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210 Tarkan Okçuoğlu, *Hayal ve Gerçek Arasında Osmanlı Resminde İstanbul İmgesi, 18. ve 19. Yüzyıllar. İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2020. ix + 241 pages, 122 figures. ISBN: 9786054642939*

Okçuoğlu's study is a beautifully produced survey of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century wall paintings from the Ottoman Empire that depict İstanbul. The book is to be lauded for examining murals in buildings located in the capital İstanbul as well as many in Anatolia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Syria, thus casting a wide net. The author sensitively analyzes these paintings in their geographic and religio-cultural contexts, and points to interesting differences between the center and the periphery. He also includes paintings on metal painted trays from the nineteenth century, and touches upon but does not fully bring into the discussion, other portable objects. Despite the rather broad title, *Between Imagination and Reality: The Image of İstanbul in Ottoman Painting (18th and 19th Centuries)*, the book does not treat oil on canvas paintings of the nineteenth century, though it is mentioned that many of the images of İstanbul originally derive from such works. Although one map and one painted metal tray are analyzed (and a few other trays are noted and illustrated), we can safely say that the weight of the evidence comes from murals, and it is in this area that the book makes a major contribution. The author explains in the introduction that his main aim is to unpack the multiple meanings of the image of İstanbul that appears so frequently in wall paintings scattered throughout the empire starting in the reign of Abdülhamid I (r. 1774–1789) and continuing throughout the nineteenth century.

Okçuoğlu argues cogently that the image of the capital served different ends in different contexts, and also took varied forms. Spread across a

vast geography, and decorating a variety of building types (mosques, tombs, but also homes and khans), images of İstanbul sometimes signified allegiance to the religious and political center of the empire, and other times contained more subversive messages. For example, mansions in Greece (on the island of Lesbos, but also in the Thessaly region) contain identifiable depictions of İstanbul with the Bosphorus and three landmasses around it (Uskudar, Galata, and the Old City), but they omit depictions of the Friday mosques that are such a prominent part of the city's silhouette. By contrast, mansions in Anatolia and Syria depict İstanbul with its mosques. By considering the works in their geographical contexts, the author shows that they are more nuanced than a simple lauding of the empire's capital. While the images of İstanbul with its mosques help to draw attention to the age of the dynasty and its religious patronage, the depictions of *yals*, İstanbul's seaside mansions, appear to point to modernity, current fashions, and a life of leisure and luxury. Imagery of clock towers, military barracks, and even factories also feature in some of these paintings, and when they do, are clearly intended to highlight a changing world, and embody an enthusiasm for novelty. Okçuoğlu also points to the multiplicity of styles, ranging from sophisticated to naive, used for the depictions.

The book is roughly divided into two parts, with the first half contextualizing and providing an overall analysis of the paintings, and the second half describing them in detail, drawing more specific conclusions with each example. Chapter 1 historicizes and places into a larger geographic and artistic context the wall paintings that form the focus of the book.

The author discusses new approaches to painting as well as architecture in the eighteenth century, and reminds us that life in İstanbul itself also included increasing numbers of Western European objects such as chairs, tables, beds, mirrors, and clocks. In doing so, he shows us that these paintings were part of a broader visual and material culture, decorating the walls of rooms that also con-

tained these types of objects and gave space to modernizing lives. Although we do not know with certainty the identities of the artists responsible for the murals, Okçuoğlu postulates a group of itinerant artists connecting the paintings in Western Anatolia and the Greek islands, pointing to İzmir and its multiethnic population as an important center. He highlights connections, through reference to Levantine families, to Italian and Central European paintings, baroque and rococo depictions of ruins in romantic landscapes that seem to find a resonance in the murals analyzed in the book. He also reminds us of a number of European publications in the Topkapı Palace collections with Ottoman notes in the margins, including a book of designs by Antoine Watteau, the renowned French artist of the eighteenth century, first brought to scholarly attention by Gül İrepoğlu. He also rightly points to portable objects with images of İstanbul for circulating and popularizing the portrait of the capital. Okçuoğlu reviews pre-eighteenth-century images of İstanbul from Ottoman sources and outlines the connections between these and the images under study in the book. The consideration of architectural decoration along with portable objects in this first part of the book, in explaining the rise of landscape/cityscape depictions in Ottoman wall paintings is an important contribution.

The second chapter, "Landscape Themes in Late Ottoman Painting," begins with a bold statement: "No matter what backing they are painted on, the largest number of late period Ottoman paintings are landscapes and cityscapes" (p. 52, my translation). The author then proceeds to first define the different types of city- and landscapes: topographic urban depictions, identifiable buildings and places, imaginary scenes and architecture; and analyzes some of their themes. Okçuoğlu devotes significant attention to evocations of paradise. Beginning with an overview of earlier Ottoman and Islamic architectural decoration that makes reference to paradise, and including paradise references in other media, from tombstones to literature, he broadens the

semantic field, and makes a case for the possibility that some of the landscape and cityscape depictions in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century wall paintings might also be considered paradise imagery on some level. In this way, he manages to connect a phenomenon usually viewed through the lens of modernization or Westernization to earlier Ottoman and more broadly Islamic practices. The chapter is rounded out by a discussion of Western furniture that appears in wall paintings as a symbol of modernity.

The third and longest chapter is a systematic analysis of the image of Istanbul in Ottoman wall painting. After a brief discussion of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Istanbul imagery in maps and manuscripts, the bulk of the chapter is devoted to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century murals. Examples in Anatolia (Muğla, Bursa, Birgi [Izmir], Merzifon [Amasya], Tokat, Manisa, and Çanakkale), are followed by those from Rumelia (Plovdiv, three examples from Lesbos, three from Larissa [Thessaly], and an engraving in the Benaki Museum), Syria (five examples from Damascus), and finally Istanbul. Okçuoğlu is careful to point out that the paintings in the provinces prefer the topographical depiction of the city, while depictions within Istanbul tend to focus on individual buildings or gardenscapes as synecdoches of the capital. There are differences, too, he notes as he analyzes individual paintings, among the provinces. While depictions in Syrian mansions are the most detailed

of all, depicting the newest buildings alongside older symbolic ones with great care, those in Greece tend to prefer the overall depiction of the city without its mosques. Thus, while Arab nationalism does not yet seem to clash with allegiance to the empire, Okçuoğlu argues, the depictions in Greece and the Balkans have a different story to tell. Of particular interest here are the depictions in different parts of the Topkapı Palace, some of which are only available through photographs. The paintings have a wide variety of components, ranging from contemporary architecture to archaeological ruins to steamboats, combining real and imaginary spaces and buildings. Other buildings in the capital spread over its vast geography from Bebek to Vefa display a variety of themes and buildings, but almost all of them ride that fine line indicated in the title of the book, between the imaginary and the real.

The conclusion restates some of the major findings of the book, laying the emphasis on the difference between the center and the peripheral regions of the empire, questioning once again why wall paintings in Istanbul do not depict the city in toto, focusing instead on individual building types, while wall paintings in the provinces, from the Balkans to Syria, prefer the topographical depictions of the city. He connects this to the capital being an object of desire for those located outside of it, and somewhat taken for granted by those within it. The differences among the provincial depictions are summed up once again. One

point mentioned most clearly in the conclusion and perhaps not equally explicitly in the book itself is change over time: how in the time frame extending from the reign of Mahmud II to that of Abdülaziz, or from 1808 to 1876, images and their meanings naturally changed. Also emphasized in the conclusion is the lack of human figures in the depictions, as well as an altogether absence of wall paintings in mosques of the capital.

This survey of images of Istanbul in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century murals brings together an important group of artworks and outlines for us how the capital is depicted and thus perceived. It is to be commended for bringing together examples from different parts of the empire, of different styles, and carrying variant meanings. Its examination of meaning and purpose, going beyond stylistic analysis, is an important step in the direction of understanding these beautiful images. Okçuoğlu convincingly shows that even if the images themselves are to be located somewhere between the real and the imaginary, they have a lot to tell us about the social, political, and artistic realities of Ottoman life in the period.

Emine Fetvacı
Boston College
fetvacı@bc.edu

ORCID: 0000-0002-3931-3560

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Dimitris Stamatopoulos,
*Byzantium after the Nation:
The Problem of Continuity
in Balkan Historiographies.*
Translated by Diane
Shugart. Budapest: Central
European University Press,
2022. 410 pages, 2 tables.
ISBN: 9789633863077

Originally published in Greek in 2009,¹ in the new English version *Byzantium after the Nation: The Problem of Continuity in Balkan Historiographies* published in 2022, Dimitris Stamatopoulos provides a critical comparative analysis of historians found, to a greater or lesser extent, on the margins of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Balkan historiography. Thus, Stamatopoulos delves into the writings of scholars who went against the tide of mainstream nation-state building and consciously

diverged from the canon by focusing on the empire. In the case of Greek historiography, Stamatopoulos reads Manouel Gedeon against Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, the doyen of modern Greek nation-state-focused historiography, and to a lesser degree, Spyridon Zambelios. As far as the Bulgarian historiography is concerned, Stamatopoulos focuses on Gavril Krâstevich's work, which he analyzes in contradistinction to various models of origins put forth in his time by his compatriots, especially Marin Dri-