

PAINTING, ARTISTIC PATRONAGE AND CRITICISM
IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE: A STUDY OF THE
OTTOMAN SOCIETY OF PAINTERS,
1909-1918

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Gizem Tongo

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Thesis Abstract

Gizem Tongo, “Painting, Artistic Patronage and Criticism in the Public Sphere: A Study of the Ottoman Society of Painters, 1909-1918”

This study examines the Ottoman Society of Painters, and traces the history of its first nine years, from its foundation in 1909 until the demise of the Empire in 1918. The position of the Ottoman Society of Painters in the late-Ottoman cultural milieu was certainly a significant one. As an artistic organization, run by the graduates and students of the Academy of Fine Arts, it published the first art journal of the Empire, and contributed to the painting exhibitions organized in Istanbul and in Vienna during the First World War.

The final decade of the Ottoman Empire was indeed a unique decade, and it is the objective of this study to understand the Society and their art as part of these ‘catastrophic’ years; the years that witnessed revolutions, rebellions, nationalistic agendas, wars and massacres. This thesis firstly explores the historical and artistic specifics that lead to the foundation of the Society, and then, focuses on the key themes and debates of its journal, in an attempt to understand how contemporary political circumstances, such as the Balkan Wars and the nationalist agenda of the CUP, influenced the fabric of the Journal itself. The last chapter looks at Ottoman visual culture during World War I and explores the responses of the Society’s painters to this disastrous war and its extraordinary conditions.

Tez Özeti

Gizem Tongo, “Resim, Sanatsal Patronaj ve Kamusal Alanda Eleştiri: Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Üzerine Bir Çalışma, 1909-1918”

Bu çalışmanın temel olarak incelediği konu, 1909 yılında kurulan Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti ve bu cemiyetin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun 1918’deki yıkılışına kadar olan dokuz yıllık tarihidir. Osmanlı’nın son dönem kültürel ortamı düşünüldüğünde, Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti’nin bu sosyal yapıdaki yeri çok önemlidir. Bir sanatçı örgütlenmesi olarak, Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi öğrencileri ve mezunları tarafından oluşturulan cemiyet, imparatorluğun ilk güzel sanatlar dergisini yayınlamış ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında İstanbul ve Viyana’da düzenlenen resim sergilerine katılmıştır.

Osmanlı’nın son on yılı pek çok yönden sıra dışı olayların yaşandığı, devrime, ayaklanmalara, milliyetçi gündemlere, savaflara ve katliamlara şahit olunduğu çalkantılı ve yıkıcı bir dönemdir. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti’ni bu katastrofik dönemin bir parçası olarak konumlandırmaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, bu tez öncelikle cemiyetin kuruluşuna zemin hazırlayan tarihsel ve sanatsal temelleri inceler. İkinci olarak, Balkan Savaşları ve İttihat ve Terakki’nin milliyetçi gündemi gibi dönemin güncel siyasi koşullarının, cemiyetin dergisinin yapısını nasıl ve ne şekilde etkilediğini, derginin ana temalarına ve tartışmalarına odaklanarak anlamlandırır. Tezin son bölümü ise, Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasındaki Osmanlı görsel kültürünü göz önünde bulundurarak, cemiyet ressamlarının bu feci savaşa ve savaşın olağanüstü koşullarına dair tepkilerini inceler.

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In Memory of My Father
İLHAN TONGO

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
As, to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And guiled honour shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly doctor-like controlling skill,
And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill:
Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

- William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 66*

Vazgeçtim bu dünyadan tek ölüm paklar beni,
Değmez bu yangın yeri, avuç açmaya değmez.
Değil mi ki çiğnenmiş inancın en seçkini,
Değil mi ki yoksullar mutluluktan habersiz,
Değil mi ki ayaklar altında insan onuru,
O kızıoğlan kız erdem dağlara kaldırılmış,
Ezilmiş, horgörölmüş el emeği, göz nuru,
Ödlekler geçmiş başa, derken mertlik bozulmuş,
Değil mi ki korkudan dili bağlı sanatın,
Değil mi ki çılgınlık sahip çıkmış düzene,
Doğruya doğru derken eğriye çıkmış adın,
Değil mi ki kötüler kadı olmuş Yemen' e
Vazgeçtim bu dünyadan, dünyamdan geçtim ama,
Seni yalnız komak var, o koyuyor adama.

- William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 66*,
translated by Can Yücel

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The *modern* in ‘Modern Ottoman/Turkish Art’ has been one of the most hotly debated subjects within art-historical studies in Turkey. Until recently, the tendency to track the ‘emergence’ of modernism in Turkish art mostly found its voice by adopting Western terminology. This was a particularly favoured practice among the first generation of Republican art historians. Invested with the paradigm of the newly-founded nation-state and an ethnically-defined nationalism, as well as a European art education and formation, these art historians re/wrote *the* modern Turkish art history by, on the one hand, canonizing mainly Muslim-Ottoman male artists and certain art works, while also assuming a universal application of Western movements and stages on the other. For these art historians, ‘modern’ painting is generally seen to have emerged in the early nineteenth century with the Western painting education offered to Muslim male students in the military and civilian schools, whose art is regarded as ‘breaking away from traditional Ottoman miniature painting,’ and paved the way for the true ‘realization’ of modern art with the ‘Generation of 1914’ (or the ‘Turkish Impressionists’ as they were also called). The ‘Generation of 1914,’ which included the painters Hüseyn Avni Lifij, Ruhi, Namık İsmail, Nazmi Ziya, İbrahim Çallı, Feyhaman, Sami and Hikmet, has become almost a *sine qua non* for Turkish modern art history writing, and equally for the collections of modern Turkish art museums. And yet, interestingly, most of the time this apparently historical point is argued without any discussion of the fact that all these painters were active members of the Ottoman Society of Painters (*Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti*).

The Ottoman Society of Painters was founded by the graduates and students of the Academy of Fine Arts (*Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi*) in 1909. The Society was active during the reign of Sultan Reşad Mehmed V (r. 1909-1918), or the era of the Committee of Union and Progress. It published the first art journal of the Empire, the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, between 1911 and 1914, and contributed to the painting exhibitions organized during the First World War. In 1921, three years after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, the Society preferred to drop the name *Ottoman* and became known as the *Türk Ressamlar Cemiyeti* (the Turkish Society of Painters). After the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Society remained active through the regular art exhibitions they organized in Istanbul and also in Ankara, the new capital of the Turkish Republic. In 1926, the Society's name was changed again, this time to the *Türk Sanayi-i Nefise Birliği* (the Turkish Association of Fine Arts), a name the Society kept for only three years until 1929. For almost forty years, between 1929 and 1973, its name remained the *Güzel Sanatlar Birliği* (the Association of Fine Arts) before its more active painting branch was finally renamed as the *Güzel Sanatlar Birliği Resim Derneği* (the Club of Painting of the Association of Fine Arts) in 1973. Today the Society is still active, organizing art exhibitions in several cities of Turkey.¹ Whilst some members of the Ottoman Society of Painters managed to develop close relations to the ruling block in the newly-founded Turkish state and became (and are still) highly popular in Turkish modern art history writing, some Society members proved less able to adapt to the Turkish Republic and are mostly forgotten in modern art historiography.

¹ The website of the Association is available at: <http://www.guzelsanatlarbirligi.com/anasayfa.htm>.

The issue of what the members of the Society were in the Ottoman Empire and what they became in the Republic and how they are perceived in Modern Turkish art history is interesting from a historical perspective. As an artistic organization founded in the Ottoman Empire and carrying the title *Ottoman*, the Ottoman Society of Painters was not often acknowledged in early Turkish republican art historiography. An example of this would be the book, *Türkiye'de Resim* (Painting in Turkey) written by Nurullah Berk in 1948. Though Berk referred 'the Generation of 1914' as having "opened a new epoch in the arts" in Turkey with "their exhibitions and the impressionistic style they brought back from Paris," he preferred to start his history with the Turkish Society of Painters without acknowledging the Ottoman Society of Painters, which was, in fact, the former association of the Turkish Society of Painters.² This was certainly related to the 'nation building' project of the early Republic which did not see itself as the continuation of the Ottoman Empire yet rather as a liberator from the Ottoman yoke.³ With the aim of disassociating Turks from their Ottoman roots, history for Atatürk's Turkey became, to borrow a phrase from Eric Hobsbawm, "part of the fund of knowledge" which was "selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized"⁴ by those whose function it was to do so. The challenge was what to select and popularize. In art historical terms, only some of the Ottoman past of Turkish modern painting was chosen, and this selective history writing set aside no place for non-Muslim Ottoman painters, nor for anything explicitly *Ottoman*. In fact the generation of Muslim male students who had

² Nurullah Berk, *Türkiye'de Resim* (Istanbul: Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi Neşriyatından, 1948), p.28.

³ Kemal Karpat, "Introduction," in Kemal Karpat ed., *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 [1983]), p.13.

been educated in military and civilian schools in the nineteenth-century would be reformulated anachronistically as the first modern ‘Turkish’ painters. No wonder then, that the art historiography of the early Republic was unwilling to include the history of a Society carrying the tainted name of *Ottoman*. In fact, as we shall see, comprehensive academic studies of the Ottoman Society of Painters had to wait until as late as the 1990s, the time when the process of Turkey’s reconciliation with its Ottoman past was already well underway.⁵

Historiography of Modern Ottoman/Turkish Painting: An Overview

There is no single story of modern Ottoman/Turkish art, though a canon was certainly created by Turkish Republican art historians. Whilst Eurocentric (and mostly the Franco-centric) modern art historiography has created a problematically exclusive canon, Turkish art historians’ reaction against their exclusion became an equally problematic nationalist discourse. Yet such fiercely nationalist art history writing also ironically adopted Western constructs of art-historical knowledge, particularly that of European art styles and of the chronology of stylistic progress.⁶

Since the professionalization of art history in the nineteenth century, style has played a significant role.⁷ Style has been called art historians’ principal mode for

⁵ Karpas, “Introduction,” p.viii.

⁶ In a similar vein, Turkish architectural historiography also suffered from nationalist and formalist history writing. One of the most important ‘contributions’ to that methodology of art and architectural history came from the Viennese scholars, such as Heinrich Glück, Ernst Diez and Josef Strzygowski in the early decades of the twentieth century. See, Oya Pancaroğlu, “Formalism and the Academic Foundation of Turkish Art in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Muqarnas*, Vol. 24 (2007), pp.67-78.

⁷ Donald Preziosi, “Art History: Making the Visible Legible” in Donald Preziosi, *The Art of Art History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 [1998]), p.7. For Hans Belting, art history “began with a concept

classifying works of art,⁸ embodied in a succession of genius artists (Courbet, Monet, Picasso) and ‘isms’ (Academism, Realism, Impressionism, Expressionism). The selection and shaping of the history of art in non-Western contexts was also informed by the same problematic notion of stylistic progress, this time with selected art works being seen as close to contemporary Western styles, which stood at the apex of an imagined hierarchy of Modern art. This ‘stylistic influence,’ as the Indian art historian Partha Mitter has acknowledged, became the key epistemic tool in studying the reception of Western art in the non-Western world: “if the product is too close to its original source, it reflects slavish mentality; if on the other hand, the imitation is imperfect, it represents a failure.”⁹ This problem of ‘stylistic-dosage’ was certainly felt in the Turkish republican context as well, where a nationalist discourse marginalized anything ‘cosmopolitan’ or ‘multi-ethnic’, including the Ottoman Empire, in this chronology of stylistic progress.

In one of the first books written on art in 1931, *Demokrasi ve San’at* (Democracy and Art), İsmail Hakkı wrote on the influential ‘isms’ of late-nineteenth and twentieth century art, and criticized Academicism for “its failure to be personal and original” and Impressionism for its “obsession with colour and light.”¹⁰ For İsmail Hakkı, Cubism was

of *history* and extended it to the concept of *style*” in the early twentieth century. Hans Belting, *Art History After Modernism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p.26. Emphasis original.

⁸ George Kubler, “Style and the Representation of Historical Time,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 138 (1967), p.853. Also quoted in Svetlana Alpers, “Style is What You Make It: The Visual Arts Once Again” in Berel Lang ed. *The Concept of Style* (Ithaca; New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), p.138.

⁹ Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism: India’s Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1922-1947* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), p. 7.

¹⁰ İsmail Hakkı, *Demokrasi ve San’at* (Istanbul: Istanbul Sanayi-i Nefise Matbaası, 1931), p.104.

the art of civilized democratic nations,¹¹ and was thus the appropriate style for Turkish architects and painters. In his conclusion, İsmail Hakkı wrote: “As our women did not lose their national character by accepting European clothes, our cities will not lose their Turkishness by adopting Cubism either.”¹² In fact, two years later in 1933, an artistic society was formed with the name *D Grubu* (Group D), whose most prominent members, such as Nurullah Berk, Cemal Tollu and Bedri Rahmi Eyübođlu, were applying cubist abstraction techniques to folkloric motifs, peasant women, and Anatolian landscapes.¹³ As a member of *D Grubu*, Nurullah Berk also published a book, *Modern San’at* (Modern Art) in 1933.¹⁴ Like İsmail Hakkı, Berk’s motive was to explore European art styles, such as Impressionism, Abstract Art, Cubism and Surrealism, and to understand how each novel artistic form broke with previous styles. Though he did not explicitly write that Cubism was the art of democratic nations, *Modern San’at* dedicated the largest section to Cubism and Cubist painters. İsmail Hakkı and Nurullah Berk’s books were not written with the aim of exploring the history of Turkish Art *per se*, yet they were certainly formulating a formalist methodology, and setting the stage of for future scholarship and collections of the modern art museums.

In fact, when Turkey’s first modern art museum was opened in 1937 with the name of *Istanbul Resim Heykel Müzesi* (Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture), the rigidity of a formalist approach in the display was visible. The Museum chose to exhibit

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.102. See, also Zeynep Yasa-Yaman, “Demokrasi ve Sanat,” *Anadolu Sanat*, Issue: 1(1993), pp.183-96.

¹² İsmail Hakkı, *Demokrasi ve San’at*, p.140.

¹³ Sibel Bozdođan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), p.253.

¹⁴ Nurullah Berk, *Modern San’at* (Istanbul: Semih Lütüf Bitik ve Basım Evi, 1933).

(and still does) its large collection of Ottoman and Turkish oil paintings in a chronological order where viewers move past the early nineteenth century non-figurative paintings, on to the late-nineteenth century still-lives, landscapes and orientalist paintings in the academic style, continue past early-twentieth century images of urban life, landscapes and portraits of ordinary people in a particularly impressionistic style, and finally arrive at the experimental, cubist and abstract art works of the young Republican artists. As a republican project with the aim of ‘educating the country’s people,’ the collection directed viewers to follow a well-defined and teleological history of modern ‘Turkish art,’ where each style replaced the former one and was in turn replaced by a more ‘western’ and hence more ‘developed’ successor. Not surprisingly, the young Republican painters’ works are represented as at the top of that aesthetic hierarchy “with the highest number of works (159),”¹⁵ contradicting and displacing the former styles and previous painters. One year later, Nurullah Berk wrote an article about the collection of the Museum, where he divided the display into three periods: the “primitives” (the period covering the beginnings of the nineteenth century until the middle and later years); the “middle period” (including the painters working during the period beginning with 1870 till the end of the nineteenth century); and the “modern period” (the artists of the new Republican generation).¹⁶ For Berk, the still-lives, landscapes and figurative paintings in the impressionist style, or the “middle period” as he called, followed and replaced those of the “primitives,” who were mostly copying from photographs, whilst the “middle period” was also followed and replaced by the young early-Republican

¹⁵ Zeynep Yasa-Yaman, *Suretin Sireti: Bir Koleksiyonu Ziyaret* (Istanbul: Pera Müzesi, 2011), p.30.

¹⁶ Nurullah Berk, “Resim ve Heykel Müzesi,” *Ar Dergisi*, No: 4 (1938). Quoted in Semra Germaner, “Elvah-ı Nahşiyi Koleksiyonu’ndan Resim ve Heykel Müzesi’ne,” *Serginin Sergisi* (Istanbul: MSGSÜ Yayını, 2009), pp.19-29.

painters, or by the “moderns.” The *modern* in ‘Turkish’ modern art was hence created and reformulated by these early twentieth century formalist discourses as a *thing* which reached its true realization when the nation’s art was seen to come to terms with the social and aesthetic modernity of the West. This modernity was conceived as having started with the “Turkish Impressionists,” and then being continued by the first generation of the Republican painters, particularly the cubists including, of course, Berk himself. Whilst undeniably useful in their endeavour to present the development of modern art in a non-Western context, these classifications nevertheless assume a universal application of Western art styles and formulate an ethnically-defined nationalist history writing by excluding the non-Muslim Ottoman painters and their artistic heritage.

Modern Ottoman/ Turkish Painting Revisited: Revisionist Studies

The fresh critical insights offered by postmodern, feminist and postcolonial studies have brought novel perspectives on the history of modern Ottoman painting. First, there were the art historical studies, starting in the 1980s, which were interested in how local westernization programmes affected ‘modern’ late-Ottoman visual culture, including the work of Günsel Renda and Zeynep İnankur. These studies were mostly the result of a ‘home-grown’ interest in the Ottoman past which had been denied by the early-Republican historiography. Second, there are the prosopographic studies of non-Muslim Ottoman painters, which have opened up new channels of inquiry into the multi-ethnic and multi-religious artistic character of late Ottoman visual culture. Garo Kürkman’s comprehensive study of Ottoman-Armenian artists, *Armenian Painters in the Ottoman*

Empire, 1600-1923,¹⁷ and Mayda Saris's, *Greek Painters of Istanbul*¹⁸ are valuable scholarly contributions tracking the long history of non-Muslim painters within the Ottoman Empire. In opposition to official/nationalist Turkish art historiography, Kürkman and Saris's studies have opened up previously obscured pages of Turkish art history writing and have inspired more inclusive modern art histories. Of the package of concepts inherited from nineteenth and early-twentieth century art historical studies, it is the conceptualization of a passive and a-historical non-Western modern art that is probably undergoing the most reconsideration. This revisionism has been felt in recent studies of late Ottoman Empire painting culture by Mary Roberts and Wendy Shaw. Wendy Shaw's 2011 book on modern Ottoman painting, *Ottoman Painting: Reflections of Western Art from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic*¹⁹ has endeavoured to present a much more inclusive story of Ottoman/Turkish modern art than many previous studies.

Inspired by the first of these revisionist approaches (reconciliation with the late-Ottoman past), studies on the Ottoman Society of Painters began to appear in the 1990s. Seçkin Naipoğlu's MA Thesis *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi* (The Journal of the Ottoman Society of Painters) mostly focused on their monthly journal where Naipoğlu presented extensive transcriptions of some of the articles from Ottoman Turkish to

¹⁷ Garo Kürkman, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ermeni Ressamlar, 1600-1923* (Istanbul: Matüsalem, 2004). An English translation of the book also appeared in the same year. *Armenian Painters of the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1923*, trans. Mary Priscilla (Istanbul: Matüsalem, 2004).

¹⁸ Mayda Saris, *Istanbulu Rum Ressamlar/Greek Painters of Istanbul* (Istanbul: Bir Zamanlar Yayıncılık, 2010).

¹⁹ Wendy Shaw, *Ottoman Painting: Reflections of Western Art from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (London: New York, I.B. Tauris, 2011).

modern Turkish.²⁰ Another MA Thesis, *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti ve Türk Resim Sanatı İçindeki Yeri* (The Ottoman Society of Painters and Its Place in the Art of Turkish Painting),²¹ written by Seyfi Başkan, was completed one year later in 1992. Başkan's motive was rather to provide biographical data about the Society's members (though the Muslim-Ottoman ones) along with a historical background of the nineteenth century artistic developments in the Empire.²² In 1994, another study on the Society, this time a PhD Dissertation, was completed by Abdullah Sinan Güler with the title of *İkinci Meşrutiyet Ortamında Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti ve Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi* (The Ottoman Society of Painters and the Journal of the Ottoman Society of Painters in the Context of the Second Constitutional Period).²³ Güler's objective, besides transcribing some articles of the Journal into modern Turkish, like Naipoğlu's thesis, was also to situate the Society within the dynamics of the Second Constitutional Era. These academic studies were also followed by more popular publications written in the late 1990s, such as Ahmet Kamil Gören's publications on the 1917 Şişli Atelier and the 1918 Vienna Exhibition.²⁴ In 2003, Ömer Faruk Şerifoğlu's publications on the regular

²⁰ Seçkin Naipoğlu, *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi* (Unpublished MA Thesis, Gazi Üniversitesi, 1991).

²¹ Seyfi Başkan, *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti ve Türk Resim Sanatı İçindeki Yeri* (Unpublished MA Thesis, Gazi Üniversitesi, 1992).

²² Two years after he completed his MA, Seyfi Başkan also published the book, *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti* in 1994. Seyfi Başkan, *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti* (Ankara: Çardaş, 1994).

²³ Abdullah Sinan Güler, *İkinci Meşrutiyet Ortamında Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti ve Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi* (Unpublished PhD Diss., Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, 1994).

²⁴ Ahmet Kamil Gören ed., *Türk Resim Sanatında Şişli Atölyesi ve Viyana Sergisi* (İstanbul: Şişli Belediyesi, 1997).

Galatasaray exhibitions²⁵ have also provided informative overviews about the activities of these painters during the war years. Probably one of the most important developments in terms of scholarship on the Society was the recent transcription of their eighteen-issue Journal in 2007 from Ottoman Turkish into modern Turkish.²⁶ This has made the Journal and the Society itself more accessible to the majority of the Turkish population born and educated since the 1928 alphabet reform.

All of these studies on the Society have much to offer compared with the relatively restrictive formalist approach adopted by the early-Republican art historians who mostly focused the ‘Generation of 1914’ by divorcing it from its role in the Ottoman Society of Painters, hence, from its historical context. Yet certain problems are posed by these studies as well. They have mostly presented the Ottoman Society of Painters as a monolithic, homogenous and exclusionary body consisting of fixed and established ideas. Such presentations seem to originate from taking the very foundation of a ‘secular’ artistic society in the Ottoman Empire at face value. These studies also seem to sidestep the crucial issue of the canon, taking for granted that same list of artists (i.e. the ‘Generation of 1914’) confirmed by pre-revisionist art history. They also seem to fail to question late-Ottoman history itself, leaving a lacuna of political, social and cultural information of the period, particularly that of patronage, and of the relationship between art and the nationalist policies taking place in the Second Constitutional Period.

Indeed, it is the central objective of this study to understand the Society and its particular social and aesthetic anxieties together with the shaping effects of the political

²⁵ Ömer Faruk Şerifoğlu, *Resim Tarihimizden: Galatasaray Sergileri, 1916-1951* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2003).

²⁶ *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi, 1911-1914: Güncelleştirilmiş Basım* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2007).

and cultural dynamics of the late Empire itself. The Ottoman Society of Painters emerged and existed during the most tumultuous years of the Ottoman Empire; the years that witnessed revolutions, rebellions, wars and massacres. So, any attempt on the part of an art historian to deal with the ‘historic moment’ of the Ottoman Society of Painters, I believe, must first engage with the politics of the late-Ottoman Empire itself. And these politics, of course, have a history which is intertwined with the nationalist policies of the Committee of Union and Progress in the final decade of the Ottoman Empire.

The Historical Context: Just ‘National’ Ideals?

When ‘nationalism’ became the revolutionary ideology of the world scene after the French Revolution, the multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire was in no way ready to adapt itself to the political realities of the century. Like other traditional empires, such as those of the Romanovs and Hapsburgs, it suffered a great deal – perhaps most of all – from the advent of nationalism. In order to adapt the ideological weapons of this ‘revolutionary’ change to its own purposes, the Empire initially resorted to the policy of what Benedict Anderson has named “official nationalism.”²⁷ The two mottos of the French Revolution, equality and freedom, became integrated into the vocabulary of the Ottoman state for the first time with the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* (Imperial Edict) of 1839²⁸ and the *İslahat Fermanı* (The Edict of Reforms)²⁹

²⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2006 [1983]), p.83.

²⁸ The *Hatt-ı Hümayun* was a statement of intent on the part of the Ottoman government, promising in effect four basic reforms: (i) the establishment of guarantees for the life, honour and property of the sultan’s subjects; (ii) an orderly system of taxation to replace the system of tax farming; (iii) a system of conscription for the army, and; (iv) equality before the law of all subjects, whatever their religion. Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004 [1993]), p.51.

of 1856. These legal acts of the *Tanzimat* (Regulations) were simply the declaration of modern state as they were centred on the concept of ‘rule by law’ as the ultimate principle, together with an attempt to create a common identity in order to contain all the Ottoman subjects, Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The *Tanzimat* reforms marked a watershed in Ottoman intellectual and cultural life, but the very visible increase in the financial and the legal status of the Empire’s non-Muslims also gave rise to Muslim dissatisfaction and reaction. This reaction expressed itself on a popular level in Muslim mob violence against Christian neighbours or Western consuls in several cities (Maraş, Aleppo, Damascus) in the 1850s and 60s. On an elite level, these reactions took the form of the Young Ottoman movement, led by Western educated young bureaucrats and writers in the 1860s. The Young Ottomans were critical of the ‘secularism’ of the *Tanzimat* reformers, yet they were equally inspired by the same Western ideas as that group, and reconciled liberal values with traditional/Islamic references.³⁰ Having realized that the Muslim population was dissatisfied, the bureaucratic elite of the *Tanzimat*, who were responsible for the official policy of reform, believed it necessary to renew *Tanzimat* Ottomanism (*Osmanlıcılık*) as a legitimate official ideology. Their aim was to preserve the absolute sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire and its sultan. By the 1860s, the ideology of Ottomanism, which was

²⁹ The 1856 Edict of Reforms was more detailed in setting forth equal treatment for all subjects of the Empire, recognizing the rights of the individual to a just, impartial, and consistent legal system by establishing a precedent for constitutional principles of government. For a comprehensive study of the reforms and edicts, see Roderic Davidson, *Nineteenth Century Ottoman Diplomacy and Reforms* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1999).

³⁰ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962). In Europe both the Young Ottomans and Young Turks were labelled “Young Turks,” although their political ideologies were in fact fairly distinct, with the Young Turks employing more secular, nationalist arguments. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p.63.

based on the equality of all Ottoman subjects regardless of ethnic, religious and language differences,³¹ became the official ideology of Ottoman nationalism³² and of the first Ottoman constitution (*Kanun-i Esasi*) of 1876,³³ as well as of the constitutional revolution that restored it in 1908. The ‘cosmopolitan’ ideology of Ottomanism, however, would very much lose ground after the loss of the European territories during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), and hence of the overwhelmingly multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of the Empire.

The last decade of the Ottoman Empire is certainly a historiographically unique decade. Starting with a constitutional revolution and ending up with massacres and the defeat of the Empire at the end of World War I, these years have been one of the most hotly debated periods within historical studies in Turkey. The general propensity to understand the concurrent ideologies of the late Ottoman Empire from Ottomanism to Islamism and to nationalism nevertheless have been recently problematized by some scholars. Erik Zürcher, for instance, has criticized this ‘linear fashion,’ and shows that the representation of the three currents of thinking: Ottomanism, (Pan-)Islamism and (Pan-) Turkism is as old as the famous essay “Three Types of Policy” (*Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset*) published by Yusuf Akçura in the Turkist émigré paper *Türk* in Cairo in 1904.

³¹ The famous nineteenth century Ottoman intellectual, Ahmed Midhat, championed Ottomanism [*Osmanlılık*] in his 1877 *Üss-i İnkilap* (The Basis of Reform): “[The declaration of the Tanzimat] reconfirmed the condition of equality that constitutes the founding basis of the Ottoman state: All classes of people living under the Ottoman flag, regardless of their religious and denominational affiliations and their communal and racial identities, constitute a unified political nation and are equal beneficiaries of the common law.” Transcribed and translated by Ahmet Ersoy, “The Basis of Reform” in Balázs Trenczényi and Mihai Kopaček (eds), *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeastern Europe (1775-1945): Texts and Commentaries*, vol. II, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), pp.291-6.

³² Ussama Makdisi, “After 1860: Debating Religion, Reform, and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 34, No: 4 (November, 2002), p.606.

³³ Robert Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period: A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1963).

For Zürcher, “modern scholars generally failed to appreciate that Akçura’s position at the time was highly exceptional.”³⁴ In order to emphasize the difference between the revolutionary Young Turks and the war criminals CUP, Zürcher claims that this teleological approach seems to obscure the overriding aim of the Young Turks’ 1908 revolution, which was primarily to introduce certain constitutional rights in order to protect and reinforce the Ottoman state they served, rather than, in Zürcher words, “on an ideological preference per se.”³⁵ Though the ‘Turk’ in the ‘Young Turks’ implies, *prima facie*, an ethnic definition, Hasan Kayalı has also convincingly regarded the designation of ‘Young Turk’ as an “unfortunate misnomer,” for it conjures away the fact that these Young *Turks* included many Arabs, Albanians, Jews in their ranks, especially in the early stages of the movement.³⁶ For most of these intellectuals, the feeling of belonging to the Ottoman ‘nation’ was neither defined by race, nor by religion, nor by language, but rather by loyalty and patriarchal feeling.³⁷ So, unlike the Kemalist nationalists after the foundation of the Republic, turn of the century Ottoman intellectuals and artists were, as Sibel Bozdoğan has reminded us, “concerned primarily

³⁴ See Zürcher’s essay “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908-1938,” in Erik Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk’s Turkey* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp.213-35.

³⁵ Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building*, p.211.

³⁶ Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p.4.

³⁷ For example, as Şükrü Hanioglu points out, in 1911 a public affairs committee published an appeal to all Ottomans to form a united front, and it did so in nine languages: Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Ladino, Serbian, Syriac (in two different scripts, Nestorian and Serta) and French. (“İttihad-ı Anasır-ı Osmaniye Hey’eti Tarafından Neşr Edilen Beyannamedir,” *İttihad-ı Anasır-ı Osmaniye* [July 23, 1911]). Hanioglu claims that though this appeal left aside numerous languages in use in the Ottoman lands (such as Albanian, Kurdish, Rumanian, and numerous Caucasian tongues, to name a few of the most significant), it gives some idea of the multilingualism of the Ottoman Empire. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p.33.

with the preservation of the Ottoman state through identification with the sultan and the empire.”³⁸

Perhaps nothing illustrates the irony of the Young Turks more explicitly than a speech given by Enver Bey (one of the strongest men of the Young Turk regime and future Paşa) in 1911 in the opening ceremony of the *Abide-i Hürriyet* (Monument of Freedom), erected to those who had died in defence of the constitution during the “31st March Incident” (*Otuzbir Mart Vakası*), a failed attempt at counter-revolution by pro-Islamic groups against the constitutional regime. Enver Bey remembered these heroes to the public in the inclusive spirit of Ottomanism: “Muslims and Christians lay side by side, a token that they, living or dead, were henceforward fellow patriots who would know no distinction of race or creed.”³⁹ Of course, the speech was given only two years after the 1909 military service law passed by the Young Turk government which made the military conscription of *all* Ottomans compulsory, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. In practice, however, the majority of eligible non-Muslim Ottomans still managed to get exemption from military service by paying, albeit at a higher rate than Muslims did. So the 1911 speech conducted by Enver Bey intended to communicate a political expectation, rather than necessarily reflecting what was happening in reality.

Yet, as much as the 1908 Constitutional Revolution had been welcomed by the majority of the Ottomans, Muslim and non-Muslims alike, the Unionists seized power in January 1913 with a military *coup d’etat* headed by the Lieutenant-Colonel Enver Bey himself, which would mark the beginning of the five-year ‘dictatorial triumvirate’ of

³⁸ Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building*, p.33.

³⁹ Quoted in Klaus Kreiser, “Public Monuments in Turkey and Egypt, 1840-1916,” *Muqarnas*, Vol. 14 (1997), p.113.

Enver, Talat and Cemal Paşas until the end of World War I. Encompassed with the loss of the Balkans in 1912-13, and hence of Ottoman identity, the CUP evolved rapidly towards a profoundly anti non-Muslim Turkification policy. At its 1913 Congress, Turkish nationalism was adopted as the official ideology, which was followed by the 1914 ‘National Economy’ (*Milli İktisat*) programme that forced hundred thousands of non-Muslim traders and businessmen to leave the Empire.⁴⁰ And the aggressive Turkification policies of the CUP with the creasing aggression of the Muslim Turkish majority against the Armenian populations ended up with their final violent large-scale persecutions in 1915.

But what was the relationship of the Ottoman Society of Painters to all these developments? How did they situate themselves in the politics of the Ottoman state between the years 1909, when the Society was officially founded, and 1918, when the Ottoman Empire was dissolved at the end of the First World War? Was their patriotism anti-cosmopolitan and xenophobic in spirit? Did they identify themselves primarily as ‘Turkish’ artists and marginalize non-Muslim painters? These are certainly interesting and compelling questions. One could easily avoid them by merely making reference to an article published in their official 1911 Regulations (*Nizamname*) which states; “The Society is under no circumstances engaged with political matters.”⁴¹ Yet what is written and wished for is not always what actually is. In fact, their *Nizamname*, which puts the details about the objectives of the Society and the regulations of the membership in their forty one articles, was published in 1911, when liberal or constitutional nationalist

⁴⁰ For the most comprehensive study on the ‘national economy’ programme, see Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye’de ‘Milli İktisat’, 1908-1918* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınlar, 1982).

⁴¹ *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Nizamname-i Esasisi* (Dersaadet: Bekir Efendi Matbaası, 1327 [1911]).

Young Turks were still powerful in the imperial capital.⁴² During their active years, between 1909 and 1918, and particularly after the 1913 *coup d'état*, the Society existed within a climate of ultra-nationalist policies, when, besides the CUP itself, some Ottoman intellectuals like Ziya Gökalp (the official spokesman of the CUP) believed in becoming “Turkish, Muslim and modern.”⁴³ Within these political tensions, some issues of the Society’s Journal were published against the backdrop of the Balkan Wars. The Balkan Wars were indeed a turning point in the rise of Turkish national consciousness; and as such, they certainly found their way into the artistic debates within the Journal. As a matter of fact, after the Journal’s two-year break in 1912, it published even more fervent diatribes against the non-Muslim instructors of the Academy of Fine Arts in their ‘failure’ to create and promote ‘national art’ (Chapter III). Later, during World War I, two Society members, İbrahim Çallı and Nazmi Ziya, went to Gallipoli in 1915 with other Ottoman intellectuals on a ‘war trip’ organized by the CUP to encourage artists and intellectuals to promote ‘jingoistic’ art from their experiences of the trenches. Just after their return to Istanbul, İbrahim Çallı and Nazmi Ziya contributed to a painting exhibition organized in the *Türk Ocağı* (Turkish Hearth) with other Society members, such as İbrahim Feyhaman, Ruhi, Hüseyin Avni Lifij, İsmail Hakkı and Halil Paşa (Chapter IV). The *Türk Ocağı* had been founded as a Turkish nationalist association in

⁴² The most famous liberal Young Turk was Prince Sabahaddin who wished to reform the Ottoman state by decentralization and regeneration of civil society. Unlike Enver, Talat and Cemal, he opposed to military dominance. As a matter of fact, he was condemned to death by the Unionists yet he managed to escape to Paris in 1913. See, Hamit Bozarslan, “Le Prince Sabahaddin (1878-1948),” *Revue Suisse d’Histoire*, 53/3 (2002), pp.287-301.

⁴³ Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Mu’asırlaşmak* (Istanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1918).

1912 with the aim of “bringing the Turkish race and language to perfection,”⁴⁴ and such a contribution by some members of the Society to a nationalist organization’s exhibition very much contradicted the article in their *Nizamname*.

Attempting to read the history of the Society parallel to the CUP’s nationalist policies, however, might also leave us with a partial understanding of their art, obscuring the great changes affecting artists during the last decade of the Empire: that of patronage. Though we can never talk about a truly developed art market within the Ottoman Empire, unlike contemporary European markets, the institutionalization of art education with the foundation of the Academy of Fine Arts in 1883 created a great number of professional painters in the first decade of the twentieth century. And this increase in the number of the professional painters in no way coincided with the demand for such art works (Chapter II).

Quite ironically, as we shall see, the First World War would facilitate art to a great extent and provide an alternative to the economic stagnation of the differentiated art market. The *Türk Ocağı* exhibition was followed by the Galatasaray exhibitions organized in 1916 and in 1917, and also by the 1918 Vienna exhibition. The Ottoman Society of Painters contributed to all these exhibitions, with picturesque landscapes, portraits and images of everyday life, and, often, with battle scenes and depictions of ordinary soldiers. Yet as much as visual culture flourished under the sponsorship of the state during the First World War, artists were also actively discouraged from publicly expressing any anti-war ideas. This, however, should not lead us to think that every work of art was uncritically patriotic about the war effort, though most of the surviving

⁴⁴ Füsun Üstel, *İmparatorluktan Ulus-Devlete Geçişte Türk Milliyetçiliği: Türk Ocakları 1912-1931* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1997), p.100.

art works from the period have been interpreted and reconstructed that way in official/nationalist art history writing. Rather than adopting a statist perspective which centres on propaganda and pro-war efforts, more nuanced and multi-faced ways of looking at these art works may certainly offer us different narratives of this strange decade (Chapter IV).

The task of interpreting an Ottoman wartime painting and understanding the mutual implication between this specific work of art and the historical data is certainly a thorny one for the art historian. Yet these paintings, like *all* paintings, carry traces of their ideological implications. Borrowing a phrase from Janet Wolff, we can say that these works of art “are not closed, self-contained and transcendent entities, but are the product of specific historical practices on the part of identifiable social groups in given conditions.”⁴⁵ This certainly does not mean to reduce art works to politics, nor to understand these artists as passive agents of their historical conditions, yet, on the contrary, without reducing one to the other, the function is to make the determinants of the images appear.⁴⁶ To write a history of the Ottoman Society of Painters without acknowledging the catastrophic years of the First World War and how it informed the fabric of the artistic world would leave us with only an inadequate, unfair and partial understanding of the place and role of artistic production during these hard years.

⁴⁵ Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1981), p.49.

⁴⁶ I have drawn inspiration from Terry Eagleton here: “Like private property, the [work] thus appears as a ‘natural’ object, typically denying the determinants of its productive process. The function of criticism is to refuse the spontaneous presence of the work –to deny that ‘naturalness’ in order to *make its real determinants appear*.” Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1976), p.101. Emphasis added.

Sources for the Study

In line with revisionist approaches and recent studies on the Ottoman Society of Painters, my research will attempt to contribute to the writing of a revised history of late Ottoman art. Yet differently from previous studies on the Society, my aim will be to understand the Ottoman Society of Painters as composed of different and competing voices and agendas, and within the flux of its social and cultural context, and with its own creative specificities. Thus, while this thesis will ask questions of a familiar object, it will also attempt to be a place where, as T.J. Clark once said, those questions “cannot be asked in the old way.”⁴⁷

In addition to the extant scholarship on early-twentieth century Ottoman art and politics, I also draw on literary, narrative and archival sources from the period. Among the literary sources, Adolphe Thalasso’s articles published in the contemporary *Les Arts et des Artistes* were extremely useful for their perspective on late-Ottoman art world and the aesthetic and economic anxieties of the artists. As my aim was to understand the late-Ottoman artistic world from the perspective of the members of the Ottoman Society of Painters, I have also used artists’ memoirs and their interviews in the secondary sources. In that sense, I analysed their Journal, the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, in order to understand the changing agendas of the Society between 1911 and 1914, and the mindset of these late Ottoman artists. The official documents in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives and personal memoirs of Ottoman intellectuals were immensely useful in understanding the cultural agendas of the Ottoman state in visual culture, particularly during the war years. Local and international periodicals and

⁴⁷ T.J.Clark, “The Conditions of Artistic Creation,” *TLS* (May 24, 1974), p.562.

newspapers such as *Türk Yurdu*, *Yeni Mecmua*, *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung* and *The Times* provided much useful information on how wartime artistic production was perceived in the media. Much of the study is also based on exhibition catalogues, such as *Die Türkei im Weltkrieg*, *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu Resim Sergisi* and *Katalog der Ausstellug Türkischer Maler*, which I consulted in private collections and also in the libraries of Boğaziçi University and Bilkent University.

Outline of the Study & Chapter Breakdown

My thesis is structured in three main parts. The chapter following this introduction aims at a general overview of the visual culture of the late-Ottoman Empire, and tries to understand how the historical and artistic specifics of the formation of the Society relate to the circumstances of its foundation and its general agenda. In this chapter, I also attempt to situate the Ottoman painters in a broader art historical framework, particularly with regard to the European avant-garde arts and their socio-political and aesthetic concerns. In embarking on a close reading of their Journal in the third chapter, I aim to understand the interactions between the different political and aesthetic agendas of the authors, as well as how the contemporary historical and cultural dynamics, such as the reaction to the defeat in the Balkan Wars and increasing ‘nationalist’ tendencies, informed the debates within the Journal. In the fourth chapter, drawing on narrative and archival sources and the exhibition catalogues, I explore the Istanbul and Vienna painting exhibitions attended by the Ottoman Society of Painters during the First World War. In this final chapter, my aim is to listen to the different responses of the painters to

this disastrous war, and to understand how they situated themselves in relation to its extraordinary conditions.

In terms of chronology, this study firstly focuses on the early and late nineteenth century artistic conditions preceding the foundation of the Society in 1909, and touching upon the Parisian years of the members from 1910-1914 (Chapter II). The third chapter mainly concentrates on the debates occurring in the Society's journal, and overlapping the Paris period. And the final chapter continues with the story of the Society's wartime experience from the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 to the Empire's final demise in 1918.

Understanding late Ottoman art history is vital not only to comprehend modern Ottoman/Turkish art history on its own terms, but is also significant for the study of global art history where Ottoman visual culture provides an excellent opportunity to grasp the impact of artistic modernity in a non-Western context. To that end, the Ottoman Society of Painters is also one of the most promising case studies to illustrate the logic and ideology of the relationship between visual culture and the 'nationalist' policies of a dynastic empire during its last decade.

CHAPTER II

FOUNDATION OF THE *OSMANLI RESSAMLAR CEMİYETİ*

At a time when the Ottoman artists have newly founded an Association and when, by dint of the constitutional regime in Turkey, all the arts in this country are about to undergo a development unknown until today, it is useful and even necessary, for the history of painting in general and for Ottoman painting in particular, to relate in a few brief pages the lives and works of those painters who share the glory of having founded the Turkish School. This school, which is destined to have its place in the sun of art and to diffuse its luminously realist manner throughout Europe in the very near future, will, among other things, lead to the collapse of false Orientalists.¹

Thus writes Adolph Thalasso, the famous Istanbul-born Parisian art critic, in his 1911 work *L'Art Ottoman*. For Thalasso, the eruption of the constitutional revolution in 1908 was the main motive for what he saw as the groundbreaking artistic progress in the Empire. He observed that the revolution had initiated artistic reforms and placed particular emphasis on the foundation of an Ottoman artist's society that would eventually shape the cultural fabric of the country and, together with the "Turkish School" (*École Turque*), would take its place "in the sun of art"; and the sun for a Levantine art critic such as Thalasso, was, despite his championing of the artists of the

¹ Adolphe Thalasso, *L'Art Ottoman: Les Peintres de Turquie* (Paris: Librairie Artistique Internationale [1911]). Reprinted with his other two works: *Les Premiers Salons de Peinture de Constantinople* (Paris, 1906), and, *Deri Se'adet ou Stamboul, Porte du Bonheur* (Paris, 1908) with a supplementary English translation. *Osmanlı Sanatı, Türkiye'nin Ressamları ve İlk İstanbul Salonları* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür A.Ş. Yayınları, 2008), p.35. Thalasso's *L'Art Ottoman* was dedicated to Prince Abdülmecid, Sultan Abdülaziz's son and a painter himself, who would later become the honorary president of the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti*.

imperial capital, still a Parisian one.² Exhilarated as he was by the Young Turks' success in building a constitutional regime, the emergence of a comparatively liberal political order, the vivid social and intellectual milieu, and the flourishing of publications and associations, Thalasso was right to be optimistic about the cultural progress of the empire. Yet he could scarcely have foreseen that both the artists and new patrons of art, the Ottoman bourgeoisie, would be less preoccupied with challenging the “false Orientalists,” than with developing bourgeois portraiture, studies of everyday life objects and military and nationalistic themes.

In this chapter I will take a broad glance at the historical and artistic specifics of the formation of the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti*, its social composition and general agenda. I will begin with an account of the reasons for the emergence of such an artistic union in the first decade of the twentieth century, and attempt to understand its formation as a part of broader historical processes: the long history of professionalization and institutionalization of the arts in the empire (i.e. the painting classes in the military and civilian schools from the late eighteenth century onwards, and the foundation of the Academy of Fine Arts in 1883); the new atmosphere of freedom brought by the 1908 Second Constitutional Revolution; the collapse of traditional institutions of patronage after the demise of Sultan Abdülhamid II; and, finally, the attempt of the Ottoman Society of Painters to build networks of private patronage within the Empire. In the following section I will introduce the Society, and give an overview of its official founding document, *Nizamname* (Regulations), and of the social

² In *L'Art Ottoman*, Thalasso wrote about the history of Ottoman painting and the pioneers of the “Turkish School”; Pierre Desiré Guillemet, Ahmed Ali Paşa, Osman Hamdi Bey, Fausto Zonaro, Salvator Valéri, Halil Paşa, Joseph Warnia-Zarzecki, Leonardo de Mango and Philippe Bello, the majority of whom were art instructors in the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul. I will explore the way how Thalasso portrays the “Turkish School” in more detail in Chapter III.

composition of its membership. Finally, I will attempt to provide a broader cross-cultural perspective of their Paris years (between 1910 and 1914), and to think about them in relation to their modern contemporaries, particularly the European avant-garde artists. The issues that will arise from an inquiry into the reasons of the Society's formation and its social character will, I hope, constitute a helpful historical background for the following chapters where I will focus more closely on their journal, the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, and the art exhibitions they organized during the First World War.

The Context of the Society's Foundation

Professionalization of the Arts in the Empire

In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire experienced profound social changes as a result of an engagement with Western modernity, which had a particular impact on the artistic fabric of the Ottoman Empire. The gradual professionalization of the arts from the eighteenth century onwards would eventually pave the way for the emergence of a professional artistic body such as the Ottoman Society of Painters in the early twentieth century.

The professionalization of the arts dates back to the later decades of the eighteenth century, when Europe and European methods of education came to represent the paragon of progress and development, under the reforming sultans Selim III (r.1789-1807) and Mahmud II (r.1808-39). Though military issues were the major stimuli for reform under their rule; Selim III's establishment of an entirely novel army force, the *Nizam-ı Cedid*, with European style training, uniform and up-to-date weapons, and the

final destruction of the traditional military backbone of the Empire, the Janissary corps, by Mahmud II in 1826, perhaps their most significant cultural outcome was the development of the means of education in the empire. The Military School of Engineering (*Mühendishane-i Berri-i Hümayun*), which was founded in 1793 during the reign of Sultan Selim III, was the first among these schools, and was later followed by War Academy (*Harbiye*), Naval Academy (*Bahriye*), Military Medical School (*Askeri Tıbbiye*) and the Military Veterinary Surgeon School (*Askeri Baytar*), opened in the early nineteenth century.³ The establishment of these new schools, and especially of art classes in their curricula, were also significant initiatives for the future ‘modern’ Ottoman painting.

Starting from the late eighteenth century onwards, painting classes were scheduled at these military and civilian schools of the period. The cadets and future soldiers were trained in naturalistic styles based on printed examples and photographs, with the aim of training the students in producing topographic lay-outs and technical drawings for military purposes. Among the generation of artists trained in this way were Ferik İbrahim Paşa (1815-1889), Halil Paşa (1857-1939), Ferik Tefvik Paşa (1819-1866), Hüseyin Zekai Paşa (1860-1919), Hoca Ali Rıza (1858-1930), Süleyman Seyyid (1842-1913) and Şeker Ahmed Paşa (1841-1907).⁴ In spite of their stylistic differences, this generation are grouped under the umbrella term of ‘soldier painters’ in modern

³ Osman Ergin, *İstanbul Mektepleri ve İlim, Terbiye, ve San'at Müesseseleri Dolayısıyla Türkiye Maarif Tarihi* (Istanbul: OsmanBey Matbaası, 1939-1943).

⁴ This generation has been one of the mostly referred subjects in Turkish art history writing. For earliest studies on these paşa painters, see, Sami Yetik, *Ressamlarımız* (Istanbul: Marifet Basımevi, 1940); Pertev Boyar, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devirlerinde Türk Ressamları, Hayatları ve Eserleri* (Ankara: Jandarma Basımevi, 1948). For a recent study on this generation, see, Turan Erol, “Painting in Turkey in XIX and Early XXth Century” in *A History of Turkish Painting*, ed. Günsel Renda et.al. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

Turkish art history writing due to their military background.⁵ Another educational institution founded much later than the Military schools was the *Darüşşafaka*, which also offered painting classes to its students from 1873 onwards.⁶ Like the painting classes offered by the Military schools, the *Darüşşafaka* did not include figural training as part of their academic system; the painting classes offered in these institutions, such as *resm-i hattı* (linear perspective) or *menazir* (perspective) were based on the study of nature and topography.⁷ In Turkish art history writing, the nonfigurative works of those artists, particularly those from the *Darüşşafaka*, are referred to as photo-interpreters (*foto yorumcular*)⁸ or “primitives” (*primitifler*), a quite Western terminology which was first used, unsurprisingly, by a French art historian, René Huyghe, who visited the Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture (*Istanbul Resim Heykel Müzesi*) after its foundation in 1937.⁹

As opposed to the Military and Civilian Schools, where art education was included as a part of a wider syllabus, with the foundation of the Academy of Fine Arts

⁵ Nüzhet İslimyeli, *Asker Ressamlar ve Ekoller* (Ankara: Asker Ressamlar Sanat Derneği Yayınları, 1965); İlkay Karatepe, *Asker Ressamlar Kataloğu* (İstanbul: Askeri Müze ve Kültür Sitesi Komutanlığı, 2001).

⁶ On *Darüşşafaka* painters, see, for example, Adnan Çoker, “Fotoğraftan Resim ve Darüşşafakalı Ressamlar”, *Yeni Boyut*, vol. 2, no: 9 (January, 1983), pp.4-12; Turan Erol, “19. Yüzyıl Resim Sanatımız ve Ressamlarımız Üzerine Yeni Bilgiler”, *Yeni Boyut*, vol. 2, no: 11 (March, 1983), pp.8-9. The *Darüşşafaka* was a pious foundation educating orphans for civilian careers. *Darüşşafaka* means ‘house of compassion’ from the Arabic *dar ush-shafka*.

⁷ As this art education was based on copying from models, Turan Erol, for instance, refers to it as establishing another “master/apprentice tradition,” quite similar to those of the former miniature art production of the Ottoman court. Turan Erol, “Painting in Turkey in Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century,” in Günsel Renda [et al] eds., *A History of Turkish Painting* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), p.96.

⁸ Seyfi Başkan, *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye’de Resim* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1997), p.46.

⁹ Nurullah Berk, *İstanbul Resim ve Heykel Müzesi* (İstanbul: Akbank Sanat Kitapları, 1972).

(*Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi*) in 1883, education in fine arts, including painting, sculpture, architecture and engraving, was, for the first time, institutionalized in the Ottoman Empire. Besides art classes, pupils were offered classes in art history, ornamentation, perspective, arithmetic, geometry, history, antiques and anatomy.¹⁰ In the Academy, art classes were taught by mostly foreign and non-Muslim Ottoman artists, such as Salvatore Valeri, Joseph Warnia-Zarzecki, Fausto Zonaro, Leonardo de Mango, Philippe Bello, Osgan Efendi, in other words those to whom Adolphe Thalasso referred as the “pioneers of the Turkish School”, while anatomy was taught by Yusuf Rami Efendi, mathematics by Hasan Bey, and art history by Aristoklis Efendi. The chair of the Academy himself was an Ottoman painter, archaeologist, museum director and public figure, Osman Hamdi Bey (1841-1910), whose paintings were academic and ‘orientalist’ in style.¹¹ The academy also embarked on a programme of publicity to develop a public appetite for the fine arts and their Ottoman practitioners. By 1885, the academy had begun to host annual exhibitions, where pupils exhibited the works they produced during studio classes to the public. The Academy also hosted the beginnings of professional artistic scholarship. The first academic work on aesthetics, the “Prolegomena to the History of Fine Arts” (*Fünun-ı Nefise Tarihi Medhali*) written by Sakızlı Ohannes

¹⁰ These classes are stated in an official document dated 1882. Transcribed and published in Mustafa Cezar, *Sanatta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1971), p.461.

¹¹ For Osman Hamdi, see Cezar, *Sanatta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi*; Cezar, *Müzeci ve Ressam Osman Hamdi Bey* (Istanbul: Türk Kültürüne Hizmet Vakfı, 1987). For Osman Hamdi and the Fine Arts Academy, see, Adnan Çoker (ed.), *Osman Hamdi ve Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi* (Istanbul: Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi, 1963). For the most recent study on him, see, Edhem Eldem, *Osman Hamdi Bey Sözlüğü* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2010).

Efendi and published in 1892, was a compilation of the author's lectures he delivered at the Academy of Fine Arts.¹²

Another aspect of professionalization was the increasing use of Western educational techniques, though these were sometimes controversial. Art education in the Academy involved the classic studio-based, western-style art classes in painting, sculpture and architecture. One graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts, Ali Sami (Boyar), later complained that the Academy did not offer live models until 1906. In that year, a group of students, including himself, Ruhi and Nazmi Ziya, demonstrated against this attitude, and gained, in return for their pains, an opportunity to work with real human models, though these were male oil wrestlers, and were to be allowed to model only semi-naked.¹³ This was still a significant challenge to the Muslim 'identity' and traditions of the Empire that time, and the director of the Academy himself was perhaps understandably reticent about attracting any negative attention. Another graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts and a member of the Ottoman Society of Painters, Hikmet Onat mentioned in an interview that one day he and his fellow students had had enough of working with male porters as models and brought a girl once from a gypsy settlement and made her adopt various postures. As they started to paint, Osman Hamdi Bey, the director, called them to his office and yelled at them that they were in a country that could not bear such things. "I hope" he said "you will go to Europe soon and paint lots of women, even naked ones."¹⁴ Perhaps these painting students who had grown up

¹² Sakızlı Ohannes, *Fünun-ı Nefise Tarihi Medhali* (Istanbul: 1308 [1892]).

¹³ Ali Sami Boyar's 1945 speech was published in Bedi N. Şehsuvaroğlu, *Ressam Ali Sami Boyar: A Well Known Turkish Painter* (Istanbul: İsmail Akgün Matbaası), p.72.

¹⁴ Hikmet Onat, "Interview" in Nurullah Berk and Hüseyin Gezer, *50 Yılın Türk Resim ve Heykeli* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 1973), pp.17-8.

relying on the presence and legitimacy of the Academy in the Empire were already braver than their high elite Academy teachers, despite the latter's established artistic relations with Europe. In fact, in his memoirs, Ahmed İhsan, the well-known Ottoman publisher and the owner of the magazine *Servet-i Fünun*, wrote that when he had been invited by Osman Hamdi Bey once to his mansion to be shown the painter's atelier, he was surprised by the fact that the atelier was located in a hidden place in the house. For Ahmed İhsan, "Hamdi was creating his paintings thus secreted away from others and sent them to Europe, and not every man could enter there because he was scared of the dragon of zealotry."¹⁵ True, Ahmed İhsan was writing his memoirs in the early-Republic, when the country had moulded Kemalism into Six Principles (republicanism; secularism; nationalism; populism; statism and revolutionism) with the aim of marginalising the influence of traditional religion and religious elites over its politics. Yet, Ahmed İhsan was not totally wrong in his narration of the Empire, even while looking at it from a Republican perspective. In fact, some reaction had already occurred in the Empire against the usage of images: the wall maps of the *Rüşdiyye* (adolescence) schools, displayed for teaching purposes, were in some instances destroyed on the grounds that they were 'drawings.' It is also claimed that a contributing factor that led to the closure of the *Dar-ül Fünun* (Imperial University) in 1870 were the remarks of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani on the subject of the advancement of arts, crafts, and industry, which were interpreted as placing the arts on an equal footing with divine inspiration.¹⁶ Despite

¹⁵ Ahmed İhsan, *Matbuat Hatıralarım, 1888-1923*, Vol. 1 (Istanbul: Ahmed İhsan Matbaası, 1930-1931), p.74.

¹⁶ See, Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press: 2002), p.165.

these reactions, five years after students' resistance against the lack of live models, a new version of the Regulations and Syllabus of the Academy of Fine Arts (*Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi Talimatname ve Ders Programları*) was published in 1911 under the new chair of the school, Halil Edhem, which stated that during the third year of the painting section the Academy would offer live-model-based study.¹⁷ Thus in contrast to the art classes offered in Military and Civilian Schools, the Academy of Fine Arts was, with some prompting, ultimately not afraid to take the lead in dictating what was and was not proper in the professional training of its students.

The Academy of Fine Arts was an example *par excellence* of a modern merit-based education system developed during the reign of Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909). The Hamidian period was characterised by a great faith in the power of education to strengthen the Ottoman state. Ottoman officials saw public education as a means to increase the identification between students and the empire itself.¹⁸ In fact, in an 1891 circular directive from the Ministry of Education to all high schools, graduates from these institutions were expected to be “ready to serve their state and country unwaveringly.”¹⁹ However, like the rest of that system, the Academy of Fine Arts produced a generation of Ottomans who would be unwilling to put up with the intellectual and political restrictions that characterised his rule outside of the enlightened academies. Adolphe Thalasso remarked this irony on the first anniversary of the constitutional revolution, arguing that while poets and historians would write down

¹⁷ *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi Talimatname ve Ders Programları* (Dersaadet: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1327 [1911]). For a transcription of the document see, Seçkin G. Naipoğlu, *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi'nde Sanat Tarihi Yaklaşımı ve Vahit Bey* (Unpublished PhD Diss., Hacettepe University, 2008), pp.343-77.

¹⁸ Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, p.168.

¹⁹ Quoted in Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: New York, I.B. Tauris, 1999), p.96.

Abdülhamid's thirty year reign "in blood", "artistic Turkey" should engrave the name of its patron sovereign "in letters of gold":

The deposed sovereign ... did everything in his power to gag and stifle all seeds of a generous thought, and of a liberatory aspiration. For thirty three years, there was no literature in Turkey. History, poetry and the theatre were reduced to nothing! ... If Literature was mercilessly persecuted, the plastic Arts, on the contrary, experienced, under the reign of Abdul Hamid, a renaissance, nay, a nascence, such as has never existed in the artistic annals of any people. Something truly worthy of remark; this sovereign, who lost the throne for having failed to respect the constitutional freedom finally proclaimed by his people last July, is the first among the Ottoman sultans who – despite the hadiths which collect the oral precepts of the Prophet – granted to Turkey its artistic independence.²⁰

Ironically or not, the founding of the Ottoman Society of Painters is related to the rise of a new protean middle class who were integrated through an 'equal opportunity' merit-based education system. The graduates of the education offered by institutions like the Academy of Fine Arts would ultimately come to despise and dismantle the system of Hamidian patronage which supported them. It can be argued that, suspicious as they were of traditional proscriptions and confident of the superiority of their education, these painters represented a new social group, establishing their own public sphere through voluntary artistic associations like the Society.

Constitutional Optimism and the New Associations

The Ottoman Society of Painters was first founded on the crest of a profound historical change. The year in which the society made its appearance, 1909, was a time in which people still had a robust enthusiasm for the constitutional revolution of July 1908; the

²⁰ Adolphe Thalasso, "Orient" *L'Art et les Artistes*, Tome IX, Avril-Septembre 1909, pp.145-6.

revolution that brought the Western-educated Young Turks to power during the last decade of the Ottoman Empire. On the eve of 23 July 1908, the Ottoman people regained their parliament and constitution, suspended some thirty years earlier by Sultan Abdülhamid II. This was the end of the absolute regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II, with its atmosphere of paranoia, surveillance and censorship. With the newfound freedom of parliament and of thought, there was an extensive enthusiasm for and increase in the number of professional and fraternal organizations. The Law of Associations (*Cemiyetler Kanunu*), decreed in August 1909, provided certain guarantees to these social formations.²¹ This new atmosphere of liberty was also marked an explosion in the number of publications; a jump from around a hundred to seven hundred was a clear indicator of this new freedom of expression.²² The foundation of the Ottoman Society of Painters was certainly a result of the novel possibilities brought about by that enthusiasm – which would not have been possible under Abdülhamid II’s rigorous policy of censorship. In fact, just one month after the Constitutional Revolution, an immediate response came from the artists of the imperial capital. As Adolphe Thalasso relates, an association consisting of painters, sculptors and architects founded an artistic organization, the “Society of Turkish Artists” (translated from Thalasso’s *La Société des Artistes Turcs*).²³ This was a possible forerunner or inspiration for the painters who

²¹ Zafer Toprak, “Cemiyetler Kanunu,” *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Vol:1 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1983), p.206; Hüseyin Hatemi, “Bilim Derneklerinin Hukuki Çerçevesi (Dernek Tüzelkişiliği)” in Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu ed. *Osmanlı İlmî ve Meslekî Cemiyetleri* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1987), pp.83-4.

²² According to Orhan Koloğlu, the number of publications jumped from 120 to 730. See, Orhan Koloğlu, “The Printing Press and Journalism in the Ottoman State,” *Boğaziçi Journal: Review of Social, Economic and Administrative Studies*, Vol. 18, No: 1-2, (2004), pp.27-33.

²³ Adolphe Thalasso, “La Société des Artistes Turcs,” *L’Art et les Artistes*, Tome VIII, Octobre 1908 - Mars 1909, p.42.

would form the Ottoman Society of Painters one year later, though it was perhaps both more ‘academic’ and diverse in spirit; headed by Osman Hamdi, the leading spirit of the academy, and reflected the Academy’s cosmopolitan character, being staffed by instructors and ex-pupils of all the Academic departments, and including Greek, Armenian and Levantine members.²⁴ Their shared enthusiasm for the new democratic and convivial methods of “Liberal Turkey” is clear from Thalasso’s detailed descriptions of “sealed letters”, “secret ballots” and transparent oversight of the election process.²⁵ However, after the initial euphoria had died away, it was clearly felt that there was a need for a separate and specialist society to adequately represent or meet the professional needs of more explicitly *Ottoman* painters.

According to the official founding document of the Ottoman Society of Painters itself, dated September 30, 1909, the society was founded with the aim of “publicizing the love of fine arts and progressing the art of painting in the Ottoman State.”²⁶ The aim

²⁴ “*General president*: H.E. Hamdy Bey, general director of the Imperial Ottoman Museum and of the Museums of the Empire ... *Presidents*: H.E. Halil Pasha ... Osgan Effendi, director of the School of Fine Arts and professor of sculpture at the same school, ... and Vahad Bey, the architect ... *Vice Presidents*: Adil Bey, a painter ... Ihsan Effendi, a sculptor ... Zardijan Effendi, an architect ... *Members of the committee*: Alaeddine Effendi, another Turkish architect ... Mr S. Valery, professor of painting ... and the sculptor Boshnakian Effendi, an old student of the School of Fine Arts, ... *Members of the council*: Among the architects: Assim Bey, Nisameddin Bey, Mavromati Effendi, Kiriakidi Effendi and Edhem Bey, who is the son of H.E. Hamdy Bey; Among the Sculptors: Hakky Bey; among the painters: Reshid Riza Bey, Shevket Bey and M. Warnia, professor at the school of fine arts, ... the posts of secretaries, ... were carried by Arif Bey, Nazmi Bey and H. Boshnakian Effendi.” *Ibid.*, p.42.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.42.

²⁶ The whole document reads the following: “Memalik-i Osmaniye’de, hiss-i bedayi-i perveriyye ta’mini ve ressamlığın terakkisi için [teşekkül eden ve merkezi şimdilik Üsküdar’da vapur iskelesi fevkinde resim sergisi itihaz edilen, mahall-i mahsusta bulunan Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti müessisini tarafından, cemiyetler nizamnamesine tevkiyan ita olunan beyanname bittetik Nizamname-i mezkûr ahkamına muafik olduğu ve cemiyetin de maksad-ı teşekkül-i menafi-i vataniyyeye hadim bulunduğu anlaşıldığından yine mezkûr nizamnamenin altıncı maddesine tevkiyan işbu varak ita kılındı.” (17 September 1325/ 30 September 1909). This official document was first published in Naci Terzi’s article, “Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti’nin Kuruluşu ile İlgili Bir Belge,” *Sanat Çevresi* (December, 1979), p.14. As the author informs us, the document was provided by Osman Asaf’s son İzzettin Bora.

of the Society would also be stated in more detail later in the first article of their 1911 dated Regulations (*Nizamname*):

The founding mission of the Society is to open public workshops, exhibitions and night classes, to give conferences, to organize trips, and to spread the love of fine arts with periodicals and other scientific publications, and to serve the progress of painting and Ottoman painters, and is based on the principal of the union of [Ottoman painters] for the achievement of their labour to secure their future in the Ottoman state.²⁷

Thus the foundation of a society can be understood as both a continuation of historical processes of professionalization of the arts in the Empire and as a response to the new freedom of civic organization. Yet, as the phrase about the need to “secure their future” in their declaration suggests, the founders of the Society also had other, more economically pressing reasons to respond collectively to the position of painting in the Empire.

The Crisis in Patronage

The merit-based art education of the Academy of Fine Arts described above had led to a vast increase in the number of trained artists in the Empire. After his visit to the Academy of Fine Arts in 1907, Adolphe Thalasso wrote that the school had a hundred and eighty students in total, consisting of “57 architecture students; 103 painting and drawing students; 14 sculpture students; and 6 metal engraving students”²⁸ making a

²⁷ *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Nizamname-i Esasisi* (Dersaadet: Bekir Efendi Matbaası, 1327 [1911]. The transcription of the *Nizamname* into modern Turkish is also available. See, Ömer Faruk Şerifoğlu, “Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti ve İlk Nizamnamesi,” *Sanat Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Issue:1 (2006), pp.119-34.

²⁸ Thalasso’s article is indeed very interesting, as he also separates the students according to their choices of the classes in the Academy: “The preference of Muslims and Armenians for drawing, painting and sculpture is remarkable, as is that of the Greeks for architecture, and of the Jews for metal engraving.” Adolphe Thalasso, “Orient,” *L’Art et les Artistes*, Tome V, Avril-Septembre 1907, pp.220-1.

total of almost two hundred. Though at the foundation of the Academy this number was limited at around fifty (consisting of “some Ottomans, some Armenians, some Levantines”), this still makes an extensive amount of new artists, since the first graduation from the Academy around 1887. However, in the wake of the constitutional revolution and the deposition of the sultan, there were serious economical problems for these young graduates in the final decades of the Ottoman Empire, greatly adding to the impetus to found a professional artistic society. Thalasso also wrote about the unfortunate economic situation, faced particularly by the painting and sculpture graduates of the Academy:

Of the students leaving from Fine-Arts, some do not continue to work, the others work ‘on the side’, with no defined goal, in the guise of a pastime and in their hours of leisure, subordinating their art, so little encouraged, so little appreciated, in favour of more lucrative occupations. Only the architects succeed. With the Fine-Arts certificate or diploma in hand, they obtain any important work, or almost any, on the spot or in the provinces. On the other hand, the painting or sculpture student deciding to earn his living with his art is obliged to leave the country. These last three years, many students have at their own expense continued their studies abroad.²⁹

When Thalasso published his article in 1907, there were still some positions available for the graduates of the Academy of Fine Arts as painters in the recently industrialised craft production of the Empire. For example, the Imperial Factory of Hereke (*Hereke Fabrika-i Hümayun*) had been actively producing carpets, often from painted designs, since 1840s and the Imperial Yıldız Porcelain Factory (*Yıldız Çini Fabrika-i Hümayun*) had been founded in 1894 by Abdülhamid II. While the Hereke Factory continued its production during the early twentieth century, the deposition of Abdülhamid II in 1909

²⁹ *Ibid.*

would bring porcelain production to a halt, and this would bring economic hardship to the already embattled young graduates.

These young artists were also having other economic problems which the previous generation did not have, related to the collapse of traditional institutions of patronage after the Constitutional Revolution. Of course, the income of painters such as Osman Hamdi, Hüseyin Zekai Paşa and Şeker Ahmed Paşa was not only dependent on the sales of their paintings; they came from upper rank Ottoman families and were themselves high level bureaucrats, close to the Sultan himself. But their art was also supported by Sultan Abdülhamid II. An 1890 official document from Abdülhamid II's private library at the Yıldız Palace, "The Inventory Notebook (list) of the Artists and Their Paintings Belonging to the Imperial Collection" (*Saray ve Kasr-ı Hümayunlarda Bulunan Resimlerin Cinsini ve Ressamların Esamisini Mübeyyen Defter*),³⁰ written under the order of the Sultan himself, illustrates how broad and rich the imperial collection was. The collection, most of which was gathered upon the order of Sultan Abdülaziz (r.1861-76) and Abdülhamid II, consisted of 346 paintings by 104 foreign, Levantine, Muslim and non-Muslim Ottoman painters; the collection included seventeen paintings by Şeker Ahmed Paşa (mostly still-life); twenty seven paintings by Hüseyin Zekai Paşa (still-lives, landscapes, interiors and paintings of historical places); and seven paintings by Hamdi Bey (orientalist paintings together with still-lives, a battle scene and

³⁰ This imperial document has been comprehensively analyzed and translated by Zehra Güven Öztürk in her study *Ottoman Imperial Painting Collection through a Document Dating from 1890* (Unpublished MA Thesis, Koç University, 2008). As Öztürk informs us, this imperial collection would later become the nucleus of the first museums founded in the Republican Era, such as the Dolmabahçe Palace Museum, the Yıldız Palace Museum, the Beylerbeyi Palace Museum, the Topkapı Palace Museum, the Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture, the Naval Museum and the Ankara State Museum of Fine Arts. Today, the notebook is kept in the Rare Books Library of Istanbul University.

a landscape).³¹ Of course, this does not mean that these paintings were directly purchased by Sultan Abdülhamid II himself. In fact, the notebook does not include prices for any of the paintings by Ottoman painters, unlike the ones painted by Gustave Boulanger each of which were bought for high prices, such as 25,000 or 20,000 francs.³² Different from Gustave Boulanger and other European professional painters in the collection, Osman Hamdi, Şeker Ahmed and Hüseyin Zekai Paşa were not wage-labouring painters who depended on the art market at the time; they were high-level bureaucrats with salaried state positions. Even so dedicated an artist as Osman Hamdi himself was strictly speaking only ever an ‘amateur’ painter. Yet, one should not think about Hamidian art patronage only in ‘hard cash’ terms. True, Abdülhamid most likely did not purchase these paintings directly from these Ottoman painters; his ‘patronage’ of the arts was more about providing opportunities for ‘publicizing’ and securing art in the Empire, such as in the foundation of the Imperial Museum and of the Academy of Fine Arts both of which were directed by Osman Hamdi himself. After Abdülhamid’s deposition, however, Sultan Mehmed V Reşad’s approach to the fine arts was totally a different story. Unlike Abdülaziz and Abdülhamid II, he did not intend to have an imperial painting collection which could, otherwise, have supported the graduates of the Academy of Fine Arts. Of course, it remains questionable whether, had the Sultan taken more of an interest in art, he would have bought these graduates’ increasingly ‘impressionistic’ paintings of everyday-life or whether he would have preferred paintings in the Academy’s more traditional and academic style. What is certain is that the new generation was no longer interested in producing such work, and despite the

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.53-6.

³² *Ibid.*, pp.39-40.

nascent bourgeois taste and sensibilities in some sections of Ottoman society, free-lance studio artists still suffered from the lack of a real art market.

So with the rising power of the bourgeois class to which the artists belonged and the changes this brought about in the patronage system, whereby the artists did not always have a pre-determined buyer, such as the Sultan or members of his court, the establishment of an artists' organization became a crucial initiative for the painters of the Empire.

Actively Developing Public Taste

Another priority for the Society, then, was the development of networks of private patronage which could furnish a market for its members' work. There were a few public painting exhibitions organized in the imperial capital in the early-twentieth century, such as the 1907 exhibition in which the future young members of the Society, like Ömer Adil, Sami, Nazmi, Hikmet, and Mehmed Ali all participated.³³ In fact, in an attempt to encourage private patronage, the Ottoman Society of Painters would organize permanent painting exhibitions in their Society centre, Üsküdar, displaying their works for sale while donating a certain amount of the sales to the budget of the Society. According to the programme they published in their Journal, these exhibitions were open every day

³³ Thalasso wrote an article on this specific exhibition, which he called "The First Ottoman Exhibition." Adolphe Thalasso, "Première Exposition Artistique Ottomane," *L'Art et les Artistes*, Tome VI, Octobre 1907- Mars 1908, pp.415-6. In this article, Thalasso wrote about the future members of the Society: "Ömer Adil Bey, a student of the School of Fine Arts, he has presented to the public a *landscape* and three paintings of *figures*, very curiously approached [...] Sami Bey, a Turkish painter with a great future. His fourteen *landscapes* bear witness to a very acute and realistic vision of nature; Nazmi Bey, another young Ottoman painter with a great future. His landscape view of Moda and his two life size Heads are treated with candour and strength; [...] Hikmet Bey, and his five little *Landscapes*; [...] Mehmed Ali Bey, and his three *Medals*." For further information on this exhibition and other public exhibitions organized in the imperial capital, see, Chapter III.

and, with the exception of Society members, all visitors were charged 1 *kuruş* entrance fee.³⁴ Besides these permanent sale exhibitions, they also organized public painting exhibitions lasting three months, either in the Society centre or at other available venues, and which would accept works by other Ottoman painters, not necessarily from among their members. These public exhibitions, whose budget was sponsored by Prince Abdülmecid Efendi, the honorary president of the Society, also offered awards to three selected artists from each branch of fine arts, painting, architecture, sculpture and engraving.³⁵ The presence of Prince Abdülmecid Efendi in the Society might be read as a resort to traditional modes of patronage, but despite his financial support to the Journal and the exhibitions, his ‘patronage’ power could certainly in no way approach the previous Sultan’s ability to build an imperial collection.

Despite these efforts by the Society and its aristocratic patron, it was still hard for individual artists to gain recognition in the differentiated art market. This was because the market for art was not yet based, or had not yet really developed, a reliable public taste for European style art. One sketch by Adolphe Thalasso of an unnamed Paşa’s philistine attitude towards art, mostly likely during the 1907 exhibition, very much proves the point:

One thinks of the Pasha of whom we asked – at one of the ‘Istanbul Salons’ – 500 francs for a marine which he wanted to acquire, but who would offer no more than 70, after having – with the knowing air of a gentleman who ‘would not be taken for a fool’ – speculated in the artist’s presence about the cost of the frame, the meters of canvas, the colours and the eight ‘days’ of the painter’s work, estimated at 6 francs! 50 centimes more a day than for painters and decorators! In this manner, he

³⁴ “Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Merkezinde Küşad Edilen Daimi Satış Sergisi Programıdır,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:1 (19 Muharrem Sene 1329/ 7 Kanunusani 1326 [January 20, 1911]).

³⁵ “Umumi Resim Sergisi Programı,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:2 (15 Saferülhayur Sene 1329/1 Şubat 1326 [February 14, 1911]).

arrived at a total of 58 francs to which he added, very generously, a tip or *bakshish* of 12 francs ‘because the panorama of the Bosphorus was well treated’!³⁶

Besides his, to Thalasso, philistine undervaluing of the artist’s labour, the Paşa’s attitude also raises another interesting issue; his preference for a non-figurative painting suggests that Islamic and traditional norms of taste still prevalent among sections of the Empire’s ruling elite. Indeed, Thalasso continues with the exploits of another philistine Paşa who also ordered a landscape for his carpet design, and:

... after having ordered a landscape of 2 meters by 1 meter 75 from a renowned painter, to be used as a model for a carpet that he wanted to have made at the Hereke Factory, demanded on six occasions alterations to the canvas, worked the artist at a frantic pace for two months in a row, and, after the picture was finally delivered, not only forgot to pay him, but, in very good faith, gave credit to himself as its true father, ‘as he had himself given all the instructions to the artist!’³⁷

As much as Thalasso is critical of these anonymous Paşas’ conservative Muslim taste and philistinism, one should not hastily categorize him as a fanciful Orientalist, generalizing an a-historical Muslim tendency in art. True, Thalasso is often outspokenly critical of what he sees as the “false interpretation” of Islamic tradition which he blames for Muslim hostility to figurative art.³⁸ Yet, in this article, he is also adamantly critical of the European Orientalist views of writers like Gerard de Nerval and the Baron de Tott, and he takes great pains to separate the mentalities and “superhuman efforts” for art of

³⁶ Adolph Thalasso, “Orient: Esthétique d'Art des Ottomans, ” *L'Art et les Artistes*, Tome VI, Octobre 1907 - Mars 1908, pp.503-4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.504.

³⁸ See, for instance, Adolphe Thalasso “Orient: le Coran et l’Art Osmanli” *L'Art et les Artistes*, Tome VII, Avril-Septembre 1908, pp.40-1.

the Paşas who had been educated in and travelled to Europe from those who had never been beyond the horizons of the imperial capital. Perhaps too, he does not literally acknowledge counter-examples for the tendency, such as the collection of Halil Şerif Paşa, the Ottoman statesman who has generally been characterized as ‘lascivious’ and a rich Ottoman dandy relishing the Parisian nightlife in 1860s, including the shockingly erotic *Origin of the World* by Gustave Courbet, and the *Turkish Bath* by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres among many other explicitly figurative paintings.³⁹ However, the objective of Thalasso’s criticism was to name and shame all that was unhelpful or a hindrance to the development of “artistic Turkey” - thus Paşas like Halil Şerif Paşa, in his ‘radical’ bravery for non-figurative painting, was generating his collection in France and with French art, instead of collecting the Ottoman painting. Also to this end, Thalasso is elsewhere equally critical of the tendency of colonials, Levantines, Armenians and Greeks to dismiss work by great Ottoman painters, preferring instead to support even mediocrities newly arrived from Christian Western Europe to genuine local talents.⁴⁰ Whether Thalasso was right or wrong in his diagnosis, and despite the best efforts of the Society to encourage the market for fine arts, it seems that the prospects for making a living from art alone still remained quite limited in the Empire when compared to the flourishing European art market.

³⁹ For Halil Şerif Paşa’s collection, see Michèle Haddad, *Khalil-Bey: Un homme, une collection* (Paris: Amateur, 2000).

⁴⁰ See Adolphe Thalasso “Orient: Esthétique d’Art des Levantines” *L’Art et les Artistes*, Tome VI, Octobre 1907 - Mars 1908, pp.552-3.

The Social Composition of the Ottoman Society of Painters

As we have seen, the emergence of the Ottoman Society of Painters in the form of an association had historical precedents and responded to specific socio-economic pressures. We now turn to an analysis of the social composition of this group, which, at least initially, attempted to incorporate artists from across class, religious, ethnic and gender divides.

Professional Bourgeoisie

When thinking about these continuities and changes in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ottoman painting and patronage, the term ‘bourgeois’ seems to serve a useful purpose. However, in itself the term is perhaps not enough; the term *Ottoman bourgeois artist* signals the intellectual and cultural characteristics of this particular grouping which pertain to its own distinctive class structure specific to the history of the Ottoman state. My own understanding of the term draws particularly on the analysis of the concept as elaborated by Edhem Eldem.⁴¹ Eldem understands Osman Hamdi as a *haut bourgeois* who was “a high-level bureaucrat, the son of İbrahim Edhem Paşa, several times minister, ambassador and once grand vizier,”⁴² while acknowledging his

⁴¹ Edhem Eldem’s study of some two thousand stock and bond depositors among the customers of the Ottoman Bank between 1903 and 1918 is one of the first attempts to rethink about the highly contested term ‘Ottoman bourgeois,’ which is mostly marginalized and neutralized in Ottoman studies, if not avoided altogether. See Eldem’s “Istanbul 1903-1918: A Quantitative Analysis of A Bourgeoisie,” *Boğaziçi Journal. Review of Social, Economic and Administrative Studies*, Vol. 11, No: 1-2 (1997), pp.53-98. What made each customer a bourgeois, for Eldem, was her or his “involvement in a capitalist type of investment and a western type of network.” For a survey of the existing literature on the term ‘Ottoman bourgeoisie’ with regard to its social and economic transformation during the nineteenth century see Eldem, “[A Quest for] the Bourgeoisie of Istanbul: Identities, Roles and Conflicts,” *forthcoming*. With the permission of the author.

⁴² Eldem, “[A Quest for] the Bourgeoisie of Istanbul: Identities, Roles and Conflicts.”

'higher standing' as opposed to the newly emerging Ottoman professional class who were rising up through the social ranks. There was thus a transition in the late Empire from the Ottoman *Tanzimat* official bourgeoisie, with their 'higher standing' based on positions at court or high up in the military or bureaucracy, to the nascent professional bourgeoisie of the early twentieth century. These last became waged professionals and no longer needed to be members of distinguished Muslim Ottoman families in order to train as teachers, doctors and lawyers in the more meritocratic education institutions of the Hamidian era. Unlike the previous generation of "amateur" painters, who belonged mostly to the upper ranks of the Ottoman bureaucracy (such as Şeker Ahmed Paşa, Hüseyin Zekai Paşa, Halil Paşa and Osman Hamdi), the graduates of the Academy of Fine Arts, in fact most members of the Ottoman Society of Painters, were the new professional middle-class of the early twentieth century; they were often full-time artists who depended on the increasingly differentiated patronage of the art market, and most of them would become professional art teachers.

So how can we see these emerging social distinctions at work in the Society itself? Firstly, we can perhaps see a gesture of social continuity in the fact that Prince Abdülmeçid Efendi was always mentioned as the honorary president of the Society in the Journal. However, the Society's foundational document, the *Nizamname*, also details that permanent members were to be chosen from among those "Ottoman painters and painting instructors from the Ottoman schools." The tendency of the permanent members to be both painters and teachers also shows us that its main attraction was towards the newly risen professional bourgeoisie of Ottoman Society. Interestingly, the *Nizamname* includes no names, but clearly states four divisions among the membership;

besides the founding members (*aza-yı müessise*), there were honorary members (*aza-yı fahriye*), temporary members (*aza-yı muvakkate*) and permanent members (*aza-i daime*). As well as being an organising principle, this division also seems to have had a socio-economic rationale. As we learn from the thirty-fifth article, an entrance fee, *1 lira*, was collected from each new permanent member, all of which would be reserved for the future expenditures of the Society. However, while the (probably salaried) permanent members were obliged to pay *20 kuruş* each month, the honorary members were exempted from this payment. Yet the same article also talks about their possible financial assistance for artists in need to whom the Society could donate with money to be collected from the honorary members' donations. While the article gives little specific detail on how this was to be carried out, it is clear that there was expectation that some members would have more difficulty in paying their way than others, and that the founders envisioned that the Society would have to collectively provide in cases of serious hardship. Such provisions seem to point to a consciousness of differences in socio-economic background among the Ottoman painters; from paşa painters and patrons to the sometimes struggling new professionals.

Muslim & Non-Muslim Painters

As the inaugural membership registration notebook has apparently not survived until today, the names of the initial members of the Society vary in many secondary sources. Ruhi (Arel), Sami (Yetik), Şevket (Dağ), Hikmet (Onat), İbrahim Çallı, Ahmed Ziya (Akbulut) and Mesrur İzzet have mostly been acknowledged by secondary sources as the

initial members of the Society.⁴³ Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşım, Osman Asaf, Ömer Adil, Nazmi Ziya, Hüseyin Avni (Lifij), Mehmed Ali, Feyhaman (Duran), Hasan Vecih (Bereketoğlu), Namık İsmail, Celal Esad, Mihri Rasim, Midhat Rebi, Müfide Kadri have generally been classified as later joiners.⁴⁴ However, as we shall see later (Chapter III), both Sami and Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşım would ultimately be among the most productive authors of the Society's Journal. While Osman Asaf had the responsibility of the managing chair (*müdür-i mesul*), and Ahmed Ziya is stated as the executive manager of the committee of the Ottoman Society of Painters (*Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti heyet-i idare reisi*), the contribution to the Journal by other members of the Society would seem to have been comparatively limited, if they made any at all. The Society Journal also mentions the names of some members who have mostly remained unacknowledged by the secondary literature; such as Agah Efendi, a painting instructor of the University (*Darüşşafaka*), or a bureaucrat like Şerif Ferid Beyefendi who was the vice manager of the Public Debt Commission (*Düyun-ı Umumiye*). What the sources seem to agree on is that all those in positions of authority and influence in the society had Muslim Ottoman names.

One reason for this may simply have been changes in the class and ethnic composition of Ottoman painters since 1883. While the quantity and visibility of Muslim

⁴³ Seyfi Başkan , *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti* (Ankara: Çardaş, 1994), p.27; Zeynep Yasa Yaman, "Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti," *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı*, Vol. 6 (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1993-95), pp.176-7. Among these members, the non-Muslim painter Tovmas Efendi is sometimes included as well. See Abdullah Sinan Güler *İkinci Meşrutiyet Ortamında Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti ve Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi* (Unpublished PhD Diss., Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi, 1994). The names of the members are mostly based on a 1943 exhibition catalogue *Güzel Sanatlar Birliği 29. Yıl Resim Sergisi Katalogu* (Istanbul: 1943) or on the Website of the Güzel Sanatlar Birliği Resim Derneği at <http://www.guzelsanatlarbirligi.com/tarihce.htm>.

⁴⁴ A recent example of this is Wendy Shaw, *Ottoman Painting: Reflections of Western Art from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (London; New York: I. B Tauris, 2011), pp.116-7.

Ottoman students increased dramatically in the Academy of Fine Arts in the early twentieth century, there were nevertheless, still a great many non-Muslim students in the institution around the time of the foundation of the Ottoman Society of Painters. In his 1907 article on the Academy of Fine Arts Thalasso continues with a classification of the pupils according to their “nationalities”: “87 Muslim students; 36 Armenian; 45 Greek; 6 Jewish; 6 Levantine.” Indeed, the increase in the number of the Muslim students is a tremendous one; as Celal Esad narrates in his memoirs, when he was himself a student at the Academy in 1890, there were only three Muslim students.⁴⁵ This shift to a Muslim majority is perhaps reflected in the fact that, rather than a modern and cosmopolitan district of Istanbul such as Pera or Galata, the Ottoman painters’ chose for their headquarters a more traditionally Muslim district; Üsküdar. The location they chose for the exhibitions during the First World War, however, would be the vacated club of *La Societa Operaia* in the more cosmopolitan district of Pera. There is also a clear Muslim dominance in the Society’s intellectual production. In the eighteen issues of the Journal, no non-Muslim painters published anything, or at least none of the non-Muslim painters referred to as members of the Society. The Journal did publish one painting by a non-Muslim painter, Tovmas Efendi, as the cover image for its seventeenth issue, together with a short biography, yet his name was not included among the members.

One should not, however, hastily conclude that the Society was an *exclusively* Muslim-Ottoman construction, though it was certainly a *dominantly* Muslim one. It should be remembered that the twelfth article of the society’s *Nizamname* stipulated

⁴⁵ Celal Esad [Arseven] was a painter and art historian of the late-Ottoman and early-Republic. During the First World War he served as the municipal head of Istanbul’s Kadıköy district (Chapter IV). Celal Esad Arseven, *Sanat ve Siyaset Hatıralarım* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1993), p.42. In his memoirs, Celal Esad added that other two Muslim students were İsmail Hakkı and Galib Bey.

only that new members be drawn from among those painters “whose honesty and goodwill is confirmed by another.”⁴⁶ This shows that *any* painter or instructor could be a permanent member of this voluntary artist organization, based on another’s recommendation. Furthermore, the contribution by non-Muslim painters to the 1916 and 1917 exhibitions, such as Viçen Arslanyan, Eleni İlyadis, Rupen Seropyan Efendi and Dimitraki Trifidi Efendi among others should certainly be emphasised; in fact, the percentage of non-Muslim painters to the 1916 exhibition was twenty seven percent and the 1917 exhibition was forty percent. It seems clear that the Ottoman Society of Painters, as an artistic union, was probably much more inclusive and heterogonous than has generally been thought.

Women Painters

Differently again from the opportunities available to the bourgeois male artist, it was also almost impossible for female artists to win recognition as painters in their own right. Thus the Society was an opportunity for women artists to develop their careers. These women members of the Society came from an upper-class background but would eventually become professional, middle-class painters and art teachers in the newly opened *İnas Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi* (Girls Fine Arts Academy) from 1914 onwards. Indeed, without exception, all of the women members of the Society were of a privileged social class status, and came from families that were close to the court.

Though the Academy of Fine Arts offered merit-based artistic education, this education was still possible only for men, and art education for women had to stay

⁴⁶ This is stated in the twelfth article of their *Nizamname*.

within four walls with private tutors until the foundation of the Girls Fine Arts Academy as late as 1914. For example, Mihri Hanım, the director of the school, was born into a prominent upper-class family; her father was Ahmed Rasim Paşa, once Minister of Health. Like Mihri Hanım, Celile Hanım was also born into an upper-class family; her father was Enver Celaleddin Paşa and her grandfather on her mother's side was Mehmed Ali Paşa, both ministers in the Ottoman cabinet. Another important member of the Society, Müfide Hanım was also born into a wealthy family and had the opportunity to take private art courses from a famous Italian painter of the time, Salvatore Valeri.⁴⁷ After 1914, these women all continued their artistic lives by teaching professionally in the *İnas Sanayi-i Nefise*. While their intellectual position in the Ottoman Society of Painters was to remain a rather peripheral one,⁴⁸ they did not found a woman painters society themselves, like the 1881 French Union of Women Painters and Sculptors.⁴⁹ As an Ottoman woman it was important to belong to an artists' organization to participate and exist artistically in the cultural milieu of the late Ottoman Empire.

⁴⁷ For women painters see, Taha Toros, *İlk Kadın Ressamlarımız* (Istanbul: Akbank, 1988); Berke İnel and Burçak İnel, "Discovering the Missing Heroines: The Role of Women Painters in Early Modernist Art in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (April, 2002), pp.205-12; Wendy Shaw, "Where Did the Women Go? Female Artists from the Ottoman Empire to the Early Years of the Turkish Republic," *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 23, No: 1 (2011), pp.13-37.

⁴⁸ No woman member of the society, for instance, wrote anything in the Journal, and, in contrast to the constant display of male Ottoman artists' paintings and articles, the eighteen issue journal published only one song composed by Müfide Kadri in its eighth issue and one painting by her in its eleventh Issue. Their peripheral position did not change in the following years either, as we shall see (Chapter IV), only nine women painters took part both in the 1916 and 1917 Galatasaray exhibitions, compare to forty and twenty seven male painters respectively. The 1918 Vienna exhibition hosted only two female painters.

⁴⁹ For the Union of Women Painters and Sculptors see, Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

The '1914 Generation' and Impressionism: An Ottoman Avant-Garde?

The '1914 generation' has been probably one of the most popular subjects among Turkish art historians and has become almost indispensable staple of Turkish modern art history writing. These artists have mostly been acknowledged as bringing the belated nineteenth century modern style, Impressionism, into the country on the eve of World War I, which led them to be called the "Impressionists" along with their other label as "the 1914 generation," or "the Çallı generation."

The story begins when some members of the Society – perhaps not surprisingly male ones only – were sent to Paris for art education in 1910, and where they stayed until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. The members went to Paris under various auspices: the most popular ones among them, İbrahim Çallı, Hikmet and Ruhi were sent by the Ottoman state as the winners of an art contest; Nazmi Ziya and Ali Sami covered his own expenses and went to Paris; Avni Lifij was sent to Paris by Prince Abdülmecid Efendi on the advice of Osman Hamdi Bey; and Feyhaman's expenses were paid by Abbas Halim Paşa.⁵⁰ Once in Paris, Avni Lifij took classes by Jean Paul Laurens, one of the last major exponents of the French Academic style.⁵¹ Except Avni Lifij, all other young Ottoman painters were educated in the Atelier Cormon run by the history painter Fernand Cormon.⁵²

⁵⁰ Hikmet Onat, "Interview" in Nurullah Berk and Hüseyin Gezer, *50 Yılın Türk Resim ve Heykeli* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 1973), pp.17-8. One of the documents in the archives also shows us that Feyhaman was given an official recommendation for his art education in Europe. BOA, MF. MKT, 1177/73, 23 Muharrem 1330 [January 13, 1912].

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁵² As Deniz Artun has pointed out, one important difference between the state-sponsored painters (Ruhi, İbrahim and Hikmet) and the privately sponsored ones (Nazmi, Namık İsmail, Feyhaman and Ali Sami) was the fact that the latter needed to register at the Académie Julian first in order to enter the Atelier

The question of whether these artists were directly influenced by their French masters is indeed an interesting one. Cormon was a painter known for his academic style and epic scenes from pre-history. Much earlier than the Ottoman painters, the famous post-Impressionist artist Vincent Van Gogh had also entered the studio of Cormon in 1885.⁵³ Given Van Gogh's post-impressionist style with highly charged colours and light and an emotional manner, and his depiction of objects from everyday life, one may easily conclude that, as a teacher, Cormon was not very influential on this Dutch painter. What about the young Ottoman painters who were in Paris that time? Given their impressionistic style and depiction of ordinary scenes and people, can we say that they were not influenced by Paris academicism either?

Impressionism as an artistic movement had already arisen in Paris in the late 1800s with Monet, Renoir and Seurat. In the France of the Third Republic, Impressionism represented bourgeois ideology as a mode of both fervent self-expression and technical conformity, which for Arnold Hauser embodied the contradictions of the class.⁵⁴ Later in the century, as the once-revolutionary French bourgeoisie revealed its anti-revolutionary and conservative character, the once-revolutionary art of Impressionism, a movement of *l'art pour l'art*, with its bourgeois values – imagination, intuition, spirituality and individuality – was neither as explicitly revolutionary nor as

Cormon in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, as they lacked an official letter, which the Ottoman Ministry of Education had provided to Ruhi, İbrahim Çallı and Hikmet. Deniz Artun, *Paris'ten Modernlik Tercümeleri: Académie Julian'da İmparatorluk ve Cumhuriyet Öğrencileri* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2007), pp.160-1.

⁵³ See, Melissa A McQuillan, *Van Gogh* (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1989); Peter Harrison, *Vincent Van Gogh* (New York: Sterling Pub. Co., 1996); Dieter Beaujean, *Vincent Van Gogh: Life and Work* (Cologne: Könemann, 2000).

⁵⁴ For a historical analysis between the French Revolution, Romanticism and Impressionism, Arnold Hauser's study offers one of the most detailed study on the subject, see, *The Social History of Art: Three: Rococo, Classicism and Romanticism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp.181-4.

political as the Parisian avant-garde. By way of contrast, the political Mexican painter, Diego Rivera, for instance, was also sent to Paris in 1909 by the Mexican state, but he preferred to establish himself within the contemporary revolutionary current of Cubism.⁵⁵

Of course, the question of the ‘radical’ in art comes with a dual implication; whether the artist was artistically or/and politically radical. The famous nineteenth century French painter, Gustave Courbet, was certainly the example *par excellence* of one who was both artistically and politically progressive. With his artistic choice of what Linda Nochlin has referred to as “militantly radical Realism,”⁵⁶ and his close association with the anarchist revolutionary Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Courbet “naturally expected the radical artist to be at war with the ruling forces of society.”⁵⁷ The examples of Courbet and Rivera, however, should not lead us to think that the ‘avant-garde’ was always the property of politically left wing artists. In fact the early twentieth-century avant-garde movements⁵⁸ would fan out in opposed political directions; the Russian Futurists’, Dadaists’, and Surrealists’ association with socialism, on one hand, and the British Vorticists’ sympathy with and Italian Futurists’ active role in fascism, on the other, is great proof of the politically dual character of the avant-garde. Yet in spite of these opposite political tendencies, all avant-garde movements had a common factor, which was their challenge to the bourgeois order. All these movements, in Raymond

⁵⁵ Diego Rivera and Gladys March, *My Art, My Life: An Autobiography* (New York: Citadel Press, 1960).

⁵⁶ Linda Nochlin, *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), p.3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁵⁸ On the “historical avant-garde,” see Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1974] 1984).

Williams terms, “implicitly but more often explicitly, claimed to be anti-bourgeois ... hostile or indifferent or merely vulgar, the bourgeois was the mass which the creative artist must either ignore and circumvent, or now increasingly, shock, deride, and attack.”⁵⁹ This was the main difference, I believe, between the European avant-garde and the Ottoman painters who were in Paris during these turbulent artistic years. They were not, and maybe should not be expected to be, critical of the bourgeois art world, its aesthetics, or its market. On the contrary, the aim of the Ottoman Society of Painters was to establish and exist in the art world of the bourgeois order, and to work for the very *existence* of art in the Empire. Their modernity and bourgeois sensibilities resembled not that of the Italian⁶⁰ or the Russian futurists,⁶¹ who called for a new art form that would break with the aesthetic traditions of the past. As much as the love for old-Italian culture and the canon of Russian literature were the enemies of the Italian futurists and the Russian avant-gardes respectively, for the Ottoman painters, the previous painters or the modern Ottoman artistic heritage as handed down by artists such as Şeker Ahmed Paşa and Osman Hamdi Bey were highly valuable and exemplary; these painterly forbears were seen as role models in their contribution to the Empire’s ‘road of progress,’

⁵⁹ Raymond Williams, “The Politics of the Avant-Garde” in Edward Timms and Peter Collier eds., *Visions and Blueprints: Avant-Garde Culture and Radical Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Europe* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988), p.5.

⁶⁰ In the eleventh and final proposition of his 1909 Futurist Manifesto, Marinetti states: “We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicoloured, polyphonic tides of revolution in modern capital cities: we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervour of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke.” published in the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro*. Quoted in F.T. Marinetti, *Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. R. W. Flint (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), p.42.

⁶¹ The 1912 Russian Manifesto published: “The past suffocates us. The Academy and Pushkin are less intelligible than hieroglyphics. Throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, etc., overboard from the steamship of modernity. He who does not forget his *first* love will not recognize his last.” Quoted in Anne Charters and Samuel Charters, *I Love: The Story of Vladimir Mayakovsky and Lili Brik* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1979), p.29.

particularly Şeker Ahmed's active role in opening public exhibitions and Osman Hamdi's role as the chair of the Imperial Museum and the Academy of Fine Arts. As we shall see (Chapter III), many debates in their Journal show their veneration to these artists. Without aiming to discard the past, the Ottoman Society of Painters believed in their power to advance and envision the future of the country as 'leaders' of the society.

After his Paris years, Nazmi Ziya once said to a fellow painter during their conversation on Picasso and Matisse; "forget these tricksters!" as these cubist artists were doing a kind of art "which could only be understood by themselves or the ones who thinks like themselves," whereas art, for Ziya, "should be loved and understood by everyone."⁶² Nazmi Ziya thus preferred to understand art as a 'public mission.' Ali Sami likewise attributed similar role to art, and took a critical attitude towards his group's classification as mere 'impressionist' painters:

We did not bring Impressionism from Paris. Our generation attempted to bring classical and academic art to the fatherland. On my return I firstly founded a fine arts academy for girls under the name *İnas Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi*. I am the founder of this school and the first instructor of its atelier.⁶³

As a matter of fact, as we shall see, their Journal, unlike many contemporary Western art journals and manifestos, would not contain any articles on the question of 'style'. Their main aim was not to come with a new, radical and innovative art style. Yet, at the same time, they were the members of a specific generation, who were raised into an intellectual milieu by the 'equal opportunity' education system offered by the Academy of Fine Arts. So the bourgeois values of intuition, imagination and individuality were

⁶² Quoted in Bedri Rahmi, *Nazmi Ziya* (Istanbul: Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi, 1937) , p.20.

⁶³ Bedi N. Şehsuvaroğlu, *Ressam Ali Sami Boyar*, p.73.

central to their art. As much as they were involved in impressionistic style, their *main* motivation, unlike the European avant-garde, was in no way to contradict or displace the previously established styles, artists or institutions. So, without falling into the trap of reading their art in a teleological sense, this newly formed Ottoman bourgeoisie, at the same time, responded in clear ways to bourgeois tastes hand in hand with the rising bourgeois patronage of the arts. They depicted portraits of ordinary people which, as the art historian Sibel Bozdoğan observes, marked “the emergence of modern individual subjectivities.”⁶⁴ The new images of everyday life, of ordinary people, and of nationalist themes in the paintings of the Ottoman Society of Painters would indeed be different from the previous traditions of ‘photo-interpreters’ whose taste is reflected in the popularity of unpeopled landscape paintings, depicting Ottoman palaces, mansions and *kiosks* (fig.1, fig.2). Their modernism was also different from that of previous academic traditions of still-life and orientalist paintings by painters like Süleyman Seyyid (fig.3), Hüseyin Zekai Paşa (fig. 4), Şeker Ahmed Paşa (fig. 5), and Osman Hamdi Bey (fig. 6). As part and parcel of profound historical changes within the Empire, including a newly developed merit-based art education system, ‘nationalist’ ideologies and war, the Ottoman Society of Painters initially channelled the art scene in line with ideals and bourgeois sensibilities which were still Western, yet would soon find their artistic voice in fervent nationalistic concerns.

⁶⁴ Sibel Bozdoğan, “Art and Architecture in Modern Turkey: The Republican Period” in Reşat Kasaba (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Turkey: Vol. 4: Turkey in the Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.423.

CHAPTER III
THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ART CRITICISM:
A RETROSPECTIVE OF THE *OSMANLI RESSAMLAR CEMİYETİ GAZETESİ*

In the eighteen issues they published between 1911 and 1914, the authors of the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi* put forward the view that art was a strong social force with potential to contribute to the progress of the Ottoman nation. As the inaugural article of the Journal states, they felt that their nation had not “reached prosperity ... due to the harmful influence of living with eyes closed to the road of progress.”¹ The ‘road of progress’ was no doubt the highway of Western civilization, which, for the majority of the Society’s members, was associated with glamorous scientific, technological and artistic advancement, while the Ottomans were “destitute of the real virtue of civilization ... because of their superstitious beliefs and unproductive habits.”² The authors were self-conscious of their social role in Ottoman society; they found themselves confronted with new sensibilities and concerns, particularly the question of their responsibility to the nation. “We shall pay the debt we owe to our nation” wrote Osman Asaf, the managing chair (*müdür-i mesul*) of the Journal, by “decorating our pages with the *chef*

¹ The first article of their inaugural issue, “Maksadımız,” was written by Şerif Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim, chairman of the editorial board (*heyet-i tahririye müdürü*). Şerif Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim, “Maksadımız” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:1 (19 Muharrem Sene 1329/ 7 Kanunusani 1326 [January 20, 1911]).

² *Ibid.*

d'oeuvres of our old and new artists. We will work hard for the emergence and development of ideas belonging to art.”³

As we shall see in the following pages, the cultural politics of the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi* was an amalgamation of several political and artistic propensities and propositions. However, its discourse was no doubt unified by the authors’ idealist and conscious desire to contribute to the ‘road to progress,’ by making artistic and cultural issues central to Ottoman society as a whole. Of course, this endeavour was their ideal; compared with the efforts of contemporary art journals published in Western Europe, the reality of the low literacy rate in the actual society they wrote for remained a real obstacle for any effort to reach a broader public.⁴ Despite this apparent lack of popular impact, the debates which the journal framed – on art as a measure of civilisation, the modern artistic heritage of the empire, the insularity and nepotism of the Academy of Fine Arts, and the creation and promotion of a national art – addressed the already established Ottoman intelligentsia in the name of a broader and increasingly self-conscious formation with national interests and bourgeois tastes.

This chapter will begin with an account of the context of the Journal’s emergence, examining how art criticism developed in the Empire as an outgrowth of reviews in the Ottoman and foreign press of the public art exhibitions which began to be organised in the late nineteenth century. Next, an overview of the governing body of the

³ Osman Asaf, “İzale-i Sübuhat İçin, Karia ve Karielerimize,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:15 (1 Nisan 1330 [April 14, 1914]).

⁴ There seems to be no precise data concerning the literacy rates of the period in question. However, due to the rise of privately founded schools and a state-sponsored educational system, overall literacy increased sharply during the nineteenth century; by the end of the century, the literacy rate among Muslims had increased from between 2-3 to 15 percent. For the imperial capital, while there were only eleven books published annually before the 1840s, that number had increased to 285 published by ninety-nine printing houses in 1908. Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.167-8.

Journal and the intellectual interests of its key contributors will give an impression of how the Journal acted as a forum for various currents in the cultural dialogue of late-Ottoman intellectual life. Section three briefly outlines the changes in the visual appearance of the Journal, both in the choice of images in the text and the Journal covers. The last section analyses the key themes and debates in the Journal, and is divided into four parts: the first examines the authors' understanding of the role of art and artistic heritage as a measure of civilisation; the second looks at the Journal's respectful attitude to significant Ottoman painters in general, and to Osman Hamdi in particular; the third looks at the changing criticisms of the Academy of Fine Arts, from criticisms of its new management and their ineffectual attempts to improve the Ottoman market for painting to, after the Ottoman defeat in the Balkan Wars, attacks on the cosmopolitan teaching staff; and finally, we examine how the Journal approached the question of the national in art between the publication break during the Balkan Wars and its last issue on the eve of World War I.

The Birth of Art Criticism in the Empire

Art criticism as a genre is mostly said to have acquired its modern form by the eighteenth century. From 1737 onwards, the self-published pamphlets distributed on the occasions of the Paris Salon exhibitions initiated the future form of modern art journals. As Thomas Crow has illustrated, different from previous displays of royal and noble collections, the Salon was the first display of contemporary art in Europe to be regular, open and free to a wider audience, and secular in character; that is, "for the purpose of

encouraging a primarily aesthetic response in large numbers of people.”⁵ Art as such thereby lost the exclusive position of objects belonging solely to upper-class patrons and circles, but became a public experience open to all, and public popularity or “mass appeal” thus began to be a determinant of the worth of a painting. In fact, the rise of art criticism in eighteenth century France was tied to the specific social and evaluative experience of the Salon public. To quote Jürgen Habermas: “the innumerable pamphlets criticizing or defending the leading theory of art built on the discussion of the salons and reacted back on them – art criticism as conversation.”⁶ In nineteenth century Europe, art criticism did not remain limited to Salon exhibition reviews, but also extended into a variety of forms; museum guides, monographs, art correspondence and historical studies.⁷

Following the European model, the development of art criticism in the Ottoman Empire, limited as it was in comparison, was largely concomitant on the rise of art exhibitions in the imperial capital, which began to be organized in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. The official bulletin of the 1873 painting exhibition, organized by Şeker Ahmed Paşa in the *Mekteb-i Sanayi* (School of Industry), announced the news to both public and painters in contemporary Ottoman newspapers:

In light of the regular painting exhibitions that are every year held in Europe, in order to progress the art of painting, the magnanimous Ahmed Efendi [the future Şeker Ahmed Paşa], painting instructor at the Mekteb-i Sanayi [School of Industry], has elected the salon of the school as the site

⁵ Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p.3.

⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Bürger, Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993 [1962]), p.40.

⁷ See, James Elkins and Michael Newman eds., *The State of Art Criticism* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

for the promotion, execution and accommodation in Istanbul of a painting exhibition, and it is hoped that painters will submit their works.⁸

Differently from former ‘private’ exhibitions such as the 1843 Çırağan Palace exhibition or the 1850s shop exhibitions,⁹ the 1873 exhibition seemed to point to a more general and heterogenous Ottoman public; it was located in the centre, Sultanahmed,¹⁰ where any and all could see the works of various artists by paying an entrance fee of 40 *para*.¹¹ The first public exhibition dedicated to the art of painting seemed to receive a good response from the artists of the time. Besides the younger pupils of the *Tıbbiye Mektebi*, *Mekteb-i Sultani* and *Mekteb-i Sanayi*, established professional artists such as H el ene and Pierre Desir e Guillemet, Hayette, Said Efendi, Mesut Bey, Palombo, Moretti,

⁸ The exhibition announcement was published in *Hakayik-ul Vekayi* and in *Basiret* on February 6, 1873. One month later, on March 18, the announcement was republished in the same newspapers, and also in the *La Turquie*. For the announcement, see Mustafa Cezar, *Sanat'ta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi* (Istanbul: Erol Kerim Aksoy K lt r, Eđitim, Spor ve Sađlık Vakfı Yayını, 1995), pp.426-8.

⁹ In 1843, an Austrian painter, named Oreker, exhibited his landscape paintings for Sultan Abd lmecid (r.1839-1861) and for the palace circle in Çırağan Palace. Later, in 1849, another painting exhibition was organized, this time in the War Academy (*Harbiye İdadisi*); a year-end student exhibition where pupils exhibited their watercolour paintings, sketches and lithography. There were also private shop exhibitions being organized in various places around Istanbul in the 1850s. In 1851, for instance, there were the Pharmacy of Antoine Calleja exhibition and the Shop of Jacques All on exhibitions. See the catalogue published for the exhibition “Pera Ressamları-Pera Sergileri, 1845-1916” (Pera Painters-Pera Exhibitions, 1845-1916); *Pera Ressamları-Pera Sergileri, 1845-1916* (Istanbul: Norgunk Yayıncılık, 2010), p.63. Mustafa Cezar, *Sanat'ta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi* and Mustafa Cezar, “T rkiye’de İlk Resim Sergisi,” *Birinci Osman Hamdi Bey Kongresi Bildiriler*, October 2-5, 1990 (Istanbul: Mimar Sinan  niversitesi Yayınları, 1992). See also, Mehmet  st nipek, *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Çađdaş T rk Sanatı'nda Sergiler, 1850-1950* (Istanbul: Artes Yayınları, 2007).

¹⁰ It is important to note that in 1863 a mixed public exhibition was also organized in Sultanahmed, where the very name “public” was included in the title “Sergi-i Umumi-i Osmani” (The Ottoman Public Exhibition). Different from the 1873 exhibition, which only exhibited paintings, the “Sergi-i Umumi Osmani” exhibition accommodated photographs, engravings on wood, books and book bindings in its fine art section. Rifat  nsoy, “Osmanlı İmparatorluđu'nun Katıldığı İlk Uluslararası Sergiler ve Sergi-i Umumi-i Osmani (1863 İstanbul Sergileri),” *Belleten*, cilt XLVII, Issue: 185 (January, 1983), pp.195-235. See also Seza Sinanlar, *Bizans Araba Yarışlarından Osmanlı Şenliklerine Atmeydanı* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2005), and the exhibition catalogue, *Hippodrom/Atmeydanı. İstanbul'un Tarih Sahnesi* (Istanbul: Pera M zesi, 2010).

¹¹ Just one year before, in 1872, the School of Industry hosted a quite interesting permanent exhibit composed of mannequins wearing Janissary costumes. The entrance fee was also designated as 40 *para* from adults and 20 *para* from kids. The amount of the entrance fee, as Mustafa Cezar points out, was written in contemporary newspapers. Cezar, *Sanat'ta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi*, p.428.

Télémaque, Ali Bey, Bourmance, Naim Bey, Acquarone, Virginia Stolzenberg, Yusuf Bahaddin Paşa and Şeker Ahmed Paşa himself all contributed to the exhibition.¹² The contemporary French-language newspaper, *La Turquie*, wrote of this very “first venture”:

Though the range of paintings and sketches is still not extensive enough, the difficulties that this new venture has faced should also be considered. For this exhibition is a first venture. In any case, we do not wish to detract from these artists’ feelings of effort and competition [...]¹³

Almost one month later another article appeared in the same newspaper, and this time the author clearly states that his aim is not to criticize, but to indicate the “benefit of these exhibitions for the progress of art”¹⁴ in the country:

Seeing an excellent nation which does not yet have regular institutionalized fine art exhibitions is indeed a surprise for us. Nevertheless, each nation is obliged to attain ever greater successes in art and painting. Is it a feeling for colour which they lack? Absolutely not! In a way, before they fell behind other nations, the Easterners used to be mentors and masters. Are not their vivid and harmoniously coloured fabrics elegant examples of this?¹⁵

Both the announcement and the reviews of the exhibition anticipated the event as one which would enable the Ottomans to participate more fully in artistic endeavours and contribute to the progress of art in the country, though in quite condescending terms.

Subsequent exhibitions were also announced in both Ottoman and French language newspapers, such as the second exhibition organized by Şeker Ahmed Paşa in

¹² The news about the exhibition was published in the French newspaper *La Turquie*, 29 Avril, 3 Mai, 20 Mai, 1873. See, Mustafa Cezar, *Sanat'ta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi*, pp.429-30.

¹³ *La Turquie*, 29 Avril, 1873 in Mustafa Cezar, *Sanat'ta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi*, p.429.

¹⁴ *La Turquie*, 20 Mai 1873 in *Ibid.*, p.430.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.430.

1875 in the *Darülfunun* (University), or Pierre Desiré Guillemet's exhibition of 1876 for his atelier students at the Painting Academy in Beyoğlu.¹⁶

One of the most interesting disputes with regard to art criticism was probably between the reviewers of the 1880 exhibition,¹⁷ organized by the “ABC Club” (Artists of the Bosphorus and Constantinople) in Tarabya, published both in the local English-language newspaper, *The Constantinople Messenger*, and an Ottoman-language newspaper, *Osmanlı*. As Mary Roberts informs us, the newspapers' reviews of the 1880 exhibition used very distinct ethnic vocabularies: while the anonymous reviewer for *The Constantinople Messenger*, presented the exhibition as hosting many distinct nationalities; Turkish, Armenian, Greek, English, French, Italian, German and Belgian, the review written in *Osmanlı* by the Ottoman critic, Abdullah Kamil, referred to the event as an “Ottoman exhibition,” for “nothing else but Ottoman themes could be seen there.”¹⁸ For Abdullah Kamil, the Armenian painters of the exhibition – Kirkor

¹⁶ As Mustafa Cezar points out, the news of the 1875 exhibition was published in *Basiret* advertising the entrance fee as 1 *kuruş* (40 *para*). An article on Pierre Desiré Guillemet's exhibition, on the other hand, was published in *La Turquie* (29 Juin 1876). See, Cezar, *Sanat'ta Batı'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi*, pp.424-33. The imperial capital saw various other exhibitions in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, three of which were organized by Şeker Ahmed Paşa in 1897, 1898 and 1900. In 1908, Adolphe Thalasso dedicated an article to the famous Ottoman painter, to commemorate the first anniversary of his death. Of the Paşa's 1900 exhibition, Thalasso wrote that: “In 1900, he opened a special exhibition of his works at the Pera Palace. The public, who were invited to visit the exhibition, admired canvasses . . . under the influence of the light and the sun and inspired by the Turkish school ... This special exhibition had – whatever else we may say of it – a considerable influence on the destiny of artistic Turkey. It was exactly in the year that followed this exhibition that the artists of Istanbul grouped themselves into a society and founded the Salons of Istanbul.” Adolphe Thalasso, “Orient,” *L'Art et les Artistes*, Tome V (Avril-Septembre 1907), pp.274-5.

¹⁷ The 1880 exhibition and also the 1881 exhibition of the ABC Club were initiated by Reverend George Washington, the Anglican priest connected to Istanbul British Embassy. Whilst the first year exhibition was located in Tarabya, for the location of the second year exhibition Pera was chosen.

¹⁸ Mary Roberts, “Geneologies of Display: Cross-Cultural Networks at the 1880s Istanbul Exhibitions” in Zeynep Inankur, Reina Lewis and Mary Robert eds. *The Poetics and Politics of Place: Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism* (Istanbul: Pera Müzesi; Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2011), p.127. These reviews were published on September 11 and September 16 respectively.

Köçeoğlu, Bogos Şaşıyan, Verjin Serviçen – were pointedly as Ottoman as the Muslim participants – Osman Hamdi Bey and Princess Nazlı Hanım.

The French art critic Adolphe Thalasso’s vocabulary was probably the most ambiguous and changeable.¹⁹ In his reviews of the Salon exhibitions (organized in 1901, 1902 and 1903), Thalasso coined the term “Turkish School,” to refer to all the exhibiting painters:

[...] the Turkish School ... has highly maintained its existence in this First Salon [of 1901]... The approach of this School can be defined as a certain type of impression, provoked not by the sight of things but by the action of light on these very same things ... an ability to understand, penetrate and feel the oriental nature and customs, which are extremely different to those of other countries and reflect these by employing a particular technique, which consists of putting the colours of the sun in the service of an artistic vision. These painters have achieved this thanks to their nationalities, places of birth or their long sojourns in the oriental countries.²⁰

Thus, for Thalasso in 1906, the “Turkish School” consists of Levantine artists – Della Sudda Bey, Stefano Farnetti and Lina Gabuzzi – the instructors of the Academy of Fine Arts –Salvator Valéri, Joseph Warnia-Zarzecki, Philippe Bello and also the non-Muslim Ottoman sculptor Osgan Efendi – foreign artists living in Istanbul – Fausto Zonaro and Leonardo de Mango – together with the Ottoman Muslim Artists – Osman Hamdi Bey, Ahmed Ali Paşa, Colonel Halil Bey and Adil Bey. As odd as it might sound from the perspective of today’s Turkish Republic, the term “Turkish” deployed by Thalasso

¹⁹ For Adolphe Thalasso, see, also, Xavier du Crest, *De Paris à Istanbul, 1851-1949: Un siècle de relations artistiques entre la France et la Turquie* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2010).

²⁰ *Les Premiers Salons de Peinture de Constantinople* (Paris, 1906). This sixteen-page booklet written by Adolphe Thalasso on the 1901, 1902 and 1903 Pera Salon exhibitions was translated and published with his other two works, *Deri Se’adet ou Stamboul, Porte du Bonheur* and *L’Art Ottoman: Les Peintres de Turquie* with a supplementary English translation. *Osmanlı Sanatı, Türkiye’nin Ressamları ve İlk İstanbul Salonları* (Istanbul: Istanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür A.Ş. Yayınları, 2008), pp.90-1.

seemed to have a more broad and inclusive sense than his usage of the term “Ottoman.” As a believer in a universal republic of art, Thalasso chose to define the national school not by considering discreet cultures of ‘origin’ but by judging to what extent they represented a shared condition, in the form of local ‘nature’, ‘customs’, ‘colours’ and ‘sun’.

However, in a 1907 article published in the contemporary French art Journal *L'Art et les Artistes*, Thalasso wrote on an exhibition organized for the occasion of the thirty-first anniversary of the succession to the throne of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Thalasso chose the title, “Première Exposition Artistique Ottomane” for his article, as he believed that this was the “first *Ottoman* art exhibition” ever organized:

It is for me a pleasure even greater than to speak of it that this exhibition marks a date in the annals of Ottoman art. Until today, in effect, all the exhibitions inaugurated in Constantinople, including the Salons of which I have spoken here last year, have been organised by Levantine artists, in a Levantine milieu, with members much more Levantine than Turkish, and have always taken place in Pera, which is the Levantine quarter of the capital. This time, the principal organiser of the exhibition is a Turk, Bahri Bey, the milieu is Turkish, the exhibitors, with only a few exceptions, are Turks, and the venue chosen is in the heart of Istanbul, in the Turkish quarter, on the street of the Sublime Porte [Bab-ı Ali].²¹

We may theorise that a new more nationalistic agenda in the artistic sphere had influenced Thalasso here, as he seems to be using the terms ‘Turk’ and ‘Turkish’ in the main text to describe an exclusively Ottoman Muslim milieu, and to distinguish it from its Levantine competitor, while the term “Ottoman” also carries an exclusively Muslim meaning in the title. That Thalasso should deploy the term ‘Turkish’ in two such

²¹ Adolphe Thalasso, “Première Exposition Artistique Ottomane,” *L'Art et les Artistes*, Tome VI, Octobre 1907- Mars 1908, pp.415-6. In this specific exhibition, many future members of the Ottoman Society of Painters also displayed their paintings, such as Sami, Nazmi, Omer Adil, Hikmet and Mehmed Ali.

apparently contradictory contexts is interesting in itself. As we shall see, the vocabulary of the Ottoman Society of Painters would contain similar contradictions to that of Thalasso about what constituted national art; for the writers of the Society, and particularly in issues published after the Balkan Wars, none of Thalasso's supposedly "Turkish School" artists (except the 'Muslim-Ottoman artists' of course) would be seen as capable of promoting or advancing Ottoman national art.

Thus, with the advent of the art exhibitions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, lively artistic debates developed mostly in foreign language, published inside and outside of the Empire, and in Ottoman language newspapers such as *Osmanlı*, as well as in literary journals like *Servet-i Fünun* and *Şehbal*. It is not clear to what extent the reviews and debates published in contemporary journals took the form of "art criticism as conversation," as Habermas described the pamphlets on the Paris Salons. However, we can safely claim that the birth of art criticism in the Ottoman Empire, which would eventually produce the first art journal of the Empire, was closely related to the exhibition reviews published in contemporary newspapers.

The Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi as an Ottoman Intellectual Forum

The *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi* was the first journal of the Empire entirely devoted to fine arts. The authors published articles on art history, the philosophy of art, aesthetics, and biographies of Ottoman painters, and embarked on a process of institutionalization of art criticism in the Ottoman state. Though most of the reproductions and the articles published in the Journal are on painting, it also includes articles and images on sculpture, theatre, architecture, calligraphy and music. As the

motto of their first ten covers states: “Sanayi-i nefisenin her şubesinde bahseder” (“Discusses every branch of the fine arts”).

Published under the declared honorary presidency (*riyaset-i fahri*) of Prince Abdülmecid Efendi,²² the first three issues of the Journal were in fact initiated by Şerif Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim, chairman of the editorial board (*heyet-i tahririye müdürü*), Osman Asaf Bey, the managing chair (*müdür-i mesul*), and M. Adil Bey, editor (*sermuharir*). Osman Asaf Bey’s chairmanship continued until the last issue of the Journal, and his name always appears as the “müdür-i mesul” on the last page of each issue. The Journal stopped writing the names of the governing body on its cover page after the seventh issue, so we do not know who assisted Osman Asaf Bey after that. Though there were minor changes in the cover design, publication house,²³ and the quantity of the page numbers and illustrations, and despite the break in publication during the Balkan Wars, the Journal committee managed to publish 18 issues between 1911 and 1914.

While the Journal was published and managed by members of the Ottoman Society of Painters, and most of the contributors were former students of the Academy

²² Prince Abdülmecid is referred to as the honorary president in a couple of places in the Journal. The first article, “Maksadımız” written by Şerif Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim, states how grateful the Society is for the Prince’s donations and encouragement: “Sanayi-i nefisedeki iktidar-ı mahsusları cihetiyle hanedan-ı saltanat-ı seniye nin medar-ı iftihar-ı olan ve tasvir-i alileri gazetemizin serlevhasına vücud-ı maalinümud-ı necabetpenahileri de cemiyetimizin riyaset-i fahriyesine şerefbaş buyuran devletlu, necabetlu Abdülmecid Efendi hazretlerinin, cemiyetin her veçhile mazhar-ı feyz ve teali olması emrinde mütemadiyen ibraz buyurmakta oldukları taltifat ve teşvikatı terakkiyata nailiyetimiz hakkında bir beşaret-i mahsusa olarak telakki eylediğimizden bu cihetle de bahtiyar ve müşarünileyh hazretlerine karşı daima müteşekkir ve minnettarız.” Şerif Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim, “Maksadımız” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:1 (19 Muharrem Sene 1329/ 7 Kanunusani 1326 [January 20, 1911]).

²³ The Journal used three different publication houses; the Manzume-i Efkar Matbaası only published the first issue, while the Şant Matbaası published the second and the third issues. The publication house they used to publish their fourth issue, Matbaa-i Hayriye ve Şürekası, would be the last change in their choice, as it would regularly publish the rest of the fifteen issues of the Journal.

of Fine Arts in the final decades of the nineteenth century, the debates on its pages demonstrate a variety of artistic and political tendencies. Most of the introductory articles were written by Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim himself, who was the intellectual voice behind the Journal's interest in traditional art. As a poet himself, Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim's articles were written in a sophisticated Ottoman Turkish, enriched by many Persian and Arabic words.²⁴ Another productive author of the Journal was Sami, who was much more rigorous than Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim in his articles, particularly in his harsh criticisms of the Academy of Fine Arts. Sami was not that much interested in traditional art; his Franco-centric vision of culture rather advocated learning from and implementing the École des Beaux-Arts model in the imperial capital's Academy of Fine Arts. Kemal Emin also published regularly in the Journal, his general articles under the heading of 'The Philosophy of Art' (*Felsefe-i Sanat*) mostly focused on the universality of art and its intrinsic value. Without reducing the meaning of art to being a mere copy of nature, he nevertheless believed that for the progress of art, one should "look for the virtue of art in nature,"²⁵ as, "the most powerful teacher of fine arts is nature."²⁶ Murtaza, another graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts, also contributed to the Journal with his regular articles, with a specific focus on the technique of human anatomical drawing, providing instructions on bone and muscle

²⁴ Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim published his collection of poems in his books, *Şihab* and *Mülhemat* in 1887 and 1897 respectively. Hüseyin Haşim, *Şihab* (Istanbul: Matbua-i Ebuziziya, 1305 [1887]) and Hüseyin Haşim, *Mülhemat* (Istanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1315 [1897]). Some of his poems have been transcribed into modern Turkish by Asuman Üneş. See Asuman Üneş, *Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim Bey, Hayatı, Sanatı, Eserleri Üzerine Monografik Bir Çalışma* (Unpublished MA Thesis, Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi, 2004).

²⁵ Kemal Emin, "Felsefe-i Sanat," Issue:7 (17 Cemaziyülahir Sene / 1 Haziran Sene 1327 [June 14, 1911]).

²⁶ Kemal Emin, "Tabiat," *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:9 (10 Safer 1330/17 Kanunisanı Sene 1327 [January 30, 1912]).

structure. The articles written on art history by Mehmed Faik and Feyzi Ulu generally focused on Egyptian, Assyrian and Phoenician civilization, and also on Italian Renaissance art and artists. Feyzi Ulu based his presentation of the Renaissance period on famous French historian, Charles Seignobos's studies. In fact, Ahmed Refik, the well-known Ottoman historian of the period, had made Seignobos's books available in Ottoman Turkish in 1912.²⁷

It is generally argued that artistic currents in the late Ottoman Empire can be sufficiently explained as merely translations and adaptations of Western intellectual developments. However, when tracing the genealogy of ideas in the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, it is important to bear in mind that the authors employed no rigorous methodology of citation, making the identification of sources and influences in these articles difficult. Thus, any attempt to compare the ideas in the Journal with those of Western philosophers would be necessarily conjectural. To what extent does F. Rebi's view that "art does not have a purpose"²⁸ connote the opinions of the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant?²⁹ Or does Rebi, again, make an implicit reference to Friedrich Nietzsche's claim that "art makes life bearable"³⁰ when he defines art as the

²⁷ Charles Seignobos, *Tarih-i Medeniyet*, trans. Ahmed Refik (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Artin Asaduryan ve Mahdumları, 1328 [1912]).

²⁸ F. Rebi, "Mesai-i Fikriye," *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:12 (25 Nisan Sene 1328 [May 8, 1912]).

²⁹ In his 1790 book *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Kant defines the beautiful as the subject of "disinterested satisfaction." For Kant, beauty has nothing to do with content, but with form, which is elucidated as "purposiveness without purpose." Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952 [1790]).

³⁰ In his 1878 book, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Ein Buch für Freie Geister*, Nietzsche defines art as making "the sight of life bearable by laying over it the veil of unclear thinking." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 [1878]), p.82.

thing which “makes us love life”³¹? Given that most of the authors were Western-educated and were familiar with Western ideas, life-style and cultural vocabulary, their references to and usage of the European model of knowledge should not be surprising. Yet it is also important to acknowledge the contribution of the Ottoman literary legacy to the intellectual milieu and equally the influence of the art history education these men were offered in the Academy of Fine Arts. While understanding the role of Western schooling and theory in late Ottoman cultural dialogue is undoubtedly productive, we should also take into account the Ottoman intellectual dynamics and specifics of the local Ottoman setting in which these ideas were reconstructed.

The Changing Face of the Journal: Images, Plates and Covers

For an art journal, the number of the images used in the first ten issues of the Journal is surprisingly low. The inaugural issue, for instance, only published one single photograph of Osman Hamdi Bey; a rather informal photo depicting him sitting backwards on his chair. Until the eleventh issue, the journal mostly published photos of famous living and deceased Ottoman painters and their works, such as Şeker Ahmed Paşa, Şevket Bey, Prince Abdülmecid Efendi, Ali Rıza Bey, and also the paintings of the two writers of the Journal, Osman Asaf and Sami. The first journal of the second year, the eleventh issue, came with a rather changed face, with a very different cover page and extensive number of images; a photo of Osman Hamdi Bey, together with a few paintings by Sami, Mahmud Bey, İzzet Bey, Osgan Efendi, Abdülmecid Efendi and Osman Hamdi himself.

³¹ F. Rebii, “Mesai-i Fikriye,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:12 (25 Nisan Sene 1328 [May 8, 1912]).

The eleventh issue was also the first issue that printed a reproduction of a painting by a woman artist, Müfide Hanım, on its pages. The fourteenth issue, which was published in 1914 after an almost two year break due to the Balkan Wars, published many prints of works by Hasan Rıza, who had died during fighting. Hasan Rıza, a self-trained painter with a military education background, was well-known for his historical paintings.³² The authors must have been familiar with his oval drawings of the sultans, which were exhibited in the Military Museum.³³

Quite remarkably, no reproductions of traditional work were published until as late as the twelfth issue in May 1912, when the Journal committee decided to include some examples of calligraphy and pottery of both the Ottoman and Arab speaking worlds. Apart from Ottoman calligraphy, the Journal also published, in its fifteenth issue, images of Arabic vases, decorated oil lamps, and trays.

During the first year of the Journal, that includes the first ten issues, the cover of the Journal uses the same image; the portrait bust of the Prince Abdülmecid Efendi framed in a crescent moon, occupying the centre of the Journal cover (fig.7). Together with the image of the Prince, the tools of four different fine artists; painters, sculptures, architects and, most probably, calligraphers, were represented by a paint tube, cutter, compass, and a brush situated in the bottom of the crescent moon. While a big pallet with two long brushes intertwining each other was used on the right side of the cover,

³² Hasan Rıza's interest in painting started during the Russo-Turkish War while he was serving as a guard for an Italian artist. In Turkish art history writing, he is mostly referred as the "martyr". On Hasan Rıza, see Süheyl Ünver, *Ressam Şehit Hasan Rıza* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1970).

³³ The Military Museum, located in the former Church of Hagia Irene, also displayed cases of weaponry alongside sultans' portraits. See, Wendy Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (California: California University Press, 2003), p.202.

the name of the Society, “Ressamlar Cemiyeti” (without using the “Ottoman”), occupied the left side of the cover, written in Kufic script situated in a paper roll. On the upper left side was written “art” (*sanat*), whilst the whole cover was decorated by olive tree leaves.

The last eight issues, published in their second year, do not use the same cover. Starting from the eleventh issue, each cover would use a different image. The painter Hasan Rıza’s portraits of Sultan Osman (r.1299-1324), the first sultan of the Ottoman Empire,³⁴ and Hayreddin Barbarossa, the famous sixteenth-century Ottoman admiral, would be used in the eleventh (fig.8) and twelfth issues (fig.9), respectively. The cover of the thirteenth issue used a painting by Halil Paşa named “A Camel Driver in Egypt” (Mısır’da Bir Deveci) (fig.10). The fourteenth and fifteenth issues carried no cover image at all, most probably in a mourning gesture for the Balkan Wars. The sixteenth issue publishes Konstantin Kapıdağlı’s 1803-dated painting of Sultan Selim III (r.1789-1807), and a description above the picture states that the image belonged to the painter İzzet Bey who produced a copy of Kapıdağlı’s painting under orders from a sultan (fig.11). The cover of the seventeenth issue carries a painting by a Non-Muslim painter, Tovmas Efendi, the head painter of the carpet factory, Hereke Imperial Factory (Hereke Fabrika-i Hümayunu) who was also a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts (fig.12). The eighteenth issue, which would be the last issue of the Journal, shows a humble pencil sketch of the painter Rıza Bey (Hoca Ali Rıza) by painter İsmail Hakkı (fig.13). In fact, the whole eighteenth issue was dedicated to Rıza Bey.

³⁴ The bust of Sultan Osman was published as the cover image in the eleventh issue, and as the caption below the picture states, this specific work was part of the collection of the Naval Museum (Bahriye Müzesi).

Art and Artistic Heritage; Measures of Civilization

Among the writers for the Journal, art is almost synonymous with civilisation itself. In the tenth issue, Sami emphasized the importance of art: “those nations who do not heed their literature, music and fine arts,” he writes, “are in the condition of being a victim without eyes, ears or language.”³⁵ Yet, while believing in the power of civilisation, they were also self-conscious and anxious about their comparative underdevelopment. “Poor us ...” wrote Sami from Paris, after one of his regular visits to the rich collection of the Louvre Museum “I do not know if we will merely remain the flatterers of the civilized countries”:

For our noble nation which holds the practice of education with the need of progress, and which cares about its universities, schools of medicine and schools of law, it is vital to care also about fine arts and not to be destitute of this vital organ [uzv-ı mühim] of civilization.³⁶

The articles written by the readers of the Journal are also remarkable in revealing the view of art among the Ottoman public (or, more precisely, by those readers who spoke in the name of the public) and their expectations of the artists of the Society. In an article published in the eleventh issue, a district governor (*kaymakam*) utters similar ideas on the identification of art and civilization to those of the Ottoman Society of Painters. Kaymakam A. Rıza claims the following:

³⁵ Sami, “Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi İçin”, *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:10 (11 Rebiülevvel 1330/ 16 Şubat 1327 [February 29, 1912]).

³⁶ Anonymous [Sami], “Tefrika-i Mahsusa: Ressam ve Heykeltıraşlara Mahsus Teşrih-i Cesed-i İnsan Yahut Teşrih-i Tasviri”, *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:4 (14 Rebiyülahir Sene 1329/ 1 Nisan Sene 1327 [April 14, 1911]).

Painting is an inseparable part of civilization and the necessary guide that serves its deployment and advancement ... in the civilized world, an educated person who is not related to art to even some degree is regarded as illiterate.³⁷

The language of these reviews also suggests an anticipated role for artists – of course, this expectation entailed *any* Ottoman artists, not just members of the Society. Another reader, Aziz Hüdai, wrote a piece directly about the Society where he identified what seemed to him to be the key characteristics of this significant artists' union and their Journal with regard to civilization:

The degree of a nation's civilization and progress is measured by its fine arts ... When I first saw the 'Ottoman Society of Painters' in this Journal, an old but, as it is significant, still-vivid memory reappeared: In a French journal, I once read the history of the progress of the French painters, and, in contrast to their life-struggles, I wept that the treasure of our art lay sleeping and abandoned in mist and neglect.³⁸

This view neatly explains the major expectations of the Ottoman public from the Society: promotion and advancement of national art and culture, but also, paradoxically, conformity to the superiority of the Western civilization. Raif Necdet dedicated another article to the Ottoman Society of Painters, "Heyecan-ı Sanat" (Passion for Art), which implicitly formulated the criteria of civilization. He complained about the contempt for the fine arts among the Ottoman public, and demanded reform on the issue, implicitly from society itself, but explicitly from the Ministry of Education (*Maarif Nezareti*). He presented the interest in the museums of developed nations [*müterakki milletler*] as exemplary:

³⁷ Kaymakam A. Rıza, "Resma Dair", *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:7 (17 Cemaziyülahir Sene 1329/1 Haziran Sene 1327 [June 14, 1911]).

³⁸ Aziz Hüdai, "Bizde Resim," *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:17 (1 Haziran 1330 [June 14, 1914]).

In this period of awakening [devre-i intibahta], to break people's indifference ... towards the fine arts and bring about reform on this subject is in fact a great and precious mission when the nation is in need of substantial and thorough social and mental changes [tahavvülat].³⁹

For Raif Necdet, the time had come to learn a lesson from the developed nations in “their indescribable and unimaginable indulgence and passion for art works ... and for their museums.”⁴⁰ The European museums Raif Necdet referred to in his article were very much the product of the nineteenth century, or of the “century of history,”⁴¹ that witnessed the rise of major public museums across the world. This “great upheaval that occurred in the Western *episteme*”⁴² with regard to collecting and exhibiting, resonated in the Ottoman world which developed its own museums, particularly the Janissary Museum and the Imperial Archaeological Museum, directed by Osman Hamdi Bey, the Western-educated artist, bureaucrat and public figure.

Surprisingly the Journal itself was not equally interested in detailing all aspects of Ottoman artistic heritage.⁴³ While articles on calligraphy and traditional Ottoman decorative art were included from the second issue onwards, these were mostly written by Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim. These articles discuss how the traditional arts, particularly calligraphy, had lost their former popularity by the turn of the century. In an

³⁹ Raif Necdet, “Heyecan-ı Sanat: Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Münevveresine İthaf,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:11 (25 Mart Sene 1328 [April 7, 1912]).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield, *The Discovery of Time* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p.232.

⁴² Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), p.367.

⁴³ By way of contrast, the first art journal of Japan, *Kokka* (meaning “flower of the nation”) started to be published in 1889 during the Meiji Period, published extensively on traditional Japanese art with a specific focus on Buddhist culture. This gesture is sometimes read as a counter-position against Meiji Japan's obsession with European art and culture. See, Andrew Gosling, *Asian Treasures: Gems of the Written Word* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2011).

attempt to revive this once-significant Ottoman art, Hüseyin Haşim wrote the history of calligraphy and its former importance in the Empire. In the article, “Zamanımızdaki Hattatine Dair” (On Today’s Calligraphers), Hüseyin Haşim juxtaposes the works of many contemporary calligraphers. He also talks about the development of calligraphy during the reign of Sultan Beyazid II (r.1481-1512) and the most famous historical Ottoman calligraphers, such as Mustafa Rakım Efendi of the reign of Mahmud II (r.1808-1839).⁴⁴ Ahmed Süreyya, a graduate of the Department of Literature of the *Darülfünun* and most likely a reader of the Journal (as he published only one article), also wrote about the condition of calligraphy within the Empire. He asks “whether we shouldn’t make an end of the profession of calligraphy, engraving, illuminating [*müzehhiblik*] and book binding [*mücellitlik*], following the Western example.” Ahmed Süreyya later took issue with this idea; for him, the development in the art of illuminating might be a good replacement for the stagnation of painting within the Empire.⁴⁵

Ottoman Painters as “Everlasting Sources of Pride”

From its first issue, the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi* was enthusiastic about publishing articles on Ottoman painters and reproductions of their work. The Journal regularly published works by contemporary artists, such as the picturesque landscapes by Halil Paşa, portraits of ordinary people by Tekezade Said, historical paintings by

⁴⁴ Şerif Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim, “Zamanımızdaki Hattatine Dair” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:7 (17 Cemaziyülahir Sene / 1 Haziran Sene 1327 [June 14, 1911]).

⁴⁵ Ahmed Süreyya, “Hikmet-i Bedayi: Resim ve Hat,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:12 (25 Nisan Sene 1328 [May 8, 1912]).

Hasan Rıza, topographic drawings by Cevad Bey, and sketches made by Sami and Mehmed Ali in Sofia during the Balkan Wars. Another important initiative was to publish works and biographies of previous Ottoman painters whose artistic contributions were generally consulted for guidance. At the end of the eighth issue, an anonymous article, “Rica-yı Mahsus” (Deliberate Request), asked the journal’s readers to contribute to its endeavour in the “revival of Ottoman fine arts” [*ihya-i sanayi-i nefise-i Osmaniye*] by inviting them to send in to the Journal any documents or works by previous Ottoman masters [*eslaf-ı üstad*] in their possession.⁴⁶ Thus the aim was, rather, to demonstrate the modern Ottoman artistic heritage as handed down by artists such as Şeker Ahmed Paşa and Osman Hamdi Bey.

As the director of the Imperial Archaeological Museum in 1881 and of the Academy of Fine Arts in 1883, Osman Hamdi Bey was unsurprisingly the most popular artist in the Journal. This is clear from the frequency of reproductions of his works. In the tenth issue, seven of the eight specially printed images published at the end of the Journal were reproductions of Osman Hamdi’s paintings. In the next issue, which was called the “Extraordinary Edition” [*nüsha-i fevkalade*], Ebuşşefik wrote a short introductory article, in which he regretted the lack of Osman Hamdi’s paintings in the museums of the Ottoman nation to which “he belongs.” A photo of the painter, depicting the “Müze müdürü” (chair of the Museum) in front of his table, also followed the article:

Regrettably, painting has neither value [*revac*] nor a market [*pazar*] in our land. Whilst each of the paintings by the deceased Hamdi Bey serialised in this publication of ours embellishes one or another European museum or king’s palace, in the hands of the nation he belongs to there is nothing

⁴⁶ Anonymous, “Rica-yı Mahsus” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:8 (18 Zilhicce Sene 1329/26 Teşrinisani Sene 1327 Muharrem Sene 1329 [December 9, 1911]).

left except a venerable grave and a sarcophagus in full tranquillity [lahid-i pür sükundan].⁴⁷

In the following article, Sami refers to Hamdi Bey as a “lover of education” who brought to the East “the light of talent and civilization” he learned from the West and “in spite of all obstacles.”⁴⁸ In the same article, Sami regales his readers with a story about Hamdi Bey told to him by a friend. We learn that Osman Hamdi had been proposed a job with a high salary by his foreign friends, and instead of being excited by this proposal, Osman Hamdi asked his friends what else this offer might bring. Sami romanticizes Osman Hamdi as one for whom “the progress of civilization and education of the nation he is a member of”⁴⁹ was more important than anything.

Interestingly enough, this romanticising of Osman Hamdi as the “everlasting source of pride,”⁵⁰ and the prime exemplar of artistic sensibility and responsibility, seemed rather to avoid the question of his actual talent as a painter. Unlike the painters Şevket Bey, whose artistic ability was regarded to be as good as the famous French painter Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier, or Hoca Ali Rıza Bey, whose landscapes were highly valued in their artistic ability to represent the real ‘national character,’ Osman Hamdi’s artistic talent was not at all emphasized. One even wonders whether there is an implicit critique of his preference for the Orientalist genre. In his article, the “Study of

⁴⁷ Ebuşeffik, “Bir İki Söz,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:11 (25 Mart Sene 1328 [April 7, 1912]).

⁴⁸ Sami, “Müze-i Osmani Müdür-i Sabıkı Merhum Hamdi Bey,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:11 (25 Mart Sene 1328 [April 7, 1912]).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Sami refers to Osman Hamdi, Şevket Bey, Hüsnü Yusuf Bey and Ziya Paşa as “everlasting sources of pride” Sami, “Mektup, Meissonier ve Louvre’daki Asarı: Bizde Meissonier Mesleğini Takip Eden Kim İdi?,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:5 (14 Cemazeyilevvel 1329/1 Mayıs 1327 [May14, 1911]).

Fine Arts from the Perspective of the Nation,” Galib Bahtiyar explicitly criticizes the famous Orientalist painter, Jean-Léon Gérôme:

... national art cannot be designated by the peculiarity of a [nation’s] costume ... some painters with us, for instance, unnecessarily place someone in a turban or a *shalwar* somewhere in a landscape or an interior picture in order to be understood.⁵¹

For Galib Bahtiyar, these practices served to pique the interest of foreigners, but from a fine arts perspective, they were not worthy of study. For Galib, while Gérôme might have shown his genius in his series of Orientalist paintings, “he could not quite expose the spirit of the East.” Of course, Galib utters nothing against Osman Hamdi whose work was highly influenced by the French Orientalist. As the man most venerated by the Ottoman Society of Painters, Osman Hamdi would, nevertheless, always be remembered as an Enlightenment “father figure,” and sometimes to the detriment of his successors:

It is a pity, a great pity that when we need Hamdi Bey’s most enthusiastic and tender encouragements, this unfortunate institution, abandoned into Halil Bey’s protecting hands with an orphan’s sadness, has not – to be honest – achieved either significant progress or significant protection.⁵²

The Academy of Fine Arts:

When the Journal began to be published in 1911, it had been almost thirty years since the foundation of the Academy of Fine Arts in 1883. Osman Hamdi, chair of the school, had died in 1910 and now the Academy was directed by Halil Edhem, Osman Hamdi’s

⁵¹Galib Bahtiyar, “Sanayi-i Nefisenin Milliyet Nokta-i Nazarından Tetkiki,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:18 (1 Temmuz 1330 [July 14, 1914]).

⁵² Sami, “Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi İçin,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:15 (1 Nisan Sene 1330/[April 14, 1914]).

brother. Starting with the sixth issue, the management of the Academy of Fine Arts became one of the centres of debate within the Journal.

This was particularly evident in Sami's articles, which advocated the French model. In his third article, entitled "*Esquisse ve Ehemmiyeti – Müsabakaları*" (The Importance of Sketching – the Competitions), he focused on a comparison between the *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi* and the *École des Beaux-Arts*.⁵³ After a long discussion of the significance of sketching education for both painters and sculptors alike, he concludes the article with certain expectations from the Ministry of Education and the Academy of Fine Art in terms of learning from the education programme of the French school. Sami's article was the first article in the Journal to directly criticise the Academy of Fine Art, from which most writers of the Journal had graduated, but it must have been well-received by the other writers as it would mark the beginning of an ongoing debate about the Academy. In the next issue, Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim wrote about the 1911 competition salon of the Academy of Fine Arts, "*Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi'nin İmtihan Salonunu Ziyaret*" (Visit to the Competition Salon of the *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi*) which he had visited more than a decade after his graduation.⁵⁴ In the article, which details the names of the winning students, Hüseyin Haşim expresses his excitement at the successful architectural projects of the school: "the architectural science [*fenn-i mimari*] section is a magnificent city [*şehristan-ı muhteşem*] in never-ending contemplation of its

⁵³ Sami, *Esquisse ve Ehemmiyeti – Müsabakaları: Fransa Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebinde Eskiz ve Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebimize Tatbik Lüzumu*", *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:6 (17 Cemaziyülahir Sene / 1 Haziran Sene 1327 [June 14, 1911]).

⁵⁴ Abdülkadirzade Hüseyin Haşim, "*Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi'nin İmtihan Salonunu Ziyaret*," *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:7 (17 Cemaziyülahir Sene 1329/1 Haziran Sene 1327 [June 14, 1911]).

grandiose projects.” Yet Hüseyin Haşim also remarks his tremendous disappointment at the inadequacy of the painting, sculpture and engraving sections:

The oil painting section of the salon is a place of sadness far away from the demands of the nation ... the engraving and sculpture sections also, like painting, could not maintain their old brightness ... this is related to the lack of demand for the painting, engraving, and sculpture branches of the fine arts in our country.⁵⁵

Sami reiterated his concern with the *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi* in the eighth issue, where he seconded Hüseyin Haşim’s disappointment with the painting section of the school competition that year, though Sami was more cutting than Hüseyin Haşim in his criticism:

The Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi has consoled and deluded enthusiastic young people from the Military Academies [Askeri] and Civil Service Academies [Mülkiye] for ages with Valeri’s brushstrokes ... today we see that this gust of reputation has not, could not and will not remain.⁵⁶

Like Hüseyin Haşim, Sami thinks that demand for painting is low in the country and that this lack of demand has constrained people to seek professions other than painting. In the next issue, Sami continues to voice his concerns about the school, though this time his main target is the Ministry of Education (*Maarif Nezareti*), whose “carelessness forced these [talented and smart young] people to renounce their eager education and look for a job to feed themselves.” Why, then, were the economic prospects of painting and sculpture graduates of the Academy of Fine Art so much worse than those of the

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Sami, “Sanayi-i Mektebi İçin,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:8 (18 Zilhicce Sene 1329/26 Teşrinisani Sene 1327 Muharrem Sene 1329 [December 9, 1911]).

architects? Though there were a few painting exhibitions in late nineteenth and early-twentieth century, the art market for painting seemed to remain quite limited.⁵⁷

Sami's third article on the Academy of Fine Art with the same title, "Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi İçin" (For the Fine Arts School) was published in the tenth issue. This time, however, Sami embarked on a new topic which would inspire other writers to take a position on the subject as well. We learn from Sami's article that Halil Edhem has come up with new projects for the Academy of Fine Arts, such as the idea, which Sami found most inspiring, of constructing an art gallery. Nevertheless, as stated in the article, Halil Edhem was thinking about hiring foreign artists to make reproductions of well-known paintings and put these reproductions in the gallery. The idea of decorating the gallery of the school with reproductions done by foreign painters seems to have made Sami completely furious, and he insists that exhibiting original art works, though fewer in number, will be better for the future of the school. Sami is clear in his criticism of Halil Edhem, while he values the Society and appeals to its judgement:

As for Halil Bey, the Ottoman Society of Painters must be sure that they know the merit and power of the puppets attached by the wires of nepotism and play with ridiculous reverence on the art scene. Benjamin Constant is nothing but a promoter who copies Chaplin. The Society cannot tolerate this covetous and egoistic promoter, even if he was a member of the Society ..., the Society is a courthouse of art [mahkeme-i

⁵⁷ The situation was even worse for sculpture, as the market for public works was even more limited: only two big public monuments were constructed in Istanbul between 1908 and 1918 – the Abide-i Hürriyet (Monument of Freedom) and the Tayyare Şehidleri Abidesi (Monument to the Victims of Air) – and even these were built by architects. The Abide-i Hürriyet (Monument of Freedom) was built by the architect Muzaffer Bey in 1911 to commemorate the victims of the intervention army against a reactionary mutiny in 1909. Tayyare Şehidleri Abidesi (Monument to the Victims of Air) was built by the architect Vedat in 1914 to commemorate the three Ottoman pilots who were martyred in an air-crash in 1914. For Ottoman public monuments, see Klaus Kreiser, "Public Monuments in Turkey and Egypt, 1840-1916", *Muqarnas*, Vol. 14 (1997). As already mentioned, Nuri Bey, Fethi Bey and Sadık Bey were killed during their flight from Istanbul to Alexandria.

sanat], it is not a theatre founded to acclaim and encourage others to acclaim the people who worship fame.⁵⁸

In the next issue, an immediate response to Sami's article comes from Vahid, the art history instructor of the Academy of Fine Arts and the son-in-law of Osman Hamdi Bey.⁵⁹ Vahid starts his article with the importance of the Academy of Fine Arts and its success in educating many painters, architects and engravers.⁶⁰ Unlike Sami, Vahid finds the idea of ordering the reproductions of well-known paintings convincing, as attempting to buy the originals would be financially impossible for the school. As a response to Sami, Vahid informs the readers that the painters who were ordered to paint the copies are high quality artists, and that "four of them are Ottomans and one is even a graduate of the *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi*." In the same issue, just after Vahid's article, the Journal also published Hüseyin Avni's views on the same matter.⁶¹ Hüseyin Avni expresses similar concerns to those of Sami but Hüseyin Avni's main reason for refusing the copies is that he believes a reproduction is "like a cadaver exempt from its soul [*ruhtan ari*]" and as such it cannot show the real importance of art to the Ottoman public:

To really understand what kind of an animal a lion is, it is never sufficient to see it dead ... in order to have a correct idea of its lion-ness, one should see it alive. Just as in order to understand completely the real meaning of an art work, a painting, and what it is for and for whom it is

⁵⁸ Sami, "Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi İçin," *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:10 (11 Rebiülevvel 1330/ 16 Şubat 1327 [February 29, 1912]).

⁵⁹ For a comprehensive study of Vahid Bey see, Seçkin G. Naipoğlu, *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi'nde Sanat Tarihi Yaklaşımı ve Vahit Bey* (Unpublished PhD Diss., Hacettepe University, 2008).

⁶⁰ Vahid, "Müze-i Hümayun'da Bir Şube-i Cedide-i Sinaat," *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:11 (25 Mart Sene 1328 [April 7, 1912]).

⁶¹ H. Avni, "Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebinde Küşadı Musammem Galeri İçin," *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:11 (25 Mart Sene 1328 [April 7, 1912]).

made, one should see the original work alive, and not the copy, which is its corpse.⁶²

Thus Hüseyin Avni thinks that Ottoman people would not gain a correct idea of art from seeing only the copies – the ‘corpses’ in his words. These ideas on the aesthetic status of reproductions had an intellectual precedent within the Empire. Sakızlı Ohannes had also put forward similar ideas on the reproduction of painting in his *Fünun-ı Nefise Tarihi Medhali*. Ohannes wrote that in a copy of a painting one “understands the lack of the traces of an artist’s feelings.”⁶³

While this debate was a significant flaring up of divisions over the future direction (and management) of the Academy of Fine Arts, the last four issues of the Journal in particular would change the direction of this criticism of Academy policy away from the aesthetic consequences of the gallery project and towards its non-Muslim instructors.

Vision of ‘National Art’ and the ‘National Artist’

In the wake of the disastrous Balkan Wars, for the members of the Ottoman Society of Painters, the victorious Bulgarians came to represent one of the most successful examples of the advancement and promotion of a national art. The main target of the authors’ criticisms of the Academy of Fine Arts would from that point on become the

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Sakızlı Ohannes, *Fünun-ı Nefise Tarihi Medhali* (Istanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1308). In this study I use the recently published transcribed version of the book. Sakızlı Ohannes, *Güzel Sanatlar Tarihine Giriş* (Ankara: Hece Yayınları, 2005), p.30.

non-Muslim, Levantine and foreign instructors who, for them, were capable neither of creating nor of teaching a sufficiently national art.

After an early use of and emphasis on the term ‘national art’ in the third issue, the authors seemed to have been largely uninterested in the subject until after the Empire’s loss of the Balkans. In the only article he published in the Journal, Ruhi writes from Paris to comment on the recent news of the sale of the Taksim Quarter (*Kırsıla*) and the square in front of it. Holding up Parisian urban planning as an example, and particularly its gardens and museums, he warns the Ottoman public about the importance of these public areas:

We should not only be content with the works we possess from Byzantine times. We should also make some by ourselves. Let us produce our *national work* [asar-ı milliye] and preserve it.⁶⁴

However, after the fourteenth issue, published after a two-year break due to the Balkan Wars, Muallim Vahyi wrote regularly in each issue, and one can feel the increased nationalist undertones of these articles. Muallim Vahyi had been taken prisoner in Sofia with Mehmed Ali and Sami. During their captivity, they had the opportunity to visit the Bulgarian Fine-Arts School and to see painting exhibitions by various Bulgarian artists. The educational reforms of the Bulgarians impressed these artists to such an extent that, after they came back to the imperial capital, they wrote about how successful Bulgarians were in their endeavour to develop and preserve their national art. After visiting a humble painting exhibition by a young Bulgarian painter, whom these three veteran Ottoman painters actually found to be of little artistic talent, Muallim Vahyi tells the

⁶⁴ Ruhi, “Paris’ten Mektup,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:3 (12 Rebiülevvel Sene 1329/ 1 Mart Sene 1327 [March 14, 1911]). Emphasis added.

story of his conversation with a Bulgarian man who was also aware of the technical incompetence of the paintings:

Yes, we also know and even confess that these paintings and other paintings done by his peers are not valuable at all with regard to art, but they are highly valuable with regard to nationality; we have never even commissioned the necessary paintings for our visual education from the European artists. Our paintings show only our country, our nation and our being Bulgarian ... No, neither of those paintings nor the other paintings done by his peers are valuable artistically. But they are our essential property ... the paintings you do not like are willingly bought by our viziers, ministers, generals, and by our rich people. They hang these paintings in their houses, and they are even proud of this.⁶⁵

Muallim Vahyi names his article “Our Adults Owe a Great Duty” (“Büyüklerimizin Borçları Pek Çoktur”) as he blames Ottoman parents for “not decorating their kids’ room with Islamic and Ottoman fine art works” and, by their ignorance, causing the “national future to die away.”⁶⁶

The concept of ‘national art’ also resonated in Sami’s by now regular column on the Academy of Fine Arts, “Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi İçin.” In one article emphasizing the concepts of ‘national art’ and ‘national artists,’ Sami writes words apparently heard from his friend’s mouth. In this indirect criticism of the Academy of Fine Arts, for Sami’s friend (or most likely for Sami himself) neither Valeri, nor Osgan Efendi (who was in fact an Ottoman artist), though they are both talented artistically, can “inspire *national fine arts* in the sons of the nation.”⁶⁷ The article continues its harsh criticism of these two non-Muslim instructors of the School:

⁶⁵ Muallim Vahyi, “Büyüklerimizin Borçları Pek Çoktur” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:14 (1 Mart Sene 1330 [March 14, 1914]).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Anonymous [Sami], “Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi İçin” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:15 (1 Nisan Sene 1330/[April 14, 1914]). Emphasis added.

What have they done, these two great professors who have been instructors for almost thirty years in the Turkish Fine Arts School [sic], two artists who have mansions in the [Princess] Islands, apartments in Beyoğlu, and considerable purchases and reputations? How many paintings have they produced for our national pages? ... A painter, a national painter, cannot be cultivated in this way.⁶⁸

Thus the Journal writers' criticism of the *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi* begins to attack both the non-Muslim and foreign instructors of the school. Though they appreciate and praise these painters' artistic talents, for the majority of the writers, "Turkish fine arts" can never be represented by instructors like Osgan Efendi, Mösyö Warnia and Mösyö Valeri. Fausto Zonaro, the court painter of Abdülhamid II between the years 1896 and 1909, also receives his share of this criticism for not being enough of a "Turk"⁶⁹:

Mösyö Zonaro has depicted the magical glitter of Eastern horizons, and maybe he has created good works with regard to art, yet neither of these works has been the work of an Easterner or a Turk [sic].⁷⁰

The question that needs to be asked is what the claims of the Journal's authors – all of whom were male, bourgeois, and Muslim – were designed to accrue privilege to male, Muslim Ottoman artists, and how effectively they marginalized the non-Muslims painters of the Empire. Did their patriotism and their definition of national art ultimately become xenophobic and anti-cosmopolitan in spirit? Ironically enough, the Journal also

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

⁶⁹ This is particularly ironic when one remembers what Adolphe Thalasso had written on the "Turkish School." Thalasso had defined Zonaro exactly the opposite in the article he wrote after Zonaro had to leave his court painter position as Sultan Abdülhamid was sent to exile: "Zonaro did not serve to the Sultan, he served Turkey" stated Adolphe, expressing his grief for the painter's recent economical hardships. Thalasso continued: "Undoubtedly, Turkey belongs to Turks, yet ... with his brush, Zonaro was the front-runner for the progress of the new Turkey on the road of civilization." Adolphe Thalasso, "Le cas Zonaro," *L'Art et Les Artistes*, Lafitte Edition, Paris, October 1909-March 1910, V. 10. Quoted in *Pera Ressamları-Pera Sergileri 1845-1916*, p.59.

⁷⁰ Galib Bahtiyar, "Sanayi-i Nefisenin Milliyet Nokat-i Nazarından Tetkiki," *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:18 (1 Temmuz 1330 [July 14, 1914]).

used a highly patriotic painting by Tovmas Efendi, the non-Muslim head painter of the Hereke Factory (Hereke Fabrika-i Hümayunu) as its cover-page for the seventeenth issue. The publication of a work by a non-Muslim artist as the cover image is all the more remarkable, considering that no non-Muslims published anything in the Journal. At the same time, however, given the national mood, the choice of Tovmas Efendi's painting makes sense, as it is a patriotic depiction of three martyred Ottoman pilots who lost their lives in an aircraft crash just after the Balkan Wars, their spirits floating in the clouds above their bones, which are draped with the Ottoman flag (fig.12).⁷¹ In the same issue, an article was also dedicated to Tovmas Efendi, and his short educational biography was presented. Even more interesting, however, is the fact that Tovmas Efendi was introduced as a highly talented painter who worked "with national and harmonious colours and lines." Finally, in the very last issue of the Journal, we see an attempt to canonize Rıza Efendi (Hoca Ali Rıza) as a national painter.

The quest for 'national' art and artist was very much the product of the nineteenth century Europe, of the era characterized by nationalism; the 'national artist' is imagined⁷² and constructed as the man (it is almost impossible to find a female 'national artist') who expresses the fundamental cultural identity, beliefs and customs of that nation. The trend that saw the revision of William Shakespeare as the 'national poet' of Britain, the elevation of Jack Yeats as the 'national painter' of Ireland and the

⁷¹ After its tremendous defeat at the end of the Balkan Wars, in the beginning of the year 1914, the Ottoman state decided to conduct a flight from Istanbul to Alexandria as a political show. Two type aircraft were piloted by four Ottoman pilots; Nuri Bey, İsmail Hakkı Bey, Fethi Bey and Sadık Bey. The aircraft named "Muavenet-i Milliye" crashed near Damascus, killing Fethi and Sadık Bey. The other plane, "Prens Celaleddin" crashed into the sea near Jaffa killing Nuri Bey.

⁷² Here, of course, I use the concept 'imagined' in the sense it is employed by Benedict Anderson. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1991 [1983]).

construction of Jean-Baptiste Greuze as the ‘national painter’ of France⁷³ made its way to the Ottoman world, to one of the most multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic empires to survive to the age of modernity. For Galib Bahtiyar, writing in the Journal’s ultimate issue, a painter’s nationality is always revealed in his paintings; “a German painter can never see ... a landscape or a face like an Italian or a Frenchman does; he cannot understand the spiritual mood like an Englishman or a Spaniard does.” For Galib, Hoca Ali Rıza Efendi’s works, as humble as they were in the size of his canvases and the context of his works (as simple as rocks, old houses, and grasses) show a real “Turkishness and Easternness.”⁷⁴ This all the more surprising, perhaps, given that Rıza Efendi’s picturesque landscape paintings are far from being explicitly patriotic or symbolically ‘nationalist’ in content (fig.14, fig.15).

This polemic on the question of the ‘national artist’ was published in the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*’s last issue. After 1914, the Journal stopped being published due to the outbreak of the First World War. This new situation would, however, mark another beginning for the Society; a shift from academicism and fairly insular scholarly debate towards a more popular appeal, with the painting exhibitions organized during the war in 1916, 1917 and 1918. It is therefore neither surprising nor paradoxical that the proliferation of heroic ideas and images peaked precisely when popular ‘nationalism’ was at its height, i.e. during World War I, as the familiar imagery

⁷³ Jean-Baptiste Greuze, the celebrated eighteenth century French painter was called “the true *national* painter of the French” in an 1831 American popular dictionary as, in his pictures, “he exhibits the most characteristic traits of the French manner of thinking and feeling.” *Encyclopaedia Americana: A Popular Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature, History, Politics and Biography*, Vol.V, ed. Francis Lieber (Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1831), p.275.

⁷⁴ Galib Bahtiyar, “Sanayi-i Nefisenin Milliyet Nokta-i Nazarından Tetkiki,” *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue:18 (1 Temmuz 1330 [July 14, 1914]).

of heroic soldiers helped ordinary men and women imagine the ‘abstract category’ of the nation.

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT WAR: PAINTING THE ‘ORDINARY SOLDIER’

The exact social, political and historical circumstances of the First World War and the reigning nationalist ideologies that penetrated into almost every activity in support of the war effort, created extraordinary circumstances for Ottoman art and artists. The spirit was jingoistic; artists were expected to contribute to that spirit, and to create works out of a war experience which was common to them all. The responses to this first total and fully modern war by the Ottoman Society of Painters were diverse, and came from different institutional and political positions – as active soldiers continuing to create works while fighting at the front, as independent artists pursuing their work on the home front, as volunteer observers in the trenches experiencing the battle zones, and as semi-official war artists paid by the state to make images in support of the war cause. This chapter is concerned with how, during these four disastrous and world-changing years, Ottoman visual culture in general and the artists of the Ottoman Society of Painters in particular were both motivated and compelled to meet the extraordinary conditions of war on the home front.

The Ottoman Empire in the Great War

The Ottoman Empire entered the Great War on October 29, 1914 on the side of the Central Powers. With insufficient infrastructure and meagre resources, the Empire was in no way prepared to fight another war, particularly following the long period of defeats and catastrophes it experienced at the turn of the century. The last African province was

taken by Italy in the Turco-Italian War (1911-1912), and by the end of the second Balkan War (1912-13) the Empire had lost 83 percent of its European territory,¹ leaving the country traumatized and in economic hardship. With the aim of ending the diplomatic isolation it had experienced during the Balkan Wars, the Empire sought alliances with major powers. After the failure of attempts to interest France and Britain in an alliance, the CUP turned their eyes to Germany and Austria-Hungary, resulting in the Empire entering the war on the side of the Central Powers at war with Russia, France and Britain.

The Ottoman Empire saw combat on nine different fronts – the Caucasus, Sinai-Palestine, Hijaz, Mesopotamia, Gallipoli, Macedonia, Persia, Galicia, and Romania – and mobilized 2.8 million troops.² Official casualty figures were never published by the Ottoman State; a fact mostly attributed to inaccurate and insufficient record keeping and to attempts to minimize the number of Armenian victims during the massacres of 1915-16.³ Yet in four years of hard-fought total war, with human suffering on an unprecedented scale, the Empire suffered a very large number of casualties.

¹ Zafer Toprak, “Cihan Harbi’nin Provası Balkan Harbi”, *Toplumsal Tarih* 104 (August 2002), pp.45-6.

² See, Edward J. Erickson, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness in World War I: A Comparative Study* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007).

³ The number of fatalities provided by Edward J. Erickson’s 2001 study, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*, is 750, 000; a number which includes military casualties killed in action and by other causes. See the Appendix F in Edward J. Erikson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001), 237. Though there is no ‘real’ fatality figure for Muslim and non-Muslim Ottoman victims of the First World War, Erickson’s analysis remains rather vague when considering the Ottoman campaign against the Armenian population between 1915-1916, which resulted in approximately one million deaths. Among others, see Jay M. Winter ed., *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

The 'Visuality' of the War

No war in Ottoman history had facilitated art in its most various forms and to such an extent until the First World War: postcards, drawings, paintings and countless photographs appeared on exhibition walls and on the pages of contemporary press. The patriotic postcards published in Austria, Germany and occasionally in the Ottoman Empire were perhaps the most remarkable and inexpensive direct visual products available during the war years.⁴ The publication of the *Harb Mecmuası* (War Magazine) in November 1915, one year after the Empire entered the war, became an effective tool for visually representing the war. Even more than the contemporary press, this journal brought updated battlefield photographs, illustrations and drawings under the public gaze.⁵ In addition to the substantial use of photographs, the magazine printed many illustrations and drawings of the battlefronts; ordinary soldier heroes, sinking Russian boats, gigantic Ottoman fleets. Photography was used frequently in the magazine, but the effects that could be achieved with drawings and illustrations were different, and were preferred by the editors in some cases. In terms of propaganda aims, the posed photographs of the battle zones seemed to be prosaic and monotonous in contrast to the inspiring drawings of soldiers fighting heroically for future victory.⁶ It is not surprising

⁴ For the popular visual culture, such as war postcards, medals and decorative objects produced during the war years see Edhem Eldem, *Pride and Privilege: A History of Ottoman Orders, Medals and Decorations* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre, 2004); particularly the chapter entitled "Revolution and War, 1908-1989," pp. 362- 483.

⁵ As Erol Koroğlu points out, one of the main goals of the Magazine was certainly to "serve the purpose of raising the spirits both of the soldiers at the front and of the civilians on the home front." Erol Koroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity: Literature in Turkey during World War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p.80.

⁶ This was the case for other belligerent countries as well. During the first years of the war, the British government, for instance, deliberately preferred war illustrations created by fine artists to official

then, that illustrations were preferred to photographs; with photos, the Ottoman public began to see what war actually looked like, but with the illustrations, the public saw what they wanted to see about the war.

Except the two decisive victories in Gallipoli and Kut al-Amara, the Ottoman army suffered an almost uninterrupted string of military defeats during the war. The victory of Gallipoli, although primarily a defensive one, immediately became the symbol of national pride and inspiration for resistance; the Ottomans managed to resist the attack by Anglo-French fleet which had started in February 1915 and saved the capital from a possible invasion.

Unlike all the other fronts of the war, and even unlike all other battles the Empire had been through, and despite the 300,000 casualties,⁷ Gallipoli would provide and inspire the most prevalent and residual images in the visual memory of the late-Ottoman Empire and of the future Turkish Republic. The bravery of the ordinary soldier was lauded in contemporary newspapers, such as the battlefield achievements of the famous sergeant Mehmed, who became a popular heroic image in the Ottoman media, and who also received a donation of ten Ottoman *lira* by the chief editor of the *Müdafaa-i Milliye* Journal, Mehmed Zeki Bey.⁸ Certainly, the Ottoman media represented Gallipoli as a seminal event; the campaign became a locus of pride and honour for the nation and an effective propaganda machine for the CUP.

photographs. See, Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), p.198.

⁷ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003 [1994]), p.118.

⁸ BOA, HR.MA, 1122/7, 26 Şubat 1330 [March 11, 1915].

A View from the Trenches: Çallı İbrahim and Nazmi Ziya in Gallipoli

Early in July 1915, the Office of the Supreme Commander in Charge invited twenty to thirty contemporary intellectuals via the General Staff Headquarters Intelligence Office (*Karargah-ı Umumi İstihbarat Şubesi*) to Gallipoli.⁹ The aim was to encourage artists, writers and musicians to produce works about the war after experiencing the battlefronts first hand. Though many expressed an interest in the Gallipoli trip,¹⁰ on 11 July 1915, the day of departure, there were only eighteen people at the Sirkeci Train Station: among them were the painters Çallı İbrahim and Nazmi Ziya.¹¹ Perhaps the best way to illustrate what kind of images these two Ottoman painters witnessed in the battle zone is to quote a passage from one of the writers of that trip who travelled with them. İbrahim Alaeddin [Gövsa], the Ottoman poet who would later publish poems on the Gallipoli campaign, wrote about his experiences of their trip and the war:

On Sunday, July 11, 1915, the group of artists who had gathered at the Sirkeci Train Station set off at 8 p.m. with the green double-laurel marked on their left arms and their khaki colour linen clothes... Through Uzunköprü, Keşan, Bolayır and Gelibolu we arrived in the fifth-army headquarters and from there we wandered into the Arıburnu and Seddülbahir battle zones, and after that we came to Çanakkale and saw the defences. By entering the closest trenches to the enemy, I saw how the war was being fought arduously and faithfully against the excellent and exceptional offensive apparatus; I also saw the scale of the defence mounted with resolution and faith against iron and fire. The cemeteries like cities and the battalions of unburied bodies have left me with a never-

⁹ BOA, DH.KMS, 33/15, 22 Haziran 1331 [July 05, 1915].

¹⁰ Erol Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, pp.82-3.

¹¹ Nazmi Ziya was working as one of the education supervisors at that time. BOA, MF. MKT, 1234/45, 22 Şaban 1333 [July 05, 1915]. Besides Çallı İbrahim and Nazmi Ziya, these people also include the writers and journalists, Ağaoğlu Ahmed, Ali Canip, Celal Sahir, Enis Behiç, Hakkı Süha, Hamdullah Suphi, Hıfzı Tevfik, Muhittin, Orhan Seyfi, Selahattin, Yusuf Razi, Mehmed Emin, Ömer Seyfettin, İbrahim Alaeddin and Müfit Ratip; and the musician Ahmed Yekta. See, İbrahim Alaeddin [Gövsa]'s introduction to the second edition of the *Çanakkale İzleri: Anafartalar'ın Müebbet Kahramanına* (İstanbul: Semih Lütfi-Sühulet Kütüphanesi, 1932 [1922]).

to-be-forgotten ache. I witnessed what a catastrophic and lofty madness war is.¹²

In İbrahim Alaeddin's words, the Ottoman soldier became an 'arduous' fighter against the technically more advanced power, and the war zones became cemeteries themselves, carrying dead bodies from both sides. Different from İbrahim Alaeddin, Hamdullah Suphi, who also travelled to Gallipoli with İbrahim Çallı and Nazmi Ziya, preferred not to mention the devastating side of the war. The nationalistic tone is rather more apparent in his account.¹³

The three big arts, painting, music, and literature, were going to utter their respect and love for the soldiers who defend Çanakkale, and their gratitude and admiration to that sublime, old Turkish sword shining like a crimson dawn on the ridge of Çanakkale.¹⁴

When İbrahim Çallı and Nazmi Ziya were sent to Gallipoli in 1915, the Peninsula was witnessing an interminable, disastrous trench war that had started in April 25 against the British Army with ANZAC (Australia-New Zealand Army Corps) support. Different from most of the painters who would later participate in the Galatasaray exhibitions, İbrahim Çallı and Nazmi Ziya experienced the horror of trenches and the ordinary soldiers' sufferings and traumas first hand. "Until the World War" Nazmi Ziya said, "I also had been in favour of those who do art for art's sake. Had I not changed the

¹² İbrahim Alaeddin's introduction to the second edition of the *Çanakkale İzleri*, unnumbered.

¹³ Hamdullah Suphi's accounts on this trip appeared as series of articles in the same year. These articles, titled "Çanakkale" were published in the newspaper *İkdam*. I use the 1929 collection of his writings in this study. Hamdullah Suphi, "Çanakkale" in *Günebakan* (Ankara: Türk Ocakları İlim ve Sanat Heyeti Neşriyatı, 1929), pp.79-123.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.81.

direction of this progress that was only tasted by artists and had no effect on the people, I too may have followed the moderns.”¹⁵

On July 23rd 1915, probably due to the camaraderie attained during the Gallipoli trip, a painting exhibition was organized in the *Türk Ocağı* which had been under the direction of Hamdullah Suphi since 1913. Together with works by İbrahim Çallı and Nazmi Ziya, the exhibition displayed paintings by Halil Paşa, İsmail Hakkı, Şevket Bey, İzzet Bey, Mahmut Bey, İbrahim Feyhaman, Ruhi and Hüseyin Avni Bey.¹⁶ Hamdullah Suphi immediately wrote a review article about the exhibition. In the article, entitled “Son Resim Sergisi” (The Latest Painting Exhibition), he drew attention to this “small exhibition, containing various themes and different styles.”¹⁷ After asking to his readers whether “Turkish painting has yet realized the hopes expected from it?” Hamdullah Suphi continues his article by reviewing some works from the exhibition; a painting of a veiled woman by Halil Paşa, a watercolour work of a landscape by İsmail Hakkı and numerous ‘impressionist’ [*teessürcü*] oil paintings by İbrahim Feyhaman, Nazmi Ziya, Ruhi, Çallı İbrahim and Hüseyin Avni. Hamdullah Suphi finishes the article on a rather optimistic note:

We are obliged to say that today and tomorrow, we are, and will be, proud of these dignified artists. The era which will understand them has arrived.

¹⁵ Nazmi Ziya, quoted in Bedri Rahmi, *Nazmi Ziya*, (Istanbul: Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi, 1937), p.20.

¹⁶ In the 1998 book of the *Türk Ocakları Tarihi* (History of the Turkish Hearth), the painters were listed as the following: “Halil Paşa, İsmail Hakkı Bey, Hamdi Bey, Şevket Bey, İzzet Bey, İbrahim Bey, Nazmi Ziya Bey, Mahmut Bey, Hüseyin Avni Bey and Dr. Hikmet Bey.” See, Hüseyin Tuncer, Yücel Hacaloğlu, Ragıp Memişoğlu eds., *Türk Ocakları Tarihi: Açıklamalı Kronoloji 1912-1997*, Vol.I (Ankara: Türk Yurdu Yayınları, 1998), p.38.

¹⁷ Hamdullah Suphi, “Türklükte Nefis Sanatlar: Son Resim Sergisi,” *Türk Yurdu* 89 (30 Temmuz 1331/12 August 1915). This study uses the transliterated collection of the *Türk Yurdu* Magazine. *Türk Yurdu*, Murat Şefkatli ed. Vol. 4 (Ankara: Tütibay Yayınları, 1998), p.195.

Today, may [these artists] be sure that the neglect that has surrounded them thus far will cede place to universal tribute and affection.¹⁸

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this article was that a comment was appended to the review by an anonymous editor of the magazine expressing discontent that military scenes comprised only a minority of the paintings, even though “these art works are the products of war years.”¹⁹ The expectation that artists create positive militaristic images corresponding to the war conditions probably seemed natural for someone writing in the *Türk Yurdu*, the mouthpiece of the *Türk Ocağı* (the Turkish Hearth), the most influential nationalist organization of the period.

1916: The Golden Year of International War Culture

The year 1916 was indeed pivotal in terms of the public perception of the conflict, wartime events, and the visual propaganda machines on both sides of the war. This cultural response was due to the growing realization that the war would not be as brief as might have been thought in the beginning. The number of war exhibitions increased, and cities started to host various exhibitions of war-related paintings created by official war artists or independent artists, and also exhibited popular war posters, postcards with mottos and propaganda images. The Ministry of Fine Arts and the Ministry of War in France, for instance, decided to exhibit works created by artists serving in the war. The aim was to exhibit these art works in official war exhibitions under the sponsorship of

¹⁸ Hamdullah Suphi, “Türklükte Nefis Sanatlar: Son Resim Sergisi,” *Türk Yurdu*, Vol. 4, p.195.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.197.

the Salon des Armées.²⁰ Under the sponsorship of the *Deutsches Rotes Kreuz* (German Red Cross), a war exhibition was opened to the public in Berlin as well.²¹ Among many other events, London also hosted an exhibition of watercolour sketches of the British and Ottoman positions in the Gallipoli Peninsula by the famous British ‘soldier painter,’ Sapper Moore-Jones.²²

In cultural terms, Vienna was probably one of the liveliest capitals during the war. Besides the famous War Exhibition, *Kriegsausstellung*, started in July 1916 in the imperial park of Prater, where war material seized from the soldiers of the Allied Powers were exhibited to the Vienna public,²³ the city hosted more than fifty exhibitions between 1914 and 1918 – ranging from exhibitions of artillery captured from the battle zones to works created by wounded soldiers, to dog shows and paintings collected from the allies.²⁴

²⁰ For the poster of this exhibition, *Salon des Armées: Réserve aux Artistes du Front*, see the website of the Library of Congress at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/frenchposter/images/art243.jpg>.

²¹ For the poster of this exhibition, *Deutsche Kriegsausstellung*, see the website: <http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/large.php?uid=27902>.

²² Anonymous, “Pictures of Gallipoli”, *The Times* (April 15, 1916). These water-color sketches and drawings were also taken to Buckingham Palace on April, 19 for the King’s inspection. See, “The King and the Gallipoli Pictures,” *The Times* (April 19, 1916).

²³ As we learn from a *Times* correspondent in Lausanne, the Viennese public were apparently boasting about their War Exhibition, comparing this big organization to others, or more precisely, to the lack of these cultural activities in Berlin: “The government has just opened in the Prater a War Exhibition. It is the only thing in the city which is everywhere spoken of with admiration. The Viennese are really proud of it and are especially delighted that the Berliners have not been able to do the same thing.” Anonymous, “Life in Vienna,” *The Times* (October 31, 1916).

²⁴ Maureen Healy, “Exhibiting a War in Progress: Entertainment and Propaganda in Vienna, 1914-1918”, *Austrian History Year Book*, Vol. 31 (2000), pp. 57-85. From the same author, see, also, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.111.

For seventeen days between 28 December 1916 and 14 January 1917, a nineteenth-century art exhibition building in Vienna, Künstlerhaus Wien,²⁵ also hosted portraits of prominent Ottoman, German and Austro-Hungarian commanders painted by the famous contemporary Viennese portrait painter, Wilhelm Victor Krausz (fig.16). This specific exhibition was first opened in the Academy of Fine Arts in April 1916 before it was brought to Künstler Wien. The Ottoman politicians and commanders – the Grand vizier Said Halim Paşa; Enver Paşa, the Minister of War and Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Army; and Talat Paşa, the Interior Minister– were displayed alongside the Austria-Hungarians and Prussians – Marquis Johann von Pallavicini, the Austria-Hungarian Ambassador at the Sublime Port; Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, the Prussian Field Marshal; Liman von Sanders, the German Generalleutnant and the military commander for the Ottoman Empire during the war (fig.17, fig.18, fig.19, fig.20). The release of the exhibition catalogue followed in the same year,²⁶ published in Vienna by the Austrian Ministry of War, in which the portraits were reproduced above the signature of each figure, with the exception of the very first portrait, that of Sultan Mehmed V Reşad (fig.21). The message of such an exhibition was remarkable for its political implications. Besides the international propaganda achievement, the most striking element was probably the dedication of the work to the Young Turks, rather than to the Ottoman Sultan. Though the date of the enthronement of the Sultan Mehmed V Reşad, 27 April 1909, is stated as the “national rebirth” [nationale Wiedergeburt] for

²⁵ Halil Edhem remembers the place of the exhibition as the Vienna Imperial Museum. See, Halil Edhem, *Elvah-ı Nakşiye Koleksiyonu* (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1970 [1924]), p.50. However, as the poster of the exhibition clearly indicates, the exhibition was held in the “Künstlerhaus Wien.”

²⁶ *Die Türkei im Weltkrieg: Bildnisse und Skizzen von Wilhelm Victor Krausz* (Wien: Kriegsministeriums, 1916).

the Empire, the emphasis on the Young Turks as having directed the “fate of Turkey since 1908” was very much linked to the contemporary strength of the CUP and of its leaders in the war cause.²⁷

In 1916, Istanbul also saw an interesting architectural competition, the competition of the German-Turkish Friendship House (*Das Haus der Freundschaft*),²⁸ organized by the *Deutsche Werkbund* (German Work Federation), a German artistic organization founded by architects, industrialists, craftsmen in 1907.²⁹ The project, however, was only opened to German architects, though it would have otherwise been contributed to by well-known contemporary Ottoman architects, such as Mehmed Vedad and Ahmed Kemaleddin, or the younger generation, such as Arif Hikmet and Muzaffer.³⁰ Though the Ottoman state only provided a venue for the project (Çemberlitaş, an important and historic area of the city), it was certainly a significant official relationship between the Ottoman state and Germany.³¹ Among eleven proposals, German Bestelmeyer’s project, with a bland classicist design that was regarded as the least controversial,³² won the competition. The site was cleared and the

²⁷ Krausz later received a third-class Mecidi order for his work. BOA, MV, 242/29, 02 Cemazeyilahir 1334 [May 06, 1916].

²⁸ The idea of building a ‘Friendship House’ was introduced by Ernst Jackh, executive secretary of the German Werkbund, and the German-Turkish Association based in Berlin and Istanbul, to the Deutsch-Türkische Vereinigung (German-Turkish Association) which had been founded in 1913.

²⁹ See the exhibition catalogue, *100 Jahre Deutscher Werkbund, 1907-2007* (München: Architekturmuseum der Technischen Universität München, Akademie der Künste Berlin, 2007).

³⁰ Suha Özkan, “Türk-Alman Dostluk Yurdu Öneri Yarışması, 1916,” *Journal of the Faculty of Architecture, Middle Technical University*, Issue:2, Vol: 1 (1975), pp.177-210.

³¹ Yüksel Pöğün Zander, *A Comparative Study on the Works of German Expatriate Architects in Their Home-Land and in Turkey during the Period of 1927-1950* (Unpublished PhD Diss., İzmir Institute of Technology, 2007), p.110.

³² Joan Campbell, *The German Werkbund: The Politics of Reform in the Applied Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p.21. According to the competition, the building was expected to have

construction started in 1918, yet the House of Friendship as imagined by Bestelmeyer and other German architects would be never realized, being halted by Germany's defeat in 1918.³³

Although the architectural competition of the German-Turkish Friendship House could not be realized, the year 1916 was indeed a significant year for the artistic flourishing of the imperial capital. The journalist Ahmed Emin [Yalman] later wrote about the interest of the Government in the fine arts during the First World War:

A provisional law made it compulsory upon the authorities to organize annual exhibitions of paintings. These exhibitions were regularly held from 1916 on. The Government, and the leading members of it, individually, likewise aided painters by giving them large orders. This encouragement inaugurated a period of flourishing in Turkish painting. Several young artists, both men and women, acquired prominence, and some excellent work was produced.³⁴

In fact, an official document in the Ottoman archives dating February 1916 very much proves his point; as the document states: "in order to serve for the progress of fine arts in our country, exhibitions will be opened in Istanbul under the appellation of fine arts every year in April, May and June."³⁵ This law was brought into force, as we shall see, with the painting exhibitions organized in the imperial capital from 1916 onwards.

numerous facilities; exhibition spaces, conference rooms, libraries, two large auditoriums, and a spacious café.

³³ Özkan, "Türk-Alman Dostluk Yurdu Öneri Yarışması, 1916," p.207.

³⁴ Ahmed Emin [Yalman], *Turkey in the World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), p.173.

³⁵ BOA, MF. MÜZ 3/59, 06 Şubat 1331 [February 19, 1916]. According to the document, the exhibitions were opened both to Ottoman and foreign painters, and would offer certain awards - gold, silver and bronze - for the chosen painters. I would like to thank Edhem Eldem for drawing my attention to this specific document.

The 1916 and 1917 “Galatasaray Exhibitions”

From *La Societa Operaia* to *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu*

With the outbreak of the war, many citizens of the Allied powers had to leave the Ottoman capital. One of the vacated places was the club of *La Societa Operaia* in Pera, which had been founded in 1863 as an association for workers.³⁶ The club was converted to a dormitory for the nearby Lycée de Galatasaray in February in 1916.³⁷ Of course, this change in the demography of Pera, the most cosmopolitan district of the Ottoman capital, was very much related to the CUP’s aim to nationalize and Turkify the state by removing the foreign elements, particularly after they were freed from the restrictions of the capitulations in October 1914. The cosmopolitan face of Pera was changed drastically; on the orders of Talat Paşa in late 1915, for instance, all French and English signs over the shops were painted and replaced by Arabic characters and even with national colours of red and white in many places.³⁸ It was during the following year that the old *La Societa Operaia* and the new *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu* (Dormitory of Galatasaray) in this district started to host three art exhibitions; the first two would be

³⁶ İlknur Polat Haydaroglu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Yabancı Okulları* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1990). Paolo Girardelli, *Istanbul e L’Italia, 1837-1908: Confronto e Interpretazioni Reciproche di due Tradizioni Architettoniche* (Unpublished PhD Diss. Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico I. Naples, 1994).

³⁷ This news was announced in *Türk Yurdu*. Anonymous, “Galatasaraylılar Yurdu”, *Türk Yurdu*, Issue: 106, 24 Mart 1332 [April 06, 1916] in *Türk Yurdu*, Vol. 5, p.40. A more specific state report also declares that the association was not active anymore by the year 1916. BOA, DH. EUM, 6/11, 06 Şaban 1334 [June 08, 1916].

³⁸ The German correspondent journalist of *Kölnische Zeitung* newspaper in Istanbul during the war years of 1915-16, Harry Stuermer, mentions the Young Turks’ hostility to foreigners. Harry Stuermer, *Two War Years in Constantinople: Sketches of German and Young Turkish Ethics and Politics*, trans. Harry Stuermer and E.Allen (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917), p.155. The original German version of the book, *Zwei Kriegsjahre in Konstantinopel: Skizzen Deutsch –Jungturkischer Moral und Politik* (Lausanne: Payot, 1917) was published in neutral Switzerland.

held in the spring of 1916 and 1917, and the last one, which hosted paintings about the war – what would later become known as the Şişli Studio – was held in late 1917 before being brought to Vienna.³⁹

The 1916 Exhibition

Both the 1916 and 1917 Galatasaray Exhibitions were opened in spring at the new Galatasaraylılar Yurdu, or “on the street next to the Karlman Derun shops” in Beyoğlu, as it is written in the exhibition catalogues. The 1916 exhibition hosted 190 paintings by forty four artists, of whom most (28) were Muslim men, and very few of whom were female (9) or non-Muslim (12).⁴⁰ Of 190 paintings, less than ten percent depicted religion-related subjects, and there were no history paintings in the exhibition. While most of these works can properly be described as impressionist landscapes and genre paintings, only 25 pictures, or thirteen percent⁴¹ of the works in the exhibition, were

³⁹ It was only in 1918 that *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu* did not host an exhibition, but between 1919 and 1951 these annual exhibitions were held regularly in summer, and not at old *La Societa Operaia* this time but at *Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultanisi* (the Royal School of Galatasaray). Today these regular annual exhibitions are collectively known as the ‘Galatasaray Exhibitions’ in Turkish art historiography. Ömer Faruk Şerifoğlu, ed. *Resim Tarihimizden Galatasaray Sergileri: 1916-1951* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003).

⁴⁰ According to the arrangement in the exhibition catalog, *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu Resim Sergisi: Birinci Sene* (Dersaadet, 1332 [1916]), these artists were: Cevad Bey, Mösyö Renemax, Matmazel Mari Bahar, Sedat Simavi Bey, Mehmed Said Bey, Midhat Rebii Bey, Mahmut Bey, Hüseyin Rıfat Bey, Matmazel Mari Kıbrıslıyan, Hüseyin Avni Bey Lifij, Sami Bey, Halil Paşa, Muazzez Bey, Kemaleddin Bey, Mufide Esad Hanım, Rupen Seropyan Efendi, Namık İsmail Efendi, Vahan Atamyas Efendi, Matmazel Eleni İlyadis, İzzet Bey, Zekai Paşa, Şeref Bey, Halid Bey, İsmail Hakkı Bey, Müzdan Said Hanım, İbrahim Bey Çallı, Hikmet Bey, Mösyö Arslanyan, Ruhi Bey, Arif Hikmet Bey, Dimitraki Trifidi Efendi, Galib Efendi, Tovmas Efendi Baldazar, Celile Hikmet Hanım, Şevki Bey, Harika Hanım, Vecih Bey, İbrahim Feyhaman Bey, Nazmi Ziya Bey, Madmazel Hinkeni, Madam Rafael, Samson Efendi Arzuruni, Ali Cemal Bey, İzzet Ziya Bey.

⁴¹ These figures are based on estimates of the paintings’ content judging from their titles, as listed in the original exhibition catalogue, for many of the original works have been lost or are kept in private collections.

directly related to the war, such as Ali Cemal's *A Watchman in Maydos* (fig. 22) and İbrahim Çallı's *A Private Soldier* (fig.23).⁴²

Interestingly, Sami wrote an appraisal of the exhibition, and, rather than talking about the war-related works in the display, his main concern was the impressionist form of the paintings:

By learning and taking courage from the Western technique, what wonderful works Turkish brushes have created! Instead of the eye-tiring, photographic drawings of Italian art, here is a lucid expression asserting nature with its mellifluous and meaningful lines, a storm of colour showing the trembling of the object under the rain of light [...].⁴³

More than fifty years after the exhibition, one of the painters who had exhibited only one painting in 1916, Vecihi [Bereketoğlu], memorialized this artistic initiative as an artistic leap forward. He agreed with Sami about the significance of the display:

That exhibition was prepared with art works by Halil Paşa, Çallı, Hikmet, Namık İsmail, Nazmi Ziya, Feyhaman and other artists. For long years, the painters and students of Valeri and Warnia, the instructors from the Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi, pursued a dark and dry technique ... That exhibition was the start of a new epoch.⁴⁴

Critically speaking, what Vecihi means by this 'new epoch' remains rather obscure, and he does not acknowledge any of the non-Muslim painters' contributions to the

⁴² Among the painters who were awarded with the silver *Sanayi-i Nefise Madalyası* (Fine Arts medal), it was only Çallı İbrahim who had exhibited works related to war: "Siper", "Nöbette bir Nefer" and "Çanakalle Muharebatı Menazırından." Besides Çallı İbrahim, other awarded artists were: İbrahim Feyhaman, Hüseyin Avni Lifij, and Matmazel Elena İlyadis. BOA, DÜİT, 66/38, 28 Temmuz 1332 [August 10, 1916].

⁴³ Sami Yetik, quoted in İpek Duben, *Türk Resmi ve Eleştirisi: 1880-1950* (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi), p.149.

⁴⁴ Vecih [Bereketoğlu] wrote a short article on Feyhaman Duran for a 1970 exhibition catalogue for the artist. In this article, he remembers the exhibition as being held in 1917. Writing exactly 54 years after the first exhibition, Vecih must have remembered the year wrong. In fact the specific painting he referred to, "Doctor Akil Muhtar Bey" (The Doctor Akil Muhtar Bey) by Feyhaman was exhibited in 1916, the year when Vecih himself also participated. See, Vecih Bereketoğlu "Feyhaman" in *Sergi Broşürü* (Istanbul Devlet Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi Yüksek Lisans Bölümü, 1970), p.7.

exhibition. Even after 50 years, his negative attitude towards the foreign instructors of the Academy of Fine Arts also very much resonates with the debates which had been taking place in the Society's Journal.⁴⁵

The 1917 Exhibition

In the second exhibition, held in 1917, the number of artists decreased to thirty seven, while the participation of the non-Muslim painters increased to more than forty percent, compared to twenty seven percent in previous year.⁴⁶ Among the non-Muslim artists, considering the CUP policy of Armenian deportations from Anatolia and the increasing aggression of the Muslim Turkish majority against the non-Muslim populations, the increase in the number of the Armenian painters from 4 to 5 (or from 9 to 14 per cent) is perhaps surprising. However, these numbers may also remind us that as much as the art world that the Ottoman Society of Painters was part of and was influenced by the nationalist ideologies of the CUP, the 'liberal' artists of the Society and their art can neither be reduced to nor merely explained by the exclusive Turkist nationalist policies of the CUP.

In 1917, the percentage of religion-related paintings decreased to less than 6 percent, while the majority were still landscape and genre paintings. The CUP-supported

⁴⁵ Chapter III.

⁴⁶ These artists were; Arslanyan Efendi, Bakkalyan Efendi, Celile Hikmet Hanım, Cevad Bey, Çallı İbrahim Bey, Fehmi Bey, Frenkyan Efendi, Fuad Bey, Halil Paşa, Harika Hanım, Hikmet Bey, İbrahim Feyhaman Bey, İmadüddün Vehbi Bey, İzzet Ziya Bey, Kalfayan Efendi, M. Arakelyan, Madam İzbet Hakel, Madmazel Eleni İlyadis, Madmazel Mazarya, Madmazel Pezas, Madmazel Tamar Françes, Madmazel Yanakopulou, Melek Ziya Hanım, Mösyö E. Malla, Mösyö Feldman, Mösyö Milman, Mösyö Şink Parahavez, Namık Bey, Nazmi Ziya Bey, Ömer Adil Bey, Ruşen Zamir Hanım, Sami Bey (Bahriyeli), Sami Bey, Seyyid Bey, Şevket Bey, Zekai Paşa. *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu Resim Sergisi: İkinci Sene* (Dersaadet, 1333 [1917]).

magazine, *Yeni Mecmua* (New Magazine),⁴⁷ featured a four-page spread of the exhibition, embellished with reproductions of six paintings from the exhibition; Hikmet's "Beşiktaş", Namık İsmail's "Tefekkür" and "Lale Devri", Şevket Bey's "Mihrab" and "Cami Kapısı" and Çallı İbrahim Bey's "Büyük Ada."⁴⁸ The *Yeni Mecmua*, however, neither emphasized the war-related paintings in the exhibition nor, surprisingly, criticized their low quantity; out of 159 paintings, only a very small minority (3, or less than 2%) were war paintings. Furthermore, these war-related paintings in the exhibition did not necessarily idealize war in heroic battle scenes; on the contrary, they were often realistic portraits of wounded and isolated soldiers, such as İbrahim Çallı's *Wounded Soldier*⁴⁹ which portrays two exhausted soldiers, one of whom has a head wound, walking by leaning on each other through an otherwise abandoned landscape (fig.24). How, then, were these exhibitions perceived? To what extent could they have satisfied the authors like the ones in *Türk Yurdu* who would expect fine artists to produce military images regarding the war conditions?

In fact, in late June 1916, *Türk Yurdu* published part of a letter written by a journalist about the Bulgarian national theatre committee in Vienna.⁵⁰ The journalist

⁴⁷ As a weekly magazine, *Yeni Mecmua*, was published between 12 July 1917 and 26 October 1918, a few days before the Mudros Armistice. The Magazine was founded by Ziya Gökalp, the nationalist ideologue of the period. Erol Köroğlu notes that the magazine used relatively high quality paper which was a great privilege in a time when even normal paper was fairly scarce. This fact was very much related to the privilege position of the magazine as supported by the CUP. See, Erol Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, pp.93-6.

⁴⁸ Anonymous, "Sanayi-i Nefise," *Yeni Mecmua*, Issue: 8, (August 30, 1917), pp.149-51.

⁴⁹ This painting would also be displayed one year later in Vienna.

⁵⁰ T.Y. "Viyana'da Milli Bulgar Temaşa Heyeti", *Türk Yurdu*, Issue: 112 (29 Haziran 1916 [June 26, 1916]), in *Türk Yurdu*, Vol. 5, pp.121-4. The journalist was indeed right in his observations about the Bulgarian war propaganda. During World War I, theatre became the most popular wartime entertainment for Bulgarian soldiers at the battle front. Each Bulgarian infantry and cavalry division had their own theater groups. Evelina Kelbetcheva, "Between Apology and Denial: Bulgarian Culture during World War

wrote admiringly about how successful the Bulgarians were in promoting their national art. Besides Vienna, he also mentions a Bulgarian fine arts exhibition in Berlin. He continues: “Have you seen how national propaganda should be? [...] By benefiting from every opportunity with a determined and pervasive ambition, Bulgaria has at last achieved her purpose in only forty years.” The anonymous writer adds his personal comments after the letter, “If we want to introduce ourselves to Europeans, in fact to our European allies and brothers in arms, as equal fellows, it is not sufficient to trust only our recruitment [...] we also have to show that we are strong in civilization, or at least capable of it.”⁵¹ As we have already seen from the journal, the Ottoman interest in Bulgarian fine arts was something which grew significantly after the Balkan Wars. Besides the debates in the Journal of the Society itself, another Ottoman magazine *Şehbal*, for instance, also published articles on Bulgarian arts, comparing them to those of the Ottoman Empire, to the disparagement of the latter.⁵² From their position as subjects of the Sultan before the Balkan Wars to being enemies during the war, now the Bulgarians came to represent a paragon of artistic success, and one more reason for contemporary Ottoman intellectuals to criticize the insufficiency of visual propaganda in the Empire.

I” in Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites eds. *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment and Propaganda, 1914-18* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.210.

⁵¹ T.Y. “Viyana’da Milli Bulgar Temaşa Heyeti” in *Türk Yurdu*, Vol. 5, p.123.

⁵² Anonymous, “Bulgaristan’ın uyanmasında sanayi-i nefisenin derece-i hizmeti, Türkün keyfi” *Şehbal*, Issue: 89 (15 Kanunisani 1329 [January 28, 1914]), p.329.

International Exhibitions of War Paintings:
Istanbul and Vienna, 1917 & 1918

In many ways, the year 1917 marked the major turning point of the Great War, as it was the beginning of the end. The belligerent countries were exhausted from fighting. The Bolshevik Revolution forced Russia out of the war, overthrew the Czar in March and established a communist government by October. America's entrance into the war in April 1917 on the side of the allies would very much change the course of the war.

Regarding visual culture, the Great War in general had already seen an unprecedented number of art works travelling abroad, and more frequently than ever before. This sense of internationality gained an even stronger hold in 1917. The Cleveland Museum of Art, for instance, initiated a significant art exhibition organization in late 1917, in which almost two thousand war posters and handbills from European countries could be seen by the American public.⁵³ Yet this novel international spirit came with its own constraints. For the countries which had had artistic ties with each other before 1914, the war caused a severance of these cultural connections where it turned them into enemies. In the first year of the war, the famous French art journal *L'Art et les Artistes* published two blank spaces in its review section of foreign artistic movements, announcing that the place of Germany and Austria-Hungary would henceforth be taken by these "two notable 'carvings-out.'"⁵⁴ The Ottoman Empire also suffered from its own share of such cultural exclusion. The long artistic relationship

⁵³ The exhibition, opened on September 22, 1917, hosted a private collection of posters and handbills from England, France and Germany. "Exhibition of War Posters," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Vol. 4, No: 7 (September-October, 1917), pp.115-6.

⁵⁴ Anonymous, "Le Mouvement Artistique À L'Étranger," *L'Art et les Artistes*, Tome XIX (Avril-Septembre 1914), p.298.

between Istanbul and Paris came across a fatal hitch, and the Empire now had to find other European capitals in which to promote its artistic expression.

Looking back at those war years, a painter and art historian himself and the municipal head of Istanbul's Kadıköy district during the First World War, Celal Esad [Arseven] wrote about how much he had been engaged in writing on the necessity of propaganda in contemporary magazines.⁵⁵ Regarding this issue, he submitted a report in early 1917 to the head of the Intelligence Service, Seyfi Paşa:

Under the influence of publication against the Turks for centuries, even our allies consider us as a primitive nation. [In order to change] the inaccuracy of this consideration, [we shall] organize exhibitions and concerts in the capitals of our allies and prove our civilization and competence.⁵⁶

Here Celal Esad specifically stated it would be valuable to organize an exhibition of Turkish paintings in Vienna and in Berlin as it would charm these allies who only recognized the Empire because of its "bravery and strength in wars." Seyfi Paşa very much approved the project, yet on one condition; some of the paintings would be about the war.

As a promoter and defender of propaganda art, Celal Esad immediately took the initiative to organize an atelier for artists in the Şişli district and arranged to import the necessary painting materials, paints and canvases from Germany:

[In Şişli], trenches were dug, and a group of soldiers carried their guns, horses and artillery. Instantly, the paints and the oilcloths brought from Germany were distributed to the artists. Painters, such as Çallı İbrahim,

⁵⁵ Celal Esad [Arseven]'s memoirs were published in Turkish newspapers *Yeni İstanbul* with the title of "Türk Resim Sanatında 70 Yıllık Hayatım" and in *Dünya* with the title of "Yıldız Sarayından Mütareke'ye Kadar Celal Esad Arseven'in Hatıraları" in 1955 and 1960 respectively. The 1993 version of a book edition is used here. See, Celal Esad Arseven, *Sanat ve Siyaset Hatıralarım* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1993).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.126.

Feyhaman, Namık İsmail, Hikmet Onat, Sami Yetik and Ali Sami sat in front of their easels in this big hangar with a glass roof. This crowd and sense of national mission gave them great enthusiasm for their work. On the one side, soldiers posing with their guns, on the other side, artillery [...] This was an opportunity for our painters.⁵⁷

In some Turkish Art history writing, Enver Paşa is indicated as the initiator of these exhibitions.⁵⁸ This idea might well be connected to Enver Paşa's interest in cinema during the war. When Enver Paşa became the Minister of War in 1914, he gave orders to establish a film department in the army, which was founded under the name of *Merkez Ordu Sinema Dairesi* (the Cinema Department of the Central Army) in 1915.⁵⁹ We do not know exactly whether Enver Paşa in particular or the CUP in general played a direct role in these exhibitions. Yet considering the harsh economic conditions of the war, when, most of the time, the Empire faced famine and the extraordinary increase in the prices of staple foods, particularly bread,⁶⁰ it should not be hard to imagine how necessary was the patronage of the state for visual culture.

⁵⁷ Celal Esad, *Sanat ve Siyaset Hatıralarım*, pp.62-3.

⁵⁸ Cf. Seyfi Başkan, *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye'de Resim* (Ankara : T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1997); Cf. Kemal Erhan, "Hüseyin Avni Lifij," *Antik-Dekor*, Issue:16 (Istanbul: Antik A.Ş. Yayımları, 1992), p.82.

⁵⁹ As it is known, Sigmund Weinberg, a Polish Jew from Romania, served as head of the *Merkez Ordu Sinema Dairesi*, for which he filmed military, royal and other official visits. Weinberg had to quit when Romania and Ottoman Empire declared war on each other. His assistant, Fuat Uzkinay, an army officer who had taken an interest in cinematography, took over the department and continued to make war documentaries. For the regulations of the center, see, Erman Şener, *Kurtuluş Savaşı ve Sinemamız* (Istanbul: Ahmet Sarı Matbaası, 1970), p.15. For the Turkish cinema, in general, see, Giovanni Scognamillo, *Türk Sinema Tarihi* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1987); Scognamillo, *Cadde-i Kebir'de Sinema* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1991); Nezin Erdoğan and Deniz Göktürk, "Turkish Cinema" in Oliver Leaman (eds.), *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film*, (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁶⁰ One of the correspondents of a newspaper from the Balkan Peninsula writes on the "Famine Prices" in the Empire: "Constantinople is threatened with famine, and now depends mainly on precarious supplies of provisions shipped from [Constanta's] port...Not only bread but almost all other food stuffs are now distributed on the ticket system...deaths from starvation now occur daily, and are not unknown even among the Turkish population. Business is practically at a standstill, and prices have increased enormously. Sugar, petroleum, rice, coffee, potatoes, and beans fetch from 15 to 20 times their normal cost... the only bread procurable is black and unpalatable." Anonymous, "Famine Prices in Turkey," *The*

The paintings created in the Şişli Atelier were firstly exhibited in late 1917 at the *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu* before they were sent to Vienna for an exhibition between May 15 and June 1918.⁶¹ There were 128 paintings exhibited in Istanbul, while this number increased to 142 in the Vienna exhibition. Of the 128 paintings of the 1917 exhibition, around thirty five percent of them were related to the war, and, unsurprisingly, most of these works were about the Gallipoli front.⁶²

Compared to the high number of artists who had participated in the previous Galatasaray exhibitions, only 19 artists contributed their works to the *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu* exhibition of late 1917, all of whom were Muslim Ottomans, and only two were female artists; Harika Hanım and Ruşen Zamir Hanım.⁶³ Unlike the previous exhibitions held in *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu*, no non-Muslim artists participated in this one. Though the number of the Armenians living in the Empire had decreased tremendously by this point, there were still some Armenian painters living in the capital, such as Viçen Arslanyan and Simon Agopyan. Agopyan in particular was well-known for his works depicting battle scenes and ordinary soldiers (fig.25). So in opposition to the 1916 and 1917 Galatasaray exhibitions, the Şişli Atelier was exclusively a Muslim ‘formation.’

Times (May 18, 1916). Constantza was regarded as the nearest point of observation for Istanbul on neutral European ground. On the First World War economy see, Vedat Eldem, *Harp ve Mütareke Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomisi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994).

⁶¹ The most comprehensive study on Şişli Atelier belongs to Ahmet Kamil Gören, *Türk Resim Sanatında Şişli Atölyesi ve Viyana Sergisi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Resim ve Heykel Müzeleri Derneği, 1997).

⁶² Except the one work on the Caucasian Front by Cevad Bey (“Kafkas Cephesi”). “Kafkas Cephesi”, however, was not taken to the Vienna exhibition. Instead, a landscape by Cevad Bey entitled “Burgazada (Antigoni)” was taken to Vienna.

⁶³ Differently from the previous years’ catalogues, the late-1917 catalogue does not carry a date, rather, it only states: “Galatasaraylılar Yurdu Resim Sergisi” (*Galatasaraylılar Yurdu* Painting Exhibition) and the price of the catalog which was 2 *kuruş*. As indicated in the catalogue, the artists were: Sami Bey, Namık İsmail Bey, Hikmet Bey, Çallı İbrahim Bey, Ruşen Zamir Hanım, İbrahim Feyhaman Bey, Ali Sami Bey, Zekai Paşa, Şevket Bey, Adil Bey, Cevad Bey, Halil Paşa, Harika Hanım, Hüseyin Avni Bey, İsmail Hakkı Bey, Ruhi Bey, Seyid Bey and Tahsin Bey.

This might well be because the idea came from an Ottoman bureaucrat rather than the painters themselves. Furthermore, though the exhibition included various paintings different from war-related ones, it was still organized with a highly patriotic and propagandistic agenda. When one remembers Enver Bey's 1911 speech during the opening ceremony of the *Abide-i Hürriyet* where he included the Muslims and Christians as "fellow patriots,"⁶⁴ the absence of non-Muslims from this 'patriotic' visual show in 1917 very much proves the increasingly exclusivist and Turkist policies of the Ottoman state, and how these informed and restructured the artistic world.

The Vienna exhibition hosted 20 artists; Zekai Paşa, who had exhibited only one work in the late 1917 exhibition, "Bir Konak Dahili" (Interior of a Mansion) did not take part in the Vienna show, while the Prince Abdülmecid Efendi, the honorary president of the Society, who had not attended the 1917 exhibition, sent four paintings to Vienna. Another artist, who had not participated in the 1917 exhibition yet contributed to the Vienna one was Mehmed Ali. Though Mehmed Ali had taken an active role in the Ottoman Society of Painters, his works were not exhibited in any of the *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu* exhibitions. His exclusion, voluntary or not, was also surprising considering the fact he had fought in the Balkan Wars with Sami and also in the Dardanelles. On the contrary, Nazmi Ziya, after voluntarily taking a trip to the Gallipoli front with Ibrahim Çallı in 1915, took part neither in the Şişli Atelier nor in the Vienna exhibition, though he had sent a few landscape paintings to the *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu* exhibitions of 1916 and 1917. Muslim artists such as Çallı Ibrahim, Ibrahim Feyhaman, Namık İsmail, Cevad Bey, Harika Hanım and Hikmet Bey, took part in all the Galatasaray exhibitions

⁶⁴ See the Introduction of this thesis.

and the Vienna exhibition, and consequently seem to have been most popular in the art circles of that time.

The opening of the Vienna exhibition was conducted by the Archduke himself. The exhibition, as Celal Esad pointed out, was well received by both Austrian visitors and the press. A poster was designed (fig.26) and the exhibition was accompanied with a German catalogue, *Ausstellung Türkischer Maler* (Exhibition of Turkish Painters).⁶⁵ Contemporary newspapers also showed interest in the exhibition; the *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*⁶⁶ published a long essay together with reproductions of some paintings from the exhibition; the *Wochen-Ausgabe des Berliner Tageblatts*⁶⁷ published a comparatively short essay with a photo of the exhibit taken at the University of Vienna. Both articles emphasized the contributions by the Prince Abdülmecid, and specifically his two works about Western culture: “Goethe in the Harem” and “Beethoven in the Harem”. Though Prince Abdülmecid did not exhibit any work in 1917, he had visited the artists in their Şişli Atelier regularly. Besides these works which staged the introduction of Western culture into the Ottoman world, Prince Abdülmecid exhibited two other paintings in Vienna; a self-portrait showing him on his armchair, “Self-Portrait” (fig.27) and the portrait “Sultan Selim I” (fig.28).

In addition to the Prince Abdülmecid, the *Berliner Tageblatts* was also highly impressed by the symbolic, neo-classical paintings created by Harika Hanım:

⁶⁵ *Katalog der Ausstellung Türkischer Maler: Veranstaltet vom osmanischen Kriegspressequartier in den verbündeten Ländern* (1918).

⁶⁶ “Türkische Maler in Wien”, *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung* (28 Mai, 1918), pp.601-2. The snapshots of these newspapers are published in Gören, *Türk Resim Sanatında Şişli Atölyesi ve Viyana Sergisi*.

⁶⁷ Arnold Höllriegel, “Die türkische Kunstausstellung in Wien,” *Wochen-Ausgabe des Berliner Tageblatts* (5 Juni, 1918), p.7. Gören, *Türk Resim Sanatında Şişli Atölyesi ve Viyana Sergisi*.

Miss Harika, a Mohamedan Turk, half a millennium after the destruction of Hellenic-Byzantine culture, paints the Greek gods ... what a triumph of the Hellenic idea! Turkish cannons devastated the Acropolis over and over what else?⁶⁸

Though the German-language newspapers seemed to be more interested in the ‘names’ of the painters, such as the contribution by the Prince Abdülmecid Efendi (“the future Sultan”) or a Muslim-woman painter, the exhibition itself contained a great variety of painting genres: there were picturesque landscapes by Cevad Bey, Halil Paşa, Ruşen Zamir Hanım and Harika Hanım (fig.29, fig.30); marines by Ismail Hakkı Bey and Tahsin Bey (fig.31., 32); interior sketches by Şevket Bey (fig.33); images of ordinary people and everyday life by Namık İsmail and Hüseyin Avni; (fig.34, fig.35); and of course, the images of ordinary soldiers and of war landscapes by Ali Cemal, Feyhaman, Hikmet, Hüseyin Avni, Mehmed Ali, Namık İsmail, Ruhi, Sami and İbrahim Çallı (fig. 36, fig.37, fig.38, fig.39). The images of enthusiastic yet exhausted and fatigued ordinary soldiers fighting for the *vatan* (fatherland) were certainly informed by the contemporary war spirit. Though each work adopted different visual tools in its depictions of warfare, many paintings from the exhibition – such as Hikmet’s curious soldiers reading letters back from home in their trenches(fig.40) and Ali Cemal’s soldiers shooting at the enemy (fig.41) – resolutely portrayed the Ottoman fatherland as protected by its unknown soldiers.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Wendy Shaw, *Ottoman Painting: Reflections of Western Art from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (London: New York, I.B. Tauris, 2011), p.150.

Painting the Ordinary Soldier Safeguarding the Fatherland

The imagery of the *vatan* (fatherland) was already in use in the Ottoman literary and visual language in the first half of the nineteenth century, as inspired by the French *patrie*. The performance of Namık Kemal’s play “Vatan Yahut Silistre” (Fatherland or Silistra)⁶⁹ in 1873 was probably a milestone in the word acquiring its full meaning and popularity. For Namık Kemal, *vatan* was the sacred land for which people were sacrificed and loved in the name of Islam and the Sultan; “Long live the Sultan”, “Long live the fatherland”, “Long live the Ottomans!” were chosen as the last words of the soldiers at the end of the play. Though it was certainly not as popular as Namık Kemal, an Ottoman woman, Zafer Hanım, wrote a novella entitled *Aşk-ı Vatan* (Love for Fatherland) in 1877.⁷⁰ The plot itself did not aim to raise patriotic feelings, (it is based on a story of two slave girls brought from Spain to Istanbul), yet Zafer Hanım wrote an adamantly patriotic introduction: “I was dreaming about sacrificing my life with my *fatherland* brothers” she wrote, and finished by informing her readers that she would donate the total revenue of the book to the “Sultan’s armies.” In these plays and novels the Ottoman fatherland was, as Ahmet Ersoy has observed, “portrayed as a sacred domain that was won in the battlefield by a dynasty which safeguarded it under the banner of Islam,”⁷¹ and also in the name of the glorious sultan. The imperial imagery embodied in the celebrated and glorified Ottoman sultan was extremely powerful. So,

⁶⁹ Namık Kemal, *Vatan Yahut Silistre*, (Istanbul, 1872). For a full list of Namık Kemal’s works see, Mustafa Can, *Namık Kemal Bibliyografyası* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1988).

⁷⁰ Zafer Hanım, *Aşk-ı Vatan* (Istanbul: 1877). The novel was also transcribed into modern Turkish by Zehra Toksa and published recently. Zafer Hanım, *Aşk-ı Vatan* (Istanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 1994).

⁷¹ Ahmet Ersoy, *On the Sources of the ‘Ottoman Renaissance’: Architectural Revival and Its Discourse during the Abdülaziz Era, 1861-76* (Unpublished PhD Diss., Harvard University, 2000), pp.338-9.

for the late-nineteenth century painters, such as the Polish-born orientalist artist Stanislas Chlebowski who was commissioned by Sultan Abdülaziz between 1864 and 1876⁷² or the Italian court painter of Fausto Zonaro who worked under the commission of Sultan Abdülhamid between 1896 and 1909 (fig. 42), or for the Ottoman self-trained painter Hasan Rıza whose historical paintings adorned the pages of the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi* (fig. 43), celebrated Ottoman war victories were always to be portrayed with the glorious sultans in the centre leading their armies. Unsurprisingly, the most painted battle scenes of these times were the conquests of Sultan Selim I (r.1512-20) and Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (r.1520-66), from times when the Empire was perceived to have reached its peak of power and prestige. As Ersoy argues, these images corresponded to the “historicist” spirit of the late-*Tanzimat* period when identification with “the glorious days of yore offered relief from the grim realities of the present,”⁷³ and when the public sentiment resonated with “a romantic yearning for the founding years of the Ottoman Empire.”⁷⁴

Yet reinforced with the effectively powerless and symbolic image of the Sultan Mehmed V Reşad, and particularly after the temporary loss of Edirne during the Balkan

⁷² In fact, for Chlebowski’s historical paintings, Sultan Abdülaziz himself supplied some sketches to this new court painter showing his preferred compositional arrangements. In 1912, the famous British fine arts magazine, *The International Studio* published the reproductions of these drawings. M. Pawlikowski, *The Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine & Applied Arts*, Vol. 57, No. 235 (1915), pp.162-3. These drawings were also published two years later, in 1914, in the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*. M. Sami, “Selatinde İncizab-ı Tersim”, *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, Issue: 14 (1 Mart 1330 [March 14, 1914]). Today the Sultan’s drawings for the painter are kept in a commemorative album held in the National Museum of Cracow. See, the exhibition catalog *War and Peace: Ottoman-Polish Relations in the Fifth-Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Selmin Kangal, trans. Bartłomiej Swietlik (Istanbul, 1999), p.432.

⁷³ Ahmet Ersoy, “Osman Hamdi Bey and the Historiophile Mood: Orientalist Vision and the Romantic Sense of the Past in Late Ottoman Culture,” in Zeynep İnankur, Reina Lewis and Mary Roberts eds., *The Poetics and Politics of Place: Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism* (Istanbul: Pera Museum, 2011), p. 146.

⁷⁴ Ersoy, *On the Sources of the ‘Ottoman Renaissance,’* pp.340-1.

Wars (the city once served as the Ottoman capital), the strong sultan imagery leading the Ottoman army in war paintings would very much give way to the ordinary soldier fighting for the national cause. Starting with the Balkan Wars, the Ottoman painters' palette of imagery had already started to include the spectre of the unknown soldier. We have already seen the escalation of debates on 'national' art in the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi* after the Balkan Wars. As a matter of fact, after suspending the publication of the Journal for almost two years due to these wars, the fourteenth issue was launched with extensive numbers of paintings of ordinary soldiers. Quite remarkably, these images of unknown soldiers were created by Hasan Rıza himself, the painter who was known for his depictions of the glorious sultans, as we have seen. Yet Hasan Rıza produced these images during the Balkan Wars and, in fact, the representations of ordinary soldiers were certainly novel and popular channels of visual expression for painters during and after the Balkan Wars, when the Ottoman state attempted to mobilize the whole Ottoman population, regardless of religious differences, using mass propaganda (fig.44, fig.45). And yet this war ended in a massive defeat and a tremendous disruption both in the size and the demographic configuration of the 'fatherland.' So it was this new dialogue with the present, and with the recent shocking change in the face of the fatherland, that lies behind the new directions in the images of the paintings; not the glorious and conquering sultan but the ordinary man willing to sacrifice his life for the national cause. During the First World War the imagery of unknown heroic soldiers would more than at anytime inform the visual language of paintings, and the visions and ideals of the painters during the Vienna exhibition were in tune with this novel understanding and representation of the fatherland. The model hero was no longer Süleyman the Magnificent approaching Vienna but Sergeant Mehmed

desperately defending Gallipoli. It is also important to note that though these new representations of the fatherland safeguarded by ordinary soldiers are very different from those of Hoca Ali Rıza's humble landscapes in terms of their content, there are parallel bourgeois sensibilities between Ali Rıza's mundane/everyday life spaces and the mundane reality of the ordinary/nameless soldier.

The aim of the exhibition was also to bring the Vienna art works to Berlin, to the German ally's capital. By June 1918, however, it became apparent that the tide of war had changed in favour of the Allied armies and an exhibition in Berlin became an impossible proposition. The Vienna exhibition would remain the first and the last international exhibition for the Ottoman painters, as their 600-year-old Empire would experience its final breakup at the end of the Great War.

A Reconsideration of the Art of the First World War

It is an indisputable irony that the Ottoman artistic field flourished with the support of the Ottoman state during the war years. Despite the desperate material conditions of the First World War, this new state sponsorship certainly created a new dynamic of patronage for the artists of the Empire. Compared to the crises in patronage during the years immediately after the Constitutional Revolution, the war years provided a lucrative alternative to the economic reluctance and stagnation of the differentiated art market. One committed nationalist poet, Yusuf Ziya, for instance, was reportedly given enough cash to buy a four-room house in 1916 for his pro-war book *Akından Akına* (From One

Raid to Another).⁷⁵ The equipping of the Şişli Atelier itself demonstrates the extensive financial support of the state for visual culture, particularly in the high quality painting materials imported from Germany in the midst of the economical hardship. Yet besides these fresh ‘economic opportunities’ and the flourishing of visual and literary culture under the sponsorship of the state, artists were also compelled to nationalism and, given the harsh military censorship against the slightest oppositional view, were actively discouraged from publicly expressing any anti-war ideas. Given these pressures, is it fair to say that the whole Ottoman artistic establishment was jingoistic, patriotic and pro-war between 1914 and 1918?

There were, in fact, a few Ottoman intellectuals who developed more ambivalent, humanist and anti-militarist positions during the war. Though it is hard to talk about a settled tradition of anti-war art in the late-Ottoman Empire, there were still a few Ottoman intellectuals who managed to raise their voices against the militarist status quo. Recent studies, particularly those of Laurent Mignon, offer fresh insights for an alternative literary discourse of post-*Tanzimat* Literature against official/nationalist historiography.⁷⁶ The philosophical essays of Baha Tevfik and late poems of Tevfik Fikret, for instance, both construct alternative humanist positions in the last decade of the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁷ In his 1914 monograph “Felsefe-i Ferd” (Philosophy of the Individual), Baha Tevfik wrote with a positivist universalism: “The matter which is

⁷⁵ In his autobiographical work, Yusuf Ziya wrote about these years. Yusuf Ziya [Ortaç], *Bizim Yokuş* (Istanbul: Akbaba Yayınları, 1966), pp.41-5.

⁷⁶ Laurent Mignon, *Ana Metne Taşınan Dipnotlar: Türk Edebiyatı ve Kültürlerarasılık Üzerine Yazılar* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009): particularly his essay “Tanzimat Sonrası Türk Edebiyatında Alternatif Okumalar,” pp.151-82.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp.153-4.

united into the same primary elements of the universe has here whatever value it has in Germany, England, America and India.”⁷⁸ His universalist perspective, which includes the ‘enemies’ of the Ottoman state (England, America and India) during World War I, was very far from the contemporary jingoistic spirit. Similarly, in one of his late poems, “Tarih-i Kadim,” Tevfik Fikret was explicitly anti-militarist and anti-heroic:

Heroism ... at base is blood and savagery
Overrun towns, ruin armies
Slash, snap, shatter, drag, grind, burn, destroy
Know no ‘mercy!’ Hear no ‘woe!’ no ‘pity!’
Swell the roads you pass with death and grief
No ear of grain, nor grass, nor moss
Burned out houses, banished families
Let no place rest unbeaten
Let every hearth become a tomb
Let the roofs cave in on the orphans’ heads.⁷⁹

If these Ottoman intellectuals felt able to voice counter positions and critiques of the war, what then of the Ottoman Society of Painters? How did they respond and react to the conditions of the First World War? Did they become and remain apolitical supporters of the war effort or, on the contrary, could we sense a critic of the war cause by some of them?

It is perhaps not surprising that the official/nationalist Turkish literary and art history canons have not raised these challenging questions, though they would certainly

⁷⁸ Baha Tevfik, *Felsefe-i Ferd* (Istanbul: Keteon Bedrosyan Matbaası, 1914), quoted in *Ibid*, p.152.

⁷⁹ Tevfik Fikret, “Tarih-i Kadim,” quoted in *Ibid*, p.154.

bring about fresh and alternative discussions of the artistic production of these years. The Turkish Republic that was founded in 1923 following the independence struggle that was the outcome of the Empire's defeat by the Western powers, constructed and reproduced itself through a highly heroic and patriotic visual language, inspired in part by these wartime paintings. One example of this is the still ubiquitous image of Corporal Seyid carrying a 300 kilo shell behind his back up to the waiting artillery during March 18, 1915 naval battle in the Dardanelles (fig. 46, fig.47).

Conversely, for most of the people living today in the formerly belligerent countries of the First World War, propaganda has been largely forgotten or ironised, and wartime art has become synonymous with *anti-war* art; such as in the poems of Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Guillaume Apollinaire, Wilhelm Klemm and the paintings of Paul Nash and Otto Dix.

Certainly, the lack of biographical sources and documentary evidence on the Ottoman artists and their specific experiences of the war mean that any too hasty interpretation of their work as oppositional carries the risk of an 'over-interpretation'. Yet we can perhaps suggest parallels with the position of European artists, drafted into wartime service by their militaristic states. Paul Nash, a British painter, was sent by British High Command as an official war artist to the Western front, and wrote the following in a letter to his wife, in which he declares his intention to, however feebly, resist the intolerable contradiction of his position:

I am no longer an artist. I am a messenger who will bring back word from the men who are fighting to those who want the war to go on for ever. Feeble, inarticulate will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth and may it burn their lousy souls.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Quoted in Margot Eates and Paul Nash, *Paul Nash, The Master of the Image, 1889-1946* (London: J. Murray, 1971), p.23.

True, we lack many first hand narratives about the horrors of the war from the late-Ottoman artists. Yet, a lack of narratives can never turn us into passive onlookers. As a matter of fact, the Ottoman war paintings are above all works of art, and thus make special demands on us as interpreters. Paintings are created carefully and slowly by their producers, most of the time after days, weeks and even months of conscious preparations and plans, and yet it is always possible for what the artist feels to leak unconsciously into the work. In fact, even if we had all the documentary evidence in front of us, it would still be naïve to expect to discover and recover the ‘true’ meaning of these art works or the ‘real’ intention of the artists, if such a thing was at all possible or even meaningful.

What, for instance, are we to make of Ibrahim Çallı’s painting *Night Attack* or Hüseyin Avni Lifij’s *War* or Mehmed Ali’s *Dardanelles After the Bombardment*? Surely these must be read as paintings which portray the horrific reality and sufferings of the battlefronts rather than glorifying the war as cause. *Night Attack* positions the soldiers of the two sides so close to each other that the rifles lay on the floor while the enemies try to kill each other with bayonets or bare hands, and at the very centre of painting we meet the wide eyes of an extremely terrified man with eyes and mouth wide open, terrorised to the point of madness by the violence surrounding him (fig.48). Avni Lifij’s *War* is an allegory of a disastrous ‘universal war’ in which devastated and scared women huddle among the ruins; the battle behind the figures has just finished and its brutality and savagery have left everything broken, empty, dry and destroyed (fig.49). The simple sketch *Dardanelles after the Bombardment*, portrays a silent dead city, ruined and abandoned by people; the demolished walls and the bare terrain very much representing

the ‘soundless’ finality of departure and death (fig.50). The strong imagery in these paintings represents the brutal struggle of war as an extreme condition of life, full of destruction, savagery and grief. Another painting from the exhibition which takes an apparently critical position to the cause of the war is Adil Bey’s *His Memory*, though it does so this time by depicting the domestic sphere (fig.51). The painting presents a woman crying and mourning in a humbly decorated room for the loss of the life of the one she loves. Different from other images of the war, in *His Memory*, the focus is turned away from the fighting on the battlefield to the sorrow left behind. Above all, Adil Bey’s work makes a straightforward statement about war, its losses and griefs.

Paradoxically, İbrahim Çalli’s painting *Night Attack* is today exhibited in the collection of the Istanbul Military Museum (*Askeri Müze*), drawing on a ‘militarist’ interpretation of the image by a country which has traditionally legitimized its existence through a highly militarized nationalism. It is no coincidence that more than a century after this disastrous war, these ‘ambivalent’ art works have either been given militarist or nationalist interpretations or been totally excluded from the official/nationalist Turkish art history canons, as with Mehmed Ali’s and Adil Bey’s work.

Indeed, the First World War has had a paradoxical character in the historical memory of the Turkish Republic. While it has mostly been dismissed and despised as a CUP cause, or, at best, as the background and trigger of the Independence War, the Gallipoli campaign has equally been commemorated and celebrated with a specific emphasis on the role of the commander Mustafa Kemal, the future founder of the Republic, and on the devotion of the ordinary soldiers to the country’s salvation. Though it has been more than hundred years since this first total war, today, the metonym “Mehmetçik” is still used for the soldiers of the nation, after Mehmed Çavuş, the famous

ordinary sergeant Mehmed, who “fought without fear” in Gallipoli. Yet looking at this specific moment of history with ‘nationalist’ and ‘militarized’ eyes has only muted and obscured the alternative voices from the period. Rather than adopting a statist perspective which centres on propaganda and a pro-war perspective, more nuanced and multi-faced ways of looking at this period are a necessary step towards an alternative reading of the extraordinary circumstances of World War I, the first great human-made catastrophe of the twentieth century. Today, I believe, fresh insights are needed to stand up for and speak of what has been misinterpreted and distorted on the pages of Turkish art history.

CONCLUSION

As art history in Turkey developed in tandem with the modern nation-state of the Turkish Republic, its epistemological tools were very much in the service of nationalist impulses. Writing in a country which adamantly constructed itself as a counter-model to the Ottoman Empire, the challenge for early-Republican art historians was to write about the art of a ‘tainted’ empire using the terminologies and ideologies of the new nation-state. In this particular kind of narrative, distortions, marginalizations and exclusions were inevitable. The very fact that this version of history was written in line with certain political and cultural agendas of the early-Republic makes it necessary to look at this period afresh and understand it in its own terms and its own creative specificities. This is precisely what I aimed to do in this study by focusing one part of that distorted history, the Ottoman Society of Painters.

The final decade of the Ottoman Empire was certainly a unique decade, starting with a revolution and continuing with rebellions, wars and massacres. These harsh and complex political dynamics led me to write a history of the Ottoman Society of Painters by understanding it as part of these catastrophic years. Thus, while I referred back to the late Ottoman and post-*Tanzimat* context of the Society, I primarily focused on the reign of Sultan Reşad Mehmed V, or the era of the Committee of Union and Progress. The major conflicts of the early twentieth century, the Balkan Wars and the First World War, marked a turning point in the national consciousness of the Ottoman Empire, and their influence on visual culture was immense. As in the case of the Ottoman Society of Painters, I proposed that the painters and their art works were very much affected by the historical circumstances of these disastrous war years.

Several major points that have arisen repeatedly in this study seem important to reiterate again in the Conclusion. First and foremost, Ottoman painting has generally been approached from a formalist and nationalist perspective, which was very much imposed by the Franco-centric and traditional art history writing we see in early-Republican art historiography. It is in no doubt that modern Ottoman painting cannot be thought without making reference to Western art trends, or aesthetic developments in Europe, as many Ottoman artists were trained in the West or by Western instructors in the Academy of Fine Art (*Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi*). Nevertheless, any attempt to judge the meaning of these art works with Euro-centric terminologies and prejudices would leave us with a partial and unfair picture of this specific art world. Such models might provide insight into the development of Western art styles, such as Impressionism's challenge to Academism in French painting, or the Italian Futurists' opposition to old Italy, or the Russians Avant-garde's rejection of traditional Russian literature. In the culture of late-Ottoman painting, however, form never became and seen as the central concern. For the 'new' painters of the late-Ottoman Empire, and for the members of the Ottoman Society of Painters, former painters such as Şeker Ahmed Paşa and Osman Hamdi Bey were seen as role models who had believed in and worked for the progress of civilization in the Empire, not a decadent generation to be challenged, opposed and replaced. These figures were publicly admired and respected by their early-twentieth century successors, and the debates that took place in the Society's Journal, as we have seen in the third chapter, very much prove this point.

As much as I attempted to understand the Society in its continuity with the previous discourse and its relation to former painters, I explored the breaks and ruptures in this history and how these differences were associated with their specific historical

conditions. In fact, Şeker Ahmed and Osman Hamdi's academism was replaced by the impressionist styles of the Ottoman Society of Painters, and by their images of bourgeois portraiture, everyday-life and heroic, military and nationalist themes. Yet this shift and rupture cannot be explained by a Modernist formalist approach or by ready-made Western terminologies. As I attempted to show in the second chapter, this shift was parallel to a change in the class structure of the painters themselves (from Ottoman high bureaucrats to professional artists, school teachers and full-time wage laboured painters). The Academy of Fine Arts, founded in 1883 during the Hamidian era, offered an 'equal-opportunity' merit-based artistic education to the future professional Ottoman painters, and the institutionalization of arts eventually created a great number of professional painters in the first decade of the twentieth century. So, as we have seen in the second chapter, this increase in the number of free-lance painters in no way coincided with the demand for their art works, hence the foundation of an artistic society was a necessary step for Ottoman painters partly due to a burgeoning crisis in patronage.

With an attempt to understand continuities and breaks in the late-Ottoman intellectual milieu, I focused on the debates took place in their Journal, the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, in my third chapter. As we have seen, the graduates of the Academy of Fine Arts, also largely the members of the Ottoman Society of Painters, often had quite different aesthetic and social anxieties, and the articles in the Journal showed us these peculiar concerns and sensibilities. The Society's priorities and agendas *per se* also changed remarkably between the years 1911 and 1914. Specifically the issues published after the Balkan Wars illustrate that the current of Ottoman art became harshly integrated into political and 'national' anxieties. The Balkan Wars were a turning point for the artistic debates within the Journal in that sense, which paved the

way for fervent diatribes against the non-Muslim instructors of the Academy of Fine Arts in their inability and failure to promote 'national art.' The Journal also published sketches and painting of ordinary soldiers created by Ottoman painters during the Balkan Wars. This representation of unknown soldiers safeguarding the fatherland was quite a novel visual tool for the painters of the Empire. These familiar images of heroic soldiers also helped ordinary men and women imagine the 'abstract category' of the nation. Therefore it was not surprising to see the proliferation of the heroic ideas embodied in these images of unknown soldiers during the First World War when popular nationalism was at its height. Wartime paintings were immensely interesting for certain reasons. They were, first of all, created by artists in the extraordinary circumstances of the war. Artists responded to this disastrous event in their own ways, and in my fourth chapter I attempted to explore the diverse narratives of these images in order to achieve a deeper and more multi-faceted understanding of these war paintings, instead of looking at them only from the perspective of propaganda and pro-war efforts.

In the light of the discussion about visual production during the war years, it must be added that nationalist and militarist narratives of the First World War have been confirmed and reformulated again and again in Turkey, not only in art historiography but also through mass media, history books and school curricula. It has been almost hundred years since the war ended, but Turkey has always failed to 'reconcile' itself to its World War I memories. Though the past couple of decades have seen a radical rethinking of the nationalist discourse of the country in academic circles, these studies still remain a minority. On the popular level, many events have unfortunately shown us the residual nationalist and militarist sentiments of the country, such as the assassination of Hrant Dink, the Turkish-Armenian journalist, in 2007. More alternative studies of

these years are needed which might, and I hope will, contribute to the way Turkey visits and thinks about its past.

I want to conclude with some questions that I faced in writing this study. As much as I have attempted to approach the Society as a diverse and heterogonous formation with varied and changing ideas, I did not, most of the time, focus on the biographies and personalities of the Society members. I believe, a future prosopographic study on these artists, though one still situated within the political, cultural and intellectual dynamics of the period, would greatly further and enrich our understanding of the Society in particular and late-Ottoman visual culture in general. The Ottoman Society of Painters often functioned in this study as a social prism through which late-Ottoman visual culture was split into its constituent colours. Thus I am well-aware of the fact this is still only *a* history of a fragment or detail of a broader visual culture. In other words, while the Society itself is a tempting case study to illustrate the wider social and cultural scene of the late-Ottoman Empire, the ‘important’ detail we choose to focus on very much informs the methodology of our study. What would the results have been, for instance, if I had focused on an artistic organization in the periphery of the Empire? What kind of broader social scene would we have ended up with if I had explored the conditions of Armenian painters living in Istanbul during the First World War? There is certainly something enticing about the ‘other’ stories of late-Ottoman Empire visual culture, and I hope in the future more studies will appear about these ignored and muted narratives of Ottoman/Turkish art history.

FIGURES USED IN THIS STUDY



Fig.1 Ahmed Ziya, *Untitled* (the garden of Yıldız Palace).

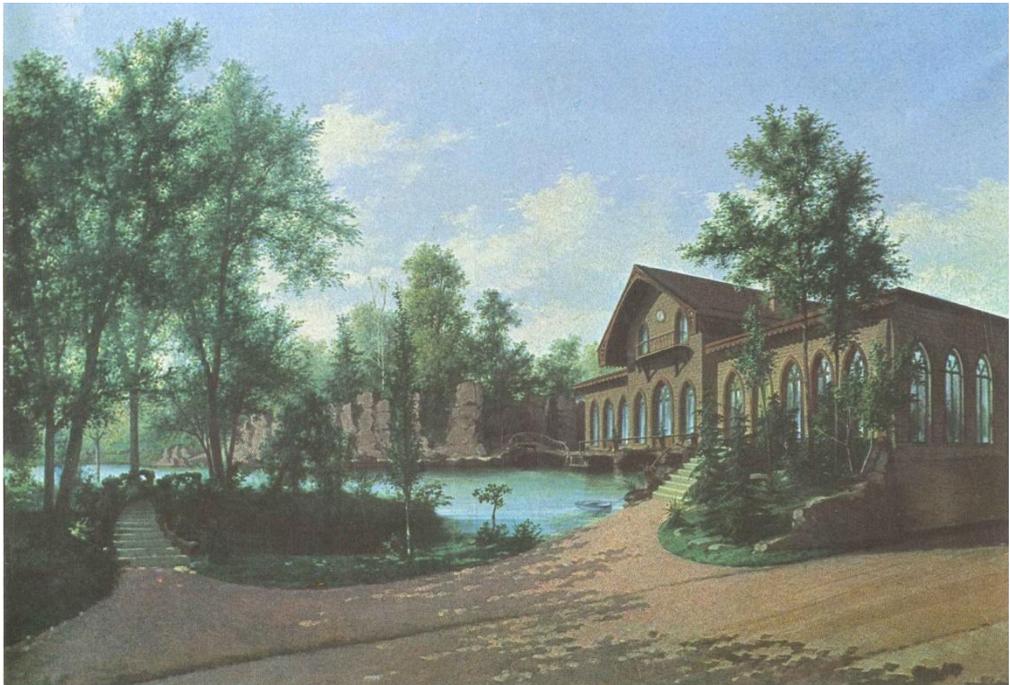


Fig.2 Unknown painter, *Untitled* (the garden of Yıldız Palace).



Fig.3 Süleyman Seyyid's *Still-life with Oranges*.



Fig.4 Hüseyin Zekai Paşa's *Still-life*.



Fig.5 Şeker Ahmed Paşa's *The Quinces*.



Fig.6 Osman Hamdi Bey's *In front of the door of Sultan Ahmed Mosque*.



Fig.7 Prince Abdülmecid Efendi, the honorary president of the Ottoman Society of Painters. The cover of the Inaugural Issue of the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*.

عثمانی ریساملار جہتی

غزنی قہسی

۲۵ مارچ سنہ ۱۳۲۸

نسخہ فوق العادہ

۱۱ نمبر سنہ - ۱۱



ادرنہ صنایع مکتبی مدیری
رسام حسن رضا نکاک

H. Riza Bey

بحریہ نظارت جلیہ سنہ عائد
موزہ دہ

Mus. de l'Amirauté

بانی سلطنت سلطانیہ عثمانیہ اول
Fondateur de la dynastie Ottomane

Fig.8 Hasan Rıza's portrait of Sultan Osman. The cover of the 11th Issue of the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*

تاریخ عثمانی رسمکاران جمعیته

۲۵ نیسان سنه ۱۳۲۸

ایلیفین سنه - نومرد ۱۲



ادرنه صنایع مکتبی مدبری
رسم حسن رضا بکاک
Peintre H. Riza Bey,

بحریه موزه سندن اقتباس
ابداعدر .
Mus. de l'Amirauté

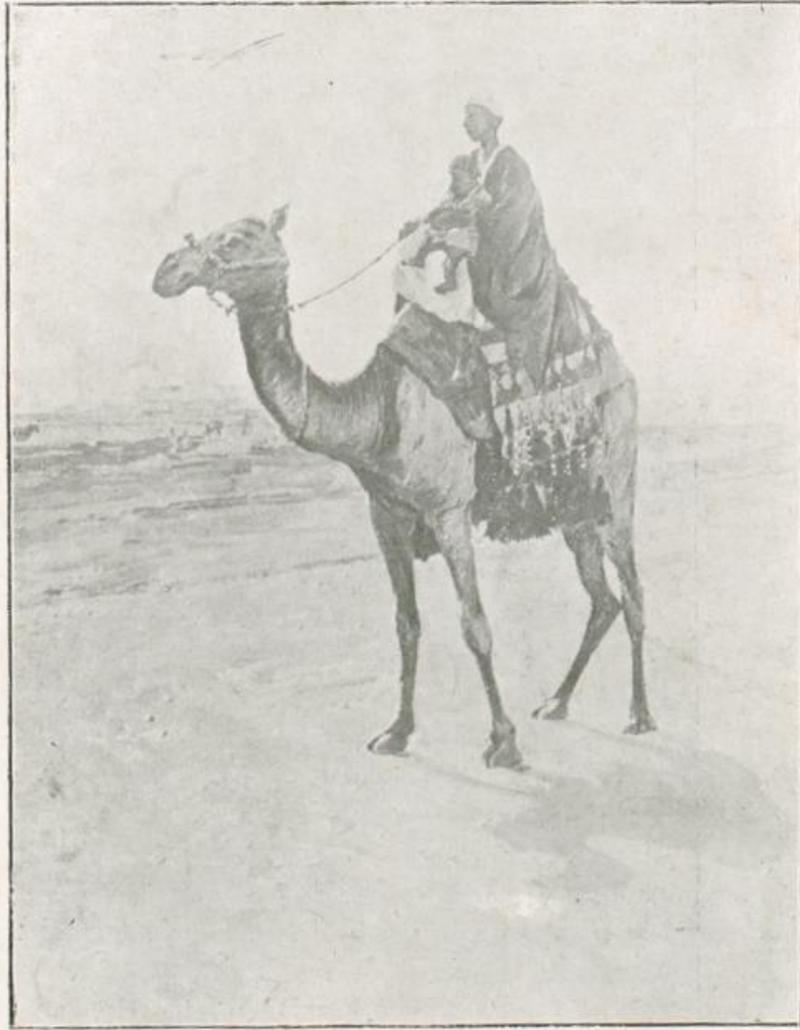
Barbarosse بارباروس

Fig.9 Hasan Rıza's portrait of Hayreddin Barbarossa. The cover of the 12th Issue of the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*

تہذیبی رسالہ عثمانی ریساملار جمعیتی

۲۵ مایس سنہ ۱۳۲۸

۱۳ - نومبر سنہ - ۱۳



Professeur Hallil Pacha

خلیل پاشا دن :

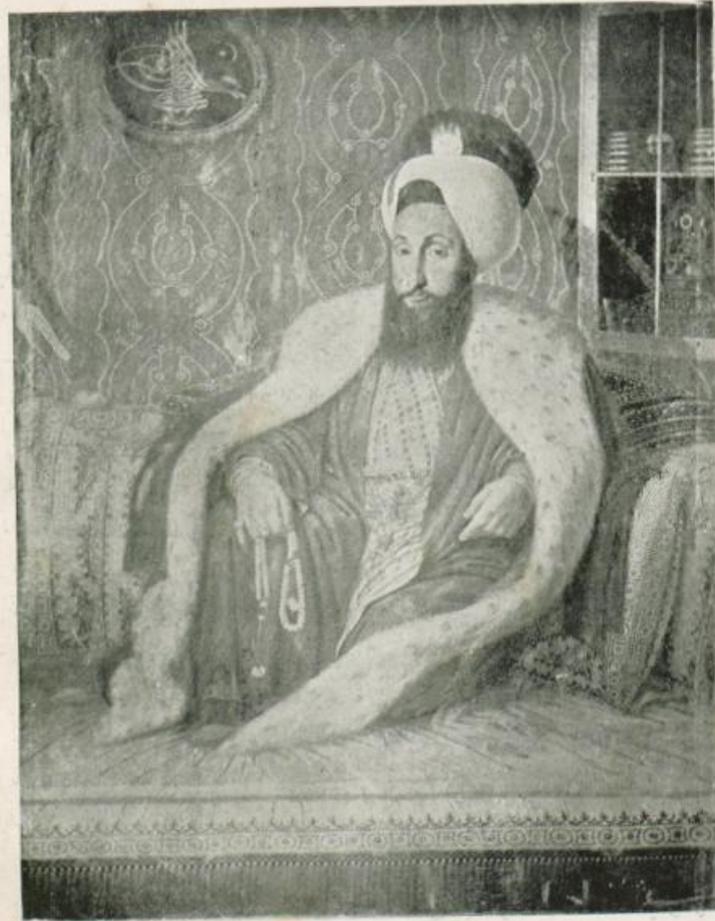
مصرده بر دورجی

Un chamelier en Egypte

Fig.10 Halil Paşa's *A Camel Driver in Egypt*. The cover of the 13th Issue of the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*

پیکر عالی حضرت سلطان سلیم ثالث

بوکره ذات شوکتها حضرت پادشاهی طرفین عثمانی - فرانسیز عبادت قدیمه سی تأییداً ضیاعه منی فرانسه
سفارتخانه سنه اهدا ایدیلن جنتمکان سلطان سلیم ثالث حضرت تریک تصویر قیمت اولر بدرکه صنایع نفیسه مآذولر نزلدن
وما بین همیون کاتیرندن رسام عزت بکه بااراده سنیه استساح ایتدیروا شدو



ایسته برسیبای یاک سلطنت ، شرکت دنیفنک انموزج بریعی !... ملی بر قیاف ذی سطوت که صاحب عالی تبارینه ،
ممثل تاجدارینه فارسی عثمانی ملتنک حس شکرانه دامتائی تجرد و رقیبسی نسبتندره متزایر دمتعالی در

Fig.11 İzzet Bey's portrait of Sultan Selim III. The cover of the 16th Issue of the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*.

شهادتِ پیلانِ عثمانی

نومرو ۱۷

۱ حزیران ۱۳۰



هرکه فابریقه هاپونی سر دسامی محترم رفیقمنز (طوماس) اقدینک بر ترسیم رمز بسدرکه مسعود و مغبوط
شہید طیاره جیلرمنک و طیاره جیلکمنک حیات ابدیہ مظهریتلری مبشردر

Fig.12 Tovmas Efendi's painting of the three martyred Ottoman pilots who lost their lives in an aircraft crash just after the Balkan Wars. The cover of the 17th Issue of the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*.

تعمیر و تعمیر
تعمیر و تعمیر
تعمیر و تعمیر
تعمیر و تعمیر

نومبر ۱۸

۱ نومبر ۱۳۳۰



رسم رضا بك

محترم استادك قاشن برادرلری رسم اسماعیل حق بكك آلبومندن :

Fig.13 İsmail Hakkı's portrait of Hoca Ali Rıza. The cover of the 18th Issue of the *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*.



Fig.14 Hoca Ali Rıza's *Snow in Üsküdar*.



Fig.15 Hoca Ali Rıza's *Pink House*.



Fig.16 The poster of *Die Türkei im Weltkrieg: Bildnisse und Skizzen von Wilhelm Victor Krausz*, 1916.



Fig.17 The Grand vizier Said Halim Paşa. *Die Türkei im Weltkrieg*, 1916.



Fig.18 Enver Paşa, the Minister of War and Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Army. *Die Türkei im Weltkrieg*, 1916.



Fig.19 Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, the Prussian Field Marshal. *Die Türkei im Weltkrieg*, 1916.



Fig.20 Liman von Sanders, the German Generalleutnant and the military commander for the Ottoman Empire. *Die Türkei im Weltkrieg*, 1916.



Fig.21 Sultan Mehmed V Reşad. *Die Türkei im Weltkrieg*, 1916.



Fig.22 Ali Cemal's *A Watchman in Maydos*. The Exhibition of *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu*, 1916.

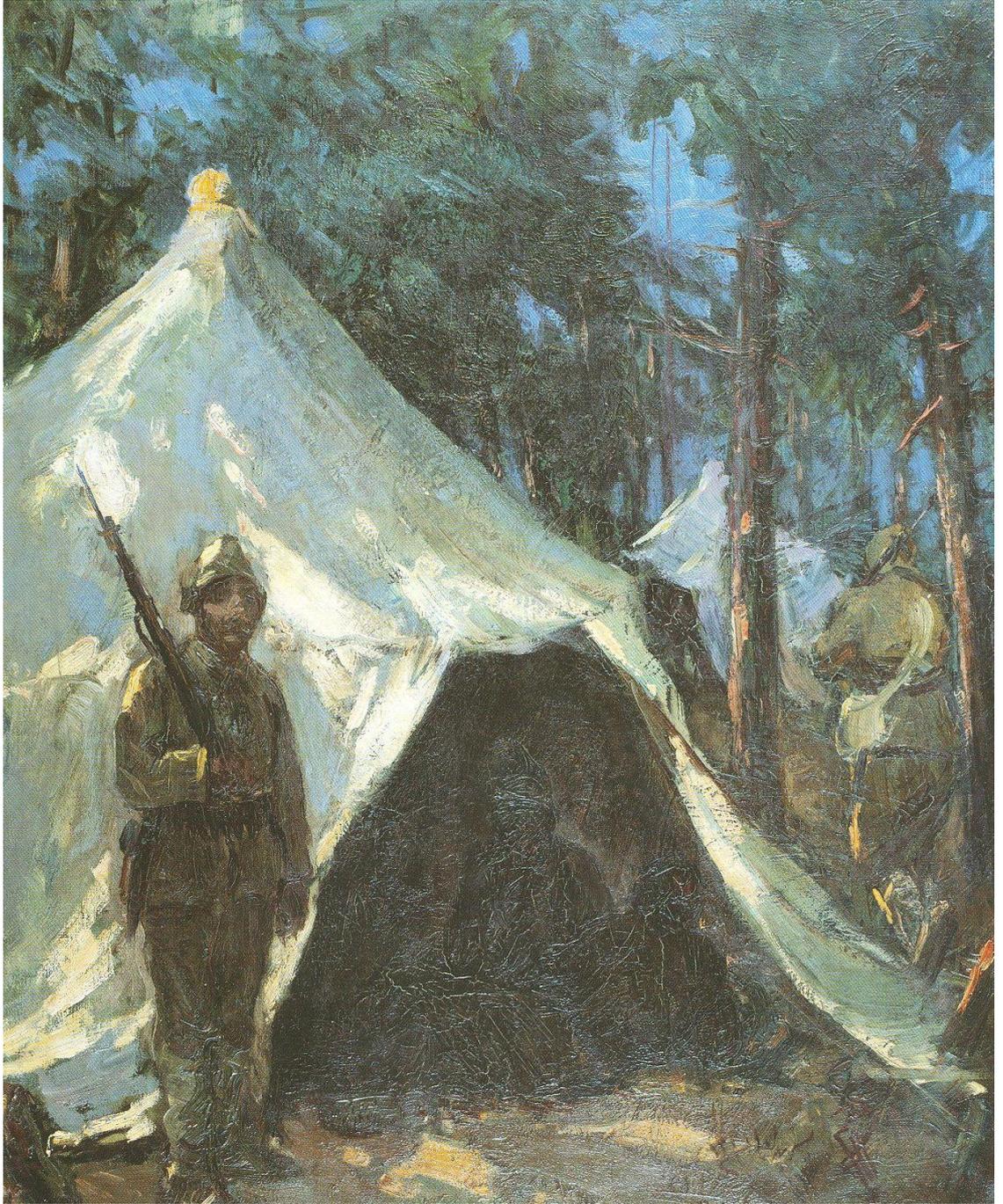


Fig.23 İbrahim Çallı's *Private Soldier*. The Exhibition of *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu*, 1916.

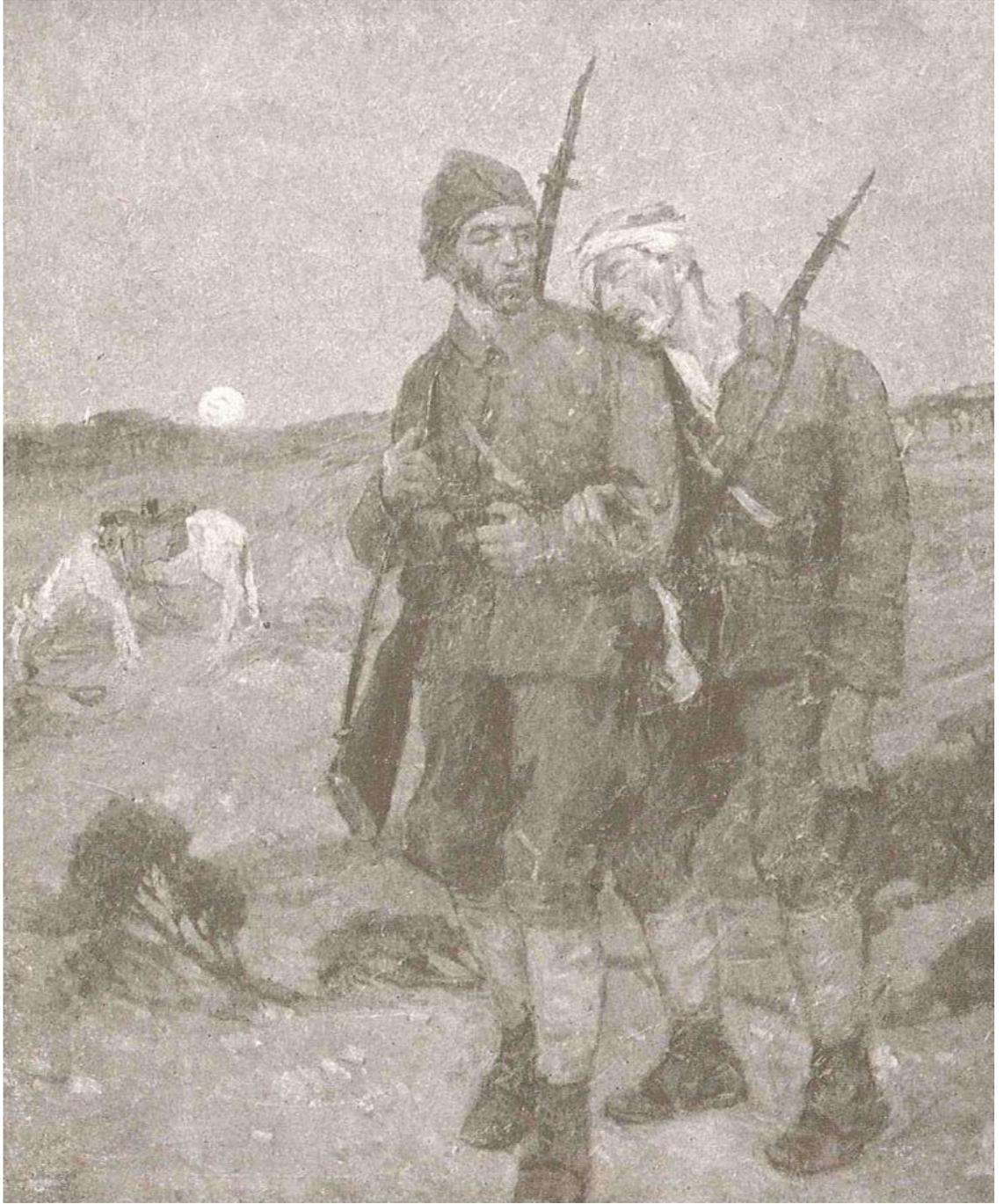


Fig.24 İbrahim Çallı's *Wounded Soldier*. The Exhibition of *Galatasaraylılar Yurdu*, 1917. (This painting was also exhibited one year later in Vienna).



Fig.25 Simon Agopyan's *Wounded Soldier Shooting*.



Fig.26 The poster of the 1918 Vienna Exhibition.



Fig.27 Prince Abdülmecid's *Self-Portrait*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.

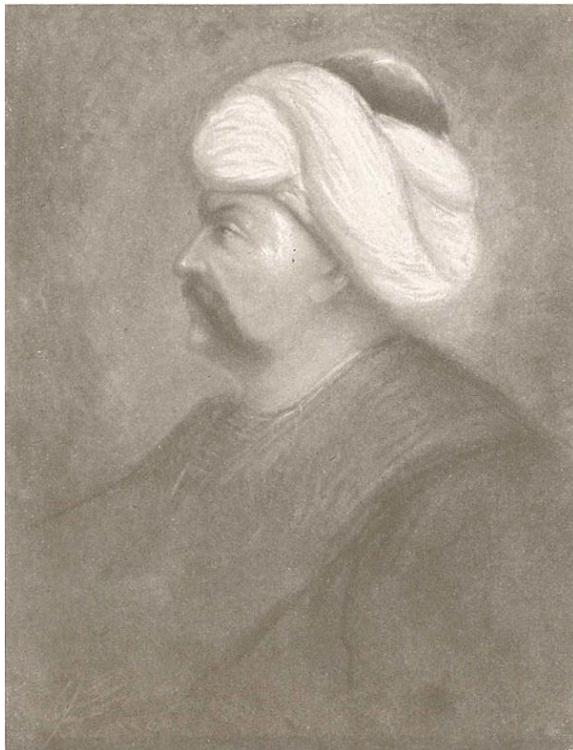


Fig.28 Prince Abdülmecid's *Sultan Selim I*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.



Fig.29 Ruşen Zamir Hanım's *Against Arc*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.

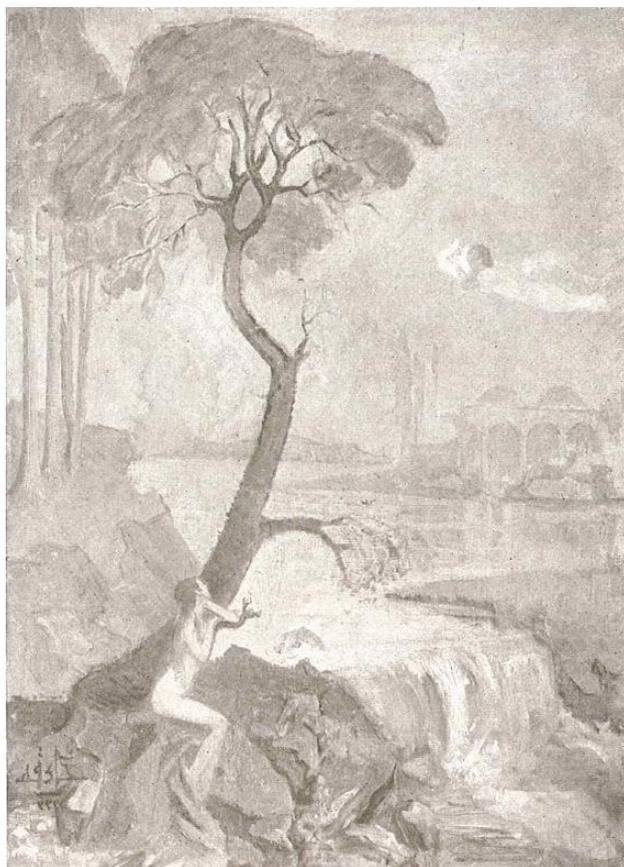


Fig.30 Harika Hanım's *Harmony*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.

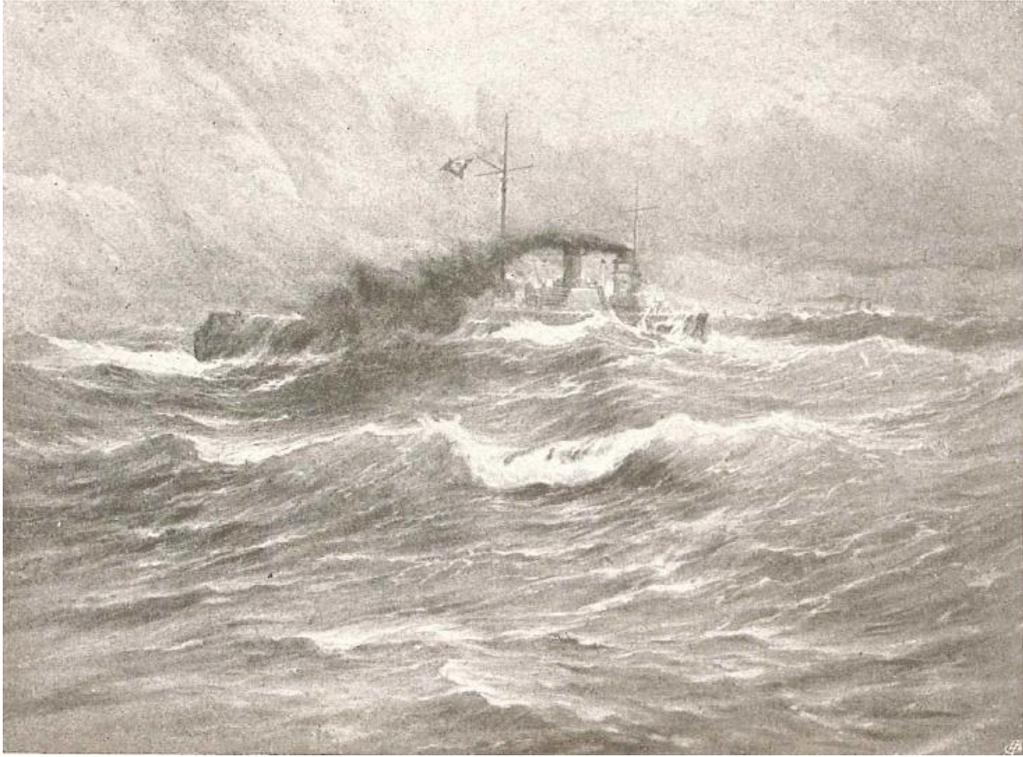


Fig.31 İsmail Hakkı's *Yavuz (Goeben)*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.

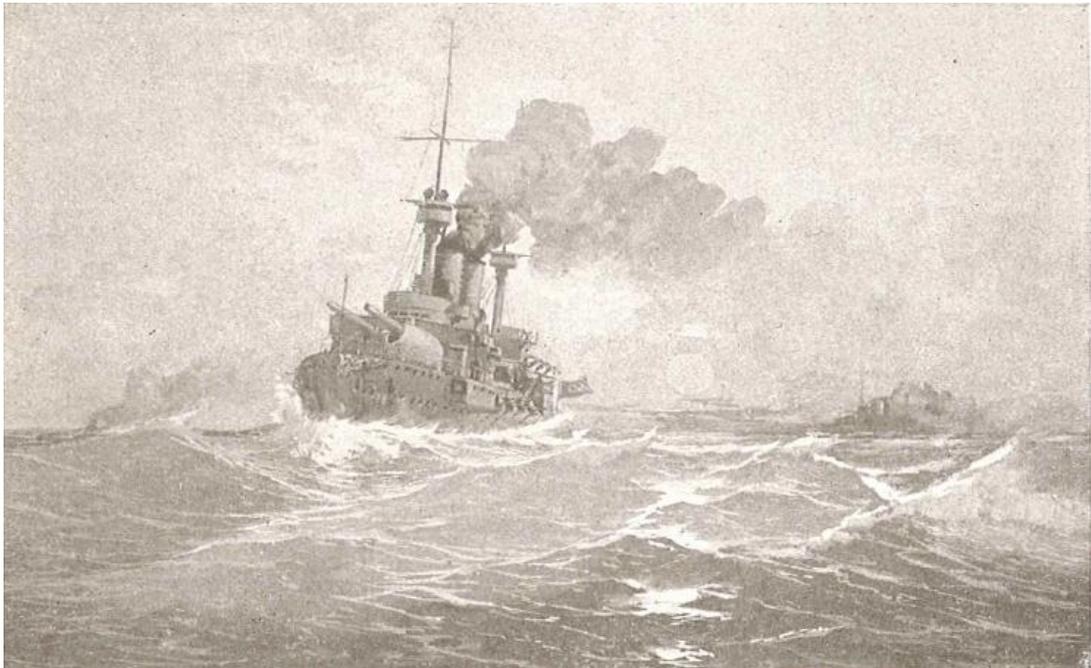


Fig.32 Tahsin Bey's *Barboros and Turgut*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.

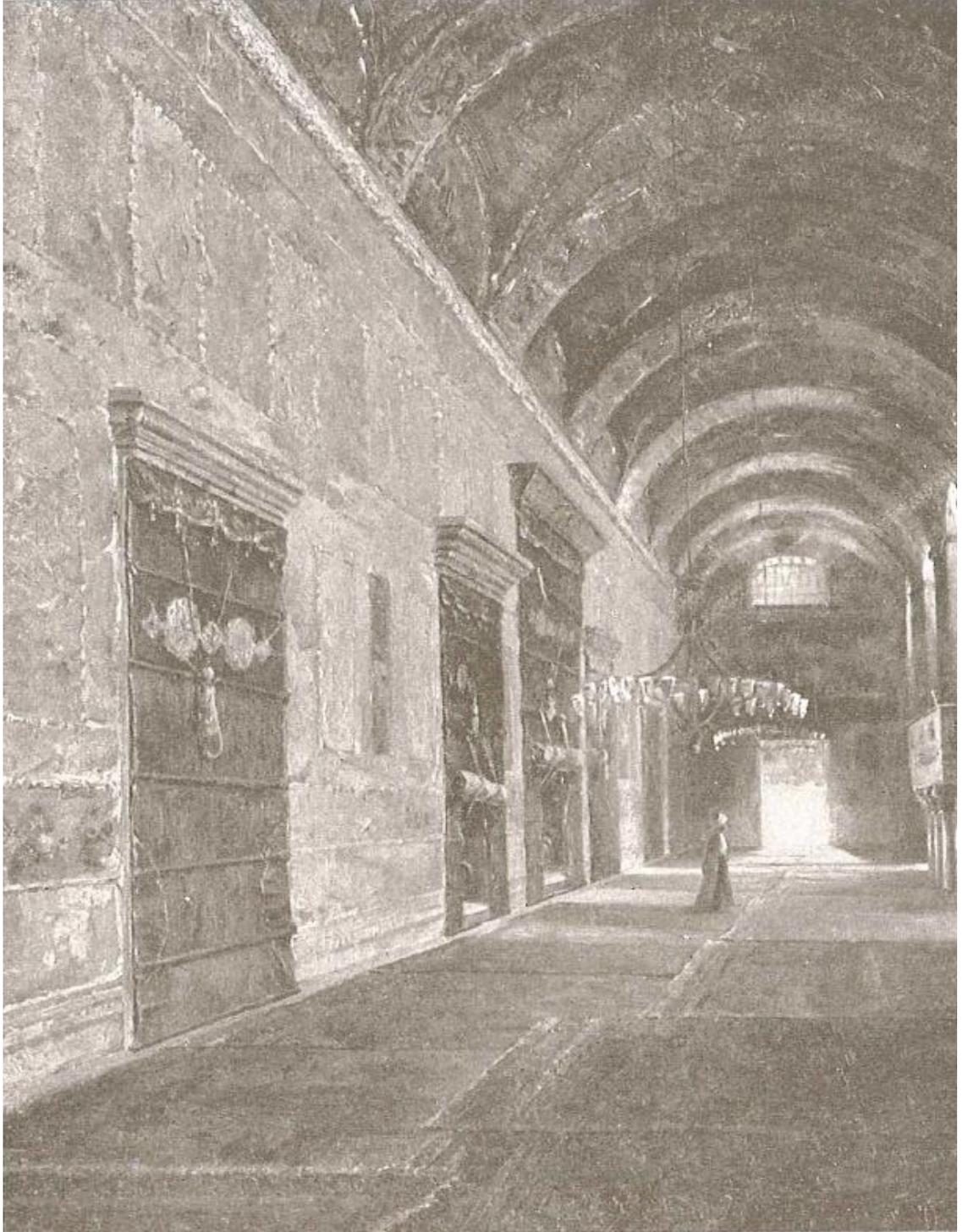


Fig.33 Şevket Bey's *The Narthex of Hagia Sophia*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.

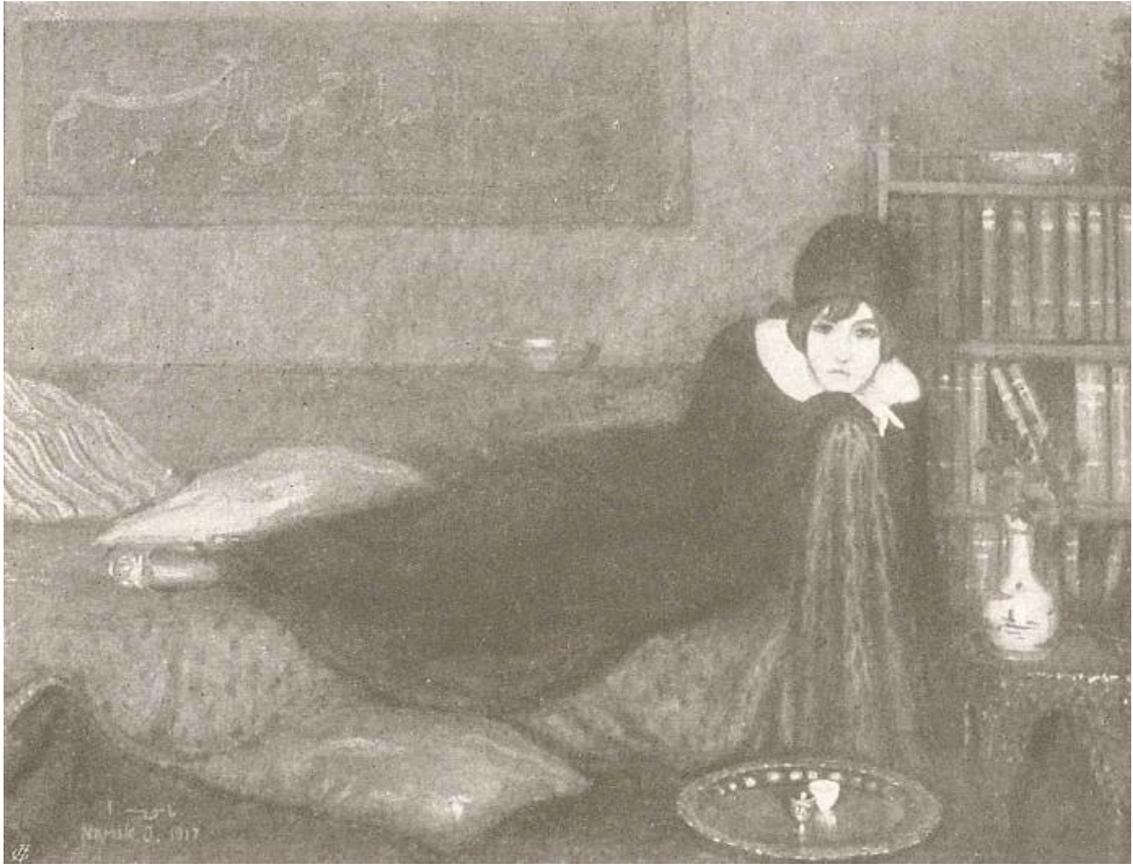


Fig.34 Namık İsmail's *Lost in Thought*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.



Fig.35 Avni Lifij's *The Wall Decoration for the Town Hall of Kadıköy*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.



Fig.36 Ruhi's *Triptyque*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.

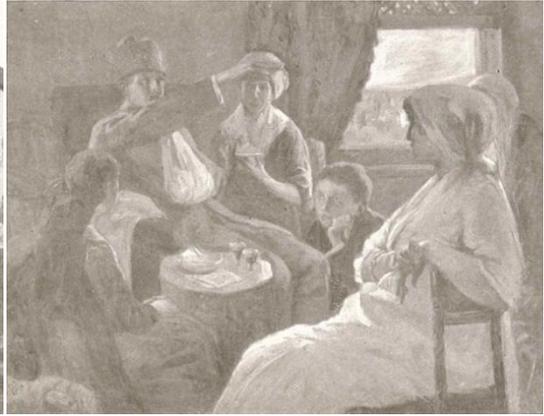


Fig.37 Feyhaman's *War Experience*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.

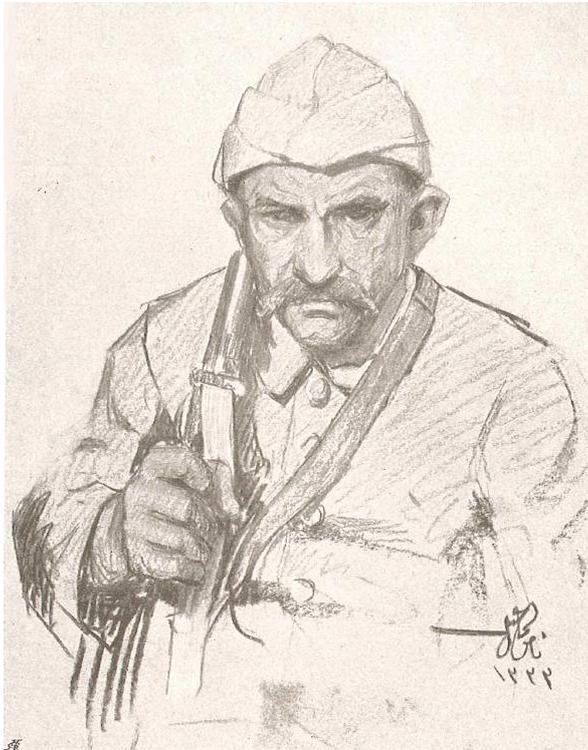


Fig.38 Namik İsmail's *Soldier*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.



Fig.39 Hikmet's *Passing through his Village*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.

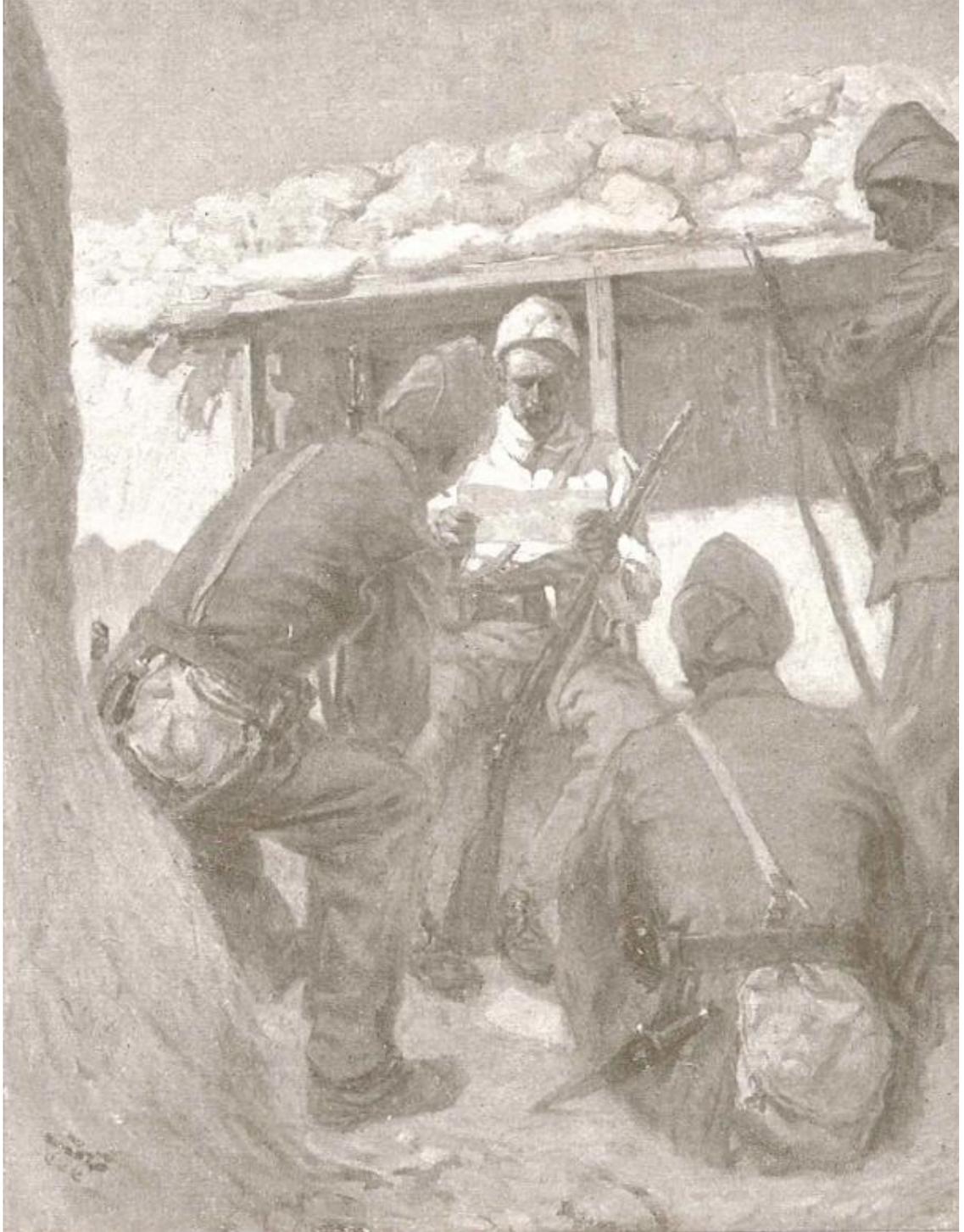


Fig.40 Hikmet Bey's *Letter from Home*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.



Fig.41 Ali Cemal's *In Dobruja*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.



Fig.42 Fausto Zonaro's depiction of Sultan Mehmed with his army in Istanbul.



Fig.43 Hasan Rıza's *The Victory of Eğri*.



Fig.44 Hasan Rıza's drawing of an ordinary soldier.



Fig.45 Hasan Rıza's drawing of an ordinary soldier depicted from his back.

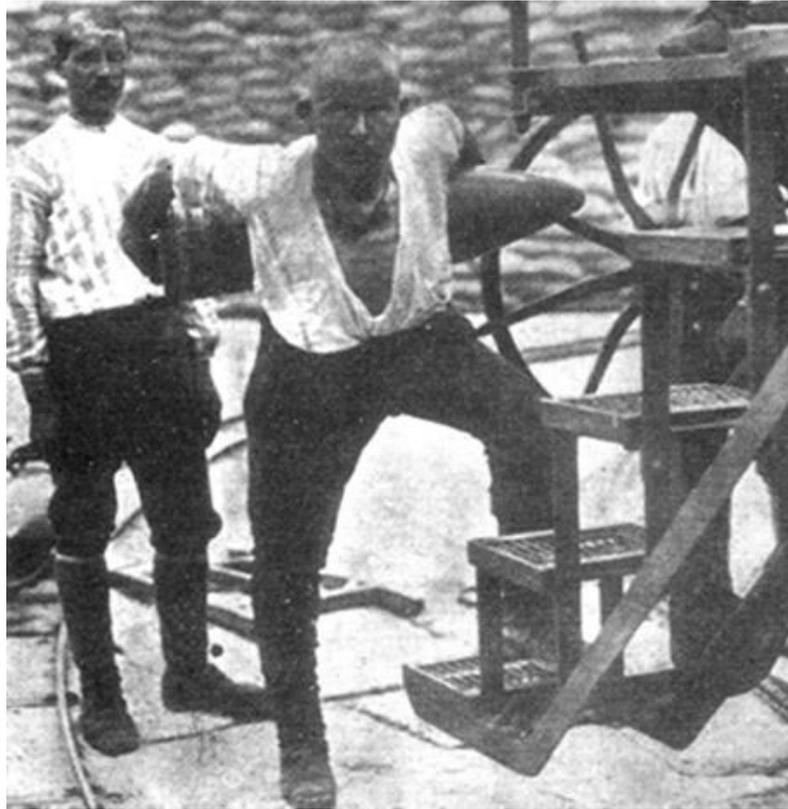


Fig.46 The photograph of Corporal Seyid carrying a 300 kilo shell behind his back up to the waiting artillery during the naval battle in the Dardanelles.



Fig.47 An example of the ubiquitous image of Corporal Seyid in today's Turkey. (A Turkish coach).



Fig.48 İbrahim Çallı's *Night Attack*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.



Fig.49 Avni Lifij's *War*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.

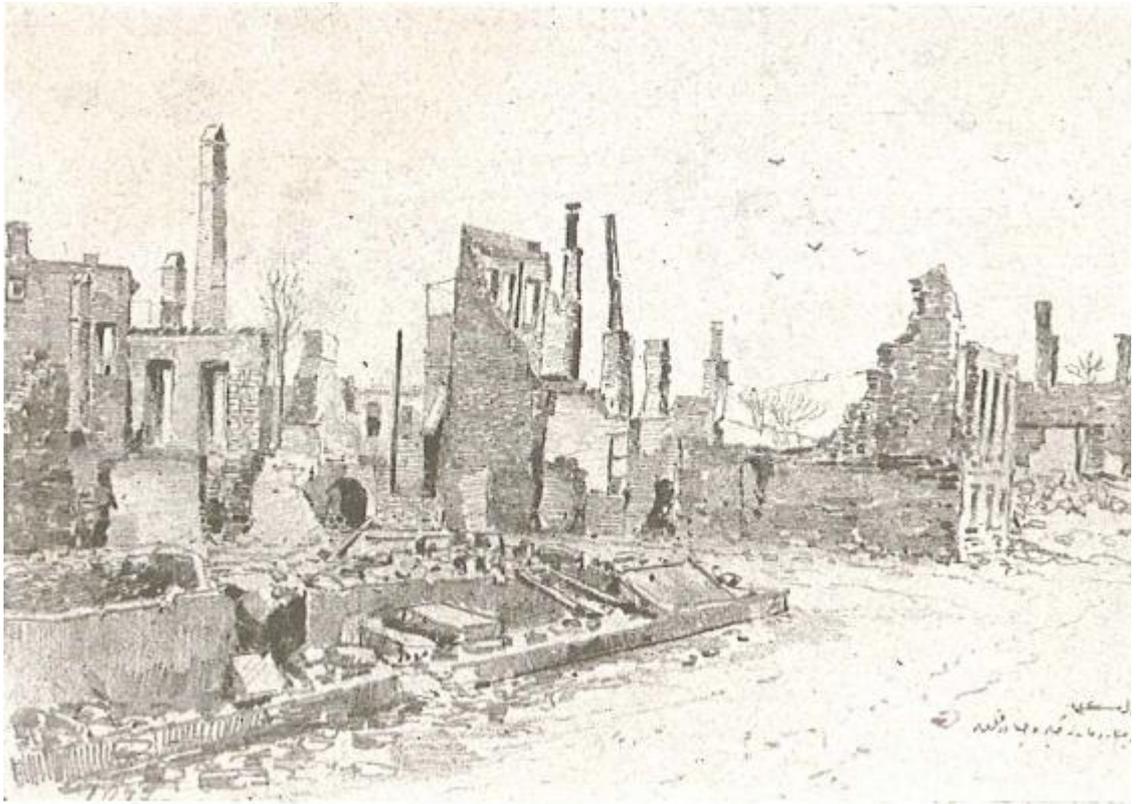


Fig.50 Mehmed Ali Laga's *Dardanelles after the Bombardment*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.

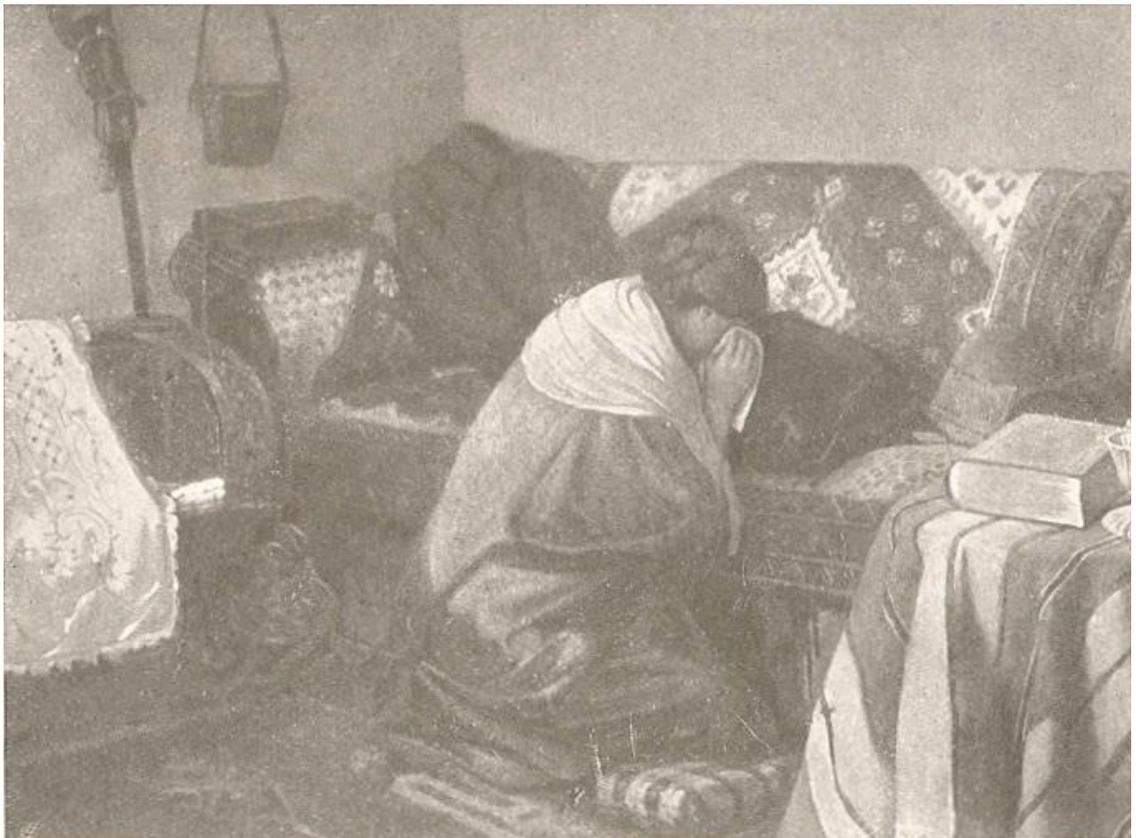


Fig.51 Adil Bey's *His Memory*. The Vienna Exhibition, 1918.

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