Mehmed II's Portraits: Patronage, Historiography and the Early Modern Context

Eva Stamoulos
Department of Art History and Communication Studies
McGill University, Montreal
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Here is the very large hall of the Great Council, renovated throughout by the hand of most excellent masters, among the best and most famous painters to be found today in the whole world: the brothers Gentile and Giovanni Bellini. Their works demonstrate how highly they are esteemed. In further proof of this, Mohammed the Ottoman, King of the Turks, sent to Venice some time ago for Gentile, to commission him to do some paintings for him and paint his portrait from life, and he went there and after the Turk's death returned to Venice.

Marin Sanudo, *Praise of the City of Venice,* 1493

Abstract

This thesis proposes an anti-Orientalist reading of the portrait of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror (r. 1451-1481) by Gentile Bellini. The artist's work is analysed in the context of the Venetian Renaissance and the status of the visual arts in the Ottoman Empire. Mehmed's patronage of Italian artists, who created medallic and pictorial portraits of the sovereign, is considered together with the local translation of conventions enabled by early modern cross-cultural encounters. The Western political and intellectual climate following the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed in 1453 is examined and, in particular, the secularising crusade literature produced by humanist scholars. Covert efforts to incorporate the Turks within the boundaries of civilised society coexisted with the conventional derogatory anti-Turkish propaganda. Bellini's portrait is seen as an attempt to portray the sultan as a member of the Venetian aristocracy. The historiographical record of modern academic scholarship in the disciplines of history and art history exploring these cross-cultural exchanges is set in a framework that explores the role of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in light of recent developments.

Resumé

Ce mémoire propose une lecture anti-orientale du portrait du sultan ottoman Mehmed II, dit «le conquérant» (règne 1451-1481) de Gentile Bellini. L'analyse du tableau tient compte du contexte particulier de la Renaissance vénitienne et du statut des arts visuels dans l'empire ottoman. Le mécénat de Mehmed d'artistes italiens qui créèrent pour lui des portraits peints et en médaille est considéré par rapport aux transformations locales des conventions picturales, permises par ces rencontres interculturelles au tout début de la modernité. Le climat politique et intellectuel de l'Occident après la conquête de Constantinople par Mehmed, en 1453, sera examiné et, plus particulièrement, les textes produits par les humanistes qui font penser à une véritable croisade séculière. Des tentatives furtives pour intégrer les Turcs à la société «civilisée» de l'époque coexistaient avec la propagande peu flatteuse et anti-turque habituelle. Le portrait de Bellini est présenté comme une tentative de représentation du sultan en membre de l'aristocratie vénitienne. Le dossier historiographique de l'érudition moderne autant en histoire qu'en histoire de l'art explorant ces échanges interculturels est replacé dans un cadre qui tient compte du rôle de l'ouvrage d'Edward Said, l'*Orientalisme*, à la lumière de récents développements.

Introduction

Less than a decade after the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (r.1451-81) had conquered Byzantine Constantinople he began to address Italian rulers with requests for court artists. The interest in Western artistic developments was unprecedented in Ottoman sultanic circles and arguably reflected the syncretistic character of the newly established Empire. Several artists made the eastward journey and a group of portraits, medallic and pictorial, testify to their presence in the Topkapi Palace. The growing interest in the Turks across the Italian peninsula and beyond led to the reproduction of these images in humanist circles. Mehmed's likeness was, thus, disseminated across Europe.

The departure point for this thesis is the portrait of Mehmed by the most famous artist to visit his court, Gentile Bellini (1429-1507). In 1479, the artist was sent to Istanbul by the Venetian Republic following a request by the sultan. The year marked the end of a long and devastating war between the two states with the signing of a peace treaty in favour of the Ottoman Empire. During his stay, Bellini took on the role of a court artist concerned with pleasing the sovereign's demands and taste, while also promoting the interests of his homeland.

My research moves from the specific considerations of the portrait in both the Ottoman and the Venetian context, to Mehmed's patronage of Western artists and the prevalent early modern attitudes towards the Turks. I conclude by examining contemporary scholarship on the Ottomans and their artistic production. The current work has been informed throughout by postcolonial considerations and particularly Edward Said's *Orientalism*.[1] I examine the latter in so far as it pertains to Western conceptual frameworks regarding the Turks and artistic cross-cultural encounters.

The first chapter considers the art historical context in the two realms. I begin with a visual analysis of Bellini's portrait and offer an overview of the Western artistic conventions evident in the work. Although undeniably a Venetian early Renaissance artefact, the portrait was commissioned by an Oriental ruler, which leads me to examine artistic developments in the Ottoman Empire and certain critical issues pertaining to portraiture and representation in Islamic art. The array of Islamic and specifically

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[1] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

Ottoman artistic concepts is brought together in a miniature painting from an illustrated manuscript of the sixteenth century.

The second chapter addresses the history of Mehmed's patronage of Italian artists, which culminated in Bellini's visit. The sultan's manifest attraction to medallic portrayals of his person is examined outside the chronological ordering of the chapter despite the connections with his graphic portraits. The separate examination of the medals is based on the characteristic features of the medium and their aesthetic coherency as an entity. Mehmed's endeavours generated a school of local artists whose style reflected the Italian presence in the Topkapi court. A portrait by Sinan Bey, one of these Ottoman artists, is singled out and discussed for the insights it offers in the complexities and subtle nuances of artistic production in cross-cultural spaces.

The third chapter relocates the focus of inquiry by considering Western approaches to the Turks. The fall of Constantinople (1453), a feat of the twenty-one year-old Mehmed, was the inaugurating episode of Western Christianity's co-existence with its Turkish neighbour. Religious frameworks for classifying Muslims were in place since the Middle Ages, but alongside them fifteenth-century humanist scholarship introduced classicising concepts of taxonomy. I examine humanist crusade literature and ethnographic accounts of the Turks for their insights into the emerging European identity and contemporary attitudes regarding the Ottomans. Alongside conventional Orientalist discourse, I explore covert efforts to include the Turks within the ranks of "civilised" society. Venice's relationship with the Porte is considered separately due to its uniqueness and complexity. With this context in place, the chapter ends with an interpretation of Bellini's portrait of Mehmed.

The final chapter addresses the literature that informs the preceding analysis. Bellini's portrait functions as a stepping stone for examining broader historiographical issues in modern scholarship on the Turks, Islam, Ottoman art and cross-cultural encounters in the fifteenth century. An analysis of the art historical and historical literature brings forward parallel trends in the two disciplines. The analogous development in both fields, I argue, can be partly attributed to the contribution of postcolonial theory and specifically, Edward Said's scholarship. *Orientalism* is examined

in further detail and its applicability and usefulness for the early modern period are called into question.

Chapter One - Gentile Bellini's Portrait of Mehmed II in Context

The son of an artist and an accomplished artist himself, Gentile Bellini was one of the leading artistic figures of the Venetian late Quattrocento. In 1469 Gentile was knighted *Comes Palatinus* (Palatine Knight) by Emperor Frederick III, a distinction which indicates his prestige as a painter despite scarce evidence of his work before this date.[1] Several years later, in 1474, the artist was commissioned to restore and repair the paintings in the Great Council Hall.[2] Their imperfect condition reflected poorly on the Republic, which often entertained foreign dignitaries in the Council's rooms. Bellini's work was cut short when he was chosen to make an *andata* (journey) on behalf of his homeland to the Ottoman capital, Istanbul. The decision was prompted by Sultan Mehmed II's request through one of his semi-official ambassadors in August of 1479 [3] for an artist "who knows how to make portraits."[4] Patricia Fortini Brown speculates that earlier the same year, during the peace negotiations between the two polities, Lufti-Beg, the Ottoman negotiator, might have seen some samples of Bellini's work.[5] The artist had completed several ducal portraits at this time, as well as *The Presentation of the White Candle to the Doge* in the room where the Ottoman was received, containing several portrayals of prominent members of Venetian society.[6] Before departing for Istanbul,

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[1] Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 51. The author speculates Bellini might have worked on the cycle of *istorie* of Doge Cristoforo Moro's journey to Ancona in 1964 to meet Pope Pius II on a crusade against the Turks. The Pope died before the plans could materialise, but the story was commemorated on the walls of theDucal Palace's *Sala dele do nape* where important dignitaries were entertained. Frederick's visit to Venice was an opportunity for the Venetians to pressure him into financially supporting their Turkish policies. It is possible, Fortini Brown argues, Frederick saw Bellini's work in the Ducal Palace (the *sala* burnt in 1483) and knighted the artist to appease his hosts and avoid more substantial commitments. Ibid., 51-2.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time,* ed. William C. Hickman, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), 378. Also see Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 110.

[4] D. Malipiero, "Annali," *Archivio Storico Italiano* 7 (1843-1644): 123 cited in Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting*, 54. Julian Raby reports there is no archival document mentioning a request for a painter, apart from the record by Malipiero and Sanudo and the proof provided by the selection of Bellini. Julian Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal," *Studies in the History of Art; Italian Medals* 21, ed. by J. Graham Pollard, 180.

[5] Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting*, 55.

[6] For details of the work, which has only survived in the form of a drawing by an unknown artist, see Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting*, 54.

Bellini's ongoing work was transferred to Giovanni, his younger brother, pending his return.[7]

Gentile Bellini's stay in Istanbul from September of 1479 possibly to the end of the following year produced one of the most enduring images of an Ottoman sovereign.[8] The portrait-bust of Mehmed II, allegedly painted *ad vivum* in 1480 and now in the London National Gallery, depicts the aging monarch five months prior to his death. (fig.1)[9] The Ottoman ruler is represented in a three-quarter view with his left shoulder towards the picture plane. His sideway gaze avoids acknowledging the presence of either the painter or an audience. The royal status of the turbaned sitter is proclaimed by the two groups of crowns on the top corners of the painting. Julian Raby, a scholar who has written extensively on Mehmed, argues that the signification of the triple motif lies in the number of kingdoms presided over by the ruler: Greece, Asia and Trebizond.[10] The identities of sitter and artist with the date of the painting's completion (November 25, 1480) are inscribed on the parapet before Mehmed.

Mehmed's features are delicate and his appearance emanates fragility. His small, inset eyes are framed by long black eyelashes and finely shaped eyebrows, while his aquiline nose is undeniably the most prominent facial characteristic, "a parrot's beak resting on cherries," as one Turkish poet phrased it.[11] His lips are thin, the upper lip protruding over the lower, and partially covered by a fair moustache. The sultan's paleness and the sallowness of his complexion contrast with the bright, pristine whiteness of his imposing turban. The heavy mass of the white cloth is intricately wrapped around a

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Esin Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting under Sultan Mehmed II," *Ars Orientalis* 9 (1973): 110. According to Babinger, Bellini stayed in Istanbul for a few weeks after the completion of the portrait in late November. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 403.
It is known the artist resumed work at the Great Council at the end of 1481. Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting*, 55.

[9] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* 424.

[10] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 182. Esin Atil, a prominent scholar of Turkish Art, cites G. F. Hill's suggestion the crowns represent Konya, Byzantium and Trepizond. The geographical location of the aforementioned complies with Raby's identification. G.F. Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance Before Cellin,* (London: British Museum, 1930), no. 432, 113-4 cited in Atil, "Ottoman Miniature," 111.

[11] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 111.

red fluted cap, *örfi,* and weighs down on the ruler's head slightly bending his right ear.[12] A light-brown fur shawl draped over the red *kaftan* conceals the sultan's heavy build.

The sultan's figure is silhouetted against a dark featureless background, while a soft glow highlights the foreground. This impetus, however, is forestalled by the parapet placed before the sultan; this device, frequently found in Renaissance portraits, abruptly disrupts the imagined unity between real and represented space. The physical barrier, paired with the fact that Mehmed's attention is focused elsewhere, contributes to an impression of detachment and remoteness. Mehmed, removed from our environment and isolated behind the slab of marble, is protected and sheltered from reach. Our presence is neither recognised nor welcomed by the seemingly self-absorbed sitter.

Bellini has enclosed Mehmed in a classicising architectural composition comprised of an arch sustained by columns. Maria Pia Pendani Fabris has linked the structure to the gate on the façade of San Zaccaria in Venice, completed around 1480. (fig. 2)[13] The shafts on either side of Mehmed are embellished with a design of superimposed vases intertwined with floral configurations. A vibrant floral pattern is also embroidered on the luxurious gold cloth which adorns the parapet. Precious stones, most prominently pearls, are sown into the fabric and a crown placed in the lower centre. Pedani Fabris maintains that near the central cabochon the name 'Mehmed' and its mirror image in Arabic are decipherable.[14]

Bellini's work was deeply rooted in the established Western practice of portraying prominent members of society's ruling elite. The portrait's pictorial language and iconographic details merged perfectly with the surrounding private and public artistic

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[12]Mehmed is known to have preferred this type of sultanic turban, worn by the *ulema* class, and, in fact, can be recognised in later works by his distinctive headgear. Serpil Bağci, "From Iskender to Mehmed II: Change in Royal Imagery," in *Turkish Art;10th International Congress of Turkish Art* (Genève: Fondation Max Van Berchen ,1999), 115.

[13]Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, "The Portrait of Mehmed II: Gentile Bellini, the Making of an Imperial Image," in *Turkish Art; 10th International Congress of Turkish Art*, 555-8..The author contends the arch in the painting can also be interpreted as a gate, possibly the Gate of Felicity in the Topkapi beyond which dwelt the Sultan. Although such readings are possible, Pedani Fabris ignores the established tradition in the West of these motifs and her readings seem to be oftentimes strained.

[14] Pedani Fabris, "The Portrait of Mehmed II," 557. The author analyses the painting in search of symbolic meanings; thus, for instance, she argues the fur collar around the sultan's neck seems to be that of a wolf which was a totem animal for the Turkish tribes. Ibid., 556.

environment. I will begin, therefore, by situating the work within this context.[15] For this purpose I will examine a work attributed to Bellini prior to his journey to Istanbul and a portrait made by his brother, shortly after Gentile's return. Both paintings, as well as Mehmed's portrayal, address the subtle complexity of simultaneously representing the head of state as an individual and as a symbol of his office.

Venetian Painting in the Quatrocento

The anonymous fifteenth-century votive painting of Doge Giovanni Mocenigo, conventionally assigned to Gentile Bellini, serves as an illustration of the artist's work as a portraitist prior to his trip to Istanbul.[16] Doge Mocenigo, who held the office from 1478 to 1485, is presented in strict profile, kneeling in the characteristic position of a donor before the Enthroned Madonna and Child.[17] (fig. 3) In place of the formulaic gesture reserved for such portraits, Mocenigo holds the banner of St. Mark. He is accompanied by his onomastic saint, John the Baptist, and St. Christopher holding a second Christ Child, while in the background lays a tranquil landscape and a clear sky. The doge's public position is proclaimed by his *corno,* the Venetian signifier for the Republic's leading figure, and ducal robes; his personal identity is proclaimed by the presence of the Baptist, whose gesture introduces him to the holy company and the observers.[18] Rona Goffen maintains, "Such compositions addressed their self-serving and perhaps self-deceiving propagandistic messages to the doge's personal circle of relatives, friends, and

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[15] On conventions of portraiture, see Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Harry Berger, Jr. "Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Potraiture" *Representations 46* (Spring, 1994): 87-120; David Freedberg, "Versimilitude and Resemblance: From Sacred Mountains to Waxworks" in *The Power of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Joanna Woodall, ed., *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Peter Burke, "Representations of the Self from Petrarch to Descartes" in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* ,ed. Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1997), 17-28.

[16] The earliest surviving work by Gentile and one of Venice's oldest paintings on canvas is a full-length portrait of one of the city's first patriarchs, St. Lorenzo Giustiniani. The work dates back to 1465. For further discussion, see Patricia Fortini Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice* (London: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997), 94-5.

[17] Rona Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 101. A bust drawing believed to be by Gentile Bellini, of Doge Mocenigo also survives. The two versions of the image are extremely close and clearly the work of the same artist.

[18] Ibid.

associates—that is, to a receptive audience."[19] The work publicises Mocenigo's devotion to the Church and his homeland, while affirming his own importance.

Giovanni Bellini's formal portrait *Leonardo Loredan, Doge of Venice*, painted shortly after the doge assumed office in 1501, offers a glimpse of the development of the genre approximately two decades after Mehmed's portrayal. (fig. 4) The younger Bellini has retained certain aspects also employed in Mehmed's portrait; the sitter is portrayed in the fashion of a Roman bust behind a parapet. Yet, the doge's body, without being fully frontally positioned, is further turned towards the picture plane. The frontality of this portrait is surprising given the pose was reserved for sacred figures;[20] meanwhile, the directness of the visual engagement is weakened by the shift of the central axis towards the left. Loredan, wearing his formal liturgical attire, is set against a brilliant blue background, possibly the sky. His appearance resonates calmness and reserve. The faint expression of a smile on his face, according to Goffen, indicates he is alive and the work is not a posthumous portrayal.[21]

The sitter's detached *gravitas* and his ducal garments contribute to the process of 'characterisation' whereby the artist, according to Lorne Campbell expresses the sitter's public identity and status.[22] In Mehmed's portrait, the prominent turban, worn by inhabitants of the East and the Holy Lands, indicates his Oriental background. The headgear, though, unlike the *corno* worn by the doge, is not sufficient to declare his

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[19] The author compares the work with Giovanni Bellini's votive picture made for Doge Agostino Barbarigo, which was neither an alterpiece nor a public commission. For further details, see Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini*, 99-101.

[20] Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini,* 208. The author adds, "The doge's portrait is distinguished from its fifteenth-century predecessors and from other portraits of Lorendan himself not merely by the frontality of the face but also by the self-possession and tranquility of his character, portrayed with such conviction by Bellini." Ibid.
In Florence in the 1470s artists, under the influence of Netherlandish art, began to depict their sitters in a three-quarter portrait, as opposed to the profile bust. Antonello da Messina, when in Venice during the same period, possibly encouraged Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, as well as their brother-in-law Andrea Mantegna, to adopt this pose. Rona Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini*, 86.
For further discussion, see Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini*, 205-12.

[21] Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini,* 212.

[22] Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 24. Campbell discusses two other facets connected to portraiture, idealisation and individualisation. The first is connected with Platonic theory and the quest for absolute beauty, while the second with the process of rendering an individual's distinctive, identifying features. The author also discusses the importance of portraits as visual documents of appearance, health, and, as mentioned, status; they were to be seen everywhere in European courts from easels, to game boards and cases for lutes. Ibid., 204.

distinction since most Orientals in Renaissance art wore turbans. The crown motifs, therefore, regalia not autochthonous to Islamic culture, aid the Western viewer in recognising the regal status of the sitter.[23] Fortini Brown takes the argument of characterisation in Loredan's portrait a step further and posits,

> ...for all his meticulous attention to detail, the artist nonetheless disjoins the doge from time and space. The man has become the office, and could as well be the reliquary bust of a saint sitting on a shelf with all the aura of a holy figure.[24]

The portrait, void of any signs of a specific period or place, is not exclusively a representation of the sitter, but simultaneously connotes the timeless qualities of his position, which will continue to exist in spite of its occupant's mortality. All three portraits, by virtue of their sitters' status, engage in this dialectic tension between individual and institutional presence. Meanwhile, in pictorial terms, the austere profile has transformed into a three-quarter view and, subsequently, a near frontal one. Although the depicted rulers persistently avoid the audience's gaze, their physiognomic details came increasingly into view enabling the audience to observe them more fully. Their portrayals become documents of their appearances and markers of their magnitude.

The composition of Mehmed's portrait also draws on the iconography of another genre of Renaissance painting: the altarpiece. Giovanni Bellini's *St. Giobbe* altarpiece (c. 1478-80) depicts an enthroned Madonna and Child flanked by Sts. Francis, John the Baptist, Job, Dominic, Sebastian and Louis of Toulouse. (fig. 5)[25] By the mid-1470s, the unified pictorial space featured in Bellini's *sacra conversazione* had begun to replace the standing tradition of polyptychs.[26] Virgin and Child are centrally placed beneath the glittering gold of the apsidal mosaic, which alludes, in Peter Humfrey's words, to the

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[23] Gürlu Necipoglu, "Suleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in a context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry," *Art Bulletin* 71 (Sept., 1989): 401-27.

[24] Fortini Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice,* 78. For a thorough discussion of the relationship between power and representation in the portrait of the king (Louis XIV in specific), see Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King,* trans. Martha M. Houle, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

[25] The precise date of the work has been a topic of contestation; suggestions range, according to Humfrey, from as early as 1474 to as late as 1485. The author offers 1478-80 as the most plausible dates based on stylistic considerations. Peter Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven and London, 1993), 347.

[26] Ibid., 201.Humfrey refers to the work as a *sacra conversazione*, but cautions against a literal application of the term since each of the featured saints appear introverted and more concerned with spiritual matters than with interacting with each other or the viewer. Ibid., 207.

"ecclesio-political allusions to Venice's Byzantine past, and to her imperial pretensions to have inherited the authority of imperial Byzantium."[27] The semicircular framing of the central figures within the pictorial space is echoed by the arch of the original stone frame. (fig.6) Real and painted architecture are finely integrated; the frame appears to be an extension of the imagined space behind the picture plane.[28]

A close inspection of Gentile Bellini's portrait and the earlier altarpiece by Giovanni draws attention to their common architectural motifs. Gentile has repeated the altarpiece's rectangular shafts with their floral decoration— additionally featured on the sides of the throne—and the rounded arch resting on three-tiered capitals with the ornamental fixtures on the external surfaces nearing the interface with the columns. As previously mentioned, analogous architectural details were also featured on Venetian buildings. The columns' floral pattern was, in fact, quite popular in both painted and sculpted renditions as evidenced by the related designs found in several contemporary Venetian altarpieces.[29]

Furthermore, the architectural elements of the portrait mirror the framing of figures in window openings. The Italian civic space was often witness to ceremonial appearances of princes at windows, galleries and balconies, where they were observed by attending crowds.[30] The exterior architecture of these palaces was re-constructed in the pictorial space of paintings to reflect such social occasions. Oriental carpets were often draped over the palaces' marble to warm and soften the surface for the duration of the procession or ceremony. This custom can be seen in *Miracle at the Bridge of San Lio* by Giovanni Mansueti (fig. 7), which was painted for the *Miracles of the True Cross* cycle (c. 1494- 1505/10) in the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelisti. Gentile Bellini's work was also featured in this cycle.[31] The painting commemorates the miraculous episode which occurred during the funerary procession of a member of the

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[27] Ibid.
[28] For a discussion of the formal interdependence of real and painted architecture, as well as the altarpiece's close relationship with the church's architecture, see Humfrey, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice*, 203-4.
[29] Giovanni Bellini's *Frari* triptych (1488), still preserved in its original gilded wooden frame, features similarly adorned columns. Ibid., 218-9. See also Girolamo da Treviso's *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints* (c. 1485) or Bartolomeo Vivarini's *Ca'Bernardo* (1482). Ibid., 207, 218.
[30] Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, 107.
[31] Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting*, 152. For a detailed account of Bellini's work in this Scuola, see 143-52.

confraternity.[32] Mansueti appears less concerned with the narrative clarity of the scene than with securing as many witnesses as possible for the pious event. *Confratelli* and members of the citizenry occupy every last inch of the *campo's* enclosed space. Additionally, all the windows of the surrounding houses are occupied by women overlooking the square.[33] Ironically, the image of Mehmed behind a parapet would not have conjured such a mental reference in the Ottoman world due to court ceremonial and the sultanic dictum of imperial seclusion, formalized by Mehmed II between 1477 and 1481.[34]

The Status of the Visual Arts in the Fifteenth-Century Ottoman World

The patronage of Western artists introduced Mehmed and his court to a foreign artistic vocabulary unknown in the Ottoman realm. The conquest of Constantinople, a city lavishly embellished with mosaics and public monuments, inaugurated cross-cultural encounters for the Turks. The victorious sultan, according to contemporary sources, saved several monuments from the pillaging crowds and ordered the looting to cease prematurely.[35] In this manner, the Ottomans came in possession of a 1,130 year-old

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[32] For details of the miraculous event, see Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting*, 152-3.

[33] Similarly in Gentile Bellini's *Procession in the Piazza San Marco* (1496) for the *True Cross* cycle women stand behind windows overlooking the procession. Elizabeth Rodini notes that several of these women are dressed in the 'Arabic manner'; she comments "...Bellini's linking of the female gender with otherness offers an intriguing prologue to the 'feminization' of the East." Elizabeth Rodini, "Describing Narrative in Gentile Bellini's *Procession in Piazza San Marco*," Art History 21, no.1 (March 1998): 40.

[34] Imperial seclusion ensured the sultan was an omnipresent and yet never visible power in the theatrical stage known as the Topkapi Palace. Gürlu Necipoglu speaks of the Topkapi as "a coercive space, the space of power...its layout, obsessed with clearly delineated boundaries and codified functions, was designed to classify, to assign roles and to impose rigid behavioral patterns." Gürlu Necipoglu, *Architecture and Power, The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York, N.Y.: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, Mass : MIT Press, 1991), 250.

[34] The palace-layout reflected the Ottoman concept of sovereignty firmly established upon the idea of inner (private) and outer (public) spheres and served consecutive sultans with few changes until 1853. Ibid., 250, 257.

[35] If the inhabitants of Constantinople had voluntarily accepted the Sultan's invitation to surrender, according to the *Sharî 'a*, the city would not have been prey to the three day plundering following the forceful conquest of a community of *ahl al-kitâb* ("people of the book", in other words Christians and Jews). For a thorough explanation of the *Sharî 'a*'s teachings on war and conquest see Halil Inalcik, "The Policy of Mehmed II towards the Greek Population of Istanbul and the Byzantine Buildings of the City," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23-24 (1969-1970):229-49.
Kritovoulos, a Greek contemporary of the Sultan and author of *History of the* Conqueror, which covers the first thirty years of Mehmed's reign (1451-1467), describes the following scene after the conclusion of the looting: "*When he*[Mehmed] *saw what a large number had been killed, and the ruin of the buildings, and the wholesale ruin and destruction of the City, he was filled with compassion and repented not a little for the destruction and the plundering. Tears fell from his eyes as he groaned deeply and passionately: "What*

Christian capital and were exposed to the established artistic tradition of the Byzantine Empire. However, the new inhabitants of Istanbul, formerly Constantinople, had their own artistic past.

The emergence of Ottoman miniature painting is almost concomitant with Mehmed's sultanate. Esin Atil, who has documented this early period in Turkish art with the help of archival material, presents a record from 1525 as the earliest confirmation of the existence of an imperial workshop, *nakkashane*.[36] The manuscript describes certain artists as sons of artists previously employed at court, which indicates a studio was established possibly as early as the 1480s (during Mehmed's reign).[37] The only surviving work from the period before Mehmed's time and the transportation of the capital from Edirne, is an illustrated manuscript of *Iskendarname* (The Book Of Iskendar, Alexander the Great) by the poet Ahmedi.[38] Only three of the miniatures are actually contemporaneous to the text and according to Atil, these "are primitive in execution and composition."(fig. 8)[39] In a discussion of Ottoman painting from 1450 to 1500, Ernst Grube comments that the realistic rendering of architectural space in the aforementioned illustrated epic was a direct influence of Byzantine paintings and mosaics which had fallen into Ottoman hands.[40] Ottoman artists appear not to have remained indifferent to the new world of visual stimuli they inhabited, although Byzantine influence is rarely discussed in fields other than architecture.

Two illustrated manuscripts have survived from Mehmed's reign: one produced in Edirne in 1455-56 and a medical treatise executed in 1465 possibly in Amasya (figs 9,

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a city we have given over to plunder and destruction!" Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror,* trans. Charles T. Riggs, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954), 76-7.

[36] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting."

[37] Ibid.,103. The *Cemaat-i Nakkasan* was the society of painters whose duty was to decorate the manuscripts commissioned for the imperial libraries and treasuries and whose workshop, the *nakkashane,* formulated the themes and concepts that were later employed in the other decorative arts. Esin Atil, *The Age of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent* (Washington: National Gallery of Art; New York: H. Abrams, 1987).

[38] Ibid., 106. In the East, Iskender, "two-horned", was the hero who travelled to the ends of the world motivated by his thirst for knowledge and conquest. The oldest renderings of the Alexander legend in the Persian language are by Firdawsi and Nizami. Ahmedi's *Iskendername*, was the first account of the Macedonian's deeds in the Turkish language. The poet lived in the court of Emir Suleyman in Edirne. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* 449-500.

[39] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 106.

[40] Ernst Grube, "Notes on Ottoman Painting in the Fifteenth Century" in *Studies in Islamic Painting* (London: Pindar Press, 1995), 444-55. Grube argues that at this early stage Persian influence on Ottoman art was not as pervasive as is generally believed.

10).[41] Atil discusses the "poor aesthetic quality" of the two provincial works which she attributes to the presumed unavailability of Persian prototypes. It is not until the ensuing reign of Bayezid II that the Ottoman imperial library began to expand and include a significant number of Persian and Turcoman works, exposing Ottoman artists to the artistic achievements of their Eastern neighbours.[42]

The difference between Venetian and Ottoman fifteenth-century artistic styles is admittedly striking and points towards two directions for further enquiry: the status of portraiture in the Ottoman world or, more generally, in the Islamic realm and the pertinence of Islamic aniconistic prohibitions to the works produced under the aegis of Sultan Mehmed.

Images in Islamic Doctrine

The intricate concepts of Islamic aniconism, iconophobia and occasional icoloclasm have yet to be fully understood and analysed. In so far as they impinge on Ottoman art and Mehmed's patronage of Western art forms, I will address certain facets of the issue. Gian Maria Angiolello, an Italian captive in Istanbul during Bellini's visit, reported that Sultan Bayezid II had many of his father's paintings sold in the bazaar in a pious act of objection towards his father's liberal attitude towards Western art forms.[43] Babinger suggests Bellini's portrait was among the works sold at the bazaar.[44]

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[41] The first is *Dilsizname* of Badi al-Din al Tabrizi and the second *Cerrahiye-i Ilkhaniye* of Sharaf al-Din. Ibid., 106-7.

[42] Ibid.,107-8. Atil argues that the fact that these works were done in provincial centres instead of the new capital, Istanbul, suggests that the "the royal painting atelier had not yet been founded in Istanbul or at least was not fully in operation in the 1450s and 1460s."

[43] Angiolello (1451-1525), a native of Vicenza, wrote *Historia Turhesca*, which details the events which took place in the Ottoman Empire in the years 1429-1513.

[44] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* 379.Atil argues this explanation of the portrait's whereabouts "hardly seems likely as Bayezid II himself was an ardent supporter of the arts." Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 111. I agree with the author on the oddity and extremity of Bayezid's alleged action, however there is evidence of his disapproval of Western art which would indicate the plot is not as inconceivable as might at first appear.
Babinger, for instance, discusses the fate Mehmed's cherished Christian relic collection which Bayezid sold to the West. Additionally, the two men's relationship appears to have been strained; Angiollelo quotes Bayezid saying "his father was domineering and did not believe in the Prophet Mohammed." Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* 411-2.
Babinger, in fact, suggests that Mehmed might have been poised by his son. "The relations between the freethinking father and the mystical, bigoted son," writes the author "had never been cordial.... It would therefore not be surprising if Bayezid, with the help of the Halveti dervishes, had plotted at least against the life of the grand vizier, and his designs may just as well have been directed against his father." Ibid., 404-5.

Additionally, "Tomaso di Tolfo wrote to Michelangelo from Turkey in 1519 that Bayezid took "no delight in figures of any sort; indeed he hated them."[45] The religious prohibition of images, therefore, was evidently a matter of concern in elite Ottoman social circles. Iconophobia found expression in the rejection of Western representational art and not in relation to Ottoman illustrated miniatures, which were being produced in Istanbul at the time. This development is not surprising given the nature of Islam's doctrinal prescriptions.

Islam's Holy Book, the Qur'an, is entirely silent on the topic of images, yet implicitly forbids their creation and veneration by denouncing idolatry. The Qur'an clearly states that all creative power lies in God, Allah, and His "unity and uniqueness" make the worship of idols a sternly condemnable blasphemy.[46] "The matter of representations of God had already been settled in Islam," writes G.R.D King; "in the lifetime of the Prophet: the inconceivable was beyond encompassing by any artistic repertoire."[47] The prohibition of images was not a prominent concern of the early Muslim community and, overall, iconoclastic tendencies were minimal.[48] For this reason, Oleg Grabar labels Islam an aniconic culture, not an iconoclastic one.[49] Iconoclastic episodes first occurred in the seventh century A.D. when figural coinage was replaced with Arabic

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[45] Julian Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a patron of the arts," *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no.1, (1982): 8.

[46] Anthony Welch, "Epigraphs as Icons: The Role of the Written Word in Islamic Art," in *The Image and the Word; Confrontations in Judaism, Christianity and Islam,* ed. Joseph Gutmann (Missoula, Montana: 1977), 64. For a thorough discussion of Iconoclasm with an emphasis on Byzantine phenomena (c. 726-843), see *Iconoclasm, Papers given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies,* eds. Anthony Bryer and Judith Herrin (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1977).

[47] Ernst Grube brings to light a fascinating exception to aniconistic doctrine: a fifteenth-century Ottoman miniature depicting the Hand of God. This was against all Islamic doctrine and testifies to Byzantine influence. The motif according to the author was never repeated in Islamic art. See Ernst Grube, "A Unique Turkish Painting of the Fifteenth Century," in *Studies in Islamic Painting* (London: Pindar Press, 1995), 464-71.

[48] The rise of Islam coincides with a period when the orthodoxy of the practice of image worshiping was being questioned and the results were dividing the Eastern Christian world into enemy camps. The timing has not escaped the notice of scholars who are divided in opinion between those who see the two events as independent of each other and those who believe that either Islam forced Christianity to re-examine the course it had taken regarding imagery or the turmoil in the Christian camp lead to Islam's pre-emptive measures. For a discussion arguing Byzantine Iconoclasm was a response to the rise of Islam, a view seldom put forth, see Patricia Crone, "Islam, Judeo-Christianity and Byzantine Iconoclasm," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980):59-65.Grabar, on the one hand, believes the early generations of Muslims were indifferent to images and, on the other, the rejection of representational art was "primarily because they could not create a meaningful and effective imagery without becoming like the Christians." Ibid., 47.

[49] Oleg Grabar, "Islam and Iconoclasm" in *Iconoclasm;Papers given at the Ninth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, 45-52.

epigraphic coinage.[50] The rarity of the incidents is confirmed by the disproportionate space they occupied in contemporary chronicles.

Explicit prohibition of images is found in the second source of Islamic doctrine, the ā*hadith*, believed to be "Muhammad's inspired utterances... they form a body of scripture second in authority only to the Qur'an, the uncreated Word of God."[51] This assembly of sayings was first collected and given an official structure in the late eighth and ninth centuries, despite its unquestionably earlier origins.[52] Unlike the Qur'an, *āhadith* are openly hostile to images of living beings and to their creators. Taken as an entity, the *Bilderverbot*, the ā*hadith* state that "it is forbidden for a Muslim to create, have, use, buy or sell images of living creatures or to be in a place where such images are to be found."[53]

The outcome of religious restrictions on the Islamic artistic repertoire was not as uniform or unilateral as suggested by official doctrine.[54] The ā*hadith* are better understood as prescriptive more than descriptive statements. Nonetheless, they were very influential in certain religious circles and, as a result, came to bear on the affairs of the

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[50] G. R. D King, "Islam, Iconoclasm, and the Declaration of Doctrine," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies University* 48, no. 2, (1985): 274.

[51] Welch, "Epigraphs as Icons," 70.

[52] Welch explains that the evidence given by *āhadith* can be regarded in two ways depending on the religious inclinations of the proposed reviewer. If they are considered contemporary to the Prophet, as Muslims believe, then, Welch argues, they reflect the infallible opinions of Muhammad; if, on the other hand, they are to be regarded as intellectual products of the seventh and eighth centuries, as most non-Muslim scholars would argue, then they offer the theoretical explanation for the lack of sacred, figural art in Islam. Ibid.
For an exhaustive catalogue of all *āhadith* pertaining to images, see Daan van Reenen, "The *Bilderverbot,* a new survey," *Der Islam* 67, no. 1, 27-77.

[53] van Reenen, "The *Bilderverbot,*" 54. The doctrinal prohibitions allow for certain exceptions: plants, trees, buildings and all things without *rūh* (soul) may be portrayed without repercussions, as well as decapitated living creatures. The latter are not considered alive due to their dismembered state and, consequently, the artist escapes the danger of imitating creation. Living beings, conversely, are allowed on carpets, pillows, *diwans* and any surfaces which by virtue of their functional purpose cannot be venerated. Ibid.

[54] Christianity, similarly to Judaism and Islam, had fought idolatry in its expansion and had explicit dogmatic positions on the worship of idols. The second commandment states, "You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow to them or serve them..." *Exodus 20:3-6* in *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts,* ed. Vivian B. Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 19-20.
Although the content of the second commandment is unmistakably iconoclastic, Jews interpreted it literally by barring images, while Christians were less literal in their reading. Nonetheless, there is a long tradition of apprehension and mistrust regarding images, especially in the Western Christian world. For a discussion on the power of images, see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art,* trans. Edmund Jephocott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

court. Aniconic restrictions were, therefore, upheld and respected is so far as public sensitivity and religious piety demanded. Nonetheless, certain court circles developed an avid appreciation for representational art forms. According to Raby,

> ...even if figural painting was an established feature of many Muslim courts, it was anathema in religious circles and there were those who looked for an absolute interdiction.[55]

Religious doctrine aside, the historical development of Islamic portraiture was a tale of dynastic ambition and claims for legitimization and immortality. For this reason, I shall turn to the appreciation and employment of representational art forms in the Islamic world.

Portraiture became important under the Mongols in Iran and later in the Timurid, Safavid and Ottoman dynasties.[56] The primary concern of the ruling elites was to legitimise their claims to power and to establish a firm hold on the mechanisms of government. Altering historical facts and re-writing the course of events was (and still is) a means justified by a cause; rulers strive to control past narratives in order to secure their present standing and gain a place in future collective memory. Thus, the Mongols, who in 1258 violently conquered and annihilated the Abbasid Caliphate,[57] commissioned a 'World History', the *Jāmi 'al-Tawārīkh* of Rashīd al-Dīn, portraying themselves as legitimate heirs to the throne and claiming a rightful place in Islamic history.[58] It is not coincidental that a conquering dynasty, eager to lay claims to a foreign past, first recognized the propagandistic potential of portraiture. The accounts of decorated palaces which survive attest to the development of painting depicting triumphant monarchs

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[55] Raby, "Sultan of Paradox," 8.

[56] Ibid., 23. The first Muslim dynasties expanded into regions with strong traditions in secular art, "from the floor-mosaics of Byzantine palaces to the wall paintings of Sasanian Iran, Soghd and Chinese Turkestan," and adopted the royal iconography of their predecessors. Filiz Cağman and Zeren Tanindi, "Approval and Disapproval of Images in Islam," in *The Topkapi Saray Museum, The Albums and Illustrated Manuscripts,* trans. J.M. Rogers (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 21.

[57] The Mongol hordes, known as the Ilkhanids, converted to Islam and reached impressive achievements in the art of the book in their capital of Tabriz. "Persian painting ...effectively begins with the Ilkhanids and attained its classical style under the Timurids." Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 204.
The Safavids, the subsequent dynasty which was founded when Timur the Lame (known in Europe as 'Tamburlaine'), conquered the Iranian world, rivalled the Ottomans and competed with them for European alliances. This dynasty largely Persianised the country by rupturing cultural and religious ties with the Islamic commonwealth in the age of the Islamic superpowers. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture.*

[58] Cağman and Tanindi, *The Topkapi Saray Museum,* 21.

fighting and feasting. Yet, early Islamic portraiture, much like Byzantine and medieval European works, did not stress the physical resemblance between real and represented, but instead offered more generic 'portrait types.'[59] Filiz Cağman and Zeren Tanindi argue that these 'portrait types' emerged from other art forms such as author-portraits at the beginning of classical texts or book-plates, which often featured enthroned rulers.[60] These representations were concerned with providing standard heroic figures and rulers who were portrayed in the guise of their cultural icons.[61]

Mehmed's apparent fascination with portraiture, expressed primarily in the form of medals, was therefore, not entirely outside his royal Islamic inheritance. His persistent interest in Italian art signifies, in my view, his intentions to supersede the 'portrait-type' legacy and experiment in a visual language capable of capturing physiognomic uniqueness in realistic terms.[62] While contemporary access to archival records in both parts of the Mediterranean has brought to light the details of requests for Italian artists, their commissions and, occasionally, accounts of their oriental experiences, at the time of these events Ottoman monarchs were far from eager to publicize these artistic ventures for fear of public disapproval. In the Ottoman Empire, as in previous Muslim states, a clear and firm distinction existed between palatine and societal, especially theological, conventions and practises.[63] Accordingly, G.M Meredith-Owens and Atil reveal sultans and high-ranking officials hid images in private rooms, so as not to displease pious Muslims.[64] Western art was thus confined to the private world within the palace gates, whereas Mehmed's "generous patron[age] of Muslim intellectuals, poets, musicians and craftsmen" constituted the public expression of his interest in culture.[65]

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[59] Ibid., 23.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Atil argues Mehmed was preoccupied with immortalising his person "as had the emperors of past and present. To belong to the cult of world rulers and perpetuate his image appears to have been a specific concern with this Sultan," concludes the author. Atil, "*Ottoman Miniature Painting,*" 105.
[63] Raby, "Sultan of Paradox," 7.
[64] G.M Meredith-Owens, *Turkish Miniatures* (London: Trustees of the British Museum 1969), 9; Atil, "Turkish Miniature Painting," 7.
[65] Raby, "Sultan of Paradox," 7.
The moulding of Constantinople into an Ottoman capital was a colossal endeavour, which demanded Mehmed's unwavering commitment to architectural patronage. The Islamic character of this public patronage is unquestionable and unilateral. For a detailed account of the sultan's efforts to rebuild Constantinople, see Inalcik,"The Policy of Mehmed II"; Inalcik, "Istanbul: An Islamic City," in *Essays in Ottoman History*, (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Eren Yayincilik, 1998). Raby also discusses Mehmed's architectural

A Portrait of Mehmed as Alexander

The topics of portraiture in Islam, Ottoman art, and Sultan Mehmed II are brought together with intriguing repercussions in an illustration from a mid-sixteenth century manuscript. The image, discussed by Serpil Bağci, appears in an episode from the epic story of Iskender illustrated in a 1560s edition of Firdausi's *Shahnama* (Book of Kings).[66] In a palace interior, adorned by geometrically decorated tiles, Iskender kneels before the enthroned Queen of the Maghrib, Qaydafe, accompanied by her female entourage. She is turned in his direction and holds out a folio with his portrait. The scene of the engrossed hero mesmerised by his portrayed likeness is entitled 'Qaydafe recognises Iskendar by his portrait.'[67](fig. 11)

The Macedonian, according to the legend, concealed his true identity and posed as one of his ambassadors. Qaydafe owned a portrait of Iskender and, as a result, was able to recognise him. In order to confirm her suspicions, she offered him the painting. The instance of recognition, when the beholder confronts his image and acknowledges the likeness, is simultaneously the unmasking of the truth; the powerful warrior-king is revealed to Qaydafe demanding the respect begot by his presence. The remarkable detail of this work, commanded by the plot, lies in the portrait displayed for the awe-stricken Iskender: the image is painted identically to the 'real' character in the scene. "The painters," writes Bağci, "are sensitive to the 'photographic' quality of the portrait. ... The more concerned the artists were about the overall aspects and qualities of the manuscript,

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patronage, but from a different perspective than the former prominent Ottomanist scholar. See, "Sultan of Paradox," 6-7.

[66] Serpil Bağci, "From Iskender to Mehmed II: Change in Royal Imagery" in *Turkish Art,* 111-25. Firdausi (c.934 - 1020) extols the life and achievements of Alexander in his national epic *Shahnama.* The story, retold by many Muslim poets of subsequent generations, is also contained in Nizami's (1141-1209) *Iskandarname* (book of Iskendar) in the epic, *Khamsa.* The first illustrated copies of this story date back to the fifteenth century and were created as a pictorial companion to Nizami's work.
Susan Elizabeth Spinale discusses the earlier illustrated version of Ahmedi's epic (aforementioned in the discussion of the status of Ottoman art during Mehmed's reign) where the hero is clothed in Ottoman costume. She writes, "[it] unambiguously documents the Ottomanization of the ancient monarch destined at his birth to conquer East and West." Susan Elizabeth Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2003), 9.

[67] Ibid., 112. There are two Ottoman copies of Firdausi's *Shahnama,* which contain a miniature illustration of this scene. The first is in a copy of *Tercüme-i Şehname-i Firdevsî* in the Topkapi Palace Library; the artistic style of its illustrations has led specialists to attribute the work to the famous Ottoman painter, Osman. Although the colophon dates the manuscript to 1544, the miniatures based on knowledge of Osman's career are believed to be produced in the 1560s-70s. The second episode comes from another translation of the *Shahnama*, copied in 1616-20 in Istanbul, and now in the New York Public Library. I will be focusing on the first of these copies as it was produced closer to Mehmed's death. Ibid., 113-4.

the more meticulous they were in approaching the issue of likeness of the portrait with the person who held it."[68] Futhermore, the author reveals, in the Ottoman *Shahnama* the portrayed ruler is not a fictitious or a generic 'portrait-type', but is identifiable as Sultan Mehmed.

This attribution is based on the facial features and the specific type of turban known from portraits created during the sultan's period. External influence can also be inferred by the format of the work, which is neither fully frontal nor full-length as was the established Islamic format for the genre.[69] Iskender/Mehmed's bust portrait in the *Shahnama* is the result of the Ottoman artists' exposure to the images made by the Italians in the Ottoman court, who all truncated Mehmed's body directly below his shoulders.[70] The Ottomans involved in this manuscript's production were, clearly, exposed to the earlier work of the Italians in the Topkapi.

In mid-sixteenth century Istanbul, several decades after Mehmed's death and arguably due to his artistic legacy, a portrait by virtue of its potential for verisimilitude was conceived as capable of documenting physical appearances. The painting records the appearance of the unique, distinguishable physiognomy of a distinguished historical person. This innovation occurred while the stylistic expression faithfully adhered to Islamic representational tradition: Iskender/Mehmed's figure is strictly two-dimensional; there is no foreshortening, no shadows, no mass or weight. Although, the Islamic world had an established tradition of incorporating rulers into literary texts in the guise of the protagonists, the conflation of the two identities is a purely Ottoman innovation.[71] The artist, thus, circumvented tradition by individualising the features of the depicted face to correspond with Mehmed's documented appearance.

The replacement of the Ottoman ruler for Iskender is not surprising given the established association of the two conquerors, which began during the sultan's lifetime.[72] Kritovoulos, Mehmed's Greek biographer, commemorated his achievements as "in no

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[68] Ibid., 113.
[69] Bağci writes, "This [the fully frontal and full length position] posture is a cliché form of the Islamic book painting. In fact, these types of portraits occur in different literary texts, depicting any protagonist, such as Shirin, Huma, Iskender, or Müshterî, falling in love with the portraits of their beloved." Ibid., 113.
[70] It should be noted that the medal portrayals were exclusively profiles, though, whereas Bellini and Sinan Bey depict the sultan in a three-quarter view.
[71] *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* new ed., ed. H.A.R. Gidd et. al. (Lieden, 1960), s.v. "painting."
[72] Ibid., 116-7.

way inferior to those of Alexander the Macedonian" and aimed to spread their fame to "all peoples who are Philhellenes and are learned in such matters."[73] Raby has confirmed Kritovoulos's work was intended as a pendant volume to Arrian's *Anabasis*, a standard book of the Life of Alexander the Great; both manuscripts were copied in similar format by the same scribe and held in the Topkapi library.[74] The presence of *Anabasis* in Mehmed's library attests to the Sultan's interest in the historical figure and his knowledge of the Macedonian's story by sources other than the Islamic versions in Nizami's Persian and Ahmedi's Turkish *Iskendername*.[75] Mehmed was eager to declare an association with the famous military figure, who like him had defeated foreign armies and subjugated empires. The posthumous substitution of Mehmed for Iskender proves the politically-motivated correlation was time-honoured.

Gentile Bellini was the most famous artist to travel to Istanbul, but he was singular in this regard. Before him a series of artists were invited to the Topkapi, affirming the sovereign's resolute intentions and persevering aspirations to include Western artists in his court who could work on his commissions and train Ottoman painters in the current Italian styles.[76] Mehmed's cosmopolitan attitude and his receptiveness towards cultural developments beyond the confines of his vast empire set a precedent for future sultans.[77] A chronological account of Mehmed's patronage will follow.

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[73] Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 3-4. The historical evidence of Mehmed's admiration for the Macedonian King and its role in the aspirations of the Ottoman court is discussed in detail by Spinale in "The Alexander Analogy." Spinale, "The Portrait Medals."

[74] In "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium" Raby argues the comparison of the two men is "the *leitmotiv* of Kritovoulos's work." The scholar examines sixteen manuscripts with the help of colophons and watermarks and securely dates them back to Mehmed's reign. Raby believes the purpose of Kritovoulos's autograph copy was "to enable the sultan to appreciate for himself the validity of his neo-Alexander image." Julian Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (1983): 8.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Atil, "Turkish Miniature Painting," 14.

[77] Ibid.

Chapter 2 - Mehmed's Patronage of Western Artists

Gentile Bellini was selected by the Venetian state to satisfy the sultanic appeal for an artist who could paint portraits. The portrait he offered Mehmed typified contemporary Venetian art in terms of composition and execution. The work lead two parallel (after)lives: one in the birthplace of its creator and one in the abode of its sitter. In the Venetian Republic, as discussed in the preceding chapter, portraiture was an established artistic genre, which was not disrupted or challenged by this work. In the Ottoman capital, on the other hand, the portrait was a ground-breaking, radical departure from artistic tradition; essential adjustments and re-thinking on the part of local artists was required if it were to be incorporated into the practices of their newly established atelier.

In the following pages I will chart the chronology of Mehmed's requests to obtain Italian artists for his court and the effect of this patronage on a segment of Ottoman artists in the *nakkashane.* The efforts to attract foreigners to Istanbul were not always successful, as they were highly contingent on political factors which shifted through time. During his reign, Mehmed requested diverse artisans including a master-builder, *christallini* craftsmen and makers of chiming-clocks from Venice, "*maestri di squlture di bronzo*" and "*maestri d'intaglio e di legname, e di tarsie*" from Florence and a scabbard-maker from the Venetian colony of Coron.[1] The variety of his appeals reveals a diversity of interests in the artistic techniques practised in Italy and a willingness to look outside his state for cultural developments in other societies.

The sight of Westerners in the newly established Ottoman capital was not a rare or astounding occurrence for its Turkish inhabitants. Mehmed's court contained numerous Italian diplomats and merchants who were active in improving relations between their cities and the Porte, while they also undermined the efforts of their rivals. Giovanni Dario and Ciriaco d'Ancona were the earliest Italian artists active in Istanbul;

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[1] Julian Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a patron of the arts," *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no.1 (1982): 5. Mehmed made archer's thumb-rings, belt-buckles and scabbards, which might explain the appeal to Coron. Raby writes, "Patronage found its pendant in the Sultan's own handiwork."

from 1450 to 1460, they sketched ancient sites situated in the Ottoman Empire.[2] Their primary occupation though, was diplomacy and their artistic endeavours were unrelated to the sultan.

Matteo De'Pasti

In 1461 Mehmed sent a request to the Lord of Rimini, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1417-1468), through a Venetian alum trade agent, for the services of one of his most important court artists and intimate friends, Matteo de'Pasti, a pupil of Pisanello.[3] Malatesta, according to Franz Babinger "the most feared of all the Italian petty tyrants and perhaps the most terrifying figure of the early Renaissance," agreed to the request.[4] On his journey, the artist carried a letter of recommendation written on behalf of Malatesta by the court literatus, Roberto Valturio, and a copy of his *De re militari*-- a map or maps of Italy and the Adriatic.[5] The letter, addresses Mehmed's interest in portrait sculptures of illustrious men of the past, the immortality gained through portraiture and Alexander the Great's insistence that he be painted only by Apelles and sculpted exclusively by Lysippus; Malatesta claimed Alexander's behaviour was paralleled by the sultan's cultivated attitude towards art.[6] It concludes with an allusion to the honour Malatesta was bestowing on his Ottoman counterpart, honour that was indicative of the high esteem and respect he felt for the sultan; despite having refused numerous princes the services of this extremely valued court artist, Malatesta had made an exception for Mehmed.[7]

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[2] Esin Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting under Sultan Mehmed II," *Ars Orientalis* 9 (1973): 108.
[3] Raby, "Sultan of Paradox," 4.
[4] Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time,* ed. William C. Hickman, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 201. Unfortunately Babinger never published the pendant volume to *Mehmed the Conqueror* containing his bibliographical notes. Inalcik offers a very helpful supplementary review of the work, titled "Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481) and His Time" in *Essays in Ottoman History* (Beyoğlu, İstanbul :Eren Yayincilik, 1998), 87-110.
Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta was one of the most notorious despots of the Renaissance. He was reknown as disloyal to those who used his services as *condottiere* and was publicly condemned to hell during his lifetime by Pope Pius II. This, though, did not inhibit Rimini from becoming a centre of learning during Malatesta's reign. John T. Paoletti and Gary M. Radke, eds., *Art in Renaissance Italy* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 282.
[5] Julian Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal," *Studies in the History of Art; Italian Medals* 21, ed. by J. Graham Pollard, 175-6.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

Unfortunately, the letter never reached the Ottoman palace since de Pasti was caught off Crete by the Venetians and accused of espionage. His captors escorted him to the Council of Ten, where he was questioned about the true purpose of his trip and eventually freed.[8] As news of the incident traveled, rumours spread that Malatesta was forging ties with the Turkish Lord and offering his services as a *condottiere*.[9] Pope Pius II openly accused the Lord of Rimini of wishing to attract the Ottomans to Italy.[10]

Mehmed's first documented request for an Italian artist ultimately met an unhappy fate, but the appeal for a known artist is noteworthy, as well as Mehmed's request that Matteo de' Pasti "paint and sculpt" him.[11]This evidence led Raby to propose that "[i]n Mehmed's mind ...there was an intimate connection between graphic and glyptic portraiture. The combined demand for images of his own likeness and historical effigies, especially of military leaders, is typical of Renaissance Humanism, and points to Italian influence in both the form and the acceptation of the sultan's patronage."[12] Indeed, the specificity of the request attests to the presence of Italian advisors in sultanic circles, whereas the Venetian interception speaks of the diplomatic dimension of these cultural exchanges. The Italian states feared secret alliances could be forged between their rivals and the Ottomans; this anxiety confirms the practice was customary.

Costanzo da Ferrara

The second artist to visit Istanbul was Costanzo da Ferrara, who was sent by the King of Naples, Ferninard (Ferrante) of Aragon.[13] In this instance the sultan did not appeal for a specific artist, but instead left the choice to the recipient. Although a precise date is impossible to infer, it is highly improbable any cultural exchange occurred during

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[8] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 201.

[9] Robert Schwoebel confirms the rumours, adding, "Less than 3 years later the same terrible Malatesta commanded the Venetian land forces in their unsuccessful campaign against the Turks in Morea." Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453-1517)* (New York: St. Mark's Press, 1967), 206.

[10] Babinger further argues "the presence in Istanbul at the time (October 1461) of Valurio's compatriot and friend Angelo Vadio might give ground for suspicion of closer relations between Rimini and the Ottoman capital." Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 201.

[11] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 176.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ferdinard I (Ferrante) (1458-94) was the son of Alfonso I "The Magnanimous," a humanist ruler in whose court gathered some of the fifteenth century's most renown scholars. Paoletti and Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy*, 280.

the period of tension following the Ottoman conquest of Negroponte in July of 1470.[14] Raby contends the most plausible dates are during Ottoman negotiations with Naples in 1461-1464 and 1475-1478.[15] The only archival verification of the visit is a letter written in 1485 by Battista Bendidio, the Ferrarese envoy to Naples, to his daughter, Duchess Eleonora d' Este, stating "Ferrante sent Costanzo to Istanbul '*gia più anni*' following a request from Mehmed."[16] The Ottoman ruler is famed to have dubbed him a *cavaliero* (knight) in appreciation of his work.[17]

Costanzo was born in Venice, but worked in both Lombardy and Ferrara, as his sobriquets Lombardo and da Ferrara demonstrate. He was a student of Pisanello and was recorded as a painter and designer in the 1480's and 1490's. A medallic portrayal of the sovereign, which survives in two signed versions, an undated one, in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, and several dated copies, one in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, are the only remnants of his stay in Istanbul.[18] (fig. 12)

The medal's obverse depicts the sultan in profile as was the conventional pose for this medium. He wears his characteristic turban wrapped around a fluted cap; the turban's weight slightly bends his ear. The sovereign is clad in a *kaftan* covered with a fur-collared coat. The reverse presents Mehmed mounted on a horse holding a scepter amidst an outdoor winter scene. On the basis of the sultan's healthy appearance, Armenag Sakisian has suggested the medal was produced as early as the 1460's.[19] Conversely, Raby contends Mehmed's physical condition in the following decade was still vigorous enough to allow for such a depiction.[20]

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[14] Raby presents a thorough argumentation regarding the possible chronology of da Ferrara's visit. "Pride and Prejudice," pp. 176-177. Both Atil and Babinger believe that Costanzo travelled to the Porte in 1478. Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," p. 109. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 505-6.

[15] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 176-8.

[16] Ibid., 176. Also see, Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 109.

[17] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 380; Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 176.

[18] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 109. They bear the date 1481 and were possibly made in commemoration of Mehmed's death.
For a thorough discussion of the medal, as well as a brief biography of Costanzo da Ferrara, see Julian Raby, "Costanzo da Ferarra" in *The Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance*, ed., Stephen K. Scher (New York: H.N. Abrams in association with the Frick Collection, 1994), 87-9.

[19] Armenag Sakisian, "The Portraits of Mehmed II," *The Burlington Magazine* 74 (1939): 177-89 cited in Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 178. The author contrasts Costanzo's medal with the one made by Bellini in 1480, which according to Sakisian reflects the declining condition of Mehmed's health.

[20] Ibid. The sultan's suffered a rapid deterioration of his health at the end of that decade.

Atil compares Costanzo's medallic portrayal of the sultan with a portrait in the Fatih (Conqueror) Album in the Topkapi Palace Museum.[21] (fig. 13) As in the medal, Mehmed is depicted in profile, wearing an imposing turban and a *kaftan,* and set against a blank background. The scholar believes the original portions of the piece, the face and turban in particular, were by the Italian artist, whereas the gold background and the reworked garments were painted by Ottomans employed in the Topkapi.[22]

The lack of signed pieces by Costanzo da Ferrara raises an obstacle in securely attributing work to his name. Recently, the gouache *Seated Scribe* in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston and a group of finely-drafted sketches of Ottoman figures, traditionally attributed to Bellini, have been assigned to the artist.[23] The group contains images of members of the sultan's entourage or individuals who attracted the artist's attention in the city's streets. Two meticulous pen-and-ink drawings of seated Turkish figures are among the works. (figs 14,15) The drawing of the *Seated Turkish Woman* features colour notations suggesting the artist intended to use the image in a painting.[24] "The reattribution of these drawings to Costanzo," writes Raby, "would establish him as an artist of considerable talent and influence, and confirm the impression conveyed by his medal of Mehmed the Conqueror, justly described as one the 'finest portrait medals of the Renaissance."[25] For the longest time Costanzo's achievements have been overshadowed by the Venetian who followed in his path.

Gentile Bellini

The next Italian artist to set sail for Istanbul was the Venetian, Gentile Bellini. In 1479 an abscess in the sultan's leg accompanied by his early gout led him to remain out of public sight and confined to his newly completed palace.[26] The same year saw the

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[21] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 108. The album (H2153) is dated between the years 1460-1480.
[22] Ibid., 110.
[23] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 176. Also see, Rosamond E. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art:1300 -1600* (Berkeley, California; London: University of California, 2002),157-8. For a complete list of the works, see Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," p. 112. The author tentatively attributes the drawings to Bellini.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 176.
[26] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 377-8. In his *Memoirs,* Philippe de Commynes (1445-1509), a French diplomat and political observer, wrote that Mehmed's decease restricted him to his palace as he did not wish his state to stir the world's contempt. Commynes attributed the sultan's poor health to "*les plaisirs du*

signing of a peace treaty ending the war with Venice and permitting the re-commencement of cultural exchanges.

In August Mehmed addressed a letter to Doge Giovanni Mocenigo appealing for a painter, a sculptor and a bronze-caster to be sent to his court and extended an invitation to one of his son's wedding.[27] The doge respectfully declined the invitation, but granted his request for a painter by sending him one of the Republic's official artists.[28] The choice of such a prominent figure undoubtedly reflected the importance Venice placed on retaining good relations with the Porte.

Bellini's mission to Istanbul extended beyond cultural objectives; it was primarily diplomatic in nature, since the Venetian government was eager to generate a favourable impression and gratitude from the Ottomans, previously a feared adversary but recently, a valuable ally. The sultan's commissions varied from imperial portraits, both on canvas and cast in bronze, to the decoration of palace apartments, an icon of *Virgin and Child* for the sultan's Christian relic collection, drawings of members of Mehmed's entourage, and,

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monde" and believed the swelling in his leg to be the result of gluttony. The Frenchman's opinion of the sultan's character and indulgences, did not deter him from admiring his political genius; he "emphasize[d] that Mehmed, Mathias Corvinus [king of Hungary] and his own master, Charles VIII, were the wisest princes to have reigned for a hundred years."

[27] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 110. Babinger states the invitation was for the circumcision of one of his grandchildren. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 378. Both statements could simultaneously be true.

[28] Opinions diverge as to the fate of the request for the sculptor and bronze-caster. It has been argued that the choice fell upon the Paduan sculptor, Bartolommeo Bellono. It is known that Bellono drew up a will in anticipation of his journey; "Since I...," wrote the concerned sculptor at the opening of his will, "am about to leave for Constantinople..." Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 183. Raby believes the Paduan resided in Turkey with two assistants for at least six months, from his departure on September 3, 1479 until mid-March, but no work from his visit has come to light to this date. The author presents evidence the sultan was not impressed by the quality of Bellono's work since in a letter to the doge dated January 7, 1480, requesting a master-builder, "Mehmed thanked the Doge for sending him the first bronzeworker, but asked for a second 'like the one your Excellency sent me before, or *even better*'." Raby writes, "[a]lthough diplomatic, the phraseology is disparaging to Bellono, and the Signoria's response was somewhat defensive: '... the first bronze founder we sent there is very famous in these parts of ours for this sort of work'." Mehmed, though, was not alone in considering the limitations of Bellono's talent as a contemporary characterised him as *ineptus artifex*. Ibid., 184.
For Raby, Mehmed's implicit criticism of Bellono's talent, offers evidence that "[t]he sultan was... no blind advocate of Italian art" and that "by the last years of his reign his appreciation of Renaissance art was informed and critical." Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox," 5; Raby, "Pride and Prejudice,"184.
Atil makes no mention of this artist in the course of her extensive discussion of painting under the patronage of Mehmed II in "Ottoman Miniature Painting." For a brief discussion of the artist and his medal of Mehmed, see James David Draper, "Bertoldo di Giovanni" in Scher, *The Currency of Fame*, 126-8.

according to Angiollelo, a view of Venice.[29] Only two of these alledged works have survived: the medal and the portrait.

Bellini's medal depicts the sultan in a profiled pose identical to Costanzo's earlier work. The reverse features the three superimposed crowns also found in the portrait. (fig.16) Raby has tentatively dated the artefact to the first half of 1480.[30] The legend encircling the crowns reads: GENTILIS BELENVS VENETVS EQVES AVRATVS COMESQ. PALATINVS F[ecit].[31] Bellini's title *Eques Auratus* (Knight with the Golden Spur), proudly displayed on the medal along with the title he had already received from Emperor Frederick III, was bestowed upon him by the sultan.[32] His work has been critiqued for "possessing neither the bold modeling nor the animated characterization of Costanzo's medal."[33] Although, the criticism is not entirely unwarranted, it should be noted that Bellini, a novice in this artistic medium, was satisfying his patron's taste for medallic portrayals. In point of fact, he never produced another medal in his career.

As discussed previously, Bellini also painted the famous portrait now in London.[34](fig. 1)The work has been heavily repainted, according to experts, who have

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[29] Julian Raby, *Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode* (London: Sotherby Publication, 1982), 22. On the possibility Bellini painted works with erotic content, Babinger writes, "Bellini's work consisted not only in painting portraits of the sultan and the members of his court but also in decorating the inner chambers of the palace with erotic and probably obscene paintings, which indeed are explicitly characterised as '*cose di lussuria*' (objects of lechery)." Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* 379. "Two documented commissions reflect the very private character of this patronage," comments Raby, "one was for erotica, the other for a painting of a Madonna and Child." Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox," 5. Atil does not comment on the possibility of such commissions.
Interestingly, Patricia Fortini Brown points out that the exact meaning of '*cose di lussuria*' is unknown; they might refer to scenes of banquets and festive occasions and not necessarily to erotic paintings. Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 55.
A double portrait found in Switzerland has been tentatively attributed to Bellini. It depicts the Sultan and a younger man, identified on an inscription as his son. Mehmed had two known sons when Bellini visited, Bayezid and Prince Cem, but both were at their posts in Anatolia during the artist's stay. For a discussion on the literature on this topic, see Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 379.
[30] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 180.
[31] Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting,* 55. The inscription on the obverse is MAGNI SVLTANI F. MAHOMETI. IMPERATORIS.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 182. Atil agrees when stating "The portrait does not appear as powerful as the one executed by Costanza." Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 111.
[34] The work was acquired in 1865 from the Venturi family in Venice (it is posited a Venetian merchant from Pera brought it to the city) by Sir Austen Henry Layard (1817-1894), a British ambassador to the Sublime Porte. His widow donated the painting to the National Gallery in London in 1917. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* p. 379; Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 111.

determined that little of the original work survives.[35] The location of the work's creation has been the subject of debate. On the basis of the date inscribed on the painting, Bellini is believed to have completed the work in the Ottoman capital. Against this conventional view, however, Atil argues that it was created upon his return to Venice with the aid of preparatory drawings and signed an earlier date; "It is doubtful," she maintains, "that the Istanbul portrait could have left the Palace and been taken to Venice as the imperial possessions were zealously guarded."[36] The evidence uncovered so far does not allow for a definitive conclusion as to the site of the execution, which necessarily assigns the debate to the realm of speculations and hypotheses.

Although little is known of Bellini's residence in the capital, his existing work indicates his projects were dictated by his patron. During his time in the Ottoman Empire, the Venetian was a court artist who was obliged to respect the taste of his patron. As Raby has pointed out, Bellini did not paint any works depicting "a view of Istanbul, of Turkish architecture, or even of Turks *en masse*."[37] His images of the Ottoman world were confined to individual studies of the ruler and his entourage: a world observed as a court painter in the enclosed space of the Topkapi.[38]

An episode from Bellini's stay narrated by Carlo Ridolfi, a biographer of Venetian artists (1648), typifies the nature of the rumours circulating in the West regarding Mehmed and Ottoman (Islamic) culture. Bellini, wrote Ridolfi, presented the sultan with a drawing of John the Baptist's beheading and although the ruler was pleased with the work, he pointed out that the Baptist's neck was protruding rather than contracting, as happened in such cases. To illustrate his point, continues the story, the

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[35] X-ray photographs were taken in 1935 and, in the words of Babinger, they revealed, "that next to nothing beyond the turban remains of the original." Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* 424-5.

[36] Atil, ibid. Atil also questions the attribution of the work to Bellini. "It may not even be by Bellini but by a follower who either used one of his sketches or copied a painting which is now lost. If the painting can be proven to be by Bellini," she writes "then he must have painted this portrait upon his return to Venice."

[37] Raby, *Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode*, 21. However, as mentioned previously, according to Angiollelo a view of Venice was requested.

[38] For a discussion of the impact of Bellini's figural studies on the art of the Venetian Republic and Northern Europe through the work of Albrecht Dürer, see Raby, *Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode*; Raby, "Picturing the Levant" in *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration,* ed. Jay A. Levenson (New Haven: Yale University Press ; Washington : National Gallery of Art, 1991). For the Venetian Republic exclusively, see Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting.*

sultan beheaded a slave in front of the horrified painter.[39] Babinger points out that Michelangelo was the protagonist of a similar story, and the narrative can be traced back to Seneca, the Roman writer, who described such an episode in the life of the Greek painter Parrhasios.[40] This *topos* repeated by Ridolfi demonstrates the desire to parallel a patron's savagery with the quest for ultimate realism.

On the artist's departure, Mehmed presented Bellini with a medal as a token of his appreciation, while, in turn, Bellini offered the sovereign a sketchbook with his father's drawings, now at the Louvre.[41] Instead of a Western-style medal, Mehmed gave the artist a solid gold *rotella* with Arabic inscriptions on one side and the sultan's *tuğra* on the other. The diploma that accompanied the gift stated, "The medal was given as a sign of affection –'*in signum purioris amoris*'-- and in order to increase the artist's fame abroad."[42] The substitution of the portrait medals offered in the West for an aniconic object constitutes a translation of conventions, whereby the Eastern monarch redefined a foreign tradition by adjusting it to his own societal imperatives. Within the confines of his private world, the Ottoman ruler experimented in Western art forms, but the formality and publicity of Bellini's departure demanded adherence to the restrictions of his faith. Mehmed, therefore, presented the artist with an Oriental rendering of the Renaissance medal, one which no longer featured representational images but the esteemed art of calligraphy and the sultan's official signature, in place of his portrait, as his personal imprint. This precious gift simultaneously pronounced the sultan's high regard of Bellini and testified to his cultivated taste and cultured behaviour as a Muslim head of state.

Bellini proudly displayed his mark of distinction from his trip to the Orient in his self-portrait in *St Mark Preaching in Alexandria,* where the artist can be seen in the left corner of the foreground. (fig. 17) The commission for this episode in the *Life of Saint Mark* cycle in the Scuola Grande di San Marco, Albergo was signed in 1504, but the

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[39] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 428-9. The story is repeated by Schwoebel, who poignantly comments, "The tales told about the sultan in connection with Bellini's visit ... reflect the tendency toward sensationalism when writing about the Turks," *The Shadow of the Crescent*, 207.
[40] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 428-9.
[41] Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox," 7.For the most recent scholarly work on the topic, see Susan Elizabeth Spinale, "The Portrait Medals of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2003).
[42] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 185. Raby writes, "[Mehmed] did not use the opportunity to spread the fame of his features." Ibid.

work was completed by Giovanni after his brother's death.[43] The scene is set in a large square enclosed by the Basilica structure and buildings constructed according to Mamluk architectual prototypes.[44] The attending crowd, a mixture of Venetian and local Mamluk figures, listens to the sermon, while some converse among themselves. The artist stands in profile, wearing a red toga and the gold necklace with the medallic pendant he received from the sultan. He has placed himself prominently among his *confratelli*, signifying his elevated status in Venetian society and his devotion to the cult of St. Mark; he also attracts attention as the closest figure to the viewer.[45] The artist displays both pride and piety, self-confidence in his life's achievements and modesty in the presence of holiness.

Bellini, already a prominent artist before he left for Istanbul, continued to enjoy fame after his return. He was the only Venetian included for the entry of 1483 in Jacopo Filippo Foresti's *Supplementum Chronicarum*, which recorded the most important events and people from creation to its publication in 1486.[46] His journey to Istanbul earned him the posthumous title in art history of "father of late Quattrocento Orientalism", although it has been argued this was to the detriment of others' contribution.[47] The artist himself proclaimed his achievements on a *cartello* in his work *Procession in the Piazza San Marco* (1496): "A Work of Gentile Bellini, Venetian, Knight, Inflamed by Love for the Cross."[48]

Mehmed's Medallic Portraits

Mehmed's behaviour as a patron reveals an evident bias towards medallic images of his own person. In point of fact, all of the surviving Italian art produced for the

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[43] Radiographs confirm Gentile Bellini was responsible for the overall composition, the massing of the figures and the architecture. Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting,* 203.
[44] Bellini work was informed by the anonymous work entitled, *Reception of an Ambassador in Damascus.* For a discussion, see Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting,* 207.
[45] Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting,* 233.
[46] Ibid., 55.
[47] LucetteValensi, *The birth of the despot: Venice and the Sublime Porte*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 79. Raby qualifies the statement by claiming, "The mistake has been to credit him [Bellini] uncritically with each and every late-fifteenth century portrait of an oriental. His influence has been exaggerated and the contribution of his fellow visitors underestimated." The latter is a reference to Costanzo da Ferrara's work.Raby, "Picturing the Levant."
[48] Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting,* 233.

Ottoman sultan is a compilation of regal portraits, whether painted or sculpted.[49] The medallic aspect of his artistic patronage has served as evidence for scholars such as Raby who are inclined towards presenting the sultan in the guise of a Renaissance prince. Raby writes, "Mehmed's education and interests enabled him ... to participate in the humanist culture of his Italian contemporaries, and his portrait medals are the best surviving expression of that participation."[50] This classicising art medium complies with certain facets of Mehmed's cultural orientation: a documented interest in history, especially Alexander the Great, a collection of antique and Byzantine statuary, salvaged from the plunder of the fallen capital, and a Christian relic collection.[51] More importantly, Mehmed's imperial aspirations for unifying the Mediterranean world under his rule found expression in the art form conventionally associated with dynastic emperors. The ambitious and assertive sultan employed medals to proclaim poignantly his power and status. To this effect, Rosamond E. Mack writes,

> Mehmed II had had a childhood interest in drawing caricatures and busts; from it developed the fifteenth century's most active patronage of medals, undoubtedly to advertise his dominion over a great eastern Mediterranean empire in a traditional Mediterranean manner for a Western audience.[52]

The sultan's interest in the genre may have been sparked by Pisanello's medal of the Byzantine Basileus John VIII Palaelogus, since it was widely disseminated through multiple copies.[53] (fig. 18) Raby speculates that these "must have circulated in Asia

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[49] Costanzo da Ferrara's drawings of two seated Turkish figures, which will be discussed further in the text, are the exceptions.

[50] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 185-6. The author also writes, "In terms of the number of artists he patronized Mehmed may well rank as the foremost patron of Italian *quattrocento* medallists. He does not rate so high in terms of quality." Raby attributes the medals' inconsistency in artistic accomplishment to conditions external to Mehmed's taste; namely, the fact that diplomatic channels and political circumstances determined the artists sent to Istanbul. He offers Mehmed's indirect critique of Bartolommeo Bellono's work as evidence of the sultan's ability to judge Italian art. Ibid., 184-5.

[51] For a thorough discussion of the Greek manuscripts in the Topkapi library which have survived from Mehmed's reign, see Julian Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium," *Dumbarton Oaks Paper* 37 (1983):15-34.
Raby excludes the possibility of linking this interest to a revival of the early Islamic gold 'portrait' medallions due to the distance of time and the stylistic dissimilarity. Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 185.

[52] Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza,* 157. The author is referring to a *cahier d'enfance*, which survives in a sketchbook from about 1444, where Mehmed had drawn numerous portrait heads. See, Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 172.

[53] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 183; Raby, "Sultan of Paradox", 4. Antonio Pisano or, as he was more commonly known, Pisanello (c.1393-c.1455) is hailed as "the first true Renaissance medallist." He is

Minor and Thrace and eventually come into Ottoman hands."[54] In Italy, Palaelogus's portrait had become extremely popular as a "type of both Greek and oriental potentate, in short an exotic figure" appropriate for representing a wide range of characters from Antiquity to Charlemagne and, ironically, even Sultan Mehmed.[55] Pisanello's skills had already been employed at the humanist court of Sigismondo Malatesta, where Matteo de' Pasti came in contact with the former.[56]

Portrait medals were intimate, personal items, "...meant to be held in the hand and studied at close range...combin[ing] tactile and visual pleasure with mental exercise."[57] In the Renaissance, their bestowing was a cherished token of favour, honour, political alliance, appreciation and acknowledgement.[58] Meanwhile, medals were a product of the humanist "individualist temper and cult of fame"; they manifested the quest for immortality and personal glory, *fama*.[59] Individual excellence and distinction were qualities advertised in the circles of patrons, connoisseurs and literati. In this sense,

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credited with inventing the basic form of the medal in this period, based on elements of an established Roman tradition paired with the newly-found "Renaissance philosophy of man." The outcome of his prolific career is believed to be unparalleled in craftsmanship and elegance. Scher, *The Currency of Fame*, 12, 15-6.
For a thorough discussion of this medal and its far-reaching impact on work by other artists, see Roberto Weiss, *Pisanello's Medallion of the Emperor John VIII Palaeologus,* (Oxford, 1966). For a discussion of Pisanello's preparatory drawings, see Michael Vickers, "Some Preparatory Drawings for Pisanello's Medallion of John VIII Palaeologus" *Art Bulletin* 60 (1978):417-24.
Pisanello was a contemporary and rival of Gentile's father, Jacopo Bellini, a leading exponent of the international Gothic style and a favourite among the humanists. (Weiss, *Pisanello's Medallion*, 12-3) The aforementioned medal depicts the penultimate Byzantine Emperor during his journey to Italy in a final effort to unite the two Churches and secure Western aid against the Turks. Although the medal is undated it was most probably executed in Ferrara in 1438/39, where the council had moved due to fear of the plague in Florence. Pisanello met the Emperor during the council, as evidenced by the preparatory drawings, but the commissioner of the medal is unknown. Ibid.,14-6

[54] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 173. Raby also looks for a possible connection between the fact that two of the artists, Matteo de' Pasti (specifically requested by Mehmed) and Costanzo da Ferrara, were Pisanello's students.

[55] Weiss points out that the engravers who depicted Palaeologus as Mehmed were probably unable to read the inscription in Greek and assumed that since he was a ruler of Constantinople, he must represent the Ottoman Sultan. "And if this could happen in humanist Florence, in those years when it was the very centre of Greek studies of Renaissance Italy, it is less surprising that it should have also happened in distant Nürnberg," where again Pisanello's portrait is used for Mehmed's portrayal. Ibid., 17-8.
For further discussion of the medal and its legacy, see Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza,* 152-5.

[56] Ibid.,18.

[57] Scher, *The Currency of Fame*, 15.

[58] Isabella d'Este (1474-1539), for instance, played a practical joke by denying the famous poet, Bernardo Accolti, the pleasure of such an honour while it was known she had circulated the medal quite widely among her circle of acquaintances.When the truth surfaced, he was furious and Isabella d'Este had to "go out of her way to placate him." Scher, *The Currency of Fame*, 19.

[59] Ibid.

medals were a powerful means of propaganda; the reverse, especially, where text in the form of mottoes or epigrams often encircled a narrative scene embedded with symbolic meanings, offered the patron the opportunity to present a picture to his milieu of his quintessential personal attributes and achievements. In the sixteenth century, contemporary medals were displayed alongside ancient medals as "illustrations of modern history as well as personal souvenirs."[60] The medal's potency, however, lay in its ability to be cast in multiple copies and dispersed; image and written word were, consequently, imparted to a select audience. This social function set medals apart from painted portraits, despite their common propagandistic qualities.

A prime example of this type of exchange took place between the Ottoman court and the Medici family. In March 1480, a cast of Bellini's medal was taken to Florence by a Turkish envoy, who carried a request for bronze sculptors to the Florentine rulers.[61] The purpose of the cast was twofold: to act as a present for Lorenzo de' Medici and as a sample of the type of work Mehmed expected of Italian artists. Lorenzo commissioned Bertoldo di Giovanni's medal as a return present; "That Lorenzo intended Bertoldo's medal as a pendant to Bellini's," writes Raby, "is confirmed by the medal's metrology and inscriptions."[62] Apart from the social etiquette of gift exchange, the Medici family was eager to proclaim its deep appreciation to the Ottoman ruler for extraditing the murderer of Lorenzo's brother, who had also made an attempt against Lorenzo's life in the famous Pazzi Conspiracy.[63] This instance constitutes the second documented instance of Mehmed's usage of his medals after the offering of the aniconic medallion to Bellini.

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[60] J. Graham Pollard, "The Italian Renaissance Medal: Collecting and Connoisseurship,"*Studies in Art History; Italian Medals* 21 (1987), 165.

[61] Raby, "Pride and Prejudice," 182.

[62] Ibid. Babinger discusses the possible political maneuvers between the Porte and Lorenzo de' Medici which occurred concurrently and refutes the theory of hidden political messages in the iconography of the reverse side of the medal. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* 384-5.

[63] The Pazzi Conspiracy had taken place on April 26, 1478 with the intent of killing both brothers in the Florence Cathedral. An emissary was sent to the Porte, as soon as news reached Florence that the assassin was in the sultan's domain. Mehmed handed over the culprit, who was escorted to Italy and publicly hung. Ibid.

James Hankins argues the medal was a sign of gratitude for the Turkish intervention in the Italian war following the Pazzi conspiracy. Lorenzo de' Medici was 'hard-pressed' by Alfonso of Aragon until the Turks landed at Otranto in 1480. The Florentine, apart from Bertoldo di Giovanni's medal, also sent copies of his *Geographia* to Mehmed and his sons, Bayezid and Djem. Hankins writes, "There is some evidence as well that Lorenzo exchanged intelligence reports with the sultan in return for trading privileges...It was widely believed that he had been responsible for inviting the Turk to Italy in 1480. Thanks to Lorenzo's fame as a philoturk, Florence further enhanced its existing reputation for greed and impiety." James

Medals had at least two alternative routes to circulation: the commissioner's social networks and requests to the artist for additional copies. Costanzo da Ferrara's medal of Mehmed, for instance, might not have been publicised by the sultan, but copies were produced in Italy (fig. 12). The later version of the work bears the date 1481 and was probably made in commemoration of the sovereign's death.[64] Paolo Giovio, Bishop of Como, and Vasari both owned copies, which they erroneously attributed to Pisanello despite Costanzo's signature on the reverse.[65] Futhermore, Giovio's copy writes Raby, "served as the basis for a painted portrait of which copies exist in both the Uffizi and Vienna."[66] Mehmed's medals, therefore, once outside of his abode took on a separate life – one dictated by the tastes of humanistic circles and not subject exclusively to the diplomatic manoeuvres of the Italian city-states and their eastward rival. The sultan's ambitions for a place among famous past and present rulers was, thus, realised by the wide circulation of his sculpted image in the West. His figure became one of the most popular and recognisable representations of the Grand Turk in Europe.

The dissemination of the sultan's image achieved by these medals begs the question of the nature of the demand. Why was there such a profound interest in depictions of Ottomans? And what was the discursive language that accompanied these images? The issue of Western reactions and attitudes to their Ottoman neighbours will be addressed in the coming chapter. The last section of the current chapter will look at the impact of Mehmed's patronage on local artists' circles.

The Istanbul School

Mehmed's invitations to Italian artists held the promise of training local talents in a Western artistic vocabulary. Whether inspired to work from the Italian art in the

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Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders: Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995): 111-207. For evidence of Florence's philoturkish policies, as well as an interpretation of the iconography of the obverse of Betroldo's medal, see Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," notes 26, 28.

[64] Raby, "Costanzo da Ferrara," 89.

[65] Ibid. The legend reads SVITANUS · MOHAMETH · OTHOMANVS · TVRCORVM · IMPERATOR (Sultan Mehmed of the House of Osman, Emperor of the Turks). On the reverse the artist wrote, HIC · BELLI · FVLMEN · POPVLOS · PROSTRAVIT · ET · VRBES (This man, the thunderbolt of war, has laid low peoples and cities). Raby "Costanzo da Ferrara" in *The Currency of Fame*, 88.

[66] Ibid.

Topkapi or explicitly trained by the foreign invitees, a group of Ottoman artists in Mehmed's court produced work which was stylistically distinctive from their native artistic heritage; Atil baptizes them the "Istanbul School".[67] Ali's *Menakib-ı Hünerveran* (1586), a history of calligraphy and bookbinding, mentions the following artists from this period: 'Maestro Paolo', his pupils Sinan, Baba Nakkaş and Ahmed Siblizade, Husamzadeh Sunullah, Baba Mustafa, Safi and Rahmi Balioğlu.[68] A total of four single portraits of their patron have survived, none of which can be positively attributed to a specific hand, while collaboration among the artists of the *nakkashane* was the established practice.[69]

Arguably the most well known portrait of Sultan Mehmed today is conventionally attributed to Sinan Bey, despite the lack of evidence supporting the assertion.[70] (fig. 19) Babinger considers the painter an Italian renegade bearing the usual name Sinan, for new converts, but offers no justification for the assumption.[71] According to Ali, mentioned above, Sinan studied under a foreign master in the palace school;[72] Raby mentions the artist was from Ragusa.[73] The only archival evidence pertaining to Sinan, apart from the

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[67] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 113.
[68] Ibid., 114.
[69] For a complete catalogue of these works, see Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting."
[70] Ibid, 115. Serpil Bağci, a contributing scholar to the catalogue for the exhibition *Turks* currently (22 January-12 April, 2005) on display at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, states it is the work of Ahmed Shiblizade "a pupil of the Ottoman artist Sinan Bey (active c. 1475-1500) to whom the painting was previously attributed." www.turks.org.uk. I would like to thank Wael Dabboussi for bringing the exhibition to my attention.
Although I have no grounds to contest Bağci's argument, for the remaining of my work I will remain faithful to the original attribution in order to avoid confusion since all the cited works refer to the portrait as a work by Sinan Bey.
[71] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* 505.
[72] Atil mentions the efforts to identify 'Maestro Paolo' with Matteo de Pasti, but concludes they are fruitless given the evidence supporting the unsuccessful fate of the journey to the Ottoman capital. Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 109.
Meredith-Owens, the author of *Turkish Miniatures,* suggests that the portrait might be the work of one of Bellini's pupils based exclusively on stylistic similarities. Following the theory that Sinan Bey was 'Maestro Paolo's student, the following possible identifications are offered: he might "be identical with Paolo da Ragusa (c. 1450) to whom are ascribed medals of Alphonso V of Naples and Federigo da Montefeltre of Urbino. He may be the same as Polo di Antonio de Ragusi, mentioned among the assistants of Donatello in the Santo at Padua." G.M. Meredith-Owens, *Turkish Miniatures* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1969), 16.
[73] This assumption is in accordance with the names offered above by Meredith-Owens. By 1480, Raby argues, Sinan was the sultan's head painter and "according to official Venetian correspondence he and his relatives wielded considerable at court." Raby, "Sultan of Paradox," 5.

aforementioned history, are the purchasing deeds of a farm in 1491 and a tombstone bearing the artist's name in Bursa.[74]

The portrait, found in the Fatih Album of the Topkapi Museum, is strikingly atypical of Ottoman miniatures of the time.[75] The sultan, presented full-figured against a blank, pale background, occupies the greater part of the folio. He is seated cross-legged, the pose favoured for royalty by medieval Oriental miniaturists, and clutches a handkerchief in his left hand and a bouquet of roses in his right.[76] The sitter wears in a *kaftan* and the turban seen in all his portraits. The upper part of his body is disproportionately long compared to the lower and appears forced into the limited, undefined pictorial space. The subtle use of shading and foreshortening in his face allude to Western visual techniques for simulating three-dimensionality in images; the two-dimensional, stylized body, conversely, reinforces the flatness of the work.[77]

Sinan Bey has drawn on, at least, two known models for this work: Bellini's portrait and the *Drawing of a Seated Woman* by Costanzo.[78] The repetition of the three-quarter profile and the rendering of Mehmed's facial features, in specific, attest to the artist's knowledge of Bellini's work, whether a preparatory study or the finished painting.[79] I would also argue that the rippled effect of the garment's sleeves and the positioning of the arms inside the figure's lap echo Costanzo's work. The entire orientation of the sultan's body in relation to the picture plane, diagonal and facing the left side, are identical to those of the seated woman.

Despite the Ottoman artist's debt to Italian works in the Topkapi, Sinan simultaneously negotiated his own artistic vision into his portrait.[80] The cast shadow of

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[74] Ibid., 114.
[75] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 115.
[76] Although the work is discussed in most works on Ottoman art, Bağci's description for the exhibition website (and presumably the catalogue) is the most detailed and informative I have encountered.
[77] For a description of the work along the same lines, see Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 115; Jürg Meyer zur Capellen *Gentile Bellini* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), 101.
[78] *Drawing of a Seated Janissary* could also have potentially served as an inspiration; the two works by the Italian artist are very close in composition.
[79] Atil writes, "The face is clearly drawn and follows the three-quarter view seen in the London painting. Even the folds of the turban, jutting right eye, awkward profile of the nose, lips and chin, the beard and bent ear are the same. Shading of the facial features also indicates a close relationship with its Western model." Ibid.
[80] Capellen writes "[w]ith the copy of the foreign model, the Oriental artist let himself be brought into a form of representation with which his own two-dimensional decorative art is in strict contradiction." Translation from original German text by Dr. Carol Doyon. Capellen, *Gentile Bellini,* 111.

the seated Turkish woman and the low viewpoint, which situates her in the middle-ground of the pictorial space, are adjusted in the work by the later artist. Sinan positions Mehmed on the precise edge of the picture plane and eliminates the open space of the previous work. Furthermore, the proportions of the body to the face, as well as the torso to the legs are no longer in natural harmony, but have been altered to accommodate the dimensions of the folio. Sinan has also transported the cross-hatchings from the ground behind da Ferarra's figure to the contour of the sultan's turban, where they no longer indicate cast shadows. The audience of Sinan's portrait is, therefore, offered a closer view of the sitter with no reference to spatial considerations. The act of seeing becomes slightly more intimate and personal, although the sultan's social position clearly did not accommodate such a notion.

Sinan's re-reading of both Bellini's portrait and Costanzo's drawing resulted in a unique artistic amalgam, conforming neither to Renaissance nor Ottoman artistic traditions. The artist translated Renaissance forms, imported from the West, into his local vocabulary, effectively fusing the two in unprecedented ways. Atil speaks of an "Oriental translation of European works."[81] The word 'translation' encapsulates the artist's mediating role in adapting a foreign artistic language into his native dialect so as to conform to his own culture's aesthetic criteria.[82] Yet, the appropriation of the Western artistic expression and its moulding into a hybrid style, unique to the Ottoman court, effectively deprived Italian art of its power to prevail over the autochthonous tradition.

This subversive quality of Sinan's work is conceptualized in Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry. For the postcolonial theorist, "to mimic" is not "to be", but instead to locate a weakness in the ability of the stronger partner to dominate and control the behaviour of its Other.[83] Mimicry, in Bhabha's words, "is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination...that turns the gaze of the discriminated back upon

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[81] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 115. "Could the model," asks the author, "have been one of Bellini's works which was still in the Palace at the time [possibly some early sketches of the London portrait?], with the artist faithfully following the upper half, and relying on his won ingenuity, composing the lower?"

[82] Ibid.

[83] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994). An example of mimicry is the difference between being English and being Anglicized in the Indian subcontinent; the latter holds the potential of subverting and nuancing the hegemony of everything 'Englishness' stands for in the minds of its advocates. Bart Moore-Gilbert, "Homi Bhabha: 'The Babelian Performance'" in *Postcolonial Theory; Contexts, Practices, Politic* (London; New York : Verso, 1997), 120.

the eye of power."[84] While the Ottoman portraitist pays homage to the artistic vocabulary imported and, one can assume, admired by Mehmed, he also refrains from forfeiting his training and the legacy of Islamic art. Ultimately, the local tradition resisted assimilation into Renaissance culture by transforming motifs and stylistic developments into its own unique dialect.

The Aftermath of Mehmed's Patronage

The Istanbul School's lasting contribution to Ottoman art is considered short-lived. In so far as this 'Italianising' hybrid style was dependant on the presence of either Western artists or access to their work, both came to an abrupt end with the death of their patron. Mehmed's wide-ranging interests enabled the occurrence of such cross-cultural contacts, but as Raby has indicated, the sultan's patronage of Italian art was "overdependent on his own person."[85] In her discussion of the importance of Sinan's portrait and its impact on subsequent Ottoman art, Atil comments,

> What the Turkish painter has done to the basic elements of Renaissance official portraiture, adding the full body in a sitting position, is of utmost significance to the history of Ottoman painting. It is this formula which will be utilized in the future genealogical manuscripts with portraits of the sultans, so popular a century later. ...This will be the one and only direct influence of the Renaissance on Ottoman art.[86]

Even though the artistic dialogue between the Ottoman Porte and the Italian city-states lacked longevity, it set the precedent for the future representation of Ottoman sovereigns in portrait albums, a genre which became extremely popular in subsequent rulers' reigns.

The portrait of Mehmed's great-grandson, Suleyman the Magnificent, for instance, found in Lokman's *Kiyafet al-Insaniye fi Şemail al-Osmaniye*, clearly pays tribute to Sinan Bey's portrait. (fig 20) The painter of the first genealogical manuscript of

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[84] Bhabha cited in Bart Moore-Gilbert, "Spivak and Bhabha" in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, eds., Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 459.
The negotiations and processes of mimicry which Bhabha sees as holding potential of subversion are actually very hard to trace and to evaluate, and indeed, according to Bhabha's critics, seem trivial in light of more material and concrete types of opposition. Moore-Gilbert, "Homi Bhabha," 131.

[85] Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox," 7. "He failed to create," continues the author, "by involvement or delegation, a sufficiently broad base of interest at court, so that on his death the initiative passed, and those who disapproved could eradicate different facets or patronage as they pleased." Ibid., 7-8.

[86] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting", 115.

Ottoman sultans, Nakkaş Osman, has repeated Mehmed's pose and gestures, meanwhile transforming the portrait into an indoor scene.[87] The artist continued to employ the three-quarter portrait, however all hints of three-dimensionality have been teased-out and the stylized holistic effect of the surface pattern is emphasized.

Sinan Bey's work was also known in the West as evidenced by a woodcut featuring Mehmed holding a rose inside a medallion in Paolo Giovio's *Vitae illustrium Vitorium* (1578).[88] (fig 21) In addition, Giovio, as previously mentioned, owned a copy of Costanzo da Ferrara's medallic portrayal of the sovereign. Atil maintains the woodcut was based on a lost original painting and "appears to be related to the London portrait, an image in Istanbul of the Sultan holding roses [presumably Sinan Bey's work] and the Costanza portrait."[89] Accordingly, the rarity of the motif of a ruler holding a rose in the West, has led Capellen to assume that the Ottoman work served as a model.[90] Unfortunately, the exact circumstances of the image's dissemination have disappeared from the archival record. Suffice it to say, Mehmed's image came full circle: Bellini's portrait, created in Istanbul along Western artistic conventions, subsequently served as part of the inspiration for Sinan's Ottoman/Renaissance portrait, which in turn was reworked in Italy once more merging Western and Ottoman motifs.

Beyond art historical considerations of artworks' inter-textuality, these portraits spread Mehmed's likeness in Europe in a period when Turks increasingly were becoming a staple of humanistic literature, propagandistic calls for crusade and sensationalist popular writings. It is the image of the Turk in early modern Europe, I will next address.

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[87] Osman is considered the most celebrated artist of the Ottoman classical period (1574-1603). For an account of his work and legacy, see Esin Atil, *Turkish Art,* (Washington and New York, 1980), 198-206.
[88] Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, 102.
[89] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting", 111. Meredith-Owens also comments on the similar iconography. Meredith-Owens, *Turkish Miniatures* , 16.
[90] Capellen, *Gentile Bellini*, 102.

Chapter 3 - Western Attitudes towards the Turks

The conventional way of discussing art produced for the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, including Gentile Bellini's portrait, is within the framework of sultanic cultural patronage. Efforts to understand the artwork centre on the simultaneous analysis of the patron's personality and life: his education and interests, whether in literature, history or past rulers, his social milieu, his ambitions and cultural orientations. Mehmed's specific artistic preferences, an expression of the aforementioned variables, imposed constraints on the Italian artists in his court, who were obliged to comply with his demands and satisfy his taste; in turn, this set the precedent for viewing the artwork.

Thus far, I have also emphasised patronage as a way of approaching the medallic portrayals and, to a lesser extent, the painted portrait of the sultan. In this chapter, I aim to shift the perspective by examining the portrait within contemporary cultural frameworks for understanding and classifying the Turks. My point of departure is the problematic of the iconography of Bellini's portrait: the lifelike image of an Ottoman Sultan in an observably Venetian setting. A turbaned man in Oriental garb was not a rare occurrence in the pictorial world of the Renaissance. Yet, Bellini's work did not belong to the established genre of "Holy Land/Christological" art nor to the elaborately imaginary compositions of the "Orientalist" Venetian School, which subsequently developed.[1] The singularity of this work paired with recent historical scholarship on the early modern period has urged me to put forth an interpretation not found in the literature to date. It is imperative, before doing so, to examine the melange of reactions and approaches to the Turks, who in the mid-fifteenth century threatened Europe by aggressively placing themselves at its doorstep.

The Opening Act –The Queen of Cities

In the fifteenth century, the Second Rome, the Eye and Heart of the World, Constantinople was a shadow of its old self, "a dying city" in the words of the historian

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[1] For a discussion, see Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988); Julian Raby, *Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode*, (Totowa and New Jersey: Sotherby Publications, 1982).

Sir Steven Runciman.[2] It was arguably a matter of time before the Ottomans, who had annexed all the surrounding countryside, conquered the Queen of Cities. At the time of the siege, the population was one-hundred thousand compared to one million in the twelfth century, while many parts within the city walls had been abandoned to nature.[3] In order to guarantee financial and military aid, the Catholic West demanded doctrinal changes from the Eastern Orthodox population of Byzantium.[4] Constantine, the last Byzantine Basileus, coroneted in 1449, had sent an ambassador to the West in the summer of 1451 seeking support. He received an ultimatum: no union, no aid. On December 12, 1452 to appease Rome a liturgy was held in Hagia Sophia where the Pope and the absent Patriarch were both commemorated.

On the other side of the city's walls stood the young and ambitious, twenty-one year-old Ottoman Sultan, Mehmed II with an army of eighty-thousand men.[5] Tursun Beg, a member of the Ottoman court who penned an account of the sultan's life, wrote Mehmed "was possessed with the idea of conquering Istanbul and constantly insisted on the necessity of taking the city without delay....[i]t was intolerable that Istanbul, surrounded by the lands of Islam, should survive under a Christian ruler."[6] The young

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[2] Sir Steven Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople 1453* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 191. Runciman offers a detailed, day-by-day account of the siege without masking his pro-Greek sentiments; he speaks of the 'tragedy' of the fall and of the Greek people as 'tragic heroes.'
For contemporary accounts of the event by first-hand witnesses and historians of the time, see *The Siege of Constantinople 1453: Seven Contemporary Accounts,* trans. J. R. Melville Jones (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1972); Sir Steven Runciman, "Byzantine Historians and the Ottoman Turks" in *Historians of the Middle East*, eds., Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

[3] Speros Vryonis Jr. affirms that Constantinople/Istanbul was the largest urban centre in Europe and the Middle East for large periods between the fourth and eighteenth centuries. Speros Vryonis Jr. , "Byzantine Constantinople and Ottoman Istanbul, Evolution in a Millennial Imperial Iconography" in *The Ottoman City and Its Parts; Urban Structure and Social Order,* eds., Irene A. Bierman, Rifa'at A. Abou-El-Haj and Donald Preziosi (New Rochelle, New York: Aristide D. Caratzas 1991), 17.

[4] In 1369, the Emperor John V Palaeologus, had personally submitted to the Pope, but had refused to involve his subjects. In Constantinople, both clergy and laity fervently objected to such diplomatic maneuvers; Runciman explains, "It was a religious age ... To buy material safety here below at the price of eternal salvation was not to be considered. If disaster was to befall them [Byzantines] it would be God's punishment to them." Runciman, *The Fall*, 7, 19.

[5] Runciman estimates that on the Greek side there were less than 7, 000 warriors. Ibid., 85.

[6] Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, trans. Halil Inalcik and Rhoads Murphey (Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1978), 33. Unfortunately for scholars not versed in Ottoman Turkish, the editors have selectively translated parts of the text. It is therefore difficult to form an opinion on the entire work.
Tursun Beg acquired *madrasa* training and enjoyed a career as a high-ranking government official for forty years. Beginning in 1474, as a high-ranking official of the *Dīwān*, he accompanied the Sultan on all his campaigns. He began writing his book after his retirement in 1488, which was a period of civil turmoil following Mehmed's death between the reigning Sultan, Bayezid II, and, his brother, Cem Sultan.

sultan's aspirations held deep root in Islamic tradition. In "Istanbul: An Islamic City," the prominent "Ottomanist" scholar, Halil Inalcik, discusses the wide-spread belief that the Prophet Mohammed ordered the first Muslim attack on the Byzantines in 624 A.D.[7] The conviction that Constantinople was predestined for the followers of Islam developed swiftly. Inalcik writes,

> Constantinople was so powerful a symbol of resistance to the expansion of Islam that a whole series of *ahādīth* ... spread about the future Muslim conquest of the city ... [One *hādīth* declares] 'One day Constantinople will definitely be conquered. What a good amir and a good army is the one that will accomplish this'.[8]

The "good amir" was destined to be Mehmed, who earned the sobriquet *Fatih*, the Conqueror, for the most important achievement of his life. When the moment was right, he seized the opportunity, disregarded the truce with the Byzantines and attacked the capital.[9] The Greeks were aided by Venetians and Genoese caught in Constantinople when the siege began, but the promised support from the West never arrived. After fifty-four days of struggle, the Ottomans breached the defence lines and entered Constantinople. Byzantium's worst fears had materialized and the Eastern Christian Empire was annihilated. The conquering Muslim army would henceforth pose a threat, as much real as imaginary, to Western states. The Turks, previously a distant thought outside philo-Byzantine circles, had violently asserted their presence and entered the European cognitive world.

The importance of Tursun Beg's account, according to Inalcik and Murphey, lies in an insider's first-hand account "of the attitudes of the Ottoman ruling class, their inner power struggles, the character and content of their war councils, and aspects of Ottoman society and culture whose private nature makes them little susceptible to study through the official and semi-official histories." Ibid., 19.

[7] Halil Inalcik, "Istanbul: An Islamic City," in *Essays in Ottoman History* (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Eren, Yayincilik, 1998), 249.

[8] Ibid., 249.

[9] Contemporary literature often portrayed Mehmed as untrustworthy and willing to deceive his enemies by ignoring diplomatic clauses when the opportunity arose. Konstantin Mihailović, "the lone Slavic memoirist to set down his personal experiences among the Ottoman Turks in the fifteenth century," wrote, "Emperor Machomet ruled happily after his father Morat. And moreover he was very crafty: He deceived under truce whoever he could [a theme that runs throughout Konstantin's book]; ... [A]nd whoever chastised him for this, he would at once become as violent as if he were some kind of madman." Konstantin Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, trans. Benjamin Stolz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975).

"Alas, wretched Christianity"[10]

Letters announcing the event were read to a mute, shock-stricken Venetian Senate on June 29, 1453.[11] An event which in hindsight appears inevitable took contemporaries by total surprise. The day after a letter was dispatched to Pope Nicholas V claiming Venice was the next victim of Ottoman expansion and urging the head of the Holy See to take action for fear Christendom would be vanquished. Before reaching Rome, the messenger informed the inhabitants of Bologna; among them was the papal governor Bessarion, who had been fervently rallying for Western intervention to save his native land.[12] News arrived at Genoa, Florence and Siena, while Byzantine refugees spread the word in the Balkans. From Italy the reports traveled further west; a chronicler as far as London recorded, "Also in this yere, which was the yer of Ower Lord god MCCCCLiij was the Cite of Constantyn the noble lost by Cristen men, and wonne by the Prynce of Turkes named Mahumet."[13]

Rumours of unspoken horrors inflicted on the defeated population and the destruction of churches, monuments art and books accompanied news of the event. The early modern imagination was abundant with atrocities and inhumane cruelties eagerly attributed to the Turks. The disaster that befell Christianity was seen as a sign from God whose will was behind all, joyful or calamitous, events.[14] Chroniclers of the period saw

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[10] On July 12, 1453 Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, the humanist scholar and future Pope Pius II, wrote a letter to Pope Nicholas V expressing his utter despair upon hearing the news of the fall. "My hand trembles," he wrote, "even as I write; my soul is horrified, yet neither it is able to restrain its indignation, nor express its misery. Alas, wretched Christianity!" He lamented the deaths of Constantinople's population, the destruction of its churches; he cried when he thought of the many books destroyed which had never reached the West. "Alas," he wondered, "how many names of great authors have now perished? It is a second death of Homer and Plato." Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453-1517)* (New York: St. Mark's Press, 1967), 9.

[11] The account of the diffusion of the news is given by Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent*, 1-4.

[12] Bessarion, a distinguished Greek in the West, was one of the most articulate and adamant supporters of the crusade. His *Orationes ad principes Christianos Contra Turcos*, first printed in 1471 in Sorbonne, is characteristic of humanist crusade literature. The author displays a vast knowledge of history, which he uses to discuses the humble origins of the Turks and their inevitable attack on Italy.
For a thorough discussion of the *Orationes*, as well as Bessarion's biographical information, see Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent,* 156-60. For an account of the circulation and impact of the work, see Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 117-8.

[13] Ibid., 4.

[14] A deterministic view of history was also prevalent in the Byzantine world. A minority among the population adhering to ultra-orthodox religious beliefs saw the loss of Constantinople as a "'certain torment' which God had visited upon the Orthodox and which ennobled them because the saints had suffered the same 'agony'." Apostolos Vakalopoulos, *Origins of the Greek Nation: The Byzantine Period, 1204-1461*, trans. Ian Moles (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 203.

the fall as punishment for the sins and the degenerate behaviour of Western princes and laity alike.[15] According to other commentators the Greeks' half-heartedness, laziness and avarice--a reference to allegations they refused to fight if they were not paid-- were the cause of their unfortunate fate.[16] The significant collection of *lamenti*, popular ballads and apocryphal accounts indicate the pervasiveness of the impact.[17] Feelings of repulsion were reserved for the Turks, pity and occasional condemnation for the slain Greeks, horror for the destroyed relics and churches and, above all, fear for their own fate. Pessimism, terror and dismay aptly describe one aspect of the atmosphere. The remedy for a segment of the population was pre-emptive action which would avenge the loss of Constantinople and protect Christendom: a crusade.

Calls to the Cross

Although the classic crusading era (1095-1291) coincides with the High Middle Ages,[18] fruitless efforts to instigate a crusade against the Turks were continuous from Pope Eugenius IV (1431-1447) to Leo X (1512-21).[19] In the fifteenth century, the crusading ideal, argue both James Hankins and Nancy Bisaha, retained the cultural power

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[15] Ibid., 14.

[16] Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent*, 16. Schwoebel discusses the mutual century-old hatred between Greeks and Latins. The intensity of the animosity is epitomized in the famous aphorism precariously attributed to the Grand Dux Loukas Notaras stating the Turkish turban was preferable to the Roman tiara. Indicative of the biased narratives prevalent at the time is Nicolo Barbaro's *Diary of the Siege of Constantinople 1453*. The author was a surgeon and a member of one of the Venetian patrician families, who was in the Byzantine capital during the siege. His account favours his countrymen, while harshly criticizing the Greeks and the Genoese. Discussing the Bailo's order the Greeks carry mantelets to the walls he writes, "But the Greeks refused to do so unless they were paid, and there was an argument that evening, because the Venetians were willing to pay cash to those who carried them, and the Greeks did not want to pay. When at last the mantelets were taken to the walls, it was dark and they could not be put on the battlements for the attack, and we did not have the use of them, because of the greed of the Greeks." Nicolo Barbaro, *Diary of the Siege of Constantinople 1453*, trans. J.R. Jones (New York: Exposition Press, 1969), 60.

[17] Schwoebel uses these accounts as evidence to argue against the idea Western reactions were limited to the higher social classes. He briefly summarizes one of the longest laments, *Lamento di Constantinopoli*, written shortly after the fall. Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent*, 20-3.
For an account of prophesies circulating in the West, see Kenneth Setton, *Western Hostility to Islam and Prophecies of Turkish Doom* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1992).

[18] James Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders: Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995): 113. For a thorough account of the differences between the classical crusade literature orchestrated by the Church and the humanist writings of the fifteenth century, see Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 111-9.

[19] Nancy Bisaha, "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary? Humanist Constructs of the Ottoman Turks in Fifteenth-Century Italy" in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe; Perception of Other*, eds., David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 186.

to command attention and commitment, at least verbally, from the ruling elite.[20] When news of the fall reached Pope Nicholas V, Schwoebel writes, the Pontiff,

> denounced Mehmed as the cruellest persecutor of the church of Christ, the son of Satan, the son of perdition, the son of death who thirsted for the blood of Christians. He pronounced the sultan to be the great red dragon with seven heads crowned by seven diadems and with ten horns described by St. John.[21]

Calixtus III, who followed Nicholas in the papal seat, alarmed over the fate of Hungary, issued another crusade bull on May 15, 1455 calling all Christian, princes and commoners, to join. Preachers were sent across the lands, as in the past to spread the news and to recruit volunteers to the cause.[22] Pope Pius II (1458-1464), one of the leading humanists of the time, succeeded Calixtus and dedicated his pontificate to organizing the ill-fated crusade.[23]

Recent historical scholarship by the aforementioned authors has drawn attention to the impact of humanist crusade literature on the emerging European identity. Papal resolve to instigate a crusade which would unite the divided West and re-conquer Constantinople –previous crusades targeted the Holy Lands— was rooted in the long tradition of militant Christianity. However, the erudite circles of humanist scholars, who along with ecclesiastics were responsible for the literary calls for a crusade, introduced classical concepts to the genre's vocabulary.

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[20] This was to change in the sixteenth century and the Protestant Reformation. Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades: From Lyons to Alcazar* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 376-420 cited in Bisaha, "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary? " 186.

[21] Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent*, 31.

[22] Ibid., 39. The most famous preacher of the time was a Minorite friar of the Observance named John Capistran. For a detailed account of his correspondence with princes and men of the Church, his travels as a preacher and his role in the victorious battle of Belgrade, which led to his sainthood, see Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent,* 41-50.

[23] Bisaha, "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary? " 191. Pope Pius IIis extensively discussed in most of the literature on this period as one of the leading figures of the period. See also, Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent;* Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders"; Kate Fleet, "Italian Perceptions of the Turks in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 5, no. 2, (1995):159-172; Mustafa Soykut, *Image of the 'Turk' in Italy; A History of the 'Other' in Early Modern Europe: 1453-1683* (Berlin: Klauss Schwarz Verlag, 2001).

M.E. Yapp accredits the Pontiff with inventing the adjective 'European' (*Europaeus*). The word appeared in works written on the need for a crusade against the Turks, where the author discussed Europe primarily in a geographical sense with "some notion of a cultural entity of which the core was Christianity." M.E Yapp, "Europe in the Turkish Mirror," *Past and Present*, The Cultural and Political Construction of Europe 137 (Nov. 1992):141.

Classical concepts of civilization against barbarism were first demonstrated to be compatible with crusade literature by Petrarch.[24] Approximately a century prior to the fall, in the crusade poem Canzone XXVIII, "O aspettata in ciel beata e bella" the famous humanist discussed the "Occidente" in terms of its superiority over the "Oriente." He relied upon the Herodotean division of Europe and Asia to describe the Arabs as a backward, uncivilized people identical to the feral Saracens of the Roman world.[25] Petrarch set a precedent for associating the Roman heroes of the past—an idealized, venerated Antiquity—with contemporary Christian warriors. Even more importantly, he revised the classical binary of civilization versus barbarism by aligning it with the conflict between West and East.[26]

The Christian West had a repository of derogatory vocabulary and malicious accusations targeting Islam and its followers. From the ninth century onwards such discourse was generously employed as inflammatory propaganda in the service of war.[27] These stereotypes, aptly illustrated by Pope Nicholas V's description of Mehmed, functioned in religious frameworks, which sought to present Muslims as the archenemies of Christianity and, from the fall of Constantinople, of Christendom. The Turk in the

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[24] Bisaha, "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary?" 188.

[25] The crusade poem was written in commemoration of Philip VI's eastward expedition in 1333. Bisaha writes, "Petrarch...reduced formidable Muslim empires to an image of disorganized and uncivilized hunters and gatherers who rely on archery because they lack the skill and courage to fight in hand to hand combat." Ibid., 188-9.

[26] Yapp addresses the misconception that the classical Mediterranean world Europe, represented by the Greeks, was associated with civilization and Asia, represented by the Persians, with barbarism The author calls attention to the historian Herodotus (484?-425? B.C.) whose division of the known world was based on linguistic terms: the people who spoke Greek belonged to the civilized world and all others to the barbarous races. The distinction was, therefore, not geographical, but cultural. Yapp, "Europe in the Turkish Mirror."

[27] Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 119. For a discussion of medieval views on Islam, see R. W. Southern *Western Views of Islam in the Middles Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962). For a review of Southern's scholarship and the opinions expressed in his work, see David R. Blanks "Western Views of Islam in the Premodern Period: A Brief History of Past Approaches" in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* 29-31.
It is very interesting to examine in parallel the Muslim East's outlook on the West. Muslims divided the world into lands under Muslim rule, *Dār al-Islām*, and lands under non-Muslim rule, *Dār al-Harb*. The latter encompassed *Rūm,* the Orthodox Christian world, and *Firangistān*, the land of the Franks. Both were "wicked places full of wicked people who were never to be mentioned without conventional curses." Yapp, "Europe in the Turkish Mirror," 139-40.
Schwoebel succinctly calls attention to the "unhappy but apparently universal tendency to represent one's enemy as personification of evil." Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent*, 226.

fifteenth century came to encompass the disparaging medieval image of the Muslim;[28] the term Turk, in fact, became a cognomen for Muslim.

The four-hundred surviving literary works composed by no less than fifty humanists in Mehmed's lifetime transposed the conceptual structure from the religious to the secular field, or, in Bisaha's words, from the medieval to the classical.[29] In the classically-inclined Renaissance courts audiences were exposed to views of the world premised on the binary of Western civilization versus Eastern barbarity. Established religious slander continued to be used along with the newly emerged derogatory categories to attract the faithful to Christianity's defence.

In response to the question of whether humanists "secularised" crusading literature, Hankins cautions against straightforward answers. It is unquestionable they greatly contributed to this trend, but Norman Daniel points to early fourteenth-century *recuperatio* treatises for "their intensely pragmatic, proto-colonialist approach to crusading."[30] Apparently, the worldly advantages, political and economic, of subjugating foreign lands had not escaped earlier crusade advocates in Western courts. Humanist crusade literature, however, marked a break with the past as Muslims began to be discussed in secular and classical terms.

"He who assumes a West assumes an East" [31]

Hankins and Bisaha argue the humanist notion of civilization became increasingly important in the formation of a European identity.[32] Humanists viewed themselves as the rightful heirs to Greek and Roman learning and, conversely, presented the Turks as fundamentally antithetical to these glorious, cultured societies of the past. The notion of Christendom as the unifying force behind the independent states of Europe was beginning

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[28] Soykut, *Image of the 'Turk,'* 149. Soykut argues the negative image of the Turk gave way to a more tolerant and realistic image towards the end of the seventeenth century. The latter was transmitted by the Venetians after Ottoman military and political loss of power.
[29] Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 117; Bisaha, "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary?" 186.
[30] Norman Daniel, "Crusade Propaganda,"88 in *A History of the Crusades*, 2nd ed., ed. K.M. Setton, (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), VI, 39-98 cited in Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 123.
[31] Emmanuel Sivan, *Interpretations of Islam Past and Present* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1985), 136 cited in Blanks, "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary?" 38.
[32] The distinction between civilization and barbarism was later supplanted by the imperialist perception of 'higher' or 'more advanced' civilization and the associated right, or even obligation, to impose it upon others. Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 124.

to lose its impetus—the Enlightenment, according to M.E Yapp, would deliver the final blow to religious markers and establish the Turks as the mirror of the Europe.[33] Christendom, however, did not directly relate to the geographical region known as Europe; the Carolingian empire had given a political and territorial definition to Latin Christendom, which the 1054 schism between Eastern and Latin Churches reinforced.[34] The Christian world was henceforth divided: Byzantine lands incorporated territories of Anatolia into the Christian realm, while Muslims were established in Spain, Sicily and later in the Balkans.

The end of the Byzantine Empire marked the halt of negotiations between the two churches; for the Latin Church the hope to reassert authority over the Eastern Orthodox Church was lost (a successful crusade could potentially reverse this trend), while the Orthodox Patriarch was guaranteed his ecclesiastic position and additionally delivered the role of the political leader of the enslaved Greek nation.[35] The disruption of the Mediterranean unity alone cannot account for Christendom's weakening cultural currency and while Yapp considers secular identities to belong to the eighteenth century, Hankins and Bisaha trace their appearance to the fifteenth century and humanist conceptual frameworks.[36]

Humanist veneration of the past was accompanied by the obligation to protect and respect its material remnants. Amanda Wunder posits Cyriacus of Ancona's travels to the Levant in the 1420s-1440s as the inaugurating episode of Renaissance guardianship of the ancient monuments under Ottoman rule.[37] The common culture of antiquarianism

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[33] Yapp, "Europe in the Turkish Mirror,"152-4. In accord with Yapp, Daniel Goffman writes, "The very idea of Eurocentrism also may be anachronistic for the early modern era, since Europe is a cultural and secular rather than a geographical notion..." Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4.

[34] Yapp, "Europe in the Turkish Mirror," 137.

[35] For a discussion of Mehmed's treatment of the Greek population of his empire, see Halil Inalcik, "The Policy of Mehmed II towards the Greek Population of Istanbul and the Byzantine Buildings of the City," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23-24 (1969-1967):229-49.

[36]Blanks states, "by the thirteenth century Europe had developed a self-identity, especially among the elites, that might properly be called 'Western.' This identity was primarily Latin Christian at first, but became more notably 'Western European" via humanism, the scientific method, and the cult of reason." Blanks "Western Views of Islam in the Premodern Period," 12-3.

[37] Amanda Wunder, "Western Travelers, Eastern Antiquities, and the Image of the Turk in Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Early Modern History* 7, no. 1-2 (2003): 89-119.
Cyriacus was believed to have tutored Mehmed II in the Ottoman encampment before the siege of Constantinople. Raby has since proven the speculation to be erroneous. See Julian Raby, "Cyriacus of

united Western travelers from higher social circles and distinguished them from the local population which did not share their concern and nostalgia for the ancient past. Love of antiquity, thus, became a sign of civility and served as a further criterion to distinguish between the Turks and Western Europeans.[38] Hostility to good letters, a favourite theme in the "lament for Greece" *topos* of humanist histories and orations, became inscribed in the epithet employed to describe the Turks: *immane genus* (*immanis* was the opposite of *humanitas*) rather than the religiously charged *infideles*.[39]

So far I have incurred the danger of presenting only one fragment of the picture: the image of the well-read and knowledgeable humanist-author composing verse in praise of Western civil society and aligning the Turks with the barbarous hordes of raiders throughout history who unleashed their wrath against their unfortunate enemies. Yet, attitudes in the early modern period were diverse and convoluted, much the same way they are today, and oftentimes the simplified, homogenized narratives of the past reflect the modern historian's viewpoints and period more than the era discussed.

It would be anachronistic to seek open opposition to the crusading ideal in a culture still shaped and controlled by religion. Nonetheless, philoturk humanists existed and their sycophantic works reflect their individual and/or their patrons' hopes for favours and co-operation with the sultan.[40] Such attitudes were never openly and publicly

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Ancona and the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 43 (1980): 242-6.

[38] Ibid., 91. The different approach to the material remains of the past, whether relics, churches or antique statuary is also one of the prevalent themes in the Western accounts of the fall of Constantinople. In these narratives the enlightened, cultured writer describes the events and actions of a people unable to understand and value the past, as evidenced by their destructive acts. Wunder concludes in the eighteenth century "Orientalism replaced antiquarianism as the academic discipline through which the East was perceived by the West." Ibid., 119.

[39] Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 122.

[40] In this category, Hankins discusses Francesco Filelfo, who was married to a member of the Byzantine Chrysoloras family, and his son Giovan Mario Filelfo, Michael Critovoulos (Kritovoulos, who wrote *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*), Giovanni Stefano Emiliano and George Trepizond. When their dealing with the Porte became public, all men came under severe criticism. Filelfo went to great pains to excuse the flattering poem he wrote in honour of the sultan in gratitude for releasing his Greek in-laws, while George Trepizond was imprisoned by the Pope. One of the most interesting cases is Giovan Mario Filelfo, who in Hankins's words, "was forced to turn the fourth book of his *Amyris* into a palinode; the first three books had praised Mehmed's conquest of Constantinople, while the last, with gross inconsistency, ended by calling on Francesco Sforza to take the Cross." Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 130-131.
For a further discussion of G. M. Filelfo's life and *Amyris*, see Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent,* 148-52; Bisaha, "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary?" 195-6.

proclaimed but remained in the secret realms of court diplomacy. Francesco Filelfo, for instance, appeared supportive of a crusade in the majority of his correspondence with the exception of a letter to Duke Francesco Sforza which suggested the initiation of clandestine peace negotiations with Mehmed II.[41] Hankins proclaims,

> Humanist advocacy of Holy War can be adequately accounted for in the context of patronage and private enthusiasm. The relative absence of opposition to crusading among humanists does not require an explanation in an age when such an opposition would be seen as heterodox…The hypothesis that there existed some secret affinity between the *studia humanitatis* and the crusading ideal is implausible and unnecessary.[42]

The author, therefore, turns to covert ways alternative opinions could be voiced against the background of the public and canonical propaganda of the "cruel and lustful Turk." Hankins examines two topics: the assignment of responsibility for the fall of Constantinople, which has been briefly examined, and "the politics of ethnography."[43] It is the latter issue I will next address, as it offers an insight into a strand of early modern thought seldom explored in accounts of Western attitudes toward the Turks. This in turn, will lead to Venetian opinions and outlooks on the Ottoman Empire.

De originibus Turcarum

In the fifteenth century, in accordance with ancient thought, the origins of a people were considered to determine fully their cultural attributes and destiny. Humanist ethnographic writings on the origins of the Turks enjoyed considerable reputation and developed in response to a historical interest in the people who had abruptly entered the West's known geographical sphere. The debate whether the Turks had descended from the Trojans or the Scythians was not simply an ethnographic puzzle since unspoken political repercussions were at play.

The terms Turci (Τούρκοι), as well as the classicizing Persians (Πέρσαι) were used in the Byzantine era to first describe the Seljuk Turks and, later, the Ottomans. The humanists of the fourteenth century began to adopt the word *Teucri* or Trojans

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[41] Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 130-1.
[42] Ibid., 131.
[43] Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders."

(*Troiani*).[44] This term became widely used in the literature of the time, in crusade bulls and the public correspondence of Florence, Venice and Regno.[45] It was not, however, a novel concept, since in the Middle Ages legends propagated the Trojan genealogy of Turks, Italians and Franks.[46] Venetians with a classical education claimed they had descended from the Trojan refugee, Antenor, while the Romans presented the Trojan Aeneas as their forefather.[47] Another myth supported the Trojans were in fact Italians who had settled in Asia Minor.[48] Giovan Mario Filelfo, previously discussed for his philo-Turkish sentiments, extolled Mehmed II's Trojan ancestry in *Amyris* and presented his conquest of Greece as a just revenge for the destruction of the city of Ilium (Troy) by the Greeks.[49] The connection drawn between the Turks and the Trojans justified the Turkish expansion and even the acts of violence committed against the Byzantine Greeks since the Trojans had suffered gravely during the war against the Greeks twenty-five hundred years ago.

There is evidence these legends were also known in the East, possibly due to the presence of Italian humanists in the sultan's entourage.[50] Mehmed's Greek panegyrist, Kritovoulos, narrates the sovereign's visit to the ruins of the ancient city of Troy; the sultan, according to his biographer, praised the ideal location of the city and inquired after the tombs of Achillles and Ajax, who he believed were graced with the fortune of being commemorated by the genius of Homer.[51] Kritovoulos repeats Mehmed's alleged oration, which is imbued with humanistic ideals,

> God, has reserved for me, through so long a period of years, the right to avenge this city and its inhabitants. For I have subdued their enemies and have plundered their cities and made them the spoils of

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[44] Ibid., 136. Teucros, the first king of Troy, had ruled over the Teucri, later conflated with the Turks. Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* 210.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent,* 148.
[47] Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 139.
[48] Ibid. The efforts to find associations with the Trojans were not contained in Italy. "The kings of France, England, Castile, and their humanist courtiers," writes Hankins, "were busily elaborating Trojan ancestries as a way of suggesting that these kingdoms had as fair a claim to be considered empires as did ancient Rome." A French legend held that two Trojan named 'Francio' and 'Turchot' were the founding fathers of the Frankish and Turkish people.
For legends circulating among German humanists linking the Saxon race with the Macedonians, who had defeated the decadent Greeks, see Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders", 140.
[49] Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent*, 149. Also see, Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 140-1.
[50] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* 210.
[51] Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror,* 181.

> the Mysians. It was the Greeks and Macedonians and Thessalians and Peloponnesians who ravaged this place in the past, and whose descendants have now through my efforts paid the just penalty, after a long period of years, for their injustice to us Asiatics at that time and so often in subsequent times.[52]

Mehmed defends his subjugation of the Byzantine Greeks as punishment for their ancestral unfairness against his people; with the help of God, he claims, he has righted wrongs.

The Italian humanist works supporting the Trojan genealogy, as well as the turncoat Greek's narrative, offer insight into two trends in early modern Western thought: the anti-Greek polemics and the early efforts to naturalise the Turks.[53] Hankins discusses this collection of writings as documented efforts to integrate the Turks into Western traditions and ultimately to domesticate them.[54] Advocacy of a common ancestral line opened up the possibility of future assimilation, presumably by means of conversion to Christianity. Interpreting the Christian loss of Constantinople and the end of the Eastern Christian Empire as the just and honourable act of avenging Hector's death lifted the blame off the Turks. Barbarous instincts and savage motives did not befit the noble Trojan image. West and East shared a common moral code which affiliated and allied them against their ancient enemy, the Greeks.

It would be misleading to imagine this trend was not rigorously opposed even within the circle of humanists. In the 1450s, Piccolomini, the future Pope Pius II, expressed passionate hostility towards the use of *Teucri* arguing the Turks were unrelated to the Trojans.[55] Piccolomini supported the legend the Turks were the progeny of Scythians, who originated in the depths of barbarity; he described them as "scandalous and ignorant ... dedicated to prostitution and rape, [people who] fed on all sorts of abominable food, and knew neither wine, nor grain nor salt."[56] Biondo Flavio wrote a

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[52] Ibid. Kritovoulos's text was written in a particularly literary Byzantine language. He refers to the Greeks as "Romans" and the Turks as "Arabs and Persians."

[53] Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 141-2.
The term 'naturalise' is used by Yapp, *Europe in the Turkish Mirror,* 141. Yapp discusses three attempts at naturalization: endowing the Turks with the chivalrous code of Christian knights, the identification of the Turks with the Trojans and the depiction of Mehmed as a Renaissance prince.

[54] Ibid., 141.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1453.vii.12), 54 in Agostino Pertusi *La Caduta di Constantinopoli.* Vol.II *L;eco nel* Mondo (Milan, 1976) cited in Fleet, "Italian Perceptions of the Turks," 163. The author

treatise *De gestis Venetorum*, connecting the Scythians, the Goths, the Huns, the Saracens and the Turks and portrayed them as the natural enemies of Greco-Roman civilization.[57]

The humanist vision of the Ottoman Empire as antithetical to civilized society or, in Lucette Valensi's poignant phrase (for the Venetian context), as the "Anti-Venice," recalls Edward Said's scholarship in *Orientalism*.[58] Said has argued European identity is predicated on its Muslim Other, the Orient. Europe developed an erroneous systematic discipline whereby the East was perceived as perpetually inferior and deficient compared to Europe. "The Orient," in Said's words, "is not only adjacent to Europe... [it is] one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other... [it] helped define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience."[59] Niccolò Tignosi's description of Mehmed illustrates the Orientalist nature of the scholarly discourse developed on early modern Europe: the sultan is described as an Oriental ruler due to the Ottoman practice of fratricide which was not a custom in Italian states.[60] Mehmed was classified as exotic and foreign; he belonged to a different order of reality due to his foreign, savage habits.

For Said (as for Michel Foucault) knowledge and power are inseparable;[61] the physical domination and occupation of the East, which occurred with imperialism and colonialism, cannot be viewed separately from the accompanying hegemonic frameworks which contained the notion of the "Orient" (Orientalism).[62] Other scholars like Bisaha, have asserted that although Western military presence had yet to occur in the East,

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continues, "Wallowing in lechery, the Turks held the study of letter in contempt ... [t]hey were the ignorant enemies of civilized life and of learning." Ibid., 52-4.

[57] The purpose of the work is to advise the Venetians on crusading policies. The author argues Venice, contrary to the Turks, is the refuge for those escaping the barbarians and the historical enemy of the latter. Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders," 142.

[58] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism,* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978). Said's work is discussed in detail in the subsequent chapter.

[59] Ibid., 1-2.

[60] Fleet, "Italian Perceptions of the Turks," 168. Tignosi (b. 1402) was present during the siege of Constantinople and commemorated his experience in *Expugnatio Constantinoplitana.* He was a professor of logic at the university in Bologna, of medicine in Florence and physics in Pisa. Ibid.

[61] Said writes, "...knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control." Said, *Orientalism*, 36.
For a discussion of Said's intellectual debt to Foucault and Frantz Fanon see, Neil Larsen, "Emergent and Residual Humanisms: Said" in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, eds., Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

[62] For a discussion of imperialism and colonialism, see Neil Larsen, "Imperialism, Colonialism, Postcolonialism," in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies.*

humanist writings such as those previously examined were setting up the binary of "us/them" and, effectively, objectifying Ottoman (in this case, synonymous with Muslim) culture.[63] I agree with Bisaha in so far as the Orient was clearly not a free subject of thought in this period. Said speaks of Orientalism as an "accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness,"[64] a grid humanists classicized, allowing for certain scholars to portray the Turks as Western civilization's barbarian Other and others to make concealed efforts to include them in their privileged taxonomy.

Ambassadorial *relazioni*, filed (not exclusively) by Venetian ambassadors to the Porte, had a considerable influence in forming the image of the Turk in the West.[65] These reports often found admirable qualities in Ottoman society and army: civic harmony, military valour, obedience to authority, discipline justice, order, and perseverance.[66] Conversely (but not surprisingly), certain other aspects of the Ottoman state were puzzling and repulsive: the uncertainty of the transfer of power, the absence of an aristocracy and the wide-ranging corruption.[67] The Venetians made these judgments based on their own societal standards; thus, for instance, the Venetian pride associated with belonging to the state's legitimate elite showed no tolerance for a society lacking hereditary social classes.

The Turks, whether praised or criticized, could not be seen independently from the West; when praised, the text was an indirect critique on western society for the qualities it was perceived as lacking, and when criticized, it was for not conforming to an occidental ideal. Such Eurocentric views of the Orient, whereby the Occident is the

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[63] Bisaha, "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary? " 187-8. In Bisaha's words, "This humanist discourse is similar to Said's Orientalist discourse in that it involves a group of intellectuals who were at once sharing in and creating learned, political, and to an extent popular, images of the Other. Although, Renaissance Europeans had not yet imposed physical power upon the Near East, humanists were beginning to assert a sense of European intellectual power and authority over Muslim societies." Ibid.

[64] Said, *Orientalism.*, 6.

[65] The *relazioni* found in Rome testify to the sharing of the ambassadorial reports among Italian states. Soykut discusses Venice's influence as an opinion creator between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries due to the numbers and accuracy of the *relazioni*, as well as the presence in the city of Byzantine expatriate scholars. Soykut, *Image of the 'Turk'*, 3-5.

[66] Ibid., p. 8; Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot,* 23-8.

[67] Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot,* 41-3.

unattainable entity by which all else is measured, speak to the very core of Said's argument in *Orientalism.*[68]

Venice-The Turk's Courtesan

In 1523, forty years after Mehmed's reign, the Turkophile and Turkish-speaking Venetian Andrea Gritti was elected doge; one of his great enemies, Alvise Priuli, spitefully declared "a man with three bastards in Turkey cannot be doge."[69] One of his illegitimate sons, Alvise, after pursuing an appropriate education for a member of the Venetian patriciate in Italy, established himself in the Ottoman capital, where he entered the close circle of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566).[70] Lucette Valensi comments, "Perhaps it was Andrea Gritti who earned Venice the reputation of 'the Turk's courtesan.' Perhaps it was his son."[71]

Although slightly later than the time period examined so far, the story successfully illustrates the complexity of life, politics and public relations in Venice. The Ottoman Empire was a foreign, infidel and enemy power. The religious temperament of the age demanded the Italian states officially and publicly approach the Porte with either hostility or, in the worst case and only when absolutely necessary, with reserved neutrality. Yet, the lucrative Levantine commerce had passed into the hands of the sultan and, additionally, his support could tilt Italy's internal power balance in favour of his ally

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[68] Similarly, Islam could not be conceived as a religion on its own terms, but had to be juxtaposed with Christianity. Said discusses a *contraferentia* or 'conference' organised by four scholars, John of Segovia, Nicolas of Cusa, Jean Germain and Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, between 1450 and 1460. The purpose of the meeting was to convert the Muslims to Christianity since it would become clear to them that Islam was merely a misguided version of Christianity. Said, *Orientalism*, 61-2.

[69] Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot,* 19. Andrea Gritti had travelled to Istanbul frequently, where he had led a life of luxury and was acquainted with members of the Ottoman court.
Daniel Goffman rather idealistically writes, "Gritti and his progeny were among the most distinguished of a flood of ambitious Venetians who, captivated by the opportunities, vigor, and refinement of the Ottoman polity, stepped across the blurred the boundaries between the Christian and Islamic civilizations and became cultural chameleons, or even, in the vernacular of that age, 'turned Turk' (*il farsi Turco*)."
Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, 140-1.

[70] Alvise Gritti was extremely close to the Grand Vizier, Ibrahim. He was named 'godson of the Grand Signor' and keeper of the Sultan's jewels. He had his own seraglio and fed over a thousand mouths. Valensi wrtes, "Lead the life of a prince—but what kind, Turkish or Venetian?"
For an account of Alvise Gritti's role in the commission of an idiosyncratic headgear from Italy for Sultan Suleyman, see Gülru Necipoglu "Suleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in a context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry," *Art Bulletin* 71 (Sept. 1989): 401-27.

[71] Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot*, 20.

city-state.[72] Schwoebel speaks of a "conflict of values that plagued the conscience of the Quattrocento"; oftentimes moral beliefs and political demands pointed in different directions.[73] In the constellation of city-states, Venice exhibited pacifistic intentions in its diplomatic manoeuvres; the Serenissima avoided taking sides in diplomatic alliances, except when there was a direct threat to its interests, and showed a strong preference for negotiations over military solutions.[74] Venice was obliged to strike a balance between exhibiting the expected condemnation for the enemies of the Western Faith and protecting its maritime and mercantile interests.

An Anti-Orientalist Reading of Bellini's Portrait

At the start of this chapter I declared my intention to re-examine Bellini's work in light of recent historical scholarship on humanist literature. The preceding pages have pointed to certain trends in early modern thought, which paint a picture of a period replete with contradictions and inconsistencies. The Turks were simultaneously demonized and admired, condemned and privileged, avoided and courted. Although, hostility and denigration were by far the predominant sentiments of the time, I believe Bellini's work does not propose a proto-Orientalist reading for reasons I will explore. To the contrary, I intend to interpret the portrait as a Venetian pictorial declaration of Turkish "naturalisation."

My reading of Bellini's work as an attempt to incorporate the Ottoman sultan into elite Venetian society is based on two factors: one internal to the work and one contingent upon the broader political environment. The first is the portrait's distinctive Venetian iconography and the second the broader historical context along with specific circumstances surrounding its creation. Bellini's visit to the Ottoman capital occurred at the end of a long and especially catastrophic war between Venice and the Turks (1463-1479). When Giovanni Dario, the Venetian secretary of state, was sent to negotiate peace terms with the Porte, he was directed to defend the Levantine trade to the best of his abilities, but obligingly concede to all the Grand Turk's commands.[75] Babinger writes,

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[72] Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent,* 10.
[73] Ibid., 33.
[74] Valensi, 18.
[75] Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* 368.

"Never in the history of Venice had a peace negotiator been given similar powers, but never perhaps in the history of the Republic had the Signoria found itself is so terrible a situation, constrained to abjure all dignity and forget the glory of the past."[76] The historical moment demanded Venice's submissiveness and attentiveness to Mehmed's requests; the grave situation is confirmed by the choice of a prominent artist such as Bellini to make the eastward journey. Meanwhile, Babinger discusses the peace treaty as a turning point in European powers' stance towards the Turks: political and economical considerations took precedence over religious fanaticism.[77]

The evidence I have presented earlier in this chapter indicated Christianity had been gradually (and grudgingly) loosening its firm grip on the political sphere of public life. Political considerations were being placed above Christian morals in a more obvious and confident manner than before. Babinger's insight into the 1478 peace treaty forwards the suggestion of an early modern reassessment of the outlook on the East or, less ambitiously, the introduction of a more affable approach alongside the traditional confrontational attitude towards the Turks. War had a crippling effect on the state's trade and resources, while an alliance with the Ottoman sovereign could restore Venetian economy and strengthen its position vis-à-vis its western opponents. Pragmatism imposed a renewed assessment of reality which traded in the Christian cause for a gravely needed peace.

Humanist literature supporting common ethnic roots between Turkish and Christian societies, Venice among them, shatters the homogenous impression of a united Western front signifying civilization against the barbarity of the East. A precedent was, therefore, set whereby the Turks were not Europe's Other; instead, they were a component of the European community by virtue of their shared ancestors. Bellini's portrayal is part of this counter-trend; Mehmed is not revealed as an exotic, savage Oriental king, but is brought into the Venetian realm and presented as a privileged member of the ruling elite equal to his Western counterparts. The work positions the Ottoman ruler within the cultural boundaries of the West and most importantly proclaims his affiliation with the Venetian Republic. Its virtual undistinguishability from portrayals

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[76] Ibid. For details of the negotiations, see Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 369-72.
[77] Ibid., 372.

of Venetian doges, save the distinct Ottoman headgear and attire, attests to the argument. Evidence of the sultan's intentions to continue his military campaigns and path of conquest towards Italy paired with his documented knowledge of the rumours of his alleged Trojan genealogy offer a framework to assess the possible reception of the work in the Ottoman court. Mehmed self-proclaimed himself a Caesar and was addressed *Ebu-'l-Feth,* Father of Victory.[78] This portrait asserted his claim of unilateral power across the Mediterranean basin.

The image of a world leader perfectly suited Mehmed's aspirations; the image of a powerful ally and a valuable partner appeased a state exhausted by disastrous war. The Ottoman sovereign was, thus, given a part in the Venetian world and privileged to be considered one of the Republic's aristocratic rulers. As one might expect, Venice's eagerness to negotiate and comply with the Turks was severely criticised and reprimanded as "un-Christian" confirming the chasm between dogmatic righteousness and diplomatic imperatives.[79] The circle of humanists in papal and aristocratic courts intent on demonising the Turks would have objected to the unuttered political implications of Bellini's work. Even though clearly an exercise of flattery, which courtiers were routinely accustomed to offering, the work was also an early pictorial attempt to include the Turks in Western society.

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[78] His lifetime military achievements earned Mehmed the title *Ebu-'l-Feth* (Father of Victory); his energy and commitment to works of piety gained him the surname *Ebu-'l-Khayrat* (Father of Good Works). E. J.W. Gibb, *Ottoman Literature:The Poets and Poetry of Turkey,* (London: L.B. Tetens, 19--?), 204. The Sultan was also a poet, who wrote under the pseudonym Avni (The Helpful One) and left a collection (*divan)* of approximately eighty poems written exclusively in Turkish. In one of these poems, he confesses, "Through the love of God, to triumph and to conquest I aspire." Ibid., 48.

[79] Pope Sixtus IV was at first reproachful, but later admitted Venice was obliged to accept the 'harsh and reprehensible conditions" of the peace treaty. The king of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus, expressed his unreserved anger against the Venetians, since "as a good Christian" he had turned down Mehmed's peace offers in hopes other Christian powers would follow his lead. Roman cardinals tried to appease his anger by describing the Pope as 'a loving father what had...taken to his bosom his repentant sons [the Venetians] who had suffered so terribly from the Turkish war, but who now perhaps would condescend to join the league of Italian princes against the infidel." Ibid., 373.

Chapter Four - Historiographical Frameworks

For this thesis, I have pursued two disciplines, art history and history, for their potential to enrich our understanding of the early cultural exchanges between Venice and the Ottoman court and to grasp better the traditions, personalities, institutions and politics at play. In this chapter I discuss the historical and art historical scholarship which has contributed to the academic views expressed so far; my intention is not simply to repeat the various authors' arguments but to place the works in a framework which sensitises the reader to the academic traditions from which these works have emerged. The exposure of parallel trends in both disciplines begs the question of postcolonialism's contribution in this development and in specific Edward Said's *Orientalism.*

I have divided my research into a dual scheme, which provides a helpful way of looking at the reviewed literature. The first group consists of historical writings on the newly emerged Ottoman Empire and specifically the reign of Sultan Mehmed. Work on this topic has been addressed primarily by Ottomanist scholars, whose fields of research covers a period of almost six-hundred years and the geographical regions of Minor Asia, the Balkans, the Middle East and South Africa. Due to the transitory nature of this reign, Sultan Mehmed is sometimes also studied by those specialising in late Byzantine history. Additionally, a new wave of historical scholarship has emerged attempting to move beyond the binary and ideologically laden conceptualisation of "(Ottoman) East /(Renaissance) West" by promoting the idea of a culturally united Mediterranean world.

The second category consists of art historical studies discussing the impact, in both East and West, of imported traditions on local artistic production.[1] Scholarship on Venetian art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries has taken a close look at the Western representation of Muslims, and also examined the Islamic aspects of Venetian material

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[1] See for example, Esin Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting under Sultan Mehmed II," *Ars Orientalis* 9 (1973): 103-120; *Arte Veneziana e Arte Islamica, Atti del Primo Simposio Internazionale Sull'Arte Veneziana e l'Arte Islamica*, ed., Ernst J. Grube (Venezia: Edizioni L'Altra Riva, 1986); St. Clair Alexandine N, *The Image of the Turk in Europe* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973); Julian Raby, "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal," in *Studies in the History of Art; Italian Medals* 21, ed., J. Graham Pollard; Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a patron of the arts," *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no.1, (1982): 3-8.

culture, whether architecture, prints or bookbinding.[2] Artists like Bellini are reviewed in regard to their contribution to the art of the Republic, whilst their Eastern journeys and their impact oversees are marginalised in the canonical discussions.[3] Ottomanist art historians also are generally uninterested in considering further implications of Mehmed's patronage of Italian artists, which is seldom examined in detail.[4] Scholars, whether Ottomanists or those specialising in the Renaissance, have, therefore, traditionally confined themselves to addressing issues of art and culture corresponding to the geographical dichotomy of Europe and Asia.

Until a short time ago the notion of examining cultural exchanges in an attempt to understand the complexities and mutual influences of this historical era was never seriously deliberated.[5] This novel approach speaks of 'cultural currency' and envisions, in accordance with the analogous development in the historical discipline, as Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton explain, the "...creat[ion of] an undivided, seamless cultural sphere within which each distinct power recognised and responded appropriately to the items circulating."[6] Both disciplines, in conclusion, are witnessing radical rethinking of traditional approaches to the early modern period's boundaries, whether artistic, intellectual, religious or political.

Edward Said's Orientalism

The work responsible for forcibly exposing the myths of truthfulness and objectivity of European conceptions of the East and effectively shattering Eurocentric

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[2] See for instance, Julian Raby, *Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode*; Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988); Anthony Hobson, "Islamic Influence on Venetian Bookbinding" in *Arte Veneziana e Arte Islamica;* Deborah Howard, *Venice and the East: The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 1100-1500* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000); for a general overview, see Otto Benesch, "The Orient as a Source of Inspiration of the Graphic Arts of the Renaissance" in *Festschrift Friedrich Winkler* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1959).

[3] See for instance Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting.*

[4] See for instance, Esin Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting under Sultan Mehmed II," *Ars Orientalis* 9 (1973): 103-120; Atil, *Turkish Art* (Washington and New York: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1980); Metin And, *Turkish Miniature Painting* (Ankara: Milet Publishing Limited, 1974).

[5] See for instance, Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests, Renaissance Art between East and West* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press: 2000); Rosamond E. Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600* (Berkeley, California; London: University of California, 2002); Deborah Howard, *Venice and the East* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).

[6] Jardine and Brotton , *Global Interests,* 42.

confidence and self-righteousness vis-à-vis its Muslim neighbour is Said's *Orientalism.*[7] First published in 1978, the thesis developed in this postcolonial writing is considered a pivotal moment in the intellectual history of Western thought on Islam, its followers, the East and ultimately its own identity. For the purposes of this work, I would argue that Orientalism serves a double function: it can be used as a mental construct to understand better and scrutinize the historical events and contemporaneous literature, while in addition it provides a useful way of thinking of the historical narratives consequently produced.

In his book, Said argues that the Orient was a European invention acting as a repository for Western fantasies about romance, exotic beings, sensual lifestyles, remarkable and "barbaric" experiences. The Orient was quintessentially Europe's Other. In Said's words, "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'."[8] In the binary distinction between "us" and "them", the latter becomes the inferior, absent and yet always present and necessary for self-identification partner; the colonized subject becomes the colonizer's Other, whose existence is required in Freudian and post-Freudian terms in order for the colonizer to develop a sense of subjectivity.

Said sees Europe's relationship to the Orient as predicated on power, domination and control. Orientalism is a system of knowledge about the Orient evident in a web of literary, historical, scholarly, political and military writings. The network of Western knowledge is intricately woven and self-perpetuating, ultimately leading the way to the literal, physical domination of the corresponding geographical region. Thus, for Said, the simulacrum called, for instance, "Egypt" is already inseparable from the actual colonization of the real Egypt. "[A]uthority," writes Said, "...means for 'us' to deny autonomy to 'it'- the Oriental country- since we know it and it exists, in a sense, *as* we know it. British knowledge of Egypt *is* Egypt."[9]

The Orient and the Oriental were created and at the same time contained by frameworks which allowed Europeans to view them as phenomena possessing regular characteristics. Orientalism, though, does not only inform the Oriental identity but also

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[7] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).
[8] Ibid., 2.
[9] Ibid., 32.

influences the way Occidentals view themselves, resulting in an even greater polarization of the (arbitrary) distinction. The domination over the Orient was legitimized by scientific 'truths' of cultural superiority and differences were seen as the justification for bloodshed on the one hand, and colonial rule and governing, on the other. Therefore, Orientalism should be seen both as a body of theory that presents itself as a constellation of undeniable truths about Europe's Other and as a practice of foreign invasion and dominance that carried a plethora of material investments for the West.

Despite the importance of Said's *Orientalism* in beginning to deconstruct Europe's claims of knowledge and supremacy over the East, his work has not been without its detractors. An often-heard objection is that his analysis proposes no alternative to the phenomenon it criticizes; Said, in other words, does not indicate it is possible to produce knowledge of a different kind from Orientalist accounts.[10] Connected to this is the question of how Said distances himself from the coercive structures of knowledge he describes in order to give his account of the Orient. The problem of critical distance is, indeed, a point of contestation for all postcolonial discourse and exposes the problematic of whether a representation of a foreign culture can ever escape the issues of language, power, and appropriation brought forth by Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and other postcolonial thinkers.[11]

Said's theory is premised on an "us/them" axis which places each author and individual as either complacent with Western domination and prejudices against the East or as a victim of such attitudes. The author himself, thus, does not escape re-inscribing the dichotomy he is eager to dissipate and, oftentimes, reduces the entire Western civilization into the antithesis of the Orient (in so far it actually exists); in his own words, "The European encounter with the Orient ... turned Islam into the very epitome of an outsider against which the whole of European civilization from the Middle Ages on was

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[10] Robert Young, "Disorienting Orientalism" in *White Mythologies, Writing History and the West* (London; New York: 1990), 127. Said, in "Orientalism Reconsidered", acknowledges the unresolved issue in his work as the question of "how the production of knowledge best serves communal, as opposed to factional, ends, how knowledge that is non-dominative and non-coercive can be produced in a setting that is deeply inscribed with the politics, the consideration, the positions, and the strategies of power." Ibid., 128.

[11] See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994); Gayarti Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture,* eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

founded."[12] Meanwhile Said neglects to come to terms with the fact that Orientalism, apart from a misrepresentation also, as Young explains, "articulated an internal dislocation within Western culture, a culture which consistently fantasizes itself as constituting some kind of integral totality, at the same time, as endlessly deploring its own impending dissolution"[13]; the opportunities set forth by *Orientalism* for a deeper insight into Western culture were, therefore, not fully appreciated. Said's dualistic thinking was a departure point for theorists who came after him, like Bhabha and Spivak, who sought alternative ways to understand the relationship between colonizer and colonized.

Orientalism in the Early Modern Period

In literature regarding the early modern period one is often confronted with the question of whether the insights of Orientalism are relevant to this timeframe. Despite the later chronological focus, Said traces the origins of Orientalism as far back as Aeschylus's *The Persians* and explicitly discusses the Middle Ages and Renaissance.[14] Interest in Islam, according to Said, was never the result of a natural and somehow innocent curiosity, but instead the outcome of medieval polemists' fear of the threat posed by Muslims.[15] An indispensable component of Said's theory entails the physical occupation of the East, which did not occur for centuries. However, it is only one of the many webs of power and control the Occident extols; in Said's words, "Orientalism is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political...power intellectual...power cultural...power moral."[16] The East's colonization would have never occurred was it not for the preceding discourse which not only enabled, but completed the aggressive act.

A close reading, therefore, of Said's reasoning would clearly support looking at European conceptions of the Orient in the fifteenth century as endemic to Orientalism. In this vein, Said considers the fact that Islam was inconceivable as a self-defining, independent religious belief system and could only be understood as a misguided

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[12] Said, *Orientalism,* 70.
[13] Young, "Disorienting Orientalism," 139.
[14] Ibid., 56-63.
[15] Ibid., 342-3.
[16] Ibid., 12.

Christian heresy.[17] Literature on the topic, such as R. W. Southern's *Western Views on Islam,* discusses the plethora of fallacies and slander circulating in the West without ever attempting to understand Europe's psychological need for their existence.[18] For Said such myths are to be seen as evidence of Europe's biased perception of the East and its people as "repetitious pseudo-incarnations of some great original (Christ, Europe, the West)..."[19] Such narratives serve to deny perpetually the Orient agency and allow it to exist only in so far as it can be understood as a distorted, inferior version of Western cultural paradigms.

Southern's account narrates the development of perceptions on Islam transforming from lack of knowledge towards a more informed, albeit still flawed picture of the religion. He divides the period into three stages: the age of ignorance (700-1140), the century of reason and hope (1124-1290) and the moment of vision (after 1290).[20] Said, on the other hand, consistent with his portrayal of Orientalism's hopelessly flawed and dangerously potent presence, views the whole trajectory as a refinement of ignorance; he categorically denies the assertion that Europe ever attained a body of positive knowledge.[21]

My primary purpose in this chapter is not to examine the Orientalist elements in early modern writings, but instead to explore the ways in which Said's insights into Europe's relationship with the East changed the manner in which scholars approach the challenging topic. I will next discuss possible frameworks for viewing historical sources on the Turks.

Historical Sources on Turks in the Early Modern Period

Ottomanist Historians

In the category of work produced by Ottomanist scholars, the most thorough historical account of Mehmed II's life is Franz Babinger's *Mehmed the Conqueror and*

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[18] R.W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962).
[19] Said, *Orientalism*, 62.
[20] Southern, *Western Views of Islam.*
[21] Ibid.

His Time, first published in 1953 for the five-hundredth anniversary of the Turkish conquest of Constantinople.[22] The author, who was a specialist of Ottoman-European relations in the Renaissance, gives a detailed account of the sultan's life, military campaigns, conquests and efforts to build his empire. Babinger weaves his own perception of Mehmed into the historical narrative; Mehmed, he writes "was one of those historical figures presenting the enigma of the so-called demonic personality."[23] Such personalities, according to the author, are geniuses who soar above considerations of ethics; they are tyrants to their people, however posthumously are often sanctified, as in the case at hand.[24] Babinger sees Mehmed as far removed from the idealised image of the Renaissance prince propagated primarily by Julian Raby. He writes, "The only thing that Mehmed II had in common with the Italian princes of his time, was the cruelty and the abuse that he made of his co-operators, but that is not enough to declare him an man of the Renaissance."[25] The author's life-long commitment to scholarship on this sultan does not inhibit him from positing persistently critical and oftentimes even sarcastic comments. In this manner, Babinger goes against mainstream Ottomanist scholars' portrayals of Mehmed which are for the most part flattering and unscrutinising. Not surprisingly, Mustafa Soykut has recently accused Babinger of either being "excessively influenced by the centuries-old historical material he studied" or complying with "a deeper prejudice that was present until a few decades ago in European historiographers on the image that they held of the Turks."[26] Soykut insinuates that Babinger is guilty of having written yet another Orientalist work: biased, condescending and, above all, Eurocentric. The critique is not unwarranted, although it is slightly exaggerated and does

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[22] Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time,* ed. William C. Hickman, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), xi. This is an English edition of a work first published in Gernan. Unfortunately Babinger never published the pendant volume to *Mehmed the Conqueror* containing his bibliographical notes. Inalcik offers a very helpful supplementary review of the work, titled "Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481) and His Time" in *Essays in Ottoman History* (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: ErenYayincilik, 1998), 87-110. The review focuses on military, political and fiscal historical facts, citing sources omitted in Babinger's account and using them to complement and occasionally correct the latter's chronology. Mehmed's cultural policies are not touched upon, which I would argue reflects Inalcik's academic interests and not a ready acceptance of Babinger's account.

[23] Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror,* 432.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Franz Babinger, "Maometto il Conqiustatore e gli umanisti d'Italia," in *Aufsaetze und Abhandlungen zur Geschichte Suedosteuropas und der Levante* (Muenchen, 1976), 293 cited in Mustafa Soykut, *Image of the 'Turk' in Italy :A History of the 'Other' in Early Modern Europe:1453-1683*,(Berlin: K. Schwarz, 2001), 13.

[26] Soykut, *Image of the 'Turk' in Italy*, 13.

not account for the time lapse between their works and the consequent historiographical development.

Halil Inalcik, a prominent and prolific scholar in Ottoman history, is author of *The Ottoman Empire, The Classical Age 1300-1600,* which is considered a landmark study of the period.[27] Inalcik's work, in accordance with the standards set in the field, is heavily grounded in archival research with an emphasis on military, political and fiscal history. The author agrees with Babinger in so far as Mehmed's depiction as a western humanist ruler is misleading; his departure point is the favouring of an interpretation of the period founded upon the Islamic component of early (Ottoman) Turkish identity. Inalcik writes of Mehmed, "His interest in the Christian world sprang only from desire to become its conqueror and ruler. Culturally he was a Muslim...His epoch's admiration for the European style in art ... did not constitute a new cultural direction."[28] Similarly in "Istanbul: An Islamic City," Inalcik discusses the *ahādith* claiming the future conquest of the city by Muslims, the legends regarding divine aid during the 1453 siege, and the measures taken by Mehmed after the fall to ensure the urban space of the city properly reflected its Islamic character.[29] The author is eager to proclaim Mehmed's religiosity and secure the Ottoman position in orthodox Islamic history.

Mehmed's reign in the founding period of the Ottoman Empire cannot escape the highly politicised, past and present, interpretations of events as they are deeply intertwined with assertions regarding the origins of this dynastic house. Daniel Goffman asserts, "It can even be argued that when modern historians have approached the early Ottoman state, they no less than Ottoman chroniclers have at times written more about their own times and selves than about their topic."[30] In the case of Turks writing on the empire that preceded the Republic of Turkey nationalism often becomes an overriding

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[27] Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600,* trans. Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973).
[28] Ibid., 181.
[29] Halil Inalcik, "Istanbul: An Islamic City" in *Essays in Ottoman History.*
[30] Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 28. One of the earliest Western accounts is Herbert A. Gibbons's *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 1916) where he juxtaposes the civilised West with the hordes of the barbarous Eastern people. The author argues the Ottomans built their empire resting upon Byzantine civilization, but ultimately failed due to the "savage line in their blood." (Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire,* 28). For a recent effort to answer these questions and ultimately a middle-ground resolution, see Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

determinant of rendering the past. The Turkish and/or the orthodox Islamic component of the multi- national and religious Ottoman Empire is inflated and idealised; historical narrative is often relegated, whether by choice or not, to providing an archival narrative verifying and reinforcing the myth of ethnic superiority and strengthening national sentiments. The strand of academic work described could be viewed as a counter-trend or even an intellectual counter-weight to Orientalist discourse. This is not to say that the two exist alone in a vacuum as mirror-reflections of each other's (distorted) ideology, but rather that, overlooking the blend of reasons responsible for their emergence, they can be seen as holding opposite ends of the cognitive spectrum. One proclaims European superiority, the other hails Muslim Ottoman culture as outshining all others. Neither approach escapes the intellectual confines of its own culture's cognitive borders to embrace difference as equally valuable and valid.

Scholars of European History

In 1453 the West took notice of the Turks and their expanding empire became a bona fide topic of scholarly investigation of European history. From the fifteenth century onwards, whether in direct military or maritime confrontation, or as the subject of humanist crusade literature, the Turks were acknowledged as playing an integral part in shaping the course of events, both political and cultural. The focus of these contemporary scholars' writing on the early modern period is not on the Turks *per se*, but on the traces left by their presence, whether actual or imagined, on the European psyche and soil. If one were to imagine a dual Ottoman/ European scheme (made possible by Orientalism's legacy), the first group showcased the Ottoman story and this group analyses the consequences of this co-existence for Western culture.

Among the earlier and influential works in the field is Norman Daniel's *Islam and the West* which investigates the continuities and changes in the image of Islam in the Latin world.[31] Southern's *Western Views of Islam,* Robert Schwoebel's *The Shadow of*

[31] Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1960). For his discussion of the Ottoman impact, see Daniel, *Islam and the West*, 11. Said discusses Daniel's notion of Islam as an image for European consumption and its affinity to the basic premise of Orientalism in Said, *Orientalism,* 60. For a discussion of the importance of Daniel's work in the field, see David R. Blanks "Western Views of Islam in the Premodern Period: A Brief History of Past Approaches," 24-31 in *Western Views of Islam in*

the Crescent, and Kenneth M. Setton's *Western Hostility to Islam and Prophesies of Turkish Doom,* are accounts of the Ottoman presence in western literature from papal bulls, to humanist personal letters, laments, books of prophesies, travel accounts and memoirs, among others.[32] Although, Schwoebel's work examines diversity of opinion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, these works do not escape reinscribing the binary conception of West/East by omitting the nuances of the period. David R. Blanks comments,

> To the extent that Westeners were concerned with the East, Edward Said is absolutely correct: the Orient *was* experienced through stereotypes that, in turn, shaped the language, perception, and form of the encounter between Europe and Islam.[33]

More recent efforts are often aimed at the conventionally overlooked areas of the historical record. In this manner, James Hankins examined the impact of humanist crusade literature (an oxymoron in conventional academic accounts of humanism) extoling an attack on the Turks on the formation of a European identity.[34] Similarly, Nancy Bisaha examined Muslim and European relations and conflicts in "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary? Humanist Constructs of the Ottoman Turks in Fifteenth Century Italy."[35] Both authors depart from canonical accounts of the East and West as clashing civilisations to embrace a more complex and, often, convoluted approach to their relationship.

The Turks in Byzantine History

Scholarship on the Turks in the early modern period is also conducted by academics specializing in the closing chapter of Byzantine history. The locus of interest here is not Sultan Mehmed's long term contribution to Ottoman or European history, but

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Medieval and Early Modern Europe, Perception of Other, eds. David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[32] Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453-1517)* (New York: St. Mark's Press, 1967); Kenneth Setton, *Western Hostility to Islam and Prophecies of Turkish Doom* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1992).

[33] Blanks, "Western Views of Islam in the Premodern Period," 38.

[34] James Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders: Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995): 111-207.

[35] Nancy Bisaha, "'New Barbarian' or Worthy Adversary? Humanist Constructs of the Ottoman Turks in Fifteenth-Century Italy" in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe.*

his attitude towards Byzantine culture, population and buildings; writers are concerned, one could say, with the aftermath of the fall of Constantinople instead of the new page opened in Ottoman history. Sir Steven Runciman's *The Fall of Constantinople 1453* is a detailed chronicle of the siege coloured by the author's pro-Greek emotions.[36] In "Byzantine Constantinople and Ottoman Istanbul," the author, Speros Vryonis, examines the transition which occurred with the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in the tradition of imperium and establishes the connections that bound two of the city's most renowned rulers, Constantine the Great and Mehmed the Conqueror.[37] The writer's tone is clearly more neutral, expressing admiration for both men, but also discreet nostalgia for the ending of an era.

Apostolos Vacalopoulos, in par with Runciman does not conceal his Greek bias and allows an air of melancholy to permeate his writing. In *Origins of a Greek Nation, The Byzantine Period, 1204-1461* Vacalopoulos speaks of the internal politics during the siege, the western help and the Turkish attitude towards Byzantium; "They [the Greeks] were treated as a people without a country and therefore powerless and of no account," he writes permitting his feelings of affiliation to be read between the lines.[38]

Inalcik, a specialist in the Ottoman component of the period, considers measures taken by Mehmed directly after the fall to repopulate the city.[39] These actions, according to Inalcik, allowed the Greek populace to prosper and heightened feelings of animosity between Greeks and Turks, who believed the conquered nation was unjustly favoured by the sultan. The blame was lifted off the sovereign by accusing his close Greek advisors of influencing him in his discriminatory decisions. Inalcik portrays Mehmed as a caring, just ruler concerned with the fair treatment of his subjects, independent of their religion.

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[36] Sir Steven Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople 1453* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965).

[37] Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Byzantine Constantinople and Ottoman Istanbul" in *The Ottoman City and Its Parts, Urban Structure and Social Order*, eds. Irene A. Bierman, Rifa'at A. Abou-El-Haj and Donald Preziosi (New Rochelle, N.Y.:Aristide D. Caratzas, 1991).

[38] Apostolos E. Vakalopoulos, *Origins of the Greek Nation, The Byzantine Period, 1204-1461*, trans. Ian Moles (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 205.

[39] Halil Inalcik, "The Policy of Mehmed II towards the Greek Population of Istanbul and the Byzantine Buildings of the City," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23-24 (1969-1970). In fact this trend of hostility culminated in the issuing of a falsified *fetvâ in 1538* for the protection of the Greeks stating that the Jews and Christians had made a secret compact during the siege of the city not to assist the Byzantine emperor and were therefore, according to the *sharî'a,* rightfully in possession of their homes and not slaves. Ibid., 248-9.

In "Interpretation in History," Hayden White discusses the unavoidable subjective nature of the historical narrative. He writes,

> A historical narrative is...necessarily a mixture of adequately and inadequately explained events, a congeries of established and inferred facts, at once a representation that is an interpretation and an interpretation that passes for an explanation of the whole process mirrored in the narrative.[40]

White makes a very useful distinction between what he terms the 'story' and the 'plot' in historical narrative. Each historian chooses to morph a certain constellation of facts and a depository of "culturally provided *mythoi*" into a historical text, a story.[41] In order for the audience to begin to unravel the narration, White argues, it must conform to an established way of telling stories, a plot. The latter are limited to "the number of modes of emplotment which the Western literary tradition sanction as appropriate ways of endowing human processes with meanings"[42]; namely, epic, romance, comedy, tragedy or satire.[43] A set of events does not come with an inherently matching plot; it is in each historian's discretion, or more accurately it is a reflection of his or her own ideological preferences to choose which plot will be employed to render the narrative. White considers the distinction useful in identifying the elements of historical texts that are "fictive."[44]

From the historians mentioned so far in this paper, I would argue Runciman, Vryonis and Vacalopoulos chose to present the events of 1453 as a tragedy, whereas Inalcik was inclined toward the romantic prototype; in another context, Babinger employed the satirical plot to retell Mehmed's life, whereas Inalcik preferred the epic scheme. The historical records left behind are common to all, but each historian's reconstruction of the past is an individual act. Choosing to view the fall and all consequent measures as a series of catastrophes or, alternatively, as victorious, righteous acts aided by God effectively depends on one's cultural outlook. Similarly, viewing Mehmed as a hero, an enlightened ruler and a devout Muslim, or as an intelligent, yet

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[40] Hayden White, "Interpretation in History" in *Tropics of Discourse; Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 51.
[41] Ibid.
[42] White, "Interpretation in History," 60-1.
[43] Ibid., 61. In the introduction of his argument, White identifies the epic among Western modes of emplotment, while in the remaining text he deals exclusively with the other four modes.
[44] Ibid.

violent sovereign, or even as a barbarian tyrant, is defined by the way one wishes to flesh out the bare bones of history. This can be said to be equally true for contemporary chroniclers and modern academics.

Complementary to White's analysis, Said's intervention allows for an additional unravelling of the historical text no longer along the lines of individual emplotment preferences but by uncovering "the profitable [for the Occident] dialectic of information and control."[45] The myths of the "scientific objectivity" of the historical text or the "expert opinions" of Orientalists are deeply invested with ideology and power imbalances, which are exposed and called into question by Said's analysis. Both White, on an individual level, and Said, on an institutional and collective level, inform the reader of the biases woven into the historical fabric.

Reconciliatory Efforts

The final set of sources I will discuss have been unanimously informed by Said's postcolonial work. The writers' attempts, or more accurately their intention, is to present a "corrected" or ideologically neutered account of European/Ottoman relations. Such works are the latest in the long tradition of writing on Ottoman history by non-Turks, yet their authors are more aware than ever before of the potential pitfalls of Eurocentric thought.[46] The "exteriority" factor, which Said described as "the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West" has been acknowledged in this case by its beholders and these works represent the efforts to overcome it or, at least, openly address it.[47]

It is in this spirit that Daniel Goffman in *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* states in his preface that a core belief threaded throughout his text is that "the early modern Ottoman Empire constituted an integral component of Europe, and that neither the Ottoman polity nor Europe makes a lot of sense without the other."[48] Additionally, Goffman shifts the direction of the inquiry from Europe's eastward-looking

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[45] Said, *Orienatlism,* 36.
[46] These publications often belong to series which aim to readdress traditional methods and conceptualizations in the historical discipline, bearing titles like "New approaches to European History" or "The Making of Europe" and are often collaborative efforts of several publishing houses.
[47] Said, *Orientalism,* 20.
[48] Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe,* xiv.

gaze to the perspective obtained by occupying the Ottoman space. He incorporates information on the state of affairs and society of the Muslim empire in an effort to "de-exoticize this enduring realm."[49]

A similar outlook is provided by Franco Cardini's *Europe and Islam*, where in his own words, he examines "the ideas, prejudices, disinformation and anti-information" which have played a vital role in the antagonistic and defamatory nature of the relationship between the two domains.[50]Although Cardini makes no claim to integrate the Ottoman perspective into his historical account, he is aware, nonetheless, of the limitations of past European attempts and undertakes to present a more open-minded and unbiased European viewpoint. In this manner, Cardini, like Goffman, lays claims to re-approaching the topic by embracing postcolonial criticism.

An awareness of the structures of power underlying one culture's representation of another can also be evidenced in work produced in recent years by scholars of Eastern origin. Mustafa Soykut in *Image of the 'Turk' in Italy-A History of the 'Other' in Early Modern Europe: 1453-1683* explores the formation of European identity in juxtaposition with its Muslim Other.[51] Soykut poses that the negative image of Muslims in the medieval period was carried on and re-applied to the Turks; their rapid military advance and political threat only intensified the nature of this polemic discourse. His text is suspended between a detached historical account of European views on the Turks, to the extent that such a concept is possible, and a discreet effort to refute their validity and bring forth the "truth." "History is never simply history," writes Claude Lévi-Strauss, "but always 'history-for,' history written in the interest of some infrascientific aim or vision"[52]; in this case, Soykut, aware of the injustice against the Turks, uses Orientalism's insights to expose specific historical biases.

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[49] Ibid., cover page summary of book.
[50] Franco Cardini, *Europe and Islam*, trans. Caroline Beamish, trans. Caroline Beamish (Oxford: Malden; Mass.: Blackwell, 2002), ix.
[51] Soykut, *Image of the 'Turk'*. The use of inverted commas for words as Turk or, elsewhere in the text, Europeanness, is particular to Soykut and I consider it to be a statement promoting the idea that these notions are constructed and ideologically vested.
[52] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London, 1966), 257 cited in White, "Interpretation in History," 56.

Art Historical Sources on Venetian Art and Ottoman Patronage

Art historical work on the Italian and Ottoman fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries accommodates a similar conceptual framework to the one employed for the historical sources. The readings can be divided on the basis of their geographical focus into the categories of Islamic and Renaissance art. Additionally, scholarly interest has transferred from the patron to the individual artist or the preferred artistic tradition and, more recently, to the cultural exchanges and dialogues taking place in the Mediterranean basin. This trend sees the area of study shift from national borders, with the oftentimes accompanying politicized account, to the cultural transactions and bilateral dialogue taking place in a unified space which supersedes these boundaries.

Ottomanist Art History

Ottoman art has been conventionally regarded as a weak adaptation of the more accomplished Persian achievements. Until recently the former had difficulty claiming its distinct position in canonical Islamic art history, a young discipline eager to establish itself and characterised by distinct schools of thought claiming centre-stage.[53] This outlook has lead many Ottomanist art historians to address openly the necessity of defending the object of their inquiries; Metin And writes,

> During the past two decades, there has been a marked change in point of view, especially on the question of Persian influence, and students of Islamic art have become aware of the equal importance of the [sic] Turkish painting.[54]

The quest for a place in Islamic art fuelled by an undeniable, and one might add unjustified, marginalization of the Turkish contribution to the field resulted in a tendency towards overcompensation. Thus, texts often exhibit an uncritical acceptance of nationalistic rhetoric emphasizing the uniqueness and superior qualities of Ottoman

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[53] Thus, G. M. Meredith-Owens in the chapter "Characteristics of the Turkish School" in *Turkish Miniatures* elaborates on the differences between the Persian and Turkish miniatures. She writes, for instance, "The range of colour is smaller than in Persian painting but the shades are stronger ... The Turk had a greater preference for full profile and frontal views than the Persian who went in for three-quarter profile..." and so on. The anxiety to establish a distinct style is characteristic of earlier writings on Ottoman art. G. M. Meredith-Owens, *Turkish Miniatures* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1969), 14.
[54] And, *Turkish Miniature Painting*, 5-6.

society and culture. Such writings on Ottoman art are anxious to establish its merits vis-à-vis its Persian counterpart, while more recent scholarship has been able to move beyond the imperative for recognition, towards an examination of specific aspects of the Ottoman artistic tradition.

One of this field's most prolific academics is Esin Atil, a Turkish scholar active in the United States, who has curated several exhibitions and penned numerous books on Islamic art, such as *The Age of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent,*[55] *Turkish Art* and *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks.*[56] Atil, consistently throughout her work, accentuates the distinctiveness and originality of Ottoman art in the Islamic community; in *Turkish Art,* she writes, "The development of the art of the book, particularly of manuscript illustration traces the life-style of a society that evolved *from a classical Islamic world into one that was uniquely Ottoman...*"[57] In her article "Ottoman Miniature Painting under Sultan Mehmed II," Atil maintains that portraiture was the only Western impact on Ottoman art introduced as part of Mehmed's "westernization of the empire."[58] Such foreign elements were in time adapted to Istanbul's requirements and tastes, leading to their eventual "Turkification."[59]

The critique aimed at Mehmed's activities as a patron of Italian artists is justified by the author's belief that the culture of Renaissance Italy was alien to Ottoman society and could, as a consequence, make no long-term contribution.[60] Conversely and always according to Atil, "Its counterpart, the Ottoman impact on Renaissance Europe, is far more pronounced with an increased interest in Oriental motifs..." in the West.[61] Athough,

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[55] This book was written in commemoration of the homonymous exhibition held in the National Gallery of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum of Art with works on loan from the Topkapi Saray Museum. The author was a guest curator of the exhibition and played an important role in its organisation allowing for many of the artifacts to be seen outside of Turkey. Esin Atil, *The Age of Sultan Suleyman.the Magnificent* (Washington: National Gallery of Art; New York: H. Abrams, 1987).

[56] Atil, *Renaissance of Islam; Art of the Mamluks* (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 1981).

[57] Atil, *Turkish Art,* 139. Italics are my own.

[58] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting under Sultan Mehmed II," *Ars Orientalis* 9 (1973): 103-20.

[59] Ibid., 119-20. Elsewhere Atil maintains "Bayezid II, *truly an Ottoman sultan either by nature or by external circumstances of his troubled reign,* would not or could not pursue the path taken by his father [Mehmed II]"; the implicit deduction is that Mehmed's sultanate was lacking or misguided in so far as he sought Western cultural interaction. Ibid., 119-20.

[60] Atil, *Turkish Art,* 231-2.

[61] Atil, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," 120. This comment strikes me as odd and, even, problematic given the very important differences between the two topics Atil addresses. The Western fascination with the Ottomans was not a consequence of Ottoman work, pictorial work to be more precise since carpets, glassware and metalware were indeed available, circulating in the West, but rather an aspect of the

it is beyond the scope of this thesis and my own field of knowledge, to challenge the claims made by Atil, I nonetheless perceive certain aspects of her work as ideologically charged by an effort to elevate the status of Ottoman art as a "pure" product of a Turco-Islamic culture. Her discussion places intrinsic values on Western and Islamic cultures; from the standpoint of Ottoman culture the West is portrayed as carrying the seeds of undesired hybridity, while the East retains the potential to enrich local culture and effortlessly merge with standing traditions.

The importance of establishing a *raison d'etre* for Ottoman art historical scholarship and a heightened awareness worldwide of the period's achievements is addressed by most of the early Ottoman scholars, even if their reasoning might not always be in agreement. Gundel Renda, for example, views Ottoman society as the most receptive to cultural influences, from both East and West, in the Islamic world.[62] In her opinion, it is not the supposed incompatibility of European and Ottoman culture which is significant, but instead the unique Ottoman facility to synthesize borrowings from neighbouring cultures.[63] Although Renda is not strongly disposed against the idea of European influence or the opening of channels of communication, she is still preoccupied with uncovering and establishing the distinctiveness of Ottoman art. This endeavour is closely linked to the aforementioned preoccupation with the formation of a national identity.[64] The juxtaposition of Etil and Renda serves to illustrate the distance in opinions

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fascination and Christological fear of Muslims. Muslim presence in artworks was usually justified by the quest for authenticity; Biblical scenes set in the Holy Lands demanded the presence of the 'unbelievers' in order that they remain faithful to an imagined historical accuracy. It is possible, however, that Atil is referring to such impact as the pseudo-Arabic found on the borders of clothing, the presence of Oriental carpets in Renaissance works or the influence on bookbinding. For a introductory reading on the topic, see Otto Benesch, "The Orient as a Source of Inspiration of the Graphic Arts of the Renaissance" in *Festschrift Friedrich Winkler* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1959); for further reading, see *Arte Veneziana e Arte Islamica, Atti del Primo Simposio Internazionale Sull'Arte Veneziana e l'Arte Islamica*, ed. Ernst J. Grube, (Venezia, 1986). On the topic of bookbinding, see Anthony Hobson, "Islamic Influence on Venetian Bookbinding" in *Arte Veneziana e Arte Islamica.*

[62] Gundel Renda, "Europe and the Ottomans" in *Europa und die Kunst des Islam 15. bis 18. Jahrhundert*, 25th International Congress of the History of Art, ed. Oleg Grabar (Wien: H. Böhlau, 1985), 9-32.

[63] Ibid., 22. Renda's account of Ottoman westward orientation begins with Mehmed II (1451-1481) through to Sultan Adbulaziz (1861-1876) who, at a much later date, was the first sultan to travel to Europe and acquire first hand knowledge of European art. Her timeframe ends with the establishment of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in 1883.

[64] Turkey's singular position in world politics, explained in part by its unique geographical location, is a complicated topic. The cultural ties to both East and West are to this day open to debate, as evidenced in Turkey's recent efforts to become a member of the EU. In this light, it is not surprising that this issue is of

regarding foreign influences on Turkish art. The topic is ideologically and politically charged and, as such, does not lend itself well to straightforward interpretations.

Gülru Necipoglu, an Ottoman scholar of the subsequent generation, is no longer primarily concerned with the characteristics that define Ottoman art as distinct from other artistic traditions, but investigates topics wholly within the parameters of the discipline. Necipoglu is especially concerned with the ways imperial conceptualization of power came to be invested into architectural constructions, such as the Topkapi Saray, or, in another case, a set of idiosyncratic regal headgear produced in Venice for Suleyman the Magnificent.[65] In regards to the Topkapi, the author links Mehmed's dynastic law code, the *Kanunname,* which transformed court ceremonial and solidified imperial seclusion, to the new palace's layout. The sultan became an invisible, awe-inspiring, omnipresent and all-controlling authority, whose palace acted out this novel role in his self-imposed absence. "This [the Topkapi] was a coercive space," writes Necipoglu, "a space of power...[i]ts layout, obsessed with clearly delineated boundaries and codified functions, was designed to classify, to assign roles, and to impose rigid behavioural patterns..."[66] In her work on Suleyman, Necipoglu continues to be interested in the role of patronage and deployment of art as a signifier of authority; the author emphasises the importance of power groups in the court's artistic sponsorship and illustrates how political alliances and cultural orientation were intricately connected and shifted through time.[67] Necipoglu, reaping the benefits of work performed to establish the field, brings research in the field up-to-date with the interests of the discipline.

Another author who has featured prominently in this study due to his extensive writing on Mehmed's cultural patronage of Italian artists is Julian Raby, currently director of the Smithsonian's Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. Apart from his special interest in Mehmed, as an Islamic art specialist, he has also published on

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central importance to all Turkish historians, who might be looking to the past for answers to contemporary problems and outlooks.

[65] Gülru Necipoglu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power, The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,* (New York, N.Y.: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991); "Suleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in a context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry," *Art Bulletin* 71 (Sept. 1989): 401-27.

[66] Necipoglu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power,* 250, 257.

[67] Necipoglu, "Suleyman the Magnificent."

Iznik pottery, Turkish bookbinding and figure paintings from nineteenth-century Persia.[68] In works like "Pride and Prejudice: Mehmed the Conqueror and the Italian Portrait Medal" or "A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a patron of the arts" Raby folds out his perception of Mehmed as an enlightened, cultured and progressive sultan, a man true to his own culture and simultaneously equal to the princes of the European Renaissance.[69] Raby is eager to portray Mehmed as receptive to Western and Byzantine cultural influences.[70] In contrast to Inalcik, he also views Mehmed as "not believ[ing] in any one culture."[71] Raby's efforts move towards refuting the negative image of the Ottomans as uncivilised and artistically retarded by promoting the idea that, at least in the case of Mehmed, they were in fact appreciative of Western culture and followed the current developments. The author's idealising outlook is also evident in *Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode*, where he discusses the West's attempts at obtaining "objective records of the East."[72] Raby is preoccupied with the accuracy of the images and consistently unwilling to investigate the Orientalist aspects of these works.

The body of Raby's work belongs to a long tradition of Western interest in Islamic art which has produced some pioneering contributions to the field.[73] The scholar's work on Mehmed's westward cultural patronage filled a gap in literature which Turkish scholars were unwilling or indifferent towards researching. The plot chosen by the author is neither surprising nor detractive from his research, but reflects his background, interests and cultural orientations.

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[68] Nurhan Atasoy and Julian Raby, *Iznik: The Pottery of Ottoman Turkey(* London, England: Alexandria Press in association with Thames and Hudson, 1989); Julian Raby, *Turkish Bookbinding in the 15th Century; The Foundation of an Ottoman Court Style (*London : Azimuth Editions on behalf of l' Association internationale de bibliophilie ,1993); Raby, *Qajar Portraits: Figure Paintings from Nineteenth Century Persian* (London : Azimuth Editions in association with the Iran Heritage Foundation; New York: 1999).

[69] Julian Raby, "Pride and Prejudice"; "A Sultan of Paradox."

[70] Julian Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37, 1983.

[71] Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox," 8.

[72] Raby, *Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode*, 83.

[73] See for instance, Meredith-Owens, *Turkish Miniatures*; Richard Ettinghausen *Islamic Art* (New York : Metropolitan Museum of Art: 1974); Norah M. Titley *Persian Miniature Painting and its Influence on the Art of Turkey and India* (Austin: University of Texas Press: 1983); Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999); Ernst Grube, *Studies in Islamic Painting* (London: Pindar Press, 1995); Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar and Marilyn Jenkins Madina, *Islamic Art and Architecture* 650-1250 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001). For a social art historical approach to the topic, see Robert Irwin *Islamic Art in Context; Art, Architecture, and the Literary World* (Upper Saddle River, NJ : Prentice-Hall ; New York : H.N. Abrams: 1997).

Renaissance Art History

When one turns attention to scholars specializing in the art of Renaissance Italy, and Venetian art in particular for the purposes of this study, a thematic shift in academic writings from patron to individual artist or style becomes apparent. The writers I am including in this grouping profess no expertise or attraction towards the world outside the Italian realm.[74] Their engagement with issues regarding the representation of Muslims, whether Ottomans or Mamluks, is in fact a natural extension of their interest in the visual arts in Venice. The presence of Oriental persons in Venetian artwork is studied solely as a phenomenon taking place and confined to Venice; the resulting possibilities for understanding contemporary perceptions of difference are left intact.

Patricia Fortini Brown serves as a prime example of academics whose publications centre on Venetian art. In *Venice and Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past,* the author discusses various facets of the Republic's invention of its own civic past such as a perceived lack of a Roman foundation, the close links with Byzantine Constantinople and the transportation of the relics of St. Mark from Alexandria in 828 A.D.[75] In *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio,* which has featured prominently in the preceding chapters, Fortini Brown establishes parallels between the Venetian chronicle, *cronaca*, and the "eyewitness" style in painting as exemplified by Carpaccio, Gentile Bellini and other painters working for the Scuole at the turn of the century.[76] The *cronaca*'s claims to historical accuracy derived from its seemingly unedited and laden with minute details account of events, a trend mirrored in the eyewitness style where "the slice of life in all its fullness signified uncontrived authenticity."[77] The author examines the growing interest in the lands of early Christianity noting the shifts that took place over time from attention to the slightest

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[74] See notes 2, 3.
[75] Fortini Brown, *Venice and Antiquity; The Venetian Sense of the Past.* Fortini Brown argues that the present day understanding of thirteenth century Venice has been formed by two paradigms: Gina Fasoli's 'myth of Venice' as "a compelling image of an ideal republic born and continuing to flourish under divine providence, always free, but secure; wealthy, but pious and just; peaceloving, but also a militant defender of liberty and a faithful daughter of the Roman Church..." and Otto Demus's thesis of a "politically inspired *renovatio imperii christiani* in art and architecture." Ibid., 15.
[76] Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio*, 87-97.The style was slipping out of fashion by 1530. Ibid., 235.
[77] Ibid., 91.

feature in a quest for documentary realism to the fanciful and more aestheticised *fantasias* by Carpaccio.[78] In a manner typical of this type of art historical work, Venice is treated as a microcosm where one can observe the impact of the world beyond its confines on the material fabric of the city itself, yet never directly face the polities existing beyond the Venetian domain.[79] This is not to accuse such work as incomplete in some way or deficient; it is more a matter of the authors' object of enquiry and the information they are searching to uncover, understand and develop. Occasionally Fortini Brown touches upon the larger issues put forth by Said, as in when she writes "While interest in the east remained vigorous throughout the sixteenth century it was no longer an east on which Venice could project its own image and thus 'appropriate' for itself."[80] Yet, this is more an acknowledgement of the wider framework of power struggle and hegemonic forces at play, than a willingness to engage in them.

The only published monograph written to this day on Gentile Bellini is by Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, published in German in 1985. Capellen assigns a whole chapter to Bellini's work in the Orient and initially approaches the topic in a unique way. For the author the 'crux of the matter' is a Renaissance artist's reaction to a completely different and unknown artistic tradition, namely Islamic art.[81] This angle on the encounter, rather than investigating the Ottoman quest for Western artists and their reaction to Renaissance achievements is surprising. Capellen's consequent discussion of Renaissance and Islamic art, though, is indicative of Eurocentric discourse; he portrays the former as more advanced due to the development of art theory and perspectival constructions, while in the East, art had yet to reach this stage. Europe is seen as the example worthy of emulation; a position not openly stated but inferred by an analysis that, for instance, discusses European 'corrections' on the two-dimensional portrayals made by Oriental artists.[82]

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[78] Ibid., 216.
[79] The list of publications on the Venetian Renaissance is to say the least extensive. Limiting oneself to works directly related to this thesis, I would further add to this group the following: Peter Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Rona Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini* (New: Yale Univeristy Press, 1989); Patricia Fortini Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997).
[80] Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting,* 237.
[81] Jürg Meyer zur Capellen, *Gentile Bellini* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), 98.
[82] Ibid., 99-100.

Towards a United Mediterranean World

A present trend in art historical work has witnessed a move towards negotiating ideas borrowed from postcolonialism and resolving the question of their applicability to the art of the early modern period. Overall, opinions are divided; the jury is out, one might say. The overriding tendency in this scholarship is to view the world of the Mediterranean basin as more homogenous than has traditionally been argued: a cosmos united by virtue of the trade of luxury goods and diplomacy. This somewhat romanticised vision of cross-cultural encounters in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries has not gone uncontested, a point to which I shall return shortly. I would first like to look briefly at a few of the scholars to have addressed these matters.

Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton in *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* promote the inapplicability of Said's views to this time period; they believe, "Just as Renaissance Man turns out to be a retrospective construction of the nineteenth-century ideology, so does its alien Other."[83] The authors envision the East and West as a united sphere, which on the surface displays incidents and rhetoric of hostility and religious zeal meanwhile masking the underlying genial and pragmatic co-existence. The movement of 'cultural currency', such as the portrait medals commissioned by Mehmed II, according to the authors, transgressed borders and appealed to a community of common taste.[84] The type of animosity and power struggles described in Said and prerequisite for the emergence of Orientalism, for Jardine and Brotton are cultural characteristics of later times.

On a similar note, Rosamond E. Mack, the author of *Bazaar to Piazza; Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600*, objects to the twofold division of the Renaissance Mediterranean world and puts forth the argument that trade from the Middle Ages onwards in non-figurative goods, such as glass, carpets, silks, ceramics and inlaid brass, led to the birth of an elite class whose cosmopolitan taste for luxury was served by merchants and supply networks on both sides of the geographical divide. According to the author, the creation of this third space, whose existence depends on the cross-cultural

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[83] Jardine and Brotton, *Global Interests,* 61.
[84] Ibid., 42.

dialogue between the binaries and is the birthplace of hybrid forms of artistic production does not inhibit the flourishing of either Renaissance or Ottoman culture. Mack's reading of the period is in compliance with Homi Bhabha's theory of the "third space" or the "in-between" space, which rejects the colonial binary framework and relocates the burden and meaning of culture in the contact zone of coloniser and colonised.[85] Mack concludes, "Sixteenth century East-West trade and artistic exchange softened a clash of civilizations, establishing a historical precedent for cultural coexistence and mutual enrichment."[86] In so far as the potential of cultural impacts to weaken the "true" nature or ideal evolution of Ottoman culture, Mack is noticeably less judgmental and more receptive to the beneficial aspects of such possibilities than scholars like Atil or Inalcik. Nonetheless, one should not disregard Mack's position as an Occidental scholar with no cultural affiliations to the object of her enquiries; she is, by virtue of her position as an outsider, less inclined towards narratives that promote Turkish nationalism or the corrupting influence of the West.

Mack is not concerned with the darker, less appealing side of cross-cultural interactions and as a result incurs the danger of misrepresenting a complex relationship and period. Issues of power and appropriation are untouched and effectively muted by the idealistic visions (this is a departure from Bhabha) of a relatively peaceful community of nations culturally conversing. The move towards viewing early modern Europe as a precursor of modern cross-national politics is, to a certain extent, an outward sign of European guilt for the centuries-long intellectual and physical abuse exercised on non-European cultures.

Deborah Howard in *Venice and the East, The Impact of the Islamic World on Venetian Architecture 1100-1500* turns to the matter of Venetians' sense of identity in order to answer the question of whether they perceived themselves as Europeans to be set opposite their Oriental Other, the Muslim Ottomans.[87] The course of her argument leads

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[85] In an interview with Jonathan Rutherford, Bhabha comments, "...for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'the third space' which enables other positions to emerge... [t]he process of hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation." "The Third Space-Interview with Homi Bhabha" in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference,* ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 211.

[86] Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza*, 179.

[87] Howard, *Venice and the East.*

her to the realisation that when the Venetians ventured into the Islamic world they did indeed identify with the West. This emerging affiliation with the Western world was closely linked to the feeling of "dislocation" afforded by travel and also to the positive energy associated with possible "material gain, visual excitement and devotional experiences."[88] The presence of Islamic elements in the Venetian cityscape was subject, Howard believes, to the process whereby "any obvious appropriation of a recognisably Islamic element required a ritual act of possession in the rendering."[89] In this manner, this latest art historical work is representative of the efforts to explore the impact of the Islamic East on Renaissance culture (without claiming to look at the reverse), while remaining alert and occasionally attentive to the broader issues arising from this interaction. Howard's work is a sample, in my opinion, of research in the field that escapes (to the degree that this is possible in any historical narrative) the hazards of presenting a uniform, static notion of a complex period, while also avoiding to superimpose later notions and problems to previous eras.

In conclusion, contemporary scholarship dealing with early modern cross-cultural interaction, in both art history and history is witnessing a trend towards historical narratives which are sensitised to issues of power and appropriation, ideology and knowledge, East *and* West or neither in favour of a unified cultural realm, the Mediterranean. "Fear, hatred, curiosity, indifference, grudging respect: all of these attitudes," writes Blanks, "surfaced, disappeared, and existed side by side in the pre-modern West."[90] Historians are increasingly beginning to take notice of the subtle nuances of the past, which were previously overlooked and undetected. The legacy of *Orientalism* continues to be felt, although concomitant efforts are being made to move beyond its strict and often misleading categorization towards more holistic approaches.

The move to include the Turks within the boundaries of Western society was a counter-trend to the pervasive derogatory image of the Turk. Although, covert and confined to humanistic circles, these ideas were as much a part of early modern thought as the disparaging and objectifying notions conventionally discussed by historians.

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[88] Ibid., 218.
[89] Ibid., 5.
[90] Blanks, "Western Views of Islam," 40.

Closely intertwined in the historical fabric along with the seeds of Orientalism, precursors to colonial rule and the East's designation as Europe's Other, were the (traces of) seeds of acceptance and inclusion.

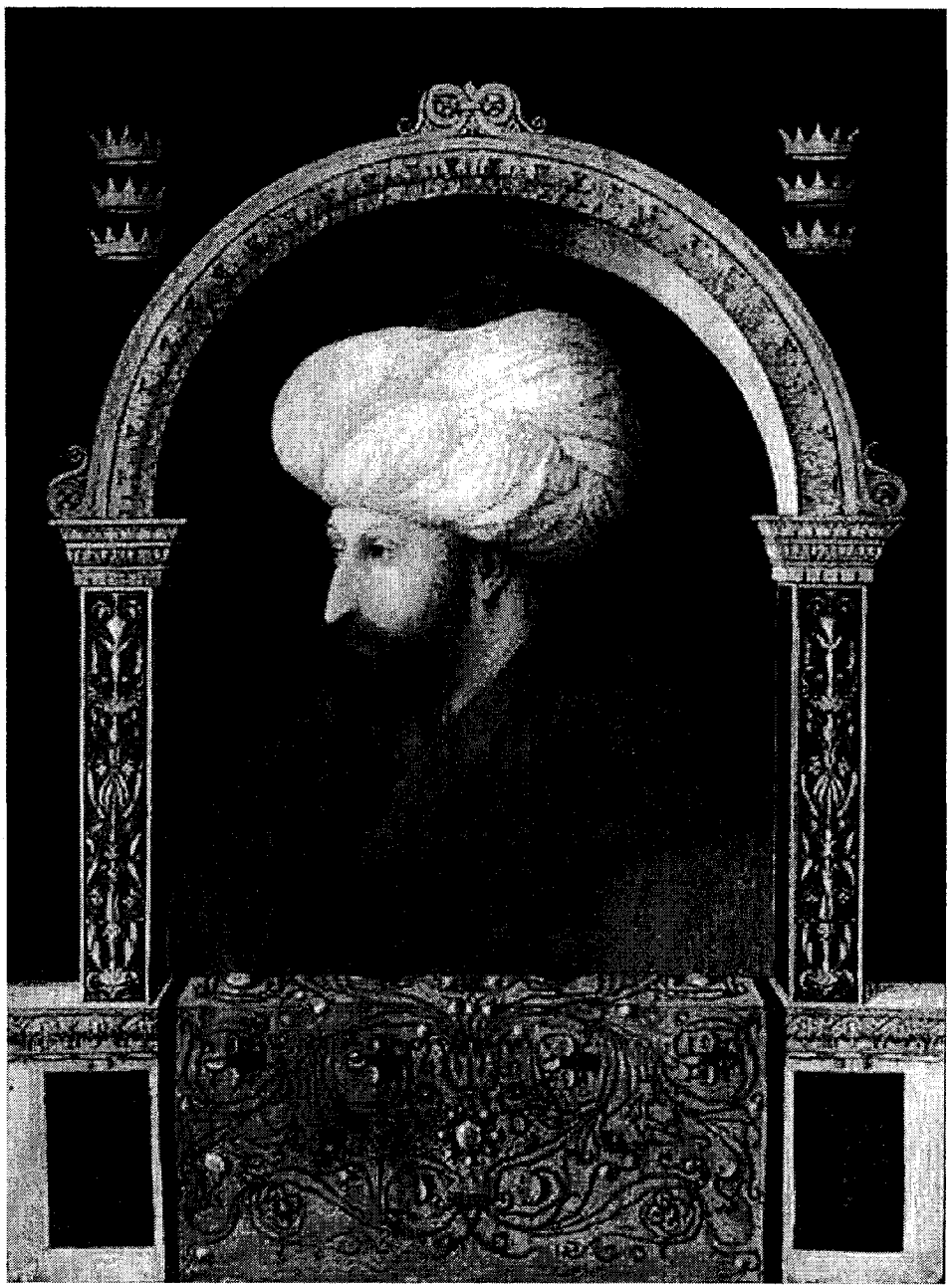


Figure 1: Gentile Bellini, *Portrait of Sultan Mehmed II*, 1480. National Gallery, London.

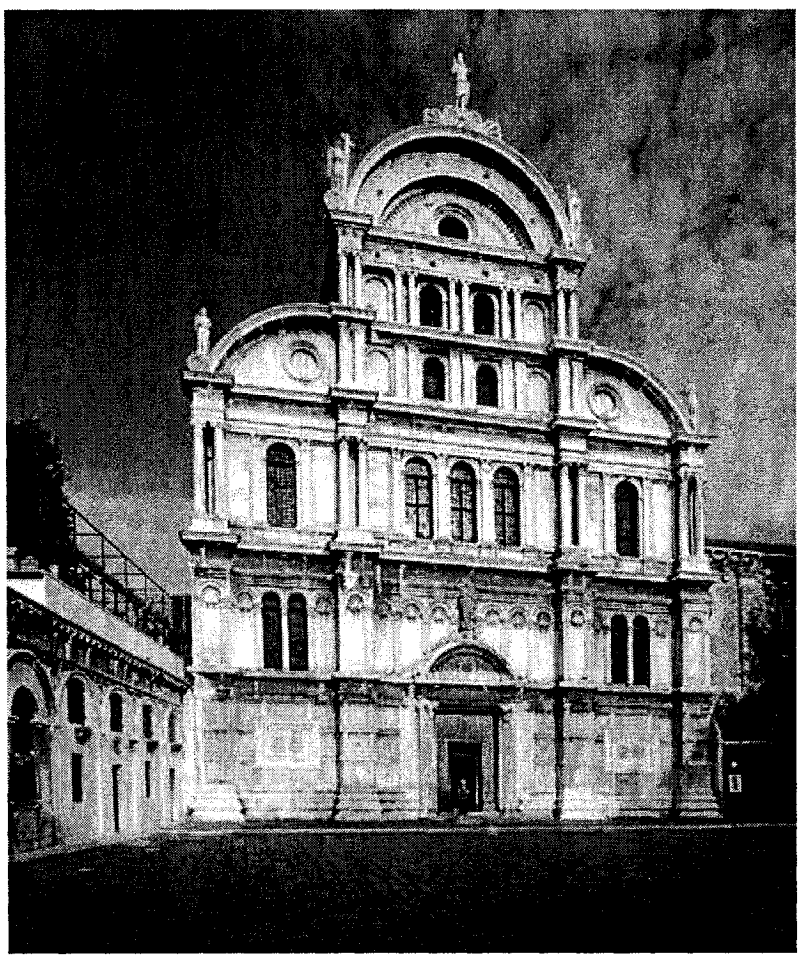


Figure 2: San Zaccaria. Venice.

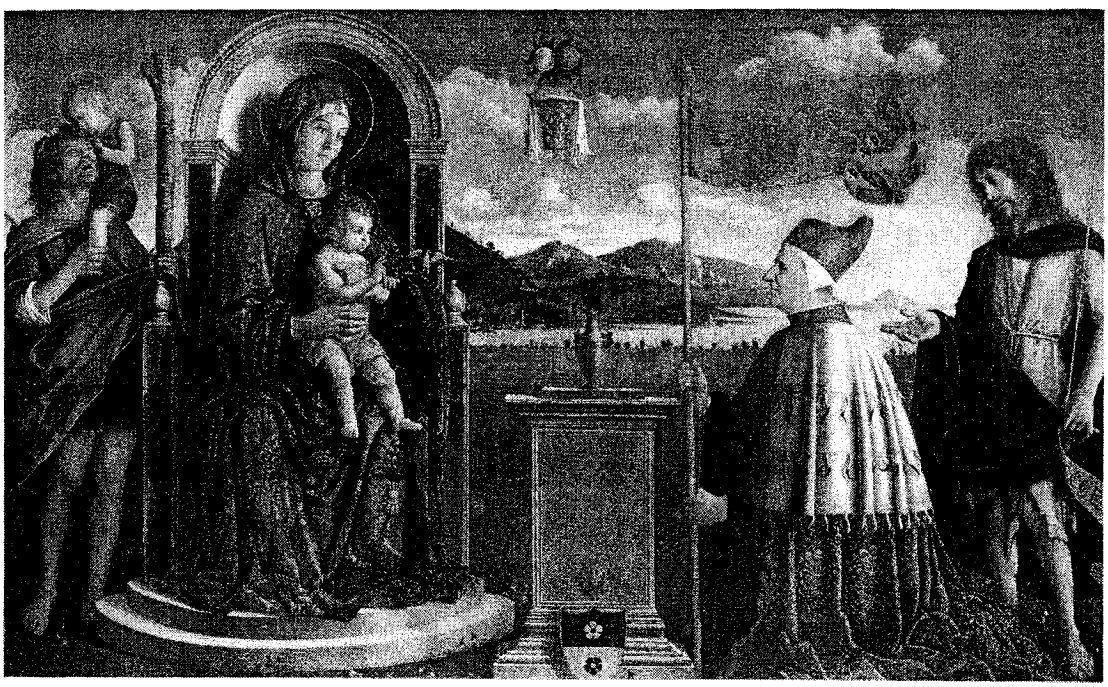


Figure 3: Fifteenth-Century Venetian (Gentile Bellini?) votive picture of Doge Giovanni Mocenigo. National Gallery, London.



Figure 4: Giovanni Bellini, *Leonardo Lorendan, Doge of Venice*, c. 1501. National Gallery, London.

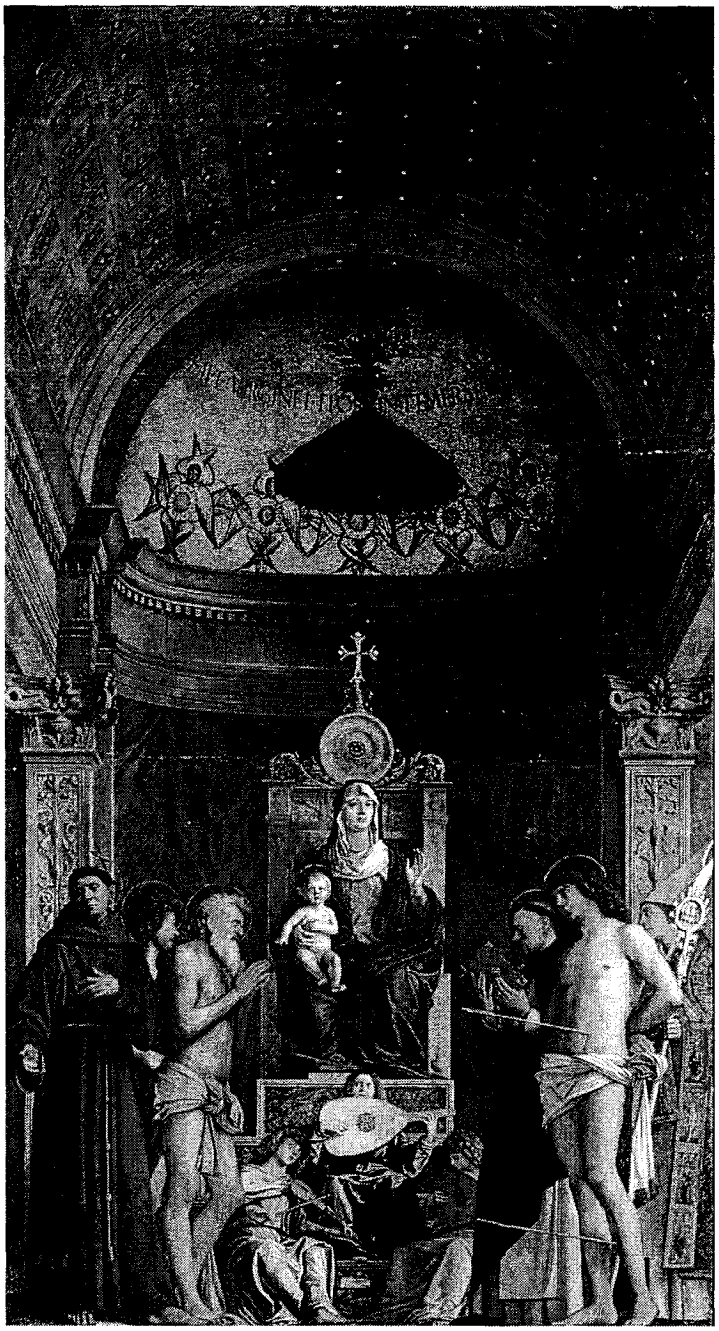


Figure 5: Giovanni Bellini, *San Giobbe Altarpiece*. c. 1478-80. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.

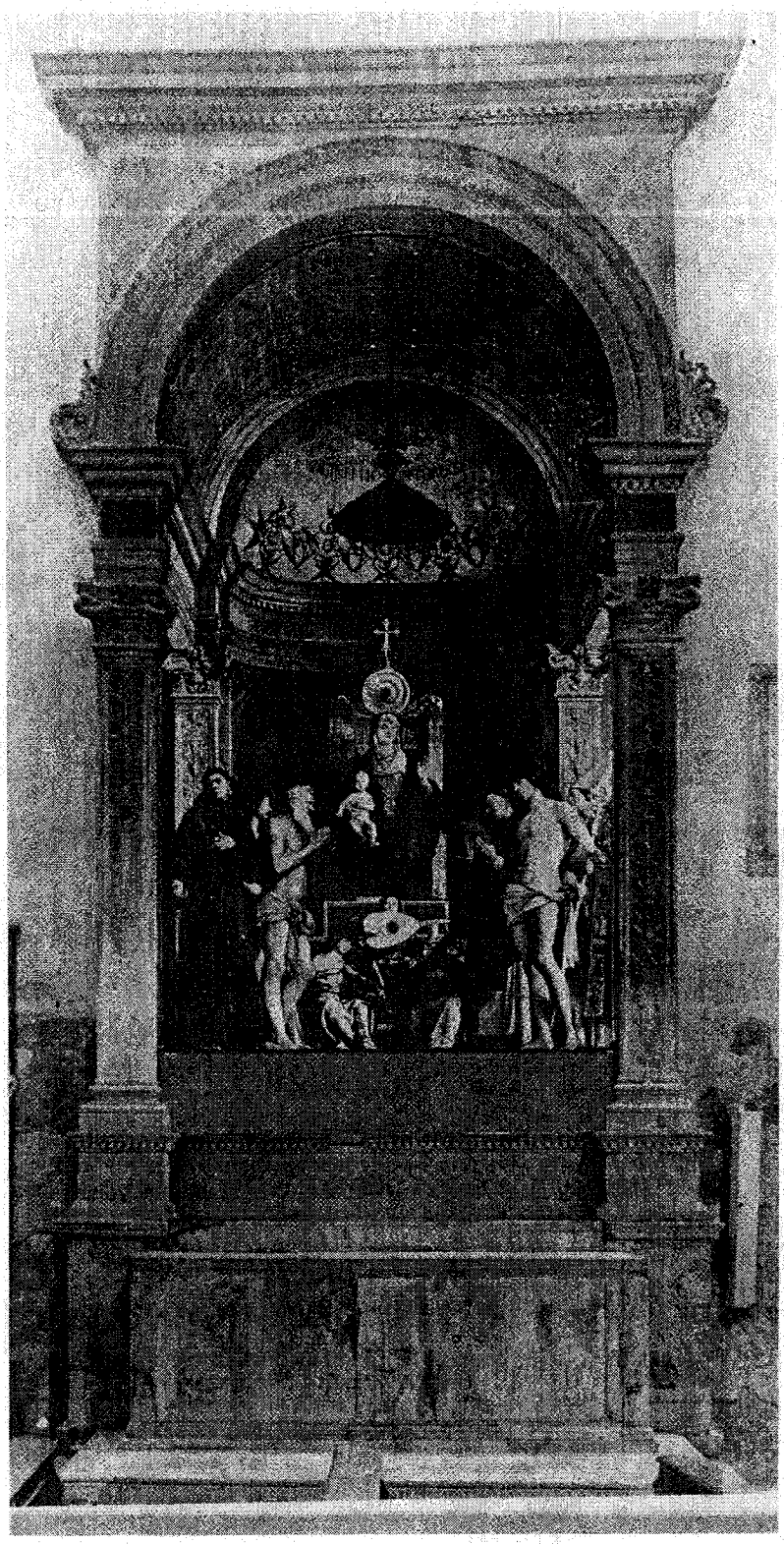


Figure 6: Photographic reconstruction by Sponza (1987) of Giovanni Bellini's S. Giobbe altarpiece in its original frame.



Figure 7: Giovanni Manusueti, *Miracle at the Bridge of San Lio,* c. 1494-1505/10. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.



Figure 8: Four Riders. Ahmedi, *Iskendername*, dated 1416. (suppl. turc 309, fol. 296a.) Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.



Figure 9: Entertainment of the Shah Nevruz. Badi al-Din, Dilsizname, c. 1455-56. (MS. Ouseley 133, fol. 80v.) Bodleian Library, Oxford.



Figure 10: Sharaf al-Din, Healing of the Dislocation of the Big Toe, *Cerrahiye-I Ilkhaniye*, c. 1465. (suppl. turc 693, fol. 201b.) Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

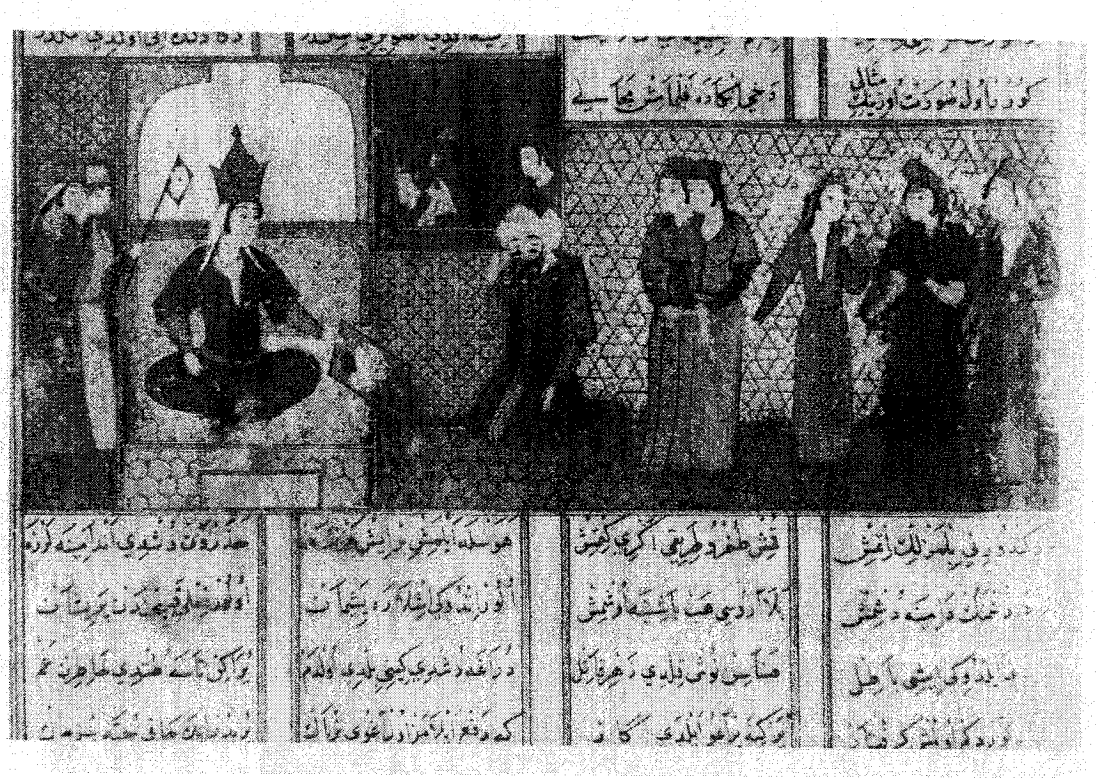


Figure 11: Qaydafe recognises Iskender by his portrait. Tercüme-i Şahnâme-i Firdevsî, (H. 1522, f. 410a.)Topkapi Palace Library, Istanbul.

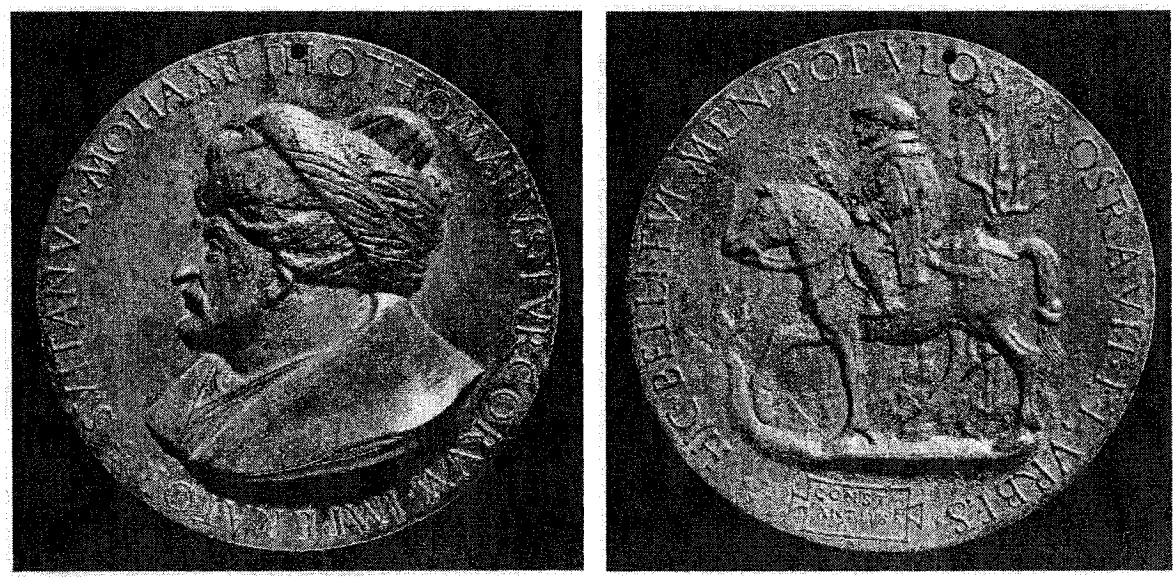


Figure 12: Costanzo da Ferrara, *Mehmed II*, obverse and reverse. The National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection, Washington, D.C.



Figure 13: Attributed to Costanzo da Ferrara, *Portrait of Sultan Mehmed II*, (H 2153, fol. 145b.) Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul.



Figure 14: Attributed to Costanzo da Ferrara, *Drawing of a Seated Woman*, (no. W/P 74.) British Museum, London.



Figure 15: Attributed to Costanzo da Ferrara, *Drawing of a Seated Janissary, (*no. W/P 73.) British Museum, London.



Figure 16: Gentile Bellini, *Sultan Mehmed II*, obverse and reverse, The National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection, Washington, D.C.

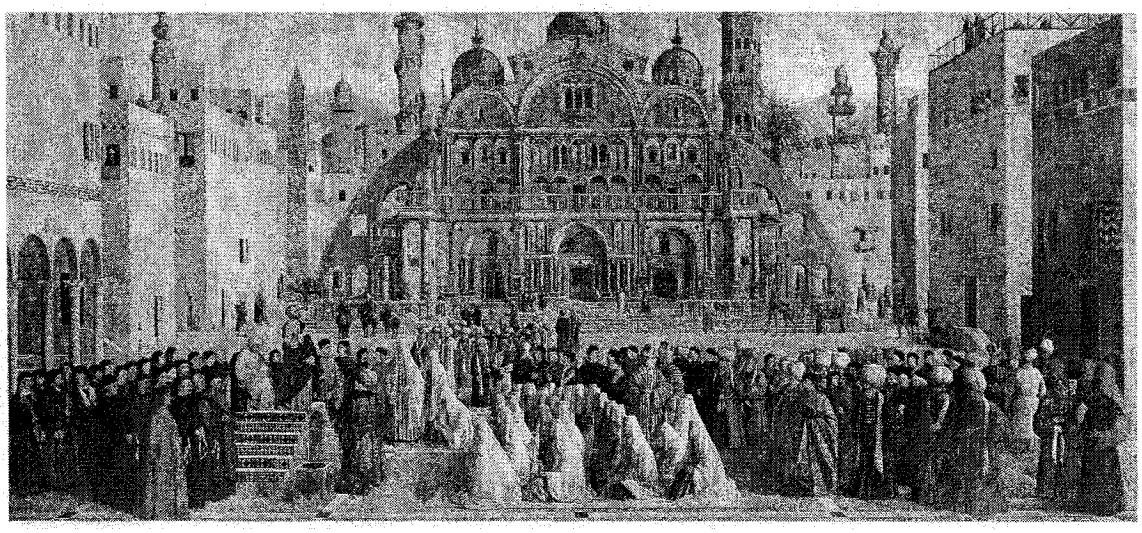


Figure 17: Gentile Bellini, *St. Mark Preaching in Alexandria,* 1504. Brera, Milan.



Figure 18: Pisanello, *Paleologus, Emperor of Byzantium*. Staatliche Museen, Berlin.



Figure 19: Attributed to Sinan Bey, *Sultan Mehmed II,* (H 2153, fol. 10a.) Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul.



Figure 20: Nakkas Osman, Suleyman the Magnificent as a young man.*Semailname* 1579 (Hazine. 1563, folio 47b.) Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul.



Figure 21: Woodcut of Sultan Mehmet II, *Vitae illustrium Vitorium*, 1578.

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