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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 5: The Miniature, The Horizontal, and The Symptom

> […] once a viewer is caught, he wanders within the miniature trying to understand how it works and what is in it, so as almost to forget that he is holding a book.
> Oleg Grabar, "Toward an Aesthetic of Persian Painting," 139.

The Ottomans hid their paintings in books, displaying them on thin pages among elegant calligraphic texts. For centuries they refrained from exhibiting images but instead kept them concealed within in the intimate space of a book, where only the reader would find them. This chapter aims to bring about a fresh insight about miniature paintings by focusing on the material aspects of the medium of the book. I concentrate on the scale, dimension, and physical orientation of miniatures as conditioned by their placement in books so as to disentangle their implications for the process of reading. The repercussions of such material aspects of the tradition of miniature painting have so far been overlooked. I propose that this deficiency might be overcome by engaging with modern art theories that deal with the relationship between materiality and perception, albeit in different media from the book.

Writing about the recent fascination with sublime proportions in contemporary art (as in Vito Acconci's and Damien Hirst's works), Susan Buck-Morss acknowledges that size is "a formal characteristic that has nothing to do with the art's content" (2004: 5). However, her discussion reminds us that while monumentalization has enjoyed its critical function of challenging the viewer's customary notions regarding scale in modern art, miniaturization has hardly been considered to have such potential. Drawing on the theoretical framework provided by Gaston Bachelard (1958), Susan Stewart (2001), and Ralph Rugoff (1997), I claim for "minute objects" an equally subversive potential through my discussion of a miniature painting depicting the campaign of King Timur (Tamerlane) against Sultan Husayn, taken from the seventeenth-century book *Rawdat al-Safa*. I contrast Eastern and Western ideas about miniaturization and consider the notion of the tableau as that which has set the normative scale for painting.

The directionality of my reading of the Timur miniature, which is analogous to that of reading a book, brings about a problem concerning the orientation of the

viewing process. The mode of reading encouraged by the miniature is significantly different from the viewing trajectory promoted by the tableau and wall painting, which follows the vertical orientation of the human body. Following critiques offered by Walter Benjamin (1928), Leo Steinberg (1972), and Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois (1997) of verticality as well as their arguments concerning the horizontal image in modernism, I argue that the miniature suggests a total horizontalization of the viewing process that affects the viewer's body as much as her intellect.

Similarly, Rugoff argues that the miniature scale draws the viewer mentally and physically closer to the image (1997:14). In the Timur miniature, at the juncture of miniaturization and horizontalization, an invisible "object," a detail in the center, takes over the image. As I have argued in Chapter 1, attentiveness to details in the process of looking can bring forth unanticipated readings. Accordingly, I suggest that the invisible detail offers a narrative reading by operating as a device for what has been conceptualized as a "pregnant moment"—which opens up to a future-to-come that cannot be incorporated within the miniature. Moreover, it functions as a symptom, as Georges Didi-Huberman called it, that indicates a passage to "another state of painting."

Opening the Book

Rawdat al-Safa, written by Mirkwand (d. 1489), is a general history book divided into seven volumes, the first of which contains the history of patriarchs, prophets, and the pre-Muslim kings of Iran. The sixth volume in question, covering the period of the reigns of Timur and his successors, goes up to 1469. It is dated 1008 in the *Hijri* (Islamic, lunar) calendar, which corresponds to 1599–1600 in the Gregorian calendar. The volume consists of 412 folios of 36.5 to 22.3 cm in size and includes eleven miniatures by an unknown miniaturist.[149] In her article titled "A Copy of the Rawzat al-Safa with Turkish Miniatures" (1969), G.M. Meredith-Owens writes that even though the use of color in the copy is reminiscent of Persian techniques, "the vigorous and exuberant layout of each composition, the shortening of the forequarters of some of the horses, the frequent use of profile and full face, and the

[149] The manuscript is written in Persian with section headings in blue and gold. It contains Turkish glosses, probably inserted later, in red.

Turkic racial types which are displayed with a great skill in characterization" indicate the Turkish origin of the miniaturist (110).[150]

Banu Mahir classifies the book as an example of provincial style, which was developed under the patronage of state officials in outlying Ottoman locales such as Aleppo, Damascus, Cairo, and Baghdad in the second half of the sixteenth century (2005: 66).[151]The style of the Baghdad miniatures differs from that of the imperial atelier in Istanbul. According to Milstein, the Baghdad style "combines material elements such as costume, architectural forms and plants from the repertory of Iran and Turkey, with techniques of modelling, perspective and three-dimensional space from Moghul, 'Arab' or even European paintings" that gave birth to a mode that was "less linear, less flat and brilliant in color than Persian and Turkish schools, less close to Europe than the Moghul" (1990: 71).

I have chosen the miniature depicting the campaign of King Timur against Sultan Husayn (Figure 27) because it combines the subject matter and compositional strategies used in the miniatures of the sixth volume.[152] The illustrated series consists mostly of battle scenes, yet there are also several miniatures that depict kings receiving envoys or marching troops en route to battle. The Timur miniature under consideration can be seen as an amalgamation of these three types of miniature subjects.[153]

[150] Norah M. Titley states that the miniatures of the *Rawdat al-Safa* are in a "Persianized Ottoman style" (1981: 60). Rachel Milstein identifies the miniatures, along with 31 other complete manuscripts and 21 detached leaves (1990: 2-3), as belonging to the so-called Baghdad school.

[151] The Ottomans captured Baghdad in 1534 and the city belonged to the Empire, except for short periods, until the establishment of the kingdom of Iraq by the British control in 1921. The commissioners of manuscripts were mostly the Ottoman governors of Baghdad who ordered illustrated manuscripts for their personal use or as gifts for the sultan in Istanbul. The Mawlawi order in the city also commissioned some books. Milstein (1990) stresses the significance of non-royal patronage in enabling the evolution of the Baghdad style free from the formality and stiffness of the court style.

[152] Timur (a.k.a. Timurlane or Timur the lame) is the founder of the Timurid Empire (1370–1405).

[153] Some of the miniatures in *Rawdat al-Safa*, such as "Ulugh Beg dispensing justice in *Khurasan*" (f.346), show events taking place within interiors. In such miniatures, we find elaborated architectural depiction. In the Timur miniature we also find the inclusion of the architectural setting—the fortress above—even though it is not a sophisticated representation.

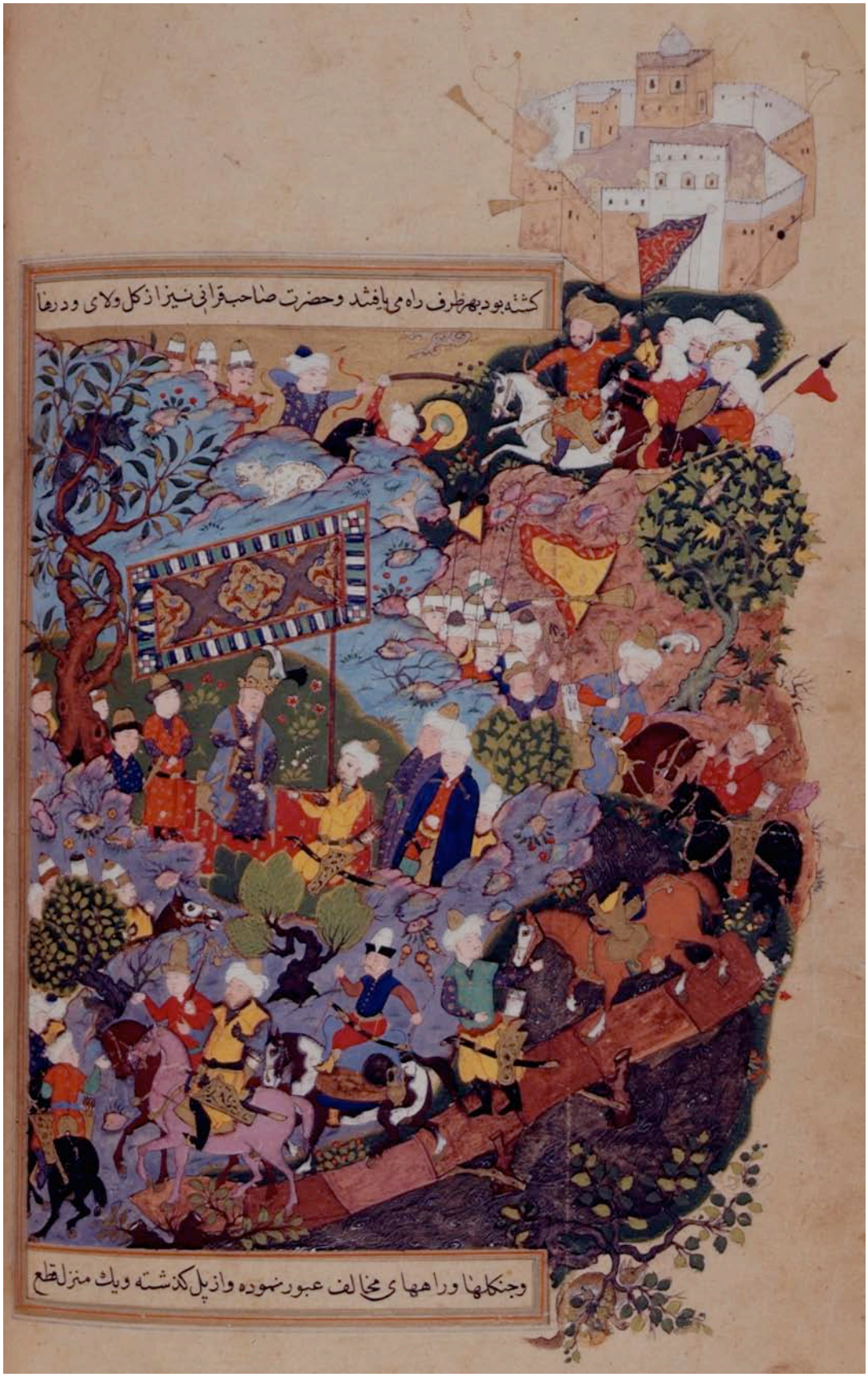

Figure 27. "Timur on his expedition to attack Sultan Husayn," ***Rawdat al-Safa,*** **artist unknown, 1599-1600, British Library, (Or. 5736; f. 232b), 28 x 17.5 cm.**

In the center of the miniature, we see Timur resting in Mazandaran (a Northern province of present-day Iran); in compositional terms, the scene resembles those that show the envoy receiving miniatures.[154] Timur, who can be distinguished by his princely headgear, sits on a transportable throne that has been placed on a red carpet under an ornamented canopy. His servants and warriors accompany him in a grassy field surrounded by a rocky landscape.

Right below the spot where Timur rests his troops wind their way through the mountain defiles toward the meadow. They appear out of a cleavage between blue and pinkish rocky mountains, the compositional structure here showing itself to be quite similar to that of the miniature of Mirza Abu'l-Qasim crossing the ford of Kunduz on the Oxus with his troops (f.368). Some of the soldiers cross a deep river by the bridge, which, according to Meredith-Owens, they must have constructed themselves (1969: 116). Some have already passed the bridge, others are about to reach the river, and still others are passing the bridge either on horseback or on foot. On the upper part of the miniature, above the colorful mountains, the remainder of Timur's army battles their enemies in an attempt to conquer the fortress of Sultan Husayn, which is placed at the top right section of the page.[155] Lacking color, the castle looks unfinished in comparison to the rest of the miniature. If we look carefully, we can see trumpets sticking out of the bastions and the contours of the flags waving on two sides of the fortress. A few soldiers stand atop the walls, one of them playing the trumpet.

The miniature is framed on three sides. On the right, as if to stress the harshness of the mountains and the powerful current of the river painted with silver, the frame is broken open. The opening has allowed the artist to place the castle outside the upper frame, a gesture that has turned the whole page into a picture plane. Within the gilded lines of the image frame, there are two text-boxes, one on the upper and the other on the lower side.[156]

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[154] For example, "Timur receiving *Amir Husayn*'s envoy during his attack on *Balkh*" (f.37v) and "Timur's envoy before Bayazid I" (f.172v).

[155] The battle scene resembles miniatures such as "Battle between Timur's army and the Tartar troops of Tuqtamish Khan" (f. 97), "Battle between the armies of Abu Bakr of Tabriz and Qara Yusuf Qaraqoyunlu" (f.277), and "Battle between Timur and Tuqtamish Khan" (f.122v).

[156] The translation of the upper text reads "[...] those who had been killed, and they would ride in all directions and also the king who had ruled for fifty years would pass through countries and gates." The lower text reads "and woods and opposing paths and pass over a bridge and cross a house [...]" I am grateful to Hossein Khosrowjah, from the Program of Visual and Cultural Studies at the

Like Levnî's procession series discussed in Chapter 3, the *Rawdat al-Safa* miniature is exceedingly crowded. There are human figures (several on horseback), animals, flags, flowers, and, for the careful eye, a whirling Chinese cloud hanging above a yellowish sky. The claustrophobia of the scene has been alleviated by an uneven distribution of the figures, especially near the place where the army marches in spirals.[157] The army proceeds from the middle of the picture toward the right and curls toward the foreground, its soldiers slowly disappearing behind the mountain after they cross the bridge. The spiraling soldiers direct the viewer's eye away from the center and into the foreground, and on from there to the encampment of Timur and his company. If we follow with our eyes the branches of the tree behind Timur, we see, at the top of the miniature, the battle taking place. This curvilinear pattern of looking ultimately ends when our eyes reach the castle—"the house," as it is called in the text.

The army circles around the encampment area located in the center of the picture plane, in which Timur and his servants are singled out as the most important part of the image. Indeed, this is the most static part of the miniature; by contrast, the marching troops and the battle scene suggest continuous motion. Troops in the foreground are busy with their crossing toward the bridge; they carry flags, or play the trumpet, or talk to each other. One soldiers on the bridge pulls his horse by the bridle while three others on horseback are involved in a conversation. In the curvilinear row of soldiers we see a chain reaction. The action of one figure is transported to the next until our eyes reach the encampment area. Though the culminating confrontation has not yet taken place, the battle scene is vivid: at the top right corner, the forces of Sultan Husayn have made a sortie from their fortress. Soldiers from both sides launch arrows. One figure on horseback—his sword drawn, and holding a shield—is about to attack the enemy.

In the midst of such movement, Timur and his company are, exceptionally, at rest (Figure 28). The companions on both sides of Timur stand still so as to offer a gesture of extreme respect. The king, meanwhile, sits on his throne, holding a white handkerchief as a symbol of his sovereignty. Clad in a bright yellow robe, a figure

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University of Rochester, for the translation of the texts.

[157] In the *Surname-i Vehbi* Levnî also uses such a whirling composition of marching troops to fit crowded scenes into the picture plane. See Chapter 3.

carrying arrows and a big sword kneels down in front of Timur. His hands are stretched out toward the king as if he wishes to give something to Timur, who has raised his right arm to receive what the servant has to offer. It is a frozen moment of silence. The arrested gestures of the servant and Timur, showing the patent tension between the two—embodied by their bodies getting closer, stretching out, and the expectation that the servant will pass on what has to be given—make up the focal point of the miniature.

Figure 28. Detail, "Timur on his expedition to attack Sultan Husayn."

Around this focal point, the marching and fighting figures spin as if they were caught up in a whirlpool. Borne along by this current, whose path is emphasized by the pinkish mountain and even more so by the river that spills over and breaks out of the frame, we arrive at the still waters, so to speak. We stare and apprehend the distance between the hands of the two figures where, in fact, nothing happens; there is nothing to *see*. We see the hands of the servant and can presume, from the way his hands are positioned, that he is holding, perhaps, an empty tray.[158] Since Timur holds nothing in his right hand we can assume that the "object" has not been exchanged.[159]

We witness an exchange of multiple looks instead of a swap of goods. The two figures regard each other while the others surrounding them hold their hands on

[158] The brown line seems continuous with the pole that holds the canopy and the contours of the carpet. Yet I think, from the way it is placed in the right hand of the servant, that the line figures an object in its own right that could be identified as a tray.

[159] Throughout the rest of this chapter, when referring to this absence, I will use the term "object" without quotation marks. However, my usage does not mean that I presume that this absence is the absence of a definite object.

their bellies and look at the two from a distance. And finally we, the viewers, our hands on the miniature, move closer and closer to the thin paper in order to see what is going on, and stare at them. Is it because the image is so small that we cannot see what every figure around Timur is gazing at? Is it because this image is a "miniature" that we do not see those details we would have seen in a normal-size painting?

The Miniature and the Tableau

> *Miniature*
>
> n. Something that is a smaller or reduced version of an original, and related senses
> adj. Much smaller than the normal size; tiny; represented, designed, or occurring on a small scale.

"Timur on his expedition to attack Sultan Husayn" or "Timur in Mazandaran" as the miniature is named, is a medium-scale miniature, measuring 28 x 17.5 cm including the fortress on the top of the page.[160] Given its relatively large proportions, it may not even be properly called a miniature, strictly speaking.

Current usage of the term "miniature" stems from a historical etymological confusion. The word is derived from the classical Latin *mini t-*, past participle stem of *mini re*, which means to color or paint with vermilion; to rubricate or (in extended use) to illuminate (a manuscript) (*OED*). In medieval book production, red lead or vermilion was used to mark particular words in manuscripts and to illuminate capitals. As these images were of necessity small, the term came to denote small portraits, a usage probably reinforced by an association in folk etymology with the (ultimately classical Latin) *min-* root expressing smallness (as in *minor*).[161] According to the *OED*, the etymologically mistaken usage of "miniature," connoting a comparison in size, appears only around 1566. I propose that this etymological

[160] Art historian Metin And differentiates three different sizes of miniature paintings. The medium-sized miniatures were the most used ones and their sizes varies from 15x 10 cm to 37 x 23 cm. Those smaller than the medium size would be utilized in case the book they were illustrating was of smaller dimensions than usual size or if it contained too many illustrations—as in the case of encyclopedias—necessitating that the size of the miniatures be smaller (2002: 131).

[161] In the medieval period a manuscript miniature was referred to as historia, and portrait miniatures as "limnings"—from lumine, hence illumination—or simply "pictures in little." For more information, see Grove Art Online. Oxford University Press, http://www.groveart.com.

overlap should be taken neither as a mere coincidence in the "evolution" of language nor a "slip of tongue" but rather should be contemplated in a historical context.

The notion of miniature, as we use it today, is a relative term. Without comparison to an original, nothing can be regarded as a miniature. As Susan Stewart writes, "there are no miniatures in nature; the miniature is a cultural product [….] of an eye performing certain operations, manipulating, and attending in certain ways to, the physical world" (2003: 55). Through this operation of the eye we construct the notion of scale, which according to Stewart "is established by means of a set of correspondences to the familiar" (2003: 46). The miniature arrives as a historical outsider in comparison to the objects we regard as familiar.

It is likely that this confusion runs parallel to the emergence of what can be called the institution of the "tableau" as the standard medium of painting in Europe in the sixteenth century. The tableau designated and secured the art of Painting (with a capital P) and, as I will argue later on, in achieving this, it determined the mode in which the viewer has since encountered the visual field. I use the term tableau following both Hubert Damisch's writings on the differentiation between *peinture* and the tableau and Gérard Wajcman's discussions of the birth of the tableau and of the spectator in his *Fenêtre: Chroniques du regard et de l'intime* (2004). Damish writes that *tableau*, in French, means painting, but it also refers to the *tabula*, the table, something square that is quite different from the English term "picture" or "painting." He writes:

> The French definition is straightforward: a "tableau" is, first of all, an object, a plane, a flat surface of wood or of canvas mounted on a frame, something like a *table*, but one that is placed vertically, at a level and in such a way as to serve as the base for whatever one may wish to inscribe or display on it. A metonym [….] or rather a synecdoche that is the opposite of the one used in English. Where the English puts the emphasis on the object represented (*picture*) and distinguishes clearly between the picture in the active, 'progressive' sense of the term, or *painting*, and the base on which the painting takes place (*canvas, panel, picture plane*), French is not adverse to stressing, right from the beginning, the material aspect of what it calls *tableau*, leaving it to the museums to be more specific and display, as the

> Louvre does, their works in what they call collections, not "de *la* peinture" (of painting) but "*des* peintures" (of paintings). (2001: 166)

For Damisch the difference between the two terms is not merely a question of terminology.[162]

He points out that they are synecdoches, but the choice of which part is to represent the whole constitutes a significant shift in perception; the term "tableau" denotes both the product of painting and the material base on which it is placed. The term "tableau" opens up ways of thinking about the relation between "the operation of painting with its external form, its 'exterior' and its substrate, if not its very substance" (Damisch, 2001: 166). According to Damisch, the tableau is an autonomous, strictly delimited, rigid, manageable, and transportable plane surface serving as the support or the frame (*cadre*) for all forms of figurative operations (1990: 190). He contends that such a mobile, displaceable, and hence replaceable object breaking away from architectural and contextual bonds coincides with the operation of the picture that emerged with the development of the technique of representation known as *costruzione legittima* (1991: 166).

Similarly, Gérard Wajcman dates the birth of the tableau as a modern form to the Renaissance period, and more specifically to the idea of the tableau as an open window which began to put an end to the reign of the medieval polyptique (2004: 57).[163] For Wajcman, as for Damisch, the logic of the tableau breaks with the contextual values of prior media, such as fresco painting and book illustration, by its delimitation of the painting within the space of encounter. It problematizes the limits and limitations of painting. As a dialectic moment, Damisch writes, the picture "may be seen as the negation of what had previously formed the base for the picture"

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[162] In a review of Hans Belting and Christiane Kruse's *Die Erjndung des Gemaldes: Das erste Jahrhundert der niederlandischen Malerei* (1994) Victor Stoichita and Didier Martnes write, "Belting rightly deplores the absence of any lexicological and historical study of the word and object *Gemalde* [….] This problem of terms is particularly acute, it seems, in English, where the notions designated by the German *Gemalde*, the Italian *quadro,* or the French *tableau* have no true equivalents. During the period analyzed by Belting, the Low Countries themselves possessed only a rather ambiguous vocabulary in this regard, since neither the French *ymaige de peincture* nor its Netherlandish counterpart, *schilderye*, covers completely the semantic field of the words tableau, *quadro*, Gemalde, or *Tafelbild*." (1996: 733). The authors also argue that Belting shows that the problem of style is intimately linked to the dimension of medium, and that in the final analysis it was the birth of a new support—the tableau in the modern sense of the term—that made the new style necessary.

[163] All translations from Wajcman's *Fenêtre* are mine.

(2001: 167). By breaking away from prior contextual spaces, such as the wall or the book, the tableau puts forth a subtle assertion of the independence of the art of painting and posits the painting as an object of worth in its own right. The tableau of the painting proper becomes the normative locus of display where all forms of figurative operations take place, offering a new way of making visible.

Does Size Really Matter?

The tableau suggested, I contend, the standardization of the scale of painting. Wajcman argues that the Renaissance *quadro* or the tableau-window operated not only as the mathematization of the form but also, and at the same time, as the "humanization" of its size (2004: 126). He proposes that the Euclidian geometry, which is based on the figure's unity, is the application of the human body to/with mathematics; the study of the body's proportions and the placement of the figures in perspective were evidently among the problems of Renaissance painting (127). Moreover, he states that the rectangular form of the tableau is comparable to the posture of the human body following the *l'uomo quadrato* of Vitruvius, which is reinvested in the Renaissance period, as in the case of Da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* (1513). This is a man in a T-shape, an erect geometric man who will become the measure of everything, including the tableau itself (2004: 132). The tableau presupposes a size comparable to that of the human body, to which it is anthropomorphically related: "The form of this support [the tableau] is more immediately proportioned with our form, with the proportions of our body, its measurement" (148).

Stewart argues that the miniature "assumes an anthropocentric universe for its absolute sense of scale" (2003: 56). In this sense, in comparison to the anthropomorphic scale of the tableau, the book illumination is called "miniature" in the sense of its being something much smaller than normal, something tiny, represented, designed, or occurring on a small scale. Stewart relates the aesthetic effect of normative human scale back to Aristotle's proposition of an appropriate scale for beauty in his *Poetics*: "A minute picture cannot be beautiful [….] nor can an immense one [….] There is a proper size for bodies and pictures—a size that can be kept in view" (quoted in Stewart, 1997: 74). According to Stewart, the aesthetic size

to which Aristotle refers is the scale of the first person subject, "the scale of the single-point perspective, [based on] a human body fixed at a precise location in time and space" (1997: 74).

No doubt, the Aristotelian aesthetic scale that had been reinvested in the Renaissance tableau was challenged and subverted in the centuries that followed. James Meyer argues that scale was one of the main concerns of the Abstract Expressionist movement in the 1940s and 1950s, whose artists sought to change the experience of the viewer in front of the tableau (2004). However, such practices were limited to the gigantic, which "assum[ed] a range of connotations from heroic and public to sublime and spectacular" (Rugoff, 1997: 11).[164]

While monumentalization has thus enjoyed its critical function of challenging the viewer's accustomed notions of scale, miniaturization has rarely been deemed to have this sort of potential. As Rugoff suggests, very small artworks were "typically looked down upon as timid and unadventurous, domesticated by a size shared with doll-house miniatures, souvenirs, and precious collectibles" that made most modernists view tiny-ness as "a forfeiture of artistic authority" (1997: 11). The critical and subversive potential of the miniature, the minute, and the miniscule—perhaps due to their associations with interiority, domesticity, femininity, and exposed materiality brought about by their requisite intensive bodily labor and craft and exaggerated attention to detail—has hardly been explored (Schor, 1987; Stewart, 2001).

Yet again, the miniature bears on scale in the phenomenological sense as a formal quality capable of inducing awareness and provoking thought. However, as Gaston Bachelard reminds us, one "must go beyond logic in order to experience what is large in what is small" (1994: 150). If the tiny object has subversive potential, it is not "through any logical dialectic of opposites (of large and small), but in a destabilizing seduction that seems to turn our world upside down" (Rugoff, 1997: 15). The miniature is not a critique of monumentality and gigantism, but, rather, as

[164] In his article "Size Matters" (2000), Robert Morris identifies a "Wagner effect" that was initiated by Jackson Pollock and can also be observed in works by Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, the minimalist sculptures of Richard Serra, and contemporary installation works by Bill Viola and James Turrell. This "really big art," writes Morris, is literally hard to put in the museum. He observes that the work "falling under the rubric of the Wagner effect would be aimed at servicing the upper echelons of a would-be-ruling class, who, in their driven generosity, demand those vast and sanctified spaces of the museum as testimony to the importance of their class and self-congratulatory public service" (482).

Stewart puts it, "of the poverty of naïve materialism confusing physical scale with subjective or social importance" (1997: 75).

The Ottomans did not associate physical scale with social importance, at least when it came to the art of painting. For Ottoman patrons of art—usually the sultans, their immediate family members, and high-ranking officials—small paintings on manuscript pages did not signify interiority, domesticity, or femininity. Instead, they were symbols of wealth, power, and grandeur.[165] Like most of the Muslim societies contemporary with theirs, Ottomans used two Arabic words to refer to what we now call miniature painting. These terms were *taswir* and *naqsh*, and were used interchangeably.[166] *Taswir* was widely used to describe different types of representational media, including painting, drawing, underglass painting, and paper cutting (*kaat'i*). It means describing something verbally or visually and designing and giving form to (something). As a noun it refers to the outcome of such an action, be it a text or an image. Linguistically, it derives from the second form of the verb *sawwara*, meaning to create, to form, to fashion but also to depict, to represent, to illustrate.[167] In the passive form it means to imagine, to conceive, and to think; hence the word *tasawwur*, which can refer to imagination, idea, and concept.[168]

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[165] Book collections were not only a symbol of sophistication but also of sovereignty. Apart from imperial commissions, books would enter the Ottoman collections as gifts from neighboring empires or as war booty. See, for example, Çağman and Tanindi (1996) for the book traffic between the Ottomans and Safavids in the 16th century. They point out that the Safavid illustrated manuscripts found their way to the imperial collections as gifts presented to the Ottoman Sultans by Safavid ambassadors sent on various missions, but a considerable number were either purchased or received as gifts during the wars by Ottoman generals, bureaucrats, and provincial governors.

[166] Following the foundation of the Turkish Republic in the twentieth century and the establishment of art history departments, the use of the adapted term "minyatür" superseded the previous terms of *taswir* and *naqsh*. There is no exact date given for this shift. In a personal email conversation, Günsel Renda pointed out the role of European publications concerning Islamic and Ottoman art employing the term miniature and noted that their inclusion into the curriculum might have initiated the process. The shift from *taswir* and *naqsh* to *minyatür* was quite effective: today, even though both terms are still used in contemporary Turkish, the usage of the imported phrase "miniature painting" has supplanted the previous two terms to the extent that even in academia, the art of book illumination is called "*minyatür*."

[167] *Sawwara* is a tricky word because of its use in the Koran. It is used in reference to creation in *surahs* such as 40:64 (two times); 64:3 (two times); 7:11; 3:6; 82:8; 59:24. *Al-musawwir*, "the Fashioner," is one of the names of God in the Koran. He fashions the creation by giving it form and color and bestows each creature with "every detail of its complicated spiritual and physical existence." This use of the word has been cited in arguments about the ban on image production; see, for example, Mazhar Ipşiroğlu (2005).

[168] As a generic term, *taswir* makes no differentiation between different practices of art using different media. For example, in modern Arabic, *taswir* refers also to photography.

Consequently, the term not only indicates creativity but also stresses that artistic practice is an intellectual and cognitive interaction with its artistic material.

The second term, *naqsh*, refers specifically to the art of miniature painting.[169] It means to color, adorn, and ornament something. In compound verb form (followed by the auxiliary *etmek*, to do, to make, to perform in Turkish) it means to engrave (something) in one's mind or memory or to make something effective and permanent. *Naqsh* is a verbal noun derived from the verb *naqasha*, *yanqushu* which means to paint and to engrave. It also refers to every kind of elegant and detailed handwork, from embroidery to woodcut printing to jewel making. Seen in relation to the term *taswir*, *naqsh* emphasizes the body (hand) in the making of the work, whereas *taswir* highlights the intellectual processes involved in the production of the image. The interchangeable use of the terms in reference to book illustration invokes two dimensions of artistic production. *Naqsh* invokes the material aspects of image production by pointing to bodily processes, while *taswir* brings forth the faculty of imagination and thought.

These two processes involved in artistic production highlighted by the "original" Ottoman terminology can be taken as theoretical apertures that may guide us to an understanding of the viewer's relation to the miniature as an intellectual and embodied one. I propose to take the European term "miniature," with its emphasis on smallness, as a companion on this theoretical trip in the hope that its "upside-down logic" might land us straight back on our feet. To be able to do that, we should first acknowledge the "ideal" space of encounter. We will consider the space of the miniature; we will open the book.

[169] *Resm* was also used, but it generally referred to a special kind of miniature painting that is made only in black ink without the application of additional colors. See Mahir (1989).

Looking at the Book

> The book sits before me, closed and unread; it is an object, a set of surfaces. But opened, it seems revealed; its physical aspects give way to abstraction and a nexus of new temporalities.
>
> Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 37

Walter Benjamin famously wrote that the mechanical reproducibility of a work of art sweeps away the aura of the original as well as the conditions of the ritual encounter between the work and the viewer (1969a). Perhaps the ritual aspect of seeing the original of an artwork is best preserved in the case of Ottoman miniature paintings: their public availability, after all, is quite limited. Most museums keep their manuscript collections in special archives, out of public sight. Therefore, the encounter with the miniature in a manuscript brought out of an archive involves a set of rituals. The book is gently placed on a special book holder or a cushion and the researcher is given a pair of gloves to wear. Wearing the sterilized gloves, one can finally become acquainted with the book as physical object.

Once held, the book asserts its weight, reveals its hardness as a three-dimensional object. It is a set of surfaces, as Stewart writes, and as such it is tactile and spatial. Joanna Drucker argues that the physicality of the book is fundamental to its meaning: the "weight of paper, covers, endpapers or insets, fold-outs or enclosures all contribute to the experience of the book" (2004: 197). Above all, the book requires that it be opened. So does *Rawdat al-Safa*. As Keith A. Smith notes, the act of turning the pages discloses the order of viewing and places the book in time (2000: 64). He argues that the book is a single experience, a compound picture made up of many separate sheets. In the codex form—such as the manuscript in question—"this single experience is revealed in slivers" (64). Never seen all at once, its totality is "perceived and exists only as retention of afterimage in the mind" (64).

Because the book is bound, the reader is encouraged to follow the predetermined arrangement of its pages. Yet the illustrations in a book have a visual charm that asserts itself over the ordinariness of the letters and might attract the reader's attention. For the non-Persian "readers" of the *Rawdat al-Safa*—such as me—the regular right-to-left flow of the Arabic letters will offer a different experience. Instead of reading the letters, which would be the expected act, "we"

non-Persian readers tend to look at the calligraphic letters. This uninitiated act of looking *at* writing requires that we understanding the act of reading in a novel manner. It points to a strict separation between the two modalities involved in the act of seeing: the optical modality of looking and the cognitive modality of reading.

Reading always—except in the case of Braille—involves the modality of looking even though the interwovenness of the optical and the cognitive is hardly acknowledged. The unreadable text makes the separation of two modalities tangible, as the viewer finds herself "just looking" instead of reading the text. Before the page, the anticipated reader becomes an accidental viewer as the visual properties of the written forms override their linguistic function. The handwritten character of the text furthers such a separation of modalities. Handwriting, in comparison to the printed text, highlights the visual qualities of letters, such as thickness, proportion, and rhythm between them. The "unintentional" viewer will find that such traits of handwriting tickle her "*l'oeil interieur*" or "interior eye," as Drucker calls it (1998: 103). What might be called "the aesthetics of handwriting" is invoked: the cognitive act of reading is suspended in the favor of the flow and the movement of the writing hand.[170]

Following such an aesthetics of handwriting, one would eventually arrive at the miniature that depicts Timur's army attacking the fortress on a left-hand page somewhere in the middle of the book. To the immediate right of the image, the written text continues to refer back to the previous pages of the manuscript.[171] Such an encounter reminds us that even though it can be regarded independently the image is, in fact, part of the text. For the actual reader of the manuscript, the text progresses forward on the left side in the text boxes placed above and below the miniature. Indeed, the upper text continues the sentence on the right page; therefore the reader of the manuscript would finish reading the sentence only within the image. For "us," the text boxes function in a similar way even though we cannot recognize that the

[170] I am not going to expand on the aesthetics of the handwriting here. For in-depth discussion of handwriting, see Sonja Neef (2000). There are many works on the subject of Arabic calligraphy. For a recent and inspiring study, see Valérie Gonzalez (2001), especially Chapter 5. For the recent uses of Islamic calligraphy in contemporary art practice in relation to unreadability and the aesthetics of writing, see Fırat (2006).

[171] Note that the manuscript pages are referred to as "folios"—meaning that two opposing pages are considered to be one and, for the sake of pagination, the one on the right is labeled (a), the one on the left (b).

text is incomplete. Separated from their linguistic function, the letters within the miniature provide visual continuity between the image and the main text and offer a way for its reader to start "reading" the image.

Pursuing the logic and the movement of reading the text, and given the right-to-left flow of the Arabic alphabet, the viewer would enter the image from the top right, below the castle where the soldiers attack Timur's army. The soldiers would direct her eyes to the left of the miniature, toward Timur's soldiers. Once we have reached the headgear of the figure furthest on the left, our eyes would scroll down and reach the tree on the right edge and, continuing the same movement from right to left, we would then follow the gazelle-leopard-wolf line. Scrolling down once more, we would finally alight on Timur's army as it emerges between colorful hills, marching toward the right of the picture plane, curving toward the left, passing the ravine and arriving at the encampment area. This pattern of reading the miniature is quite different from the spiraling pattern that I suggested in the opening section of this chapter. Leaving for a later discussion the different semantic possibilities offered by these two paths of reading, I suggest that what these modes have common can illuminate the ways in which the miniature relates to the body of the viewer and to the visual experience in general.

The Horizontal Image

Both patterns of reading the miniature promote a horizontal and curvilinear mode of looking. Such a mode, no doubt, follows the flow of reading: moving right to left, scrolling down, and tracing the spiraling army as it curves from right to left, and then scrolling upwards. The miniature follows the movement of the text, but not too strictly. The miniature is like a text in which the viewer/reader is left free to wander among the letters, a text in which the hierarchical relation between up and down has been disrupted. The act of reading taints the way we look at the image and guides our look within the picture plane to move from right to left and vice versa. This pattern of looking literally reads the image.

This mode of viewing is further encouraged by the horizontal orientation of the image. Similar to the way a book would be positioned, the miniature *lies* in front of the viewer. The viewer looks at the image from above, and, rather than standing in

front of the vertical tableau of Damisch and Wajcman, she positions herself so that her body and the miniature are separated by a 90-degree angle. She inter-faces the miniature in a horizontal manner that lingers somewhere between reading and looking. Such a horizontal orientation is starkly opposed to what Benjamin once called "the dictatorial perpendicular." In "One-Way Street" (1928), he states that, centuries ago, scripture "began gradually to lie down, passing from the upright inscription to the manuscript resting on sloping desks before finally taking itself to bed in the printed book." Then it began to rise again from the ground: "The newspaper is read more in the vertical than in the horizontal plane, while film and advertisement force the printed word entirely into the dictatorial perpendicular" (1996b: 456).

Taking Benjamin's idea of the dictatorial perpendicular as a point of departure, Rosalind Krauss argues that such a hegemony of the vertical should be related to the Gestalt psychologists' conceptualization of the visual field defined in relation to the self-image of the human subject. This perceptual space is "subject to gravitation, ventrally sighted, dextrally favored" as a projection that returns "the perceiver's own potential image as though in an invisible mirror" (1997a: 89). She argues that Jacques Lacan takes up the unified "good-form" of the Gestalt body in his essay on the mirror stage (1936), in which the image seen in the mirror—the prefigurative of the "I"—would be seen upright. Krauss contends that verticality appears a necessary ingredient in the Gestalt/Imaginary brew, linking signification/meaning with the human being's uniquely upright posture, a position that orients her to her surroundings. This positioning establishes a set of values based on "up" and "down," "high" and "low."[172]

In their book *Formless* (1997), Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois elaborate on Georges Bataille's discussion of the process of "horizontalization" that challenges the verticality of the human body within the visual field. Rephrasing Bataille, Bois

[172] Krauss states that the mirror image might be seen as a Narcissus-like position, bending over the reflective horizontal surface (given Lacan's intense fascination with the Narcissus created by Caravaggio), which might confirm this site of the image as a horizontal plane. This understanding, argues Krauss, would overlook the configuration of the image wrought by the painting itself: the composition of the painting wheels around the central point established by the figure's projecting knee. Therefore the painting itself converts the actual bodily position into a visual Gestalt. It thereby asserts that "for the subject of vision, the subject who is using the image to stabilize his own ego around a center of consciousness, all images—whether seen on a horizontal plane or not—will enter the space of his or her imagination as upright: aligned with the verticality of that viewer's own body" (1997a: 90).

writes, “man is proud of being erect [….] but this pride is founded on a repression [….] Present architecture, by means of which his horizontal gaze traverses a vertical field, is a travesty” (1997: 26).[173] Perhaps the institution of the tableau was, from the beginning, complicit with such a travesty by its imitation of the anthropomorphic scale and reverberation of the “*l'uomo quadrato*,” who faces the visual field as an erect T.

Similarly, in the section entitled “The Flatbed Picture Plane” of his 1972 essay “Other Criteria,” Leo Steinberg addresses the problem of the verticality of the tableau (using “picture,” from the English terminology). He suggests that from the old masters to abstract expressionism, “the conception of the picture as representing a world, some sort of worldspace which reads on the picture plane in correspondence with the erect human posture” was shared as an axiom dictating how the picture plane was conceived (1972: 82). In such a conception, the top of the tableau corresponds to the point where we hold our heads aloft, while its lower edge gravitates to the spot where we place our feet. By these correspondences, Steinberg argues, the tableau imitates the sense data experience of the “normal erect posture” in a “natural world” (84). Therefore, he continues, “the Renaissance picture plane affirms verticality as its essential condition”; the works of Picasso, Rothko, Matisse, and Pollock did not cause this condition to be superseded (84).

Steinberg argues that the flatbed picture plane—as it is utilized in the works of Robert Rauschenberg and Dubuffet, for example—insists on a radically new orientation, in which the painted surface is no longer the analogue of a visual experience of nature but of an operational process. He argues:

> [I]t is not the actual physical placement of the image that counts. There is no law against hanging a rug on a wall, or reproducing a narrative picture as a mosaic floor. What I have in mind is the psychic address of the image, its

[173] Bataille usually relates the horizontal posture to animality. Freud also emphasizes the difference between the human being’s erect posture and animal horizontality. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), he relates the origin of civilization to the primacy of upright posture. He writes: “The fateful process of civilization would thus have set in with man’s adoption of the erect posture. From that point the chain of events would have proceeded through the devaluation of olfactory stimuli and the isolation of the menstrual period to the time when visual stimuli were paramount and the genitals become visible, and thence to the continuity of sexual excitation the founding of the family and so to the threshold of human civilization” (1961, 54 n.1). Civilization is the effect of the repression of smell and its replacement by the sense of vision, which results in the privileging of the erect posture.

> special mode of imaginative confrontation, and I tend to regard the tilt of the picture plane from vertical to horizontal as expressive of the most radical shift in the subject matter of art, the shift from nature to culture. (1972: 84)[174]

Bois points out that the strict demarcation dividing the vertical and the horizontal axes corresponds, in fact, to a separation between the realms of the "pure visible" and the "carnal." The pure visible refers to the visual field perceived vertically, whereas the carnal sphere is the space occupied by our bodies, the space in which we move. According to Bois, the partition between the two has been "theorized since the Renaissance by means of the conception of painting 'as a window opened onto the world'" (1997: 27).[175] The impossible caesura between the visible and the carnal is related to another opposition, namely the relation between "painting's vertical section and completely covered surface" and "the horizontal and diagrammatic space of writing" (Bois, 1997: 27). Bois' understanding here is akin to that of Benjamin and Steinberg.[176]

Taking place in the realm of the carnal as well as the diagrammatic space of writing and reading, the process of horizontalization is a double operation. For Krauss and Bois, it involves the rejection of the privileging of that which exists to be seen horizontally from a vertical position (e.g., pictures on a wall) and undoing the verticality inherent in what has been deemed proper art. Refusing the gestures of the standard technique, horizontal paintings such as Jackson Pollock's open up a gap between the work's horizontal orientation and the viewer's vertical positioning in front of them. [177]

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[174] Benjamin posited a similar opposition between horizontality and verticality that exists regardless of the viewer's physical encounter with the image. It is the "internal meaning" of the image that remains horizontal for Benjamin, as it does for Steinberg. Benjamin theorized the mode of imaginative confrontation mentioned by Steinberg through a distinction between drawing and painting. Conceiving of these two media as "two cuts though the world's substance," he considers the longitudinal section of painting and the cross-section of certain pieces of graphic art (1996b: 82). He argues that the longitudinal cut seems to be that of representation that somehow contains objects, while the cross-section seems symbolic in that it contains signs. (82) Benjamin suggests that the horizontal cut is reminiscent of reading; it is, as such, affiliated with signs.

[175] In the following chapter I focus on the metaphor of the window in relation to the discourse of transparency and framing.

[176] Steinberg borrows the term "flatbed" from the flatbed printing press, "a horizontal bed on which a horizontal printing surface rests" (1972: 82).

[177] According to Krauss, Jackson Pollock's drip paintings—in which the canvas, literally brought low, is laid horizontally on the floor to be painted on the ground, thus making these works initially

Such an experience, involving an uncoupling between the positioning of the image and the viewer, amounts to a one-way act of horizontalization that takes place within the image. In other words, it is only the image that bears the process of horizontalization. The viewer's positioning remains intact, albeit disturbed. In contrast to this "half-way" horizontalization, I will argue that the horizontal orientation of the miniature is accompanied by a horizontalization of the viewing position of the sort that challenges the viewer both physically and cognitively.

Krauss and Bois' endorsement of horizontality in modern art, inspired by Benjamin, Bataille, and Steinberg, is an attempt to understand the ways in which horizontal image relates to the viewer as an alternative to the operation of the vertical image. The diverse theorizations that I have invoked can productively be brought to bear on the orientation of the miniature so as to open up a discussion of an alternative bodily interaction with the image and a different notion of pictorial representation that is highlighted by the horizontal imaginary.

Horizontal Viewing

As elements in a book, the Ottoman miniatures were meant to be seen by the viewer as she held the volume in hand or as she peered into the book after it had been placed on special X-shaped book trestles called *rahle*. Already, such a positioning of the book makes a horizontal cut through the vertical visual field, and it demands that the viewer sits down and adopt a bent-over position as she enters the intimate space of the book. Consequently, the miniature will be encountered in a bodily posture reminiscent of reading as well as writing. Such is the case with the Timur miniature. As I have argued, it invites its viewer to read the image. But it also demands that she position her body as if she were reading a book. Thus, the miniature challenges the ideal of the upright viewer who stands within the vertically perceived visual field at the moment of the encounter. The miniature's viewer would of necessity be bent

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horizontal—are perfect example of these processes, (1997b: 93-97). Steinberg argues that Pollock's works are revelations to which we relate visually as from the top of a columnar body. He writes, "Pollock indeed poured and dripped his pigment upon canvases laid on the ground, but this was an expedient. After the first color skeins had gone down, he would tack the canvas on to a wall - to get acquainted with it, he used to say; to see where it wanted to go. He lived with the painting in its uprighted state, as with a world confronting his human posture" (1972: 84).

over the book, her face turned away from the vertical visual field and directed downwards into the horizontal space of the miniature.

This posture of viewing determined by the miniature is different from what the vertically oriented image proposes. While the viewer of the tableau stands *in front* of the image in an erect posture, the viewer of the miniature bends her body above the image and faces downwards. The downward look and the space it opens up between the viewer and the image constitute an intimate and solitary field between the two that takes the viewer away from the realm of the visual and brings her into the arena of the carnal.

This effect resonates with Rugoff's proposition that small objects draw us closer to them and that such forward movement parallels a mental process:

> [T]he more closely we examine minute details, the less we notice the gulf in size that separates us. The act of paying attention is in itself a kind of magnifying glass [….] [T]his charges our experience of the object, imbuing it with an almost hallucinatory acuity [….] Despite the negligible physicality of tiny work, its effect on us may be surprisingly visceral. (1997:14-15)

Stewart warns us that in approaching the miniature, "our bodies erupt into a confusion of before-unrealized surfaces" (1993: 70). Such confusion occurs when, as we hold the miniature object in hand, we sense that "our hand is no longer in proportion with its world; instead our hand becomes a form of undifferentiated landscape, the body a kind of background" (70).

Our encounter with the Timur miniature bears a similar corporal challenge, if not confusion. In contrast to the tableau, which has proportions based on those of the human body, Stewart suggests that the miniature's measure is the hand (Stewart, 1993: 46). Even though Stewart writes on "miniature books," so small as to fit in the palms of their readers, the Timur miniature encourages a comparable form of bodily interaction in which the sense of touch is provoked. Although we cannot hold the whole image in our hand at once, its scale is still to be measured in proportion to the hand. The viewer can grasp it in her hand; the depicted figures are comparable in size to a finger or thumb. This physical correspondence is furthered by the leaning position of the viewer's body necessitated by the miniature's horizontal orientation. With the body lowered, the hand is placed in-between the eyes of the viewer and the

image. Thus the vertical "good form" of gestalt body assumed by the tableau is fractured; the bits and pieces of the viewer's body become visible to herself. The encounter takes place not in the space of the purely visible dominated by the eye but rather in the carnal realm occupied by our bodies. This is no longer the space "subject to gravitation, ventrally sighted, dextrally favored" (Krauss, 1997a: 89). As the body curves into itself, the law of gravity starts to crumble; the notions of up vs. down and high vs. low lose their certainty with regard to the construction of the space within the miniature.

And indeed, in her encounter with the Timur miniature, the viewer starts losing the sense of what's up and what's down, what's high and what's low. This is simply the continuation of a process that had already been implied by the bent posture of her body. If the miniature were to be seen vertically, that is, "fronto-parallel to the plane of vision" (Krauss, 1997: 91), it would follow the vertical law of gravity that it instead defies most visibly, perhaps, in the "bottom" of the picture plane. In vertical orientation, the tree drawn by the side of the ravine with a fox on its branches will be seen as if it were upside-down in relation to the rest of the miniature. Similarly, the flowers scattered all around the miniature—most notably on the blue-purple hill by the ravine and right beneath the tree in Timur's encampment—would seem inverted. However, such a travesty of perception occurs only if the miniature is made to follow the logic of the tableau and the vertical Gestalt, as Krauss calls it.

The operation of lowering oneself out of the vertical and into the horizontal involves "tipping things over, making them stumble, fall, lie in the mud" (Bois and Krauss, 1997: 29). The Timur miniature does precisely this. The flattened canopy and the bridge over the ravine defy the vertical look that would be directed at them; they direct the viewer's eyes above them and invite a horizontal look within a horizontal field. In such a field, the miniature encourages the assembling and merging of the letter and the figure, the textual and the visual, the act of reading and the act of looking.

The encounter with the miniature does not follow the sense data experience of the "normal erect posture" in a "natural world," to follow Steinberg. The event of looking at the miniature proposes a physical retreat from the verticality of the visual as the viewer turns downwards toward the space of the book and toward her body. The viewer who closes herself over the miniature and over her own body detaches

herself from the pure visual. She occupies the realm of the carnal, where the body operates within oppositional tensions: getting closer and moving away, scrolling up and down or from right to left and vice versa. As such, the miniature proposes a total horizontalization of the image and of the viewer's body and intellect. The horizontal image allows the viewer to experience that which might diverge from the laws of the "natural world." By so doing, the miniature enables one to go beyond conventional perceptions of dimension and scale.

Time, too, is in play here. In what follows, I discuss the ways in which the representation of time in the Timur miniature offers us a miniaturized, condensed temporality that challenges the norm of linear temporality and gives way to a nexus of new temporalities.

Pregnant to "a Nexus of New Temporalities"

Bachelard, writing on the "man with a magnifying glass," argues that looking through a magnifying glass conditions an entry into the world at the moment when we have to accept heretofore unnoticed details (1994: 155).[178] Thus, Bachelard argues, the minuscule is a narrow gate, but it opens up an entire world. The passage out of this narrow gate leads us to enter the miniature world and, from there, to "large issues from small, not through the logical law of a dialectics of contraries, but thanks to the liberation from all obligations of dimensions, a liberation that is a special characteristic of the activity of the imagination" (154-55).

At the focal point in the Timur miniature, the place where Timur was to receive the object presented to him by his servant, we are offered the possibility of entering the miniature world of the image. This scene attracts and captures the viewer's attention. Within the temporal structure of the image, it appears to be taking place in the present tense. Titley explains the temporal structure of the miniature as follows:

[178] In the chapter entitled "Miniature" in his *Poetics of Space*, Bachelard analyzes literary descriptions of tiny objects as a way of entering the world in detail. His discussion of the "man with the magnifying glass" starts with an elaboration of the flower descriptions made by the botanists. Later on, the man with the magnifying glass becomes the metaphor for paying attention to details and taking in the "world as though it were quite new to the observer," who is "a fresh eye before a new object" (155).

> Timur resting in a mountain clearing in Mazandaran during his campaigns, *while* his army attacks a fortress in the background. Other soldiers *are traveling* around a mountain pass and crossing a deep ravine [….]. (1981: 60, emphasis added)

Seeming to propose that the events depicted in the miniature take place simultaneously, Titley suggests a unified temporal structure. However, the compositional structure of the miniature might allow us to construct a different representational temporality.

As I argued earlier on, the miniature can be read by following two potential reading trajectories. The first starts from the middle of the miniature, from where the marching troops appear by the mountain pass. Following the soldiers on the bridge in the lower part, we move on to the place where Timur and his company take their respite and then, ultimately, reach the upper part, where the battle takes place. Alternatively, one can enter the picture plane from the upper part and follow the directionality dictated by the text. This path starts from the fortress and proceeds to the battle, then moves on to the focal point and eventually ends in the lower part of the picture plane. These two potential reading paths offer us alternatives to the time track suggested by Titley. Instead of simultaneity, they put the events in succession.

In relation to the focal point, the march of the troops and the battle scene can be read as taking place in the past and future, respectively. This reading demonstrates that the miniature encapsulates successive events that take place at different times as well as in varying locations.[179] By using such a technique in which different temporalities come together in one image, the miniature creates its own temporality. This temporality accords with Stewart's argument that the miniature does not attach itself to lived historical time.

She writes,

> Unlike the metonymic world of realism, which attempts to erase the break between the time of everyday life and the time of narrative by mapping one perfectly upon the other, the metaphoric world of the miniature makes

[179] Such a narrative technique is not alien to the Ottoman miniature painting even though, by the mid-seventeenth century, we can observe a tendency to unify the pictorial plane temporally and spatially.

> everyday life absolutely anterior and exterior to itself. The reduction in scale which the miniature presents skews the time and space relations of the everyday lifeworld […]. (2001: 65)

Similarly, the condensed and compressed temporalities within the Timur miniature are in stark contrast with the suspended present-ness of the everyday viewing experience. The difference between the two diverse temporal experiences manifests itself in what Stewart calls the miniature time. She cites a psychological experiment conducted at the School of Architecture of the University of Tennessee, which indicated a direct correlation between physical scale and the viewer's perception of duration. She writes that, as the scale of an image or other perceptual stimulus decreases, the viewer's experience of time is extended. Thus, five minutes of clock time may seem like half an hour (66). Similarly, the condensed temporality of the Timur miniature encapsulates a "normal" viewing time and prolongs the perception of duration.

The extension of the viewing time entails that the viewer does not grasp the image all at once, as if it were what Diderot called a hieroglyph, which enables the viewer to absorb the picture instantaneously. Seeing an image is not an immediate action but a process, an event, or a negotiation between viewer and image, as I have argued in previous chapters. If the miniature object necessitates its miniature viewing time, the Timur painting will make such a temporal expansion tangible. The patterns of traveling in the miniature—following the chain of movement from one soldier to the others, alighting on unexpected details such as an animal atop a tree, or landing on the suspended hands of Timur and the servant—will stretch the viewing process far beyond the *augenblick*. This experience of the image and of duration coincides with the temporal structure of the miniature, which also unravels itself through the viewer's act of reading the image.

Such concentration and prolongation of viewing time explodes in a narrative instance that seems to unite different temporalities within the miniature. The moment of tension between Timur and his servant (what I have called the focal point of the miniature) can be seen as a "pregnant moment" that synchronizes *all* of the miniature's events in one common instant. The pregnant moment, a term coined by Gotthold Lessing in *Laöcoön: On the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766), is an arrested single moment that represents the entire story in one scene. In light of this

definition, however, the gesture between the two figures can hardly be taken as a pregnant moment, as it seems like the entire story has *already* been visualized in the miniature. By way of clarification, I will discuss in what follows the ways in which this tension functions as a pregnant moment connecting past, future, and present events—even though we cannot grasp this operation at first glance (Figure 29).

Figure 29. Detail, "Timur on his expedition to attack Sultan Husayn."

In her book *Narratology*, Mieke Bal explains that the pregnant moment—representing "a single moment but one which can only be understood as following the past and announcing the future"—is the pictorial equivalent of a crisis in narrative (1997: 211). Following Bal, I would like to suggest that the frozen gesture between the two figures pointing at an invisible object of exchange corresponds to such a crisis. It is the knot of the image of which disentanglement would unravel other tensions in the miniature. Once the tension is resolved, the troops will finally arrive at the encampment area and the arrow of the soldier in the blue garment will pierce the breast of the soldier on horseback. Moreover, the leopard will attack the wolf and scare the gazelle away; the fox in the tree will attack the bird and perhaps flush it out of the tree (Figure 30 and 33).

Figure 30. Detail, "Timur on his expedition to attack Sultan Husayn."

As such, this suspended moment directs our attention to past events as well as to the future battle even though we experience the miniature in an implied "present tense." This gesture is "pregnant" with another time that cannot be incorporated within the miniature—namely, the moment when the battle *will have been* won. It is a future, invoked in the present of the image within the pregnant moment, that has not yet arrived and is still to be determined but that nevertheless dictates retrospectively, in its turn, the past, which *will have been* for that future. That is to say, the tension between the figures is "pregnant" to a future when the fortress will have fallen.

There, in the focal point of the miniature, we see the gestures between the figures without an object of exchange, which is left as an enigma, as a failure of representation, or even an instance of non-representation. Lessing argues that the pregnant moment "as the instant right before the climax or catastrophe [….] designates a lack that the viewer fills in by seeing" (quoted in Grootenboer, 2005: 176, n4). As a divergent form of the pregnant moment, the tension between the two figures indeed designates a lack. Yet the viewer cannot fill in this lack by seeing because there is nothing to see. According to Lessing, the pregnant moment ought to give the viewer's imagination free rein: "The more we see, the more we add in our imaginations, the more we must think we see" (quoted in Grootenboer, 2005: 24).

Yet the pregnant moment in the Timur miniature contains implications for seeing, reading, and imagining. Bachelard writes that in looking at a miniature, "unflagging attention is required to integrate all the detail" (1994: 159). The invisible object is one of those details that call for such constant scrutiny. Even though it is not visible as a painterly mark, it draws the viewer's attention to it as a recognizable event suggested by the gesture between the two figures. The suspended gesture and

its absent object conceived as a pregnant moment encourage the viewer to concentrate on the lack, which would not be filled by the viewer's seeing but by her performing a narrative act. The absent object, as a detail capable of inserting meaning in its absence, allows the viewer to perform such a narrative reading based on the interaction of pictorial details.

The pregnant moment conveys a future-to-come, a "will have been," invoked through the relation between the absent object and the fortress. The fortress pinpoints this future to come, albeit in a complex way (Figure 31). First, it falls outside the image's frame, suggesting thereby that its fall is contingent on what is presented by the image. It is in the picture, but not quite. Its outlines touch the field where the battle is taking place, hence it is symbiotically connected to the image. So is its conquest.

Figure 31. Detail, "Timur on his expedition to attack Sultan Husayn."

Second, in contrast to the way it is included in the composition, the fortress is separated from the rest of the miniature on the basis of an ontological difference. The figures within the image are fully colored, whereas the fortress appears to be incomplete. It consists of mere outlines accompanied by a thin application of white paint. On a semantic level, the distinctiveness of the fortress suggests a temporal break with the colored surface of the miniature.[180] We can see the events taking place in the simple tenses of past, present, and future—marching troops, Timur at rest, the

[180] Technically speaking, the act of drawing belongs to an earlier stage of painting that comes before the application of hues. In this capacity we can read this difference as an indicator of the process of painting and argue that the fortress was either added later or it was the last thing in the image to be painted and was left unfinished. In either case, the fortress arrives late even though it refers to the previous phase of drawing.

battle joined—clearly and in full color. They are rendered as full figures that can be examined in minute detail. The fortress, on the contrary, is perceived as an undone, not-yet-materialized quasi-figure. This figure of the fortress refers to a predestined future that has not yet arrived. Even though it cannot be seen clearly, it can be grasped as a ghostly outline.

For the careful eye, the fortress is not the only unfinished figure in the miniature. The two birds resting in the tree in the upper right and lower parts of the image are not painted either (Figure 32 and 33). Based on the similarities among these details—the fortress, the birds, and the invisible object—their interaction constructs a curvilinear syntagm. The figure of the bird as an indexical sign for news to be delivered might help us to read this hypothetical visual sentence hidden in the main narrative of the miniature. The quasi-figures of the birds, standing for news of an event that has not yet happened—Timur's victory—bridge the semantic and temporal gap between the fortress and the absent object. When the fortress falls, the birds will fly and deliver the news of victory and hence the exchange between the servant and the king will have been completed.

Figure 32 and Figure 33. Detail, "Timur on his expedition to attack Sultan Husayn."

In such a reading, the invisible object is not supplanted with an object visibly refilling its place but is taken as a narrative detail that interacts with other pictorial elements on the basis of its incommensurable absence. This reading demonstrates that the miniature alludes to an object/event that cannot be represented. And as it cannot be represented, its absence brings us news, not of victory, but of another state of painting. It gives us a symptom.

What is Being Handed to Timur, or the Symptom

In Chapter 1, I discussed the operation of pictorial details via a close-up analysis of the "Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise" miniature. I argued that tiny or compositionally marginal pictorial elements open up different reading possibilities than those entailed by an iconographic interpretation. All the details on which I focused, with the exception of Eve's missing navel, are visually definable. Each detail's "contour delimits a represented object, something that has a place or rather has *its place*, in the mimetic space" (Didi-Huberman, 2005: 268). The invisible object in the Timur miniature, however, functions differently than those details.[181]

In my view, the absent object points to the "fact" that there are voids within the representational structures. In such gaps, as Norman Bryson puts it, "depiction fails or is blocked as a collection of legible signs, where depiction mounts a measure of resistance to the whole mimetic project" (1993: 336).[182] The absent object refers to such a failure of representation. It pierces a hole in the logic of representation. It is an accident in the miniature, yet it is sovereign. It taints the whole image with its absence; it spreads its contamination all over not only because it is compositionally focal but also because it is semantically at the center of the image. It is a senseless, unformed, incomprehensible, and precarious gesture; hence it is accidental. Yet it is sovereign because its "blurred" meaning is linked to a destiny within the miniature; it binds the image to itself.

Georges Didi-Huberman calls such sovereign accidents symptoms. He borrows the notion from Freud and yet, in retaining the clinical overtones of the term, he puts it in the service of a critical paradigm. He writes,

> A sovereign accident is called, strictly speaking, a *symptom*: a word understood here to have all the extension and semiological rigor that Freud bestowed on it. A symptom [….] is, for example, the moment, the

[181] It can be argued that the absent navel of Eve functions similar to the way the absent object does. However, the narrative potentiality of Eve's absent navel stems from Adam's overemphasized navel. Even though it is absent, the viewer expects the definite form of the navel; therefore it works in line with what Didi-Huberman calls the detail principle (2005).

[182] Bryson talks of "those qualities of the image that stand outside reason, qualities that do not correspond to meaning (the legible) and cannot be apprehended in terms of mimesis (the visible)" (1993: 337).

> unpredictable and immediate *passage* of a body into aberrant, critical state of hysterical convulsions, of extravagance in every moment and posture: gestures having lost their "representivity," their code [….] [N]o "message," no "communication" can any longer emanate from such a body. (Didi-Huberman, 2005: 260)

Such pictorial accidents challenge mainstream humanist art-historical inquiry, which is based on specific, certain knowledge of the art object. Having lost their representative capacity, and bearing no message, symptoms confront the conventional art-historical tone of certainty; they become passages that open up our knowledge about images toward the realm of instability. They bring the possibility of not-knowledge when they unravel the nets of knowledge (2005: 7). As a critical event, a symptom is a singularity, an intrusion, but also an implementation of a signifying structure. Yet the meaning that surges forth through the symptom is expressed "only as an enigma or as the '*appearance "of something,"*' not as a stable set of meanings" (2005: 261).

Figure 34. Detail, "Timur on his expedition to attack Sultan Husayn."

The symptom reveals that figurability is "a process, a power, a not-yet […] an uncertainty, a 'quasi'–existence of the figure" (269). It is a potential figure, a figure figuring or a "pre-figure" that "interrupts ostensibly, from place to place […] the continuity of the picture's representational system" (266). The absent object in the Timur miniature performs precisely the same action. It disturbs the picture by its potentiality, by its quasi-existence that has not been figured. It *happens*, gets through, extravagates in the space of representation and makes a detonation or intrusion in the miniature (268).

Just like Didi-Huberman's examples of *pan*s in the tableaus of Vermeer, which are visible but not recognizable in the system of mimetic representation, we see a patch of color—a brownish line, perhaps a tray?—that cannot easily be named (Figure 34). However, even if we read the patch as a tray we cannot name what it conveys. Therefore, it evokes the expectation of the visible in its absence; it is a symptom in the miniature that functions *in absentia*. It is indeed a process, a power, and a not-yet existence of the figure to come, which has not yet been figured. As such, it is an indicator of lack, not in the mimetic order but in the economy of representation, in the operation of figuration. Unlike Didi-Huberman's *pan*, it does not refer to a binding of mimetic and non-mimetic representation. Rather, in light of my earlier reading of the absent object as news that has not yet been delivered, it points to the operation of figuration and the dialectical relationship between representation and what is beyond representation.

In line with this, the absence can be seen to allude to the impossibility of representing news of a victory that has not yet happened. Such news can be invoked only as a suspended gesture, as an unfinished figure of a bird or an incomplete fortress outline. It can be "materialized" not as a form but only as an absence of figuration. In this respect, it is beyond representation, a temporal impossibility. It is also beyond the logic of representation because of the ontological status of news. Visually, news can be represented either iconically, as in the form of a letter, or indexically, through figures such as a bird or a gesture of a hand. However, news cannot be visually uttered. Didi-Huberman would call this unarticulated and immaterialized "sign" *virtual*. According to him, the term suggests how "the regime of the visual tends to loosen our grip on the 'normal' [….] condition of knowledge" (18). What is invoked in the image is the potentiality of the object, not its actuality. Therefore, it does not give the viewer a certain figure, or the knowledge of an object represented. It produces its effect by calling to the viewer's imagination, but doing so without articulating the certainty of visible knowledge.

The virtual stands in opposition to the "normal" regime of the visual world wherein "we think we know what we are seeing, which is to say wherein we know how to name every appearance that it pleases the eye to capture" (Didi-Huberman, 2005: 28). Obviously, the absent object, even though we can name it as a message, does not belong to the register of the visible—comprising elements of representation,

in the classical sense of the word. Neither does it belong to the invisible since it somehow strikes the viewer's eye yet reaches her by paths that are not visual.

As such, the absence in the miniature points out the paradox of figurability and of the conditions of figuration. It remains an enigma that does not communicate with any object. As I have argued, compositionally the miniature flows toward this absent object as if the viewer's gaze were taken up into a whirlpool that makes nothing visible. Moreover, as the center of such a current, the absent object is pregnant to temporal aspects and a future-to-come that cannot be incorporated by the miniature. In this capacity, it emerges as the symptom, as an immediate passage opening to representation as "containing with itself an underside of that which cannot be represented" (Bryson, 1993: 337).

The absence designates, as a symptom, "another state of painting within the representative system of the picture: a precarious, partial, accidental state"—which is why Didi-Huberman speaks of *passage* from one state to another (2005: 266). Borne through this passage, we end up in the world of the small, the horizontal, and the virtual: the symptoms of what we cannot see through transparent windows.

In the following chapter, I discuss one of the most persistent of all visual metaphors, namely, the window trope. Considering in this regard a seventeenth-century miniature entitled "The Theological School of Gazanfer Ağa" by Ahmed Nakşi, I will argue that even though the metaphor was first invoked to refer to the specific medium of the tableau-window, its metaphorical resonance goes beyond the limits of the medium. The overarching epistemological effect of the window metaphor is a unique juxtaposition of two discourses: transparency and the frame. This concurrence of these two discourses suggests that what is seen is also knowable. I will conclude that the miniature under consideration challenges both discourses by promoting the frame as a threshold between different modes of representation, by "thresholding" the visual, and by bringing to the fore opacity as a mode of visual encounter. In this capacity, the threshold metaphor offers an alternative, albeit not an antidote, to the window metaphor as a means of conceptualizing the position of the viewer in the visual field.