor something unnecessary tacked on to a work that is already complete in itself. It is rather a supplement added to the work to cover up an internal lack that actually constitutes the work as *ergon*. Derrida concentrates on only one of the cases given by Kant as examples of *parergon*, the frame, leaving aside other possible *parergonalities*.[130] Inspired by Derrida's analysis, I will turn to the ornamentation within the miniature painting as an instance of *parergon*.

Articulating the ornamental patterns as *parergon* in the portrait of the sultan brings back the problem of the inside and outside of the painting, yet does so in a quite different manner than Derrida argued for the frame. Physically, the ornamental surfaces are firmly situated within the picture plane. However, they seem to supplement the major topic of the miniature—that is, the portrait of the sultan—even though they cover most of the image's surface. There is nothing but ornamentation around the sultan and the prince, as if they were situated in an infinite surface made up patterns and motifs. If a *parergon* can be added only by virtue of an internal lack in the system to which it is attached, what is lacking in this portrait so that the floating patterns should come to supplement it?

I contend that ornamentation comes to construct the pictorial space that the miniature lacks and, in this capacity, it not only spatially designates the image but also constitutes the work.[131] The hypothetical infinite surface in which the sultan is firmly situated is not only cut out by the frame on four sides but is also interrupted within by means of the ornamentation's ordering. We recognize the geometrical patterns representing the wall tiles and floral motifs in the lower part as the carpet, whereas the patterns above the throne resemble embroidered textiles. In semiotic terms, then, these elements function simultaneously as iconic and indexical signs: they stand for the signified on the basis of a presumed similarity (tile, knitted carpet, embroidered textile), but they also refer to them on the basis of a referentiality that constructs them as the wall, the floor, and the throne, respectively.

In this sense, the signification process triggered by such extensive

[130] See Chapter 5 and 6 on the function of the frame in miniature painting.

[131] Zeynep Sayin notes that *ornare* also means to arrange and give order; the image with ornamental character orders while it embellishes. Therefore, she argues, even though the ornamental image is not the carrier of meaning per se, it transforms the work into a self-enclosed and organic structure of meaning (200: 80-81).

ornamentation is twofold: first, they purport to provide an "iconic way of reading" (Bal and Bryson, 1991: 190). We assume that the ornamental patterns stand for their object on the basis of a hypothetical similarity between them. In such a reading, the horizontal floral motifs are not mere formal embellishments, but are taken to refer to a carpet pattern. An iconic mode of reading, in this case, promotes a resemblance between the ornamentation and the presumed carpet motif. The geometrical patterns in the background of the miniature, evoking the Islamic wall-tile patterns for which the Topkapi Museum is famous, can also be read in this way. Second, because the ornamentation within the miniature can invoke carpet motifs and wall tiles, it also works as indexical sign referring to architectonic elements, i.e., the wall and the floor. That is to say, by invoking the iconic reading of a tile pattern or carpet motif, the ornamentation indexically constructs the wall and the floor, respectively. By means of this interpretation of the ornamental forms, the initial non-space—infinite surface—is transformed into a representational place, perhaps a room in the Ottoman palace. This reading concords with Robert Nelson's suggestion that "[o]rnament [is] not a device for soaking up meaningless space but an artifice for claiming space as meaningful" (Nelson, 1993: 5 quoted in Negrin, 2006: 221).

In the beginning of this chapter, I questioned whether the removal of the ornamentation in the portrait of Ahmed III would affect the efficacy of the image as a portrait. As it happens, an artist from the so-called *Refail* (or Rafael) School painted such a portrait as if to further such an inquiry (Figure 24). This image is taken from a painting of genealogical tree (an introduction from Europe) that depicts all sultans within oval medallions (Irepoğlu, 2000: 396). Irepoğlu suggests that the portraits of the genealogical tree painting are modeled on those in Levnî's series. She adds that the portraits are so faithful to Levnî's series that we must conclude that the artist had the opportunity to examine it (2000: 45). [132]

[132] Refail is an Armenian painter who served as a court painter to Mustafa III and Abdulhamid I. He was trained in Italy and introduced new forms such as gouache and oil painting. His approach in most of his portraits in oil on canvas display a Western approach to portrayal of figures and painting technique (Irepoğlu, 2000: 388-391). One of these paintings is in the Topkapi Palace (17/30), one in the Celsing Collection, and a third is in the Gripsholm Castle. All three are virtually identical, with only minor discrepancies in the background landscape.

Figure 24. Detail, Sultan Ahmed III, Genealogical Tree, artists unknown, eighteenth century, oil on canvas, Gripsholm Castle (Grh 227), Sweden. Reproduced from Irepoğlu (1999: 108).

In the following section I focus on the discrepancies between the two images so as to discuss how the tension between the two inherently different representational spaces allows us to understand the operation of the ornament in Levnî's portrait.

Of Other Spaces

The portrait from the *Genealogical Tree* maintains the compositional scheme of Levnî's miniature by depicting the sultan seated in a diagonally placed throne on the left hand side of the picture plane. The prince is placed on his right, more or less where Levnî positioned him. His outfit and sitting position follows those of the Levnî miniature. The prince stands in the same position as in Levnî's work, although his outfit is slightly different. The overarching difference between the two images—besides the painting technique and medium—is ornamentation. The genealogical portrait lacks the overall ornamentation employed in Levnî's miniature. The background is painted a plain light brown; the patterns on the carpet are barely visible. The backside and corner of the throne are moderately embellished in blue and gold.

That the painting does not employ extensive ornamentation is perhaps an

appeal to European taste in portraiture—and because the sultans' names are written in Latin script in small cartouches above the portraits, it is plausible to argue that the painting was commissioned by a European patron. In this image nothing distracts the viewer's attention away from the two figures. The representational space is not constructed through an ordering of the ornamental patterns but rather by means of foreshortening the ground and putting the throne in perspective. The portrait brings forth a "closed interior space." It has depth and the figures are firmly positioned within this interior. [133]

In the Levnî miniature, however, the line demarcating the geometrical ornamentation from the lower floral patterning, obscured as it is by the sultan's throne, can barely be seen at the extreme right of the miniature. To the left it is hidden behind the prince's costume. This short demarcation line gives us a vague hint where the wall ends and the floor starts. Even if the rest of the line were visible throughout the image, it would only help the viewer differentiate between two surfaces, a distinction already established by the use of contrasting patterns. In such a simple way, the ornamentation imbues the miniature with a sense of space; the ornamental patterns are "constructive supplements" rather than embellishments to the complete representation of the object that, as Kant would have it, are meant to augment the delight of taste.

Nevertheless, seen in isolation, the competing ornamental patterns do not represent the space as a three-dimensional entity in which the objects could plausibly become visible and voluminous. Every ornamental segment—the wall, the carpet, and the throne—occupies the same plane from the same frontal point of view. The geometrically patterned surface is seen frontally as a wall would be seen, as is the carpet. To see a carpet motif frontally, as it appears in the image, one should change viewpoint and see the floor from a bird's-eye vantage. As such, and in contrast to the genealogical portrait, the use of ornament on the spatial surface enforces two-dimensionality. Rather than a stage-like interior space where the figures could be placed, what we have here is a sort of flat texture containing two distinct and

[133] In *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (1927), Erwin Panofsky appreciates the achievements of Giotto and Duccio in rendering pictorial space as a conquest over medieval representational principles. According to Panofsky, these artists' representations of closed interior space signify a "revolution in the formal assessment of the representational surface [….] This surface [….] is once again that transparent plane through which we are meant to believe that we are looking into a space, even if that space is still bounded on all sides" (1991: 55).

contrasting patterns. In this capacity, the sultan and the prince are not placed in a cube-like representational space but are instead situated on the surface of the miniature constructed with ornamentation.

The figures are located centrally in front of this two-dimensional wall/carpet surface. To the left stands the little prince on a small spot that seems to have been opened up just to include him in the miniature by means of the extended frame. It is as if his presence had not been planned in advance: he was incorporated into the image hastily, after the composition had been finalized.[134] The placement of the prince in the marginal corner of the picture plane (made at a cost, since the frame had to be expanded) can be read in two ways. First it can be seen as downplaying the status of the prince in comparison to the sultan so that the ruler's presence is not shadowed by the existence of a second figure. However, the expansion of the frame to include the prince can also be regarded as emphasizing his royal importance.[135] It seems as if it was necessary to include the prince in the miniature. In the *Genealogy* portrait, however, the prince is firmly situated in the picture plane, the two figures harmoniously co-existing in the same plane.

The ambivalent status of the prince is further emphasized by placing him in the picture plane at quite an impossible point (in terms of a realistic depiction). If the meeting line between the wall and the floor mentioned above is taken to be a straight one—which should be the case since the viewing position is frontal—it should have ended more or less at the edge of the jutted-out frame, just beneath the skirt of the prince's caftan. If we follow the expectation of a linearly ordered representational space we realize that the prince is positioned somewhere between the wall and the floor. In the portrait from the *Genealogy*, the prince is located in the foreshortened ground, firmly on the floor. I will argue that the impossible spot opened for the prince in Levnî's portrait is made possible by the ornamental surface that fuses the architectonic elements—i.e., the wall and the floor—into each other. The positioning of the prince doubtless appears impossible only if one considers the pictorial space to

[134] Irepoğlu suggests that Levnî might have appropriated the compositional scheme of a seventeenth-century portrait of Sultan Mehmed IV by *Musavver Hüseyin* (1999: 106). In this miniature the sultan is enthroned and accompanied by janissaries. Levnî replaces these figures with that of the prince, a truly innovative approach in the Ottoman royal portraiture. It doubtlessly refers to the continuity of the Empire. The inclusion of the prince occurs in another image (water colour on paper) in *Silsilenâme-i Osmâniye* (ca. 1757-1789) in the portrait of Sultan Mustafa III.

[135] I am grateful to Alena Alexandrova for emphasizing this aspect.

reflect our visual experience within the "real" field of vision as it has been represented in the *Genealogy* portrait. In the visual field perceived as conditioned by our experience, such a spot between the wall and the floor would belong to a non-existing space, a *un-topia*. The presence and possibility of the un-topic space within the miniature does more than demonstrate that the two notions of space are incompatible and that the representational space is not a capturing of optical space per se.

I propose that this *un-topic* space reflects what the art historian Deepak Ananth has called the decorative aesthetics of the carpet (1996: 157). Ananth proposes that the profusion of floral and vegetal motifs in the "Islamic" tradition of miniature painting brings about an organization of space akin to that of a carpet. The pictorial consequences of such an aesthetic can be seen in the denial of "any hierarchy in the treatment of space as exemplified by the easy reciprocity and mobility between indoors and outdoors, background and foreground, center and margin—those paradigmatic spatial components of Western painting that the Islamic miniature audaciously recasts as the discrete yet interlinked elements of an all-encompassing surface design" (157).

Such an aesthetic, which, I contend, is promulgated in the portrait of Ahmed III, does not presuppose a structural unity that would close up the work. In the portrait of the sultan, the ornamentation indeed constructs the representational space as an act of *parergon*, providing the *ergon* with what would otherwise be lacking. Yet this ornamental space is far from being a systematized, finished entity. On the contrary, it is a form of "makeable" space that can be extended in every direction, as shown by the instance of the inclusion of the prince. As Ananth proposes, such a conception of pictorial space lies in strict opposition to a linear, perspectival configuration of space, which is geometrically ordered, definite, closed, and unitary. The space of the miniature, by contrast, is marked by a peculiar instability and internal inconsistency, and is not constituted in accordance with a static point of view. Rather, as I mentioned above, it contains multiple points of view that enable the viewer to see the image from different angles, as in the cases of the wall/floor surface and the throne. If the pictorial space does not contain one central point that organizes the whole image, then such a space can be turned in different ways and played with. Left and right, up and down could be translated into each other. The

space moves in a way not unlike the way the beholder can move her eyes over the painting.

This fluidity is in congruence with Zeynep Sayin's argument that in Islamic visual arts the relations between center and periphery, figure and the ground, and inside and outside are different than those determined by the modernist ontology of the work of art. She argues that the idea of unity of the work—that is, *ergon*—as a closed achievement designed in advance is alien to Islamic aesthetics (2000: 184). The unity in Islamic work, Sayin contends, does not revolve around a center. The center in Islamic works is simultaneously nowhere and everywhere. Therefore, the attachment and detachment of parts in relation to this non-unity do not lead to a structural *ergon* constructed around a center. No doubt, such an understanding of the work of art refuses the Kantian opposition between *ergon* and *parergon*, since the work does not assert itself as a complete product. Rather, it is a site of contingency, and as such the distinctions between essence and attachment and outside and inside are undone.

As Rosalind Krauss and Yves-Alain Bois argue, "the modernist ontology requires an artwork to have a beginning and an end, and holds that all apparent disorder is necessarily reabsorbed in the very fact of being bounded" (1997: 4). The portrait of the sultan, on the other hand, suggests that such unity is not the condition of *ergon* once we define it by contingency, openness, and incompleteness. Such an ontology of painting admits a constant lack that cannot be superseded because it is precisely this lack that constitutes the image—neither its borders nor its alleged unity do so.

In this sense, the portrait of the sultan seems to suggest an aesthetics associated with the arts of Islam. In contrast, the *Genealogy* portrait, which had probably been executed a few years after the *Silsilenâme* miniature, is decontaminated—"sterilized," as it were—from extensive ornamentation so as to display the sultan without any visual hindrance. In this respect, the miniature portrait promotes a different conceptualization of portraiture. It reclaims the classical function of royal portraiture in which sultans are displayed as static icons, distanced from their viewers.

Trapped on the Surface

Flatness is one of the formal characteristics of miniature painting. From the seventeenth century onwards, however, miniaturists, most prominently Ahmed Nakşi, attempted to play with the partial illusion of depth so as to partially expand the pictorial space.[136] The portrait of Ahmed III seems to refute such play by filling up, to the extent of *horror vacui*, the surface of the miniature with two-dimensional ornamentation. This preference for intricately patterned surfaces "can be interpreted as an 'Islamicizing' trend in Ottoman visual culture, delineating its difference from its European counterpart" at a time when the Empire was going through a systemic process of Westernization (Necipoğlu, 2000: 32). It is plausible that in his effort to revise the stylistic constraints of traditional Imperial portraiture, Levnî might have chosen to impart an effect of *horror vacui*. Literally meaning "fear of emptiness," this phrase refers to the act of filling the entire surface of an artwork with ornamental details, figures, shapes, lines, and anything else the artist might envision. Such claustrophobic claiming of the surface of an artwork is conventionally associated with the so-called arts of Islam.[137]

Whether or not Levnî aimed at such an Islamizing effect extensive ornamentation in the form of *horror vacui* promotes the aesthetics of the carpet. As I have already noted, Ananth suggests that the profusion of floral and vegetal motifs in the "Islamic" tradition of miniature painting reflects the decorative aesthetics of the carpet (1996, 157). The carpet, he argues, is the example of ornamentation "on a resolutely flat surface, and this is reflected in turn in the miniature painter's treatment of the picture support as something opaque, impermeable" (157). Similarly, the wall

[136] See Chapter 6 for a discussion of a miniature painting by Ahmed Nakşi.

[137] Most of the art historians working on the so-called arts of Islam, such as Richard Ettinghausen, have put forth an Orientalist understanding of the practice of extensive ornamentation by relating it to socio-cultural aspects of the "Islamic" cultures. Ettinghausen (1979) offers three explanations for the motivation of *horror vacui* in Islamic art and architecture. Firstly, he suggests a connection between crowded living conditions in Near Eastern cities and an artistic taste for density, arguing that living in close quarters increased the individual's sense of security, provided that he lived in a harmonious and well-organized setting. Since the outskirts of the cities were considered dangerous, he contends, closeness was associated with pleasantness, while emptiness bore the opposite connotations. Second, he suggests the impact of richly planted gardens on the minds of the people, proposing an indirect effect of abundant vegetation on taste and aesthetic attitudes. Third, he mentions a general tendency in the Islamic world toward exaggeration, be it in language or social behavior. For a critique of the relation between Orientalist discourse and art-historical inquiry regarding Islamic ornament, see Necipoğlu (1995), especially Chapter 4 and 5.

and carpet patterns in the portrait seek to reclaim the miniature surface as an opaque entity that is strictly two-dimensional.

Rendered in this way, the ornamentation seems to leave no space for the illusion of depth. However, the imperial throne can be seen as an aperture that pierces the miniature. Because it is diagonally placed, the throne can show the sultan in a three-quarter view and provide an effect of depth. Although the throne is drawn in recessing lines that ostensibly would enhance the three-dimensionality of the miniature's composition—especially its arm side—it is devoid of volume because of the application of the decorative surfaces. As such, the throne appears not so much as a golden attribute of a powerful sultan but rather as a cutout chair that has been pasted on the flat, ornamented pictorial space. Moreover, the combinations of floral patterns covering the three parts of the throne—its side, back, and upper parts—appear as if they have been taken from different surfaces and pasted on the throne independently of each other, without consideration of color or harmony of pattern. Although these randomly assembled pattern-surfaces visibly enrich the symbolic seat of the empire, they also cause it to look like a patchwork caricature of an imperial throne. They do so by imposing flatness on the object they decorate.

Corresponding to carpet patterns, the ornaments covering both sides of the throne are depicted frontally. They directly face the viewer, who always sees these detailed motifs from the same angle, as if the throne keeps moving within the image only to expose itself to the viewer from one side. In the portrait of the sultan, the two sides of the throne as a three-dimensional object are shown frontally, even though the throne was drawn with a certain concern for perspective, as suggested by the diagonal arm-side. That is to say, the contours of the throne imply the object's three-dimensionality by means of recessing lines, while the ornaments covering the sides, because of their frontal depiction, refute such recessive gestures. Here the viewer is faced with the resistance of the ornament and the ornamental surface to three-dimensionality and the illusion of depth.

It is in such a plane of pure lines and colors of geometrical tiles, floral patterns, and floating tendrils that we encounter the flat-as-paper face of the sultan. He is wrapped in these ornamental forms that actually push him toward the viewer, as if he were protruding out of the picture plane. The effect provided by the ubiquitous ornamentation is akin to what might be called "reverse depth," a strategy

of modernist collage technique that, as elaborated by Clement Greenberg, was used to signify depth within the painting's shallow surface.[138]

Greenberg refers to abstract expressionism and also, and more specifically, to the cubist collages by Picasso and Braque. However, there is a certain similarity that should not be overlooked between the formal concerns of cubist images and the portrait of the sultan. What makes the comparison illuminating is the reclaiming of the surface of the pictorial material and the continuous play with the illusion of depth to reintroduce flatness as a form of expression. In his essay "Collage" (1959), Greenberg discusses the ways in which Picasso and Braque dealt with the flatness of the canvas and created the illusion of depth by affixing paper or pieces of cloth, which provided an illusion of depth in reverse. He argues that in such a strategy, there is a literal building-out from the picture plane, rather than an illusionist recession beyond it, that secures "the effect of depths and volumes by bringing this or that part of the picture physically close to the eye, as in bas-relief" (Joselit, 2000:21).

In a similar manner, the flat surface of the ornamentation, which actually resembles a pasted-paper assemblage, as I mentioned in relation to the throne, brings the sultan close to the viewer's eyes. In fact, the whole miniature seems like a collage of different patterns and parts affixed on top of one another. This pseudo-layered formation—the geometrical and floral patterns / the prince / the throne / the sultan—brings the sultan within the viewer's reach. His restless right arm and the skirt of his caftan, which opens up in layered folds, strengthen this effect of protrusion. Such an illusionistic push extends the picture plane forwards. In this respect, the miniature reaches out to the viewer's side to violate the distance between the two. Momentarily, the figure of the sultan acts upon the viewer and attacks her eyes—only to regress back to the flatness of the throne, to which it is symbiotically attached.

This closeness of the sultan resonates with Ireopoğlu's arguments about the innovative approach employed in Levnî's portraits:

[138] Comparing Braque's or Picasso's cubist collages with an eighteenth-century Ottoman miniature might sound absurd, yet I find the comparison plausible since it helps us to problematize notions of flatness and depth through their struggles with the picture plane. Greenberg himself also made comparable connections between Byzantine and Modern art in an article entitled "Byzantine Parallels" (1961). Laura U. Marks (2007) argues that the two major elements of Western modernism, the haptic image and the abstract line, arrived in the West in considerable part through the influence of Islamic art. For a similar cross-cultural examination of ornamentation and abstraction, see Bruderlin (2001).

> The relaxed way in which the artist has tackled his subjects [….] clearly demarcates Levnî from previous Ottoman royal portrait painters. This is the first time that the concept of "exalted ruler," one of the primary qualities of the sultans whose superiority of status was unquestionable, had been viewed at closer quarters, giving the impression that the distance between subject and sovereign was not so insuperable after all. (2000: 382)

Yet, as I will argue later, the illusion of closeness of the sultan operates in such a way that ultimately secures his incommensurable distance from the viewer. This process, again, is achieved by the extensive ornamental patterns covering the sultan, which ensnare him within them as if he were caught in a spider's web. In contrast to the portrait from the *Genealogy*, in which the sultan is placed firmly *inside* the picture plane, here he is trapped on the surface of the miniature portrait. This entrapment of the sultan could be seen as a failure if the function of a "successful" portrait is taken to be the display of the inner world of the sitter to its viewers. The miniature offers a contrary view, in which the portrayed is impersonalized so as to maintain the idea of the "exalted ruler." The clash between these two discourses about portraiture as it has been manifested in Ottoman visual culture is addressed in Orhan Pamuk's novel *My Name is Red*.

The Truth of the Portrait

Pamuk's novel *My Name is Red* (1999) focuses on the tension between "Eastern" and "Western" visual regimes under the guise of a tale of love and murder that unfolds over nine days in sixteenth-century Ottoman Constantinople. The clash between traditional miniature painting and Renaissance easel painting (the characters refer to it as Frankish painting, using the Ottoman term for the West) materializes when the sultan orders a book to be illustrated in the Frankish style, which would then be given to the Venetian Doge to arouse awe and the desire for friendship. This book would include the sultan's portrait as well as other images: Satan, a tree, a dog, and a horse. While the implications of perspectival drawing dominate discussion among the miniaturists, the main knot of the novel concerns the genre of portraiture.[139]

[139] For a comprehensive visual analysis of *My Name is Red*, see two articles by Çiçekoğlu (2003a; 2003b).

The idea of the gift-book comes by way of *Enishte* (Uncle), an ambassador of the sultan who had stood in front of thousands of portraits in *palazzi*, churches, and the houses of prosperous men in Venice. Each portrait he had seen, he contends, "was different from the next"; they all "were distinctive, unique human faces," announcing the portrayed subject's "existence, nay, their individuality and distinction" (130). In Venetian paintings, eyes are not holes in a face but are "just like our own eyes, which reflect light like a mirror and absorb it like a well"; lips are not "a crack in the middle of faces flat as a paper" but "fully express [....] our joys, sorrows, and spirits with their slightest contraction and relaxation"; noses are not "a kind of wall that divides our faces, but rather, living and curious instruments with a form unique to each of us," observes Enishte in a mixture of praise and complaint (137).

The idea of capturing the sitter's unique individuality as the Frankish painters do becomes an obsession for Olive, the most talented miniaturist under the tutelage of Master Nakkash Osman. He passionately tries to make a convincing self-portrait that would show every mark on his face. It would depict "all of the wrinkles, shadows, moles and boils, every detail," from his whiskers to the weave of his clothes, and would show "all their colors in all their shades [….] down to the minutest details as much as the skills of Frankish painters would allow" (485). Even though he manages to put his portrait in the center of the last painting of the book, in the place where the sultan should have been, he confesses that all his attempts, ultimately lacking a good resemblance, were monuments to his failures. He can never depict his face as he sees it in the mirror, and therefore fails to assert his unique personality and his painterly style that would set him apart both as a distinguished individual and a successful artist.

Within the story of *My Name is Red*, the institutional resistance of the court atelier to realist representation is voiced by different characters as blasphemy, a renunciation of the vision of Allah which the miniaturist is supposed to pursue.[140] The Venetian masters "depict what the eye sees just as the eye sees it" (206), whereas the humble miniaturist, in painting what he looks at, attempts to depict what Allah envisions and desires. Implicitly and explicitly criticizing observational

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[140] For a detailed discussion on the ban of figurative representation in Islam and the ways in which it was imposed and was broken in different periods, see Ipşiroğlu (2005).

realism in painting, the characters frequently invoke the Islamic canon of miniature paintings painted by masters, such as Bihzad, who had been able to represent the world conceptually. Throughout the book the tension between the visual regimes remains unresolved. Yet the inevitability of change over stasis of tradition is implied by Enishte, who prophetically says "your stars, your ghostlike cypresses, your red-tinted pictures of love and death, yours and all the rest, all of it will vanish" (209). "One day everyone will paint as they do": "when painting is mentioned, the world will think of their work!" since there is an "undeniable allure to the paintings they make" (206). He hints at people's irresistible desire to have themselves portrayed realistically; one eventually comes to realize that "you too would want to see yourself this way, you'd want to believe that you are different from all others, a unique, special, particular human being": "the only way to have one's face immortalized is through the Frankish style" (206).

In the end, the fictional book within Pamuk's novel is never completed and presented to the sultan. In reality, however, many Ottoman sultans had their portraits done by "*Frenk*" artists since the reign of Mehmet II, which could be called the initial formative period of Ottoman miniature painting. In fact, it is difficult to assert that such a divisive institutional clash between visual regimes ever took place in the courtly ateliers. Almost a century later, Murat III (r.1574–1595), the sultan of the period in which Pamuk's novel is set, also had the chance to see his Frankish-style portrait, which was attributed to Paolo Veronese. These portraits were acquired just before the *Şemailname* of Nakkash Osman, which later become the canon in imperial portraiture, was finished. In the prologue of the book, it is stated that the portraits of the earlier sultans from the Veronese series—to which the miniaturist had no visual access—served as inspiration for the miniature portraits made by Nakkash Osman. However, Osman did not "copy" the artistry and style of the "Veronese" series. Rather, he used them as lifelike models to sketch out the physiognomy of the sultans for his portrait series.

Surprisingly, Verenose relied on another series, one made by Paolo Giovio that was heavily depended on an earlier Ottoman model. The Ottoman series that inspired Giovio was produced by an artist who stood outside the mainstream and incorporated European influences into his idiosyncratic style (Raby, 2000: 136). This complicated interaction between Eastern and Western visual cultures shows the difficulty of pinning down an authentic cultural separation between the two. Even

though this particular case is exceptional, such an example might suggest that the clash between the two visual regimes were smoother than Pamuk suggested in *My Name is Red*, at least for the formative periods of Ottoman miniature painting.

Like many of his predecessors, the sultan Ahmed III had probably seen the portrait on canvas of him that was painted by the European painter Jean-Baptiste Vanmour, who made several portraits of the sultan while in Constantinople. A clash between "Eastern" and "Western" visual regimes of the sort suggested by *My Name is Red*, if it in fact existed, should clearly be seen in works of Vanmour and Levnî, who slightly revised the rules of imperial portraiture set by Nakkash Osman. In 2004, the works of these two contemporaneous artists—including several portraits of Ahmed III—were brought together for the first time in an exhibition entitled *Lale Devrine İki Özgün Bakış: Levnî & Vanmour* (Two Genuine Views of the Tulip Period: Levnî & Vanmour), held in the Topkapı Palace Museum Treasury Ward in Istanbul.[141] The title of the exhibition already implied that the artists had different if not unique "perspectives," and visitors were persuaded of differences between them not only through the title but also through the organization of the exhibition.

While the paintings of Vanmour were hung on the walls, as they were intended to be displayed, the miniatures of Levnî were put on tables with vitrines so that the viewer had to lean on the tables to see them (Figure 25).

Figure 25. Snapshot from the exhibition "Lale Devrine Iki Özgün Bakıs: Levnî & Vanmour." Reproduced from http://www.yapitr.com/turkce/haber_detay.asp?NewsID=8140.

[141] The exhibition was a continuation of the exhibition "The Ambassador, the Sultan & the Artist" held at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (4 July–26 October 2003), but with Levnî's paintings added.

Despite the physical interruptions within the exhibition—the viewer constantly had to move up and down between works by Vanmour and Levnî—one could grasp thematic continuities between the works. It seems that both artists were interested in life in the seraglio and the everyday life of ordinary people in Istanbul. Furthermore, both artists mostly chose portraiture as their means of expression. However, the discourse of clash was sustained within the art-historical presentation of their works. The exhibition catalogue (which surprisingly fails to include the miniatures of Levnî) *An Eyewitness of the Tulip Era: Jean-Baptiste Vanmour* (2003) frames the paintings as documenting in a realistic style one of the most significant periods in Ottoman civilization and culture. As implied, the eyewitness, Vanmour, objectively painted what he had seen in Constantinople; this now enables us to witness a distinguished period through his eyes.

In contrast, the portraits of Levnî, most of which were in the exhibition, were considered to depict fictional characters rather than refer to real people (Ireopoğlu, 1999: 168). Yet Ireopoğlu argues that these portraits are "still" valuable since they give the contemporary viewer enough tips about how the Ottoman people of the eighteenth century used to dress; their clothes were determined by different ethnic, religious, or professional backgrounds.[142]

Such a framing of the paintings brings us back to the discussion about representation evoked in *My Name is Red*. Are the paintings of Vanmour more realistic than the miniatures of Levnî, and is this what makes them so different from each other? Are Vanmour's portraits more successful than Levnî's in terms of capturing the "truth" of their sitters? Do they reveal "unique" personalities (Figure 26 and 21)?

[142] Yet the discourse of realism is not totally discarded, especially as the miniatures of *Surname-i Vehbi*, also on display in the exhibition, were considered images that realistically documented the festival. See, for example, Esin Atil (1999).

Figure 26. Sultan Ahmed III, Jean Baptiste Vanmour, 1703, oil on canvas, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 33.5x26.5.

Let me turn back to the portrait of the sultan once again in light of the problematic invoked by *My Name is Red* and the exhibition. Even though my aim is not to compare the sultan portraits by Vanmour and Levnî as different modes of representation, I would like to look at the Levnî portrait through the Vanmour painting to open up a discussion of the miniature's "success" as a portrait. There is hardly any need to mention differing uses of color, light, and shading, or the application of paint in the two works. Beyond such formal differences, there is something else in the miniature that resists imparting the enticement offered by the painting. Although it contains attractive ornamentation, the miniature hides itself from being seen clearly. If the portrait as a genre aspires to present the sitter in his or her absence, to make an invisible person visible to the beholder, then the miniature refrains from that aspiration. Rather, it screens the sultan.

By so doing, the miniature hinders the viewer's potential experience of a sultan's magnificence, an impression that might be imparted by Vanmour's painting. In the miniature there is too much to look at; whereas in a more grandiose representation, the sultan should be the only figure for the viewer to concentrate on. Moreover, wherever the viewer looks, she ends up on the surface of the image, unable to see through its flatness. She is seduced to "see in" yet is distracted by the ornaments covering the image, which trap her as much as they do the sultan in the image. This feeling of entrapment—more than the feeling of amazement that one

would experience when seeing the sultan through "the eyes of the eyewitness"—pulls the viewer toward the miniature.

Does such entrapment of the sultan alter the viewer's expected relation to the image, given that we are dealing with portraiture, one of painting's established genres? In the introduction to *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (1997), Joanna Woodall writes that "[t]he desire which lies at the heart of naturalistic portraiture," is to overcome separation: "to render a subject distant in time, space, spirit, eternally present" (1997: 8). It is assumed that "a 'good' likeness will perpetually unite the identities to which it refers" (8). After quoting Aristotle and Alberti on portraiture and their judgments about the nature of a successful good portrait, Woodall concludes that traditionally in Western art discourse, portraiture was based on exact resemblance and ideal likeness. In this conception, features poetically refer to the inner subjectivity of the portrayed (16–17). Similarly, Ernst van Alphen opens his chapter on the dispersal of portrait by stating that in Western culture, "the portrait is highly esteemed as a genre because, according to the standard view, in a successful portrait the viewer is confronted not only with the 'original,' 'unique' subjectivity of the portrayer but also with that of the portrayed" (2005: 21). Therefore, he argues, the traditional portrait gives authority not only to the portrayed but also to the work of the artist as mimetic representation.[143]

Leaving aside the originality of Levnî, I question whether the portrait of Ahmed III captures his "essence" as the subject of the painting in a way that the miniaturists of *My Name is Red* both desired and abstained from to avoid blasphemy. If we pursue Irepoğlu's line of argument, this portrait reflects the physical and psychological traits of Ahmed III in a way incompatible with traditional Ottoman royal portraiture—for it presents him, with his "dark and thick beard," as "handsome and elegant." This elegant representation seizes "his fine and pleasure loving personality and sophistication"(1999: 108). In her discussion, Irepoğlu relies on the eyewitness accounts of Lady Wortley Montagu and Venetian ambassador Angelo Emo, as well as the writings of Ottoman royal historians such as Rashid, to make us believe that Ahmed III really looked as Levnî depicted him. Moreover, she points out the facial similarities between Vanmour's paintings and the miniature portrait so as

[143] It is worth mentioning that both Woodall and van Alphen are critical of the "traditional" Western understanding of portraiture. Both expand their discussions to take on this canonical view by concentrating on the moments when this tradition was shattered in Western art.

to strengthen her textual references. By putting forward such visual and textual "evidence" for the lifelikeness of Levnî's portrait, Irepoğlu falls into a double discourse of realism: she first asserts the direct correspondence between images and "reality," refuting the work of representation; then, with such authority being given to the images, she rectifies the miniature's (presumed) claim for verisimilitude.

Irepoğlu's trust in Levnî's success in capturing Ahmed III's personality stems from the alleged continuity and unity between the signified and the signifier, so that the artist represents the object she perceives and the viewer of the work thus has direct access to the represented object. Even if one assumes that "it might be possible for the painter to know that his image corresponds to his original perception or intention," as Norman Bryson argues, "no such knowledge is available to the viewer": she can "only see what the painter has set down on canvas" (1983: 39). If the viewer has only the image to see, the achievement of likeness, asserting the success of the portrait, falls flat. Therefore, I contend that the uniqueness of the subject portrayed is established not by means of mimetic resemblance between the sitter and the portrait but is rather an effect of the relation between the viewer and the image.[144] What makes the portrait of the sultan *not* successful according to the standard view mentioned above is the viewer's confrontation with the image, because this confrontation challenges her expectations.

Moreover, if the "successful" portrait captures the essence of the subject represented, it manages to do so only by turning the portrayed subject into an object that the viewer can appropriate on her own terms. In such a formulation, the relation of the viewer to the image is inherently intrusive and possessive. However, in the case of Levnî's portrait of Ahmed III, the viewer's expectation of seeing through the image—seeing, that is, the essence of the portrayed subject—is first interrupted and then cancelled out. At first sight, everything seems as "normal" as one could expect from a portrait: the figure has the "recognizable" eyes, nose, and lips that would make up a realistically depicted face, even if the proportions of the body are distorted (the hands are too big compared to the feet, a mistake which is corrected in the *Genealogical* portrait). No doubt, the sultan's lips are a crack in the middle of his

[144] Closely related to the discussion of "uniqueness" in portraiture is the notion of authority. Thinking along similar lines as I do here, van Alphen states that the authority of the portrayed is not so much the object of portrayal but its effect. That is, the experience of the viewer in front of a portrait is chronologically reversed: seeing the portrait the viewer presumes that the person portrayed was important, and then that person is bestowed with authority as an individual (2005: 22).

flat-as-paper face, and his nose is a kind of wall that divides his face—we recall the miniaturist's complaint in *My Name is Red*.

However, this figure might still make the viewer follow Irepoğlu's suggestion that Ahmed III really looked as Levnî depicted him. His beard, his jeweled headgear, and his costume make us believe that we are looking at no ordinary man but a sultan. In this sense, one cannot deny the work of mimetic representation. Yet this representation does not work on the basis of reference to a real individual. The face of the figure works mimetically because the image fails to convey the discourse of realism. The failure to construct a three-dimensional space, the absence of depth, the unrealistic proportions of the prince, the impossible positioning of the throne, the anatomically incorrect body of the sultan: these qualities refute the rhetoric of realist representation in the miniature. Surrounded by such "signs of the unreal," the face appears as a site for resemblance. However, this face is impenetrable: it is like a mask that does not reveal the inside, does not give access to the soul of the sultan. There is no way for the viewer to pierce the image, to break into the face to discover the uniqueness of the sultan's personality. The viewer's gaze is suspended on the surface of the image at the level of its ornamentation, which reduces everything seen in the miniature to its flatness.

If this flattened surface, constructed and secured by the ornamentation within the miniature, absorbs the sultan (even if he tries to escape here and there), one should wonder about the "other side" of the image: what happens to the viewer's experience of the image? Can she save herself from the trap set by the ornament? My answer would be no. The viewer's act of looking at the sultan's portrait will be suspended within the "domain of looking," between distance and closeness, seduction and distraction. As I will argue in the next chapter, miniature painting asks for the physical closeness of the viewer primarily because of its size, which, in contrast to the spatial distance required by easel painting, forces the viewer to lean over the image so as to see it clearly. I also argued, in the first chapter, that such closeness is required of the viewer where pictorial details drag her into the painting. Continuing the same line of thought, I now suggest that the flatness of miniatures brings a new dimension to the viewer's relation to the image, namely that of the imposed psychological distance that severs the viewer from the miniature, hence in this case from the sultan. As a result, the latter becomes even more unreachable.

The Auratic Shield

The ornamentation in the miniature challenges the viewer's desire to see into the image so as to capture and possess the "essence" of the portrayed while the expectation of depth is left unsatisfied. The viewer's gaze is dispersed over the portrait's surface; tiny details of the miniature's ornamental surfaces ask the viewer to come near and force her to direct her eyes to particular points. Such oscillation between closeness and distance, concentration and dispersal introduces a relation between the viewer and the image, which I would like to call "auratic," following Walter Benjamin and his famous concept of aura.

As is well known, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1937), Benjamin provides his most extensive discussion of the concept. He sets off from the first argument that aura is a "unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be" (1969a: 222). In later writings such as "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939), the notion of distance becomes one of the defining components of the concept of aura, the "unique manifestation of distance" (1969b: 188). Benjamin equates aura with the distance of the viewer as a particular way of looking at the object that makes the image inapproachable. The experience of aura, writes Benjamin, "rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man" (1969 b: 188). Therefore, aura is not inherent to the artwork, but rather it is experienced in relation to the artwork; it is a particular form of relation of the viewer to the artwork. This distance cannot be superseded even if the viewer is pulled into the work by means of her familiarity with the subject matter:

> The essentially distant object is the unapproachable one. Unapproachability is indeed a major quality of the cult image. True to its nature, it remains "distant, however close it may be." The closeness which one may gain from its subject matter does not impair the distance which it retains in its appearance. (1969 a: 243)

In this respect, even though the miniature may appear to be close because of its subject matter, its appearance—constituted by excessive ornamentation and unbridgeable flatness—maintains its distance. In contrast to distance, closeness

implies “not only the triumph of the subject’s frame of reference over that of the external image [….] but also his or her assimilation of the image” (Silverman, 1996: 97). In this respect, closeness is a possessive relationship. It implies getting hold of the image as an object: a process which, as I have argued, is discouraged by the portrait of the sultan.

Such warding off the viewer accords with Necipoğlu’s argument that the Ottoman sultan differs from his contemporaries by his incompatible invisibility and overemphasized power of gazing. In “Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces” (1993), Necipoğlu discusses the differences between the visual economies of Persian, Ottoman, and Mughal dynasties as manifested in the construction of imperial architecture. In a semiotic analysis of the structure of the Topkapi Seraglio as the seat of the Ottoman Empire, she argues that the Ottoman sultan was made invisible to his vassals, but he “could survey his capital and view public spectacles without himself being seen. This one-sided viewing could be exercised by sitting behind a grilled window” above the entrance arch of the first gate leading into the first court, known as the Court of Processions (304).[145]

Within the seraglio, the sultan was almost invisible as well. He could, for example, gaze inside the public council hall (*Divan-i Humayun*) from behind a grilled window opening in the tower. From this vantage point he could watch legal proceedings and banquets for ambassadors without himself being seen. Considering such examples, Necipoğlu contends that

> [T]he spectacular silhouette that the Topkapi projected to the world could only be perceived from a distance [….] The ruler’s gaze, architecturally framed by grilled windows, view-commanding private kiosks, and belvedere towers, signifying his power to see without being seen (or to be seen only as a shadowy silhouette), accentuated the unbridgeable distance between the ruler and the ruled. (305)

[145] Filiz Yenişehirlioğlu (2000) observes a direct relationship between Ottoman art and palace ideology and argues that Istanbul has to be credited for the creation of stately and royal images in art and architecture. Moreover, she discusses how ordinary citizens regarded these creations and how certain forms of art and architecture were transmitted from the capital to the provinces. For a similar discussion on the transmission of the use of windows and window glass in imperial architecture to provinces, see Bakirer (2001).

Similarly, private meetings with the sultan within the seraglio were obscured. The façade of the private reception hall, which represented the monarch's absolute authority, was covered by a large ceremonial window with gilded iron grilles. This window allowed official visitors a preview of the sultan enthroned in majesty, framed by the window like an icon (305). Therefore, it is plausible to argue that encounters with the Ottoman sultan were based on the ruler's semi-invisibility, veiled as he was by means of grilled windows or doors. The viewer could see him only as a silhouette and at some distance; he was always situated behind a screening frame that impeded the possibility of mutual gazing. The sultan was inapproachable in a way similar to the way in which the sultan's portrait imposes on the viewer. Although the portrait makes the sultan fully visible—it even pushes him close to the viewer—the viewer's gaze cannot reach him: it is always deterred and deferred.[146]

However, in the early eighteenth century the secluded image of the sultan delivered by the structure of the Topkapi seraglio is transformed into a more accessible royal image. According to Tülay Artan, during the age of Sultan Ahmed III (1703-30) "the role and image of the sultan changed as his image as a horseback leader in war faded" (quoted in Peker, 2002: 148). His authority was declared and consolidated by the erection of new waterside palaces and ceremonies attached to their use. Peker suggest that "the banks of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn had never before witnessed such magnificent and elaborate activities around the royal residence, and the transparency of the '*yali*' (waterside houses) exposed once isolated lives to full public view from the water" (2003: 148). This transformation of Ottoman court ceremonial, marked by the construction of display-oriented monumental palaces, was inspired by French models. Shore palaces set in public parks gave way by the nineteenth century to even more openly Europeanizing palaces no longer hidden behind forbidding walls, and finally to the total abandonment of the Topkapi together with the antiquated political order it represented (Necipoğlu, 1993: 306).

In this sense, in the reign of Sultan Ahmed III the invisible image of the "oriental despot" is replaced by a novel "presencing effect" in which the sultan

[146] Mutuality of looks is impossible in the miniature since the sultan has no eye contact with the viewer. He is not even shying away from the viewer. He is indifferent to any outsider's gaze; he is absorbed in himself, a state that closes the painting off before the eyes of the beholder.

purported a relatively transparent image (Marin, 1988).[147] The miniature portrait, however, refutes such unobstructed visibility of the Sultan. This discrepancy points up the miniature's attempt to reinforce the conventional image of the unapproachable Ottoman ruler. In this capacity**,** the miniature is successful as a "portrait of *the sultan*." It does not represent an individual—Ahmed III—but presents the sultan, conceptually, as an image. The viewer is not provided with *a* sultan, but with the meaning of *sultan-ness*. If one can talk about the intention of an image, then the miniature is successful: it "intends" not to be a portrait like the *Genealogy* portrait, but an idea or an event that affects its viewer precisely by keeping her outside, at a distance.[148]

In the fifth protocol of the "Protocols to the Experiments on Hashish, Opium and Mescaline," Benjamin writes that the distinguishing feature of the genuine aura is "the ornament, an ornamental periphery [*Umzirkung*] in which the thing or being lies fixed, as if confined in a sheath." If we take his definition literally, then the sultan in the portrait is indeed surrounded with such ornamental periphery; he is confined in a *sheath* that secures him from the intrusion of the viewer, just as the Topkapi Palace's grilled windows did. The ornamentation in the miniature scatters the viewer's look on the surface of the image, where there is hardly a place for her eyes to rest.

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147 The image of the Ottoman sultan can be contrasted to the spectacular image his (almost) contemporary Loius XIV of France. Necipoğlu notes that according to Peter Burke, Louis XIV, in his memoirs, contrasts the French style of monarchy with the style of nations where "the majesty of kings largely consists in not allowing themselves to be seen." In addition to the Spanish monarch, as Burke suggests, this statement may also allude to the Ottoman sultan whose rule French writers of the time had come to regard as the epitome of Oriental despotism. Many of them contrasted the sultan's awe-inspiring invisibility with the public accessibility of the French king who wanted to be loved by his subjects, a topos that links hiddenness with despotism." (1993: 306). In *Portrait of the King* (1981), Louis Marin discusses the semiotics of power in the verbal and visual representations of the absolutist monarchy of Louis XIV by relying on Ernst H. Kantorowicz's discussion of the medieval doctrine of the "king's two bodies" (1957). I will not expand on the Ottoman political discourse in the early eighteenth century, at the time when court ceremonial was being transformed—which has not yet been studied—as the discussion exceeds the limits of this study.

148 Here the difference between the functions of the miniature portrait and the portrait on canvas should be retained. The miniature was designated to be seen by one person at a time (that is by the sultan and his family). The canvas, on the contrary, exerts its power by its collective visibility. Yet, this does not mean that it had public visibility as it was, most probably, kept in the Palace treasury. In the nineteenth century, imperial portraits gained public visibility especially under the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839) who has ordered to have his portraits to be hung on the walls of diverse imperial institutions. He "is said to have gone as far as minting coins with his engraved portrait" (Renda, 2000: 449).

It is in this sense that the portrait of the sultan succeeds in achieving its intention to present the idea of sultan-ness. The auratic shield does not actually reveal the sultan. It reminds the viewer that she is looking at a sultan who cannot be "seen." In this way, the portrait manages to maintain the invisibility of the sultan, as was the case in the miniature series of the sultan's procession, discussed in the first chapter. Therefore, the ornamentation takes on the imperial function of screening the sultan from his vassals' gaze in a way that is similar to the manner in which the palace's windows and doors obscured him.

In the following chapter, I focus on another notion, namely the "miniature," which like the ornamental has been traditionally associated with the feminine. Following a discussion of the symbiotic relationship between the book and miniature painting, I dwell on the ways in which size might matter in relation to painting. Through a discussion of the seventeenth-century miniature representing King Timur's battle in Mazandaran, I will argue that the "normal" size of the modern tableau-window follows the dimension and erect orientation of the human body. The miniature, on the contrary, follows the dimensions of the book in correspondence to the hand. Consequently, it follows a horizontal orientation that encourages the viewer to position herself accordingly. Moreover I propose that the Timur miniature provides us with a miniaturized representational time and space. Lastly, keeping in line my discussion of the small, I focus on an invisible detail in the miniature and assert that it functions on a different level than does the representational detail (discussed in Chapter 1). This absent detail operates as what Georges Didi-Huberman called the "symptom" which brings forth another state of painting.