

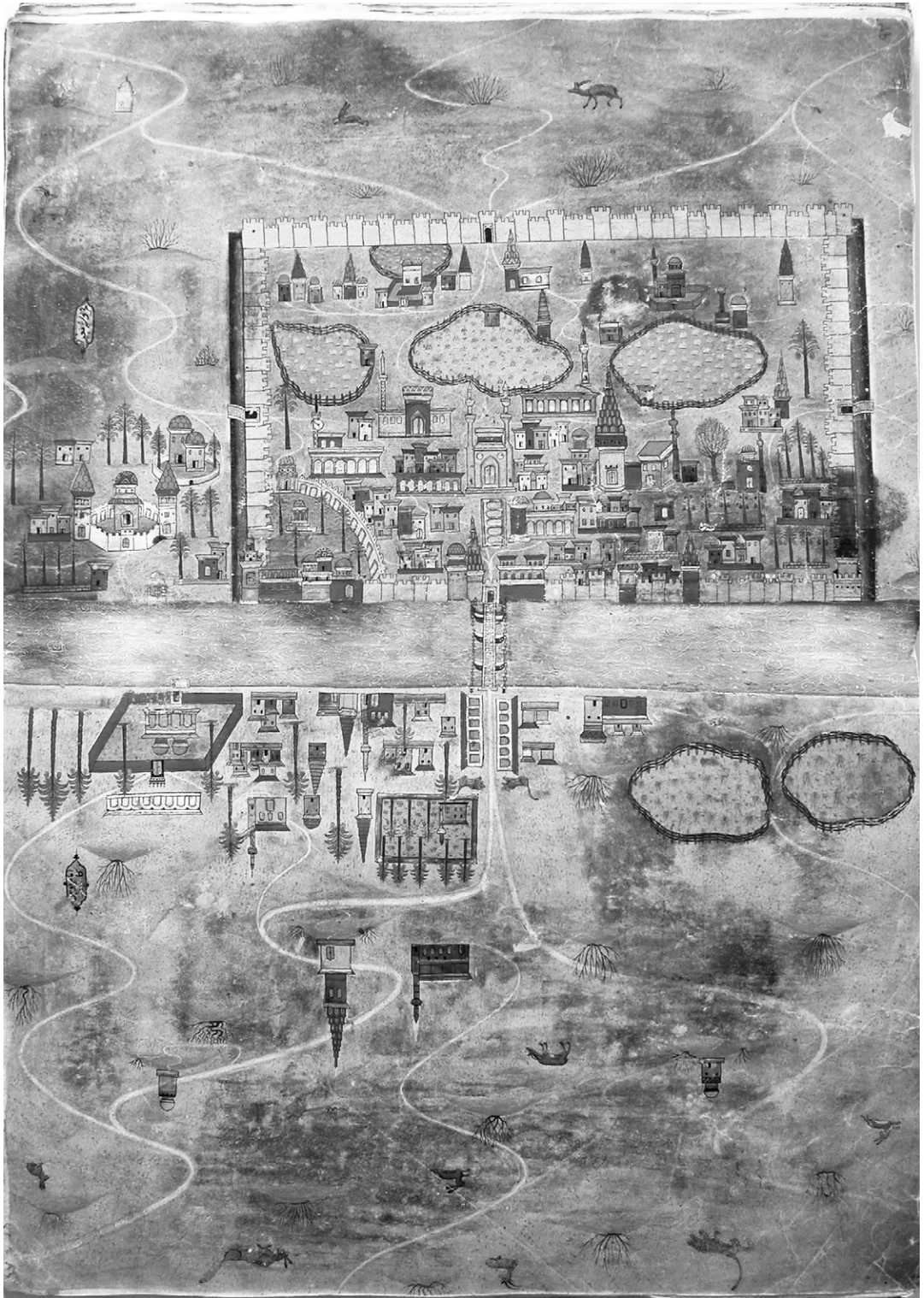
Editor's Column: My Name Is Blue—a Map of Ottoman Baghdad

THE COOL RIBBON OF WATER CUTTING ACROSS THE COVER OF THIS issue is the Tigris, the river that has, these last five years, absorbed so many Iraqi dead: citizens the United States government refuses to name or number. In Matrakçı Nasuh's sixteenth-century miniature of Baghdad, the river summons a different time. Its polished blue anchors the landscape and provides the ambit for a series of public roads, their ochre curves disciplined as they enter the city (fig. 1). These winding roads lead to Baghdad's dark gates; they suggest a landscape abstract and jaunty, with paths swirling irrationally here and there. In keeping with Asian miniature traditions, the countryside's flora and fauna loom and shrink; they seem out of plumb with Baghdad's buildings and suggest a quasi-magical world where scale and perspective do not yet dominate. There are no people anywhere, making Baghdad a place both empty and pastoral.

Caught by the beauty of this miniature, one is tempted to overlook its origins. The Tigris swaddles the moated city; Baghdad becomes a fantasia of landmarks and giant trees where a pink mosque yawns like a Persian gargoyle. But this map depicts a newly militarized zone. Nasuh created a series of urban miniatures in *Description of the Stages of Sultan Suleyman's Campaign in the Two Iraqs*,¹ or *Beyan-i menazil-i sefer-i 'Irakeyn-i Sultan Süleyman Han*, to celebrate Süleyman the Magnificent's martial success in Syria, Iraq, Iran, Hungary, and the Mediterranean. A man of the Turkish Renaissance, Nasuh also translated and updated al-Tabari's tenth-century *History of Prophets and Kings*, wrote a mathematical textbook, and organized the games accompanying the circumcision rituals for Süleyman's sons. Like these festivities, his miniature of Baghdad is designed to record the reach and power of the Ottoman Empire; it is part of a larger record of the

FIG. 1

View of Baghdad,
from Matrakçı
Nasuh's *Beyan-i
menzil-i sefer-i
'Irakeyn-i Sultan
Süleyman Han*,
ca. 1537 (T5964,
Istanbul Univ. Lib.)
47v–48r.



regions Süleyman conquered, a map innovative, decorative, and space-claiming.

In 1535 Baghdad was among Süleyman's southernmost stops on his military campaign through the Middle East. Abetted by a Safavid strategy of withdrawal, Süleyman quickly conquered the city, reclaimed its shrines for Sunni Islam, and came home by way of Tabriz, another conquest. Nasuh, his geographic miniaturist, was Bosnian in origin, reminding us of the Ottoman Empire's many fiefdoms as well as its cosmopolitan reach. Nasuh sketched these city plans while on the move and created his colorful miniatures in Renaissance Istanbul—a city flourishing in the midst of empire and high art. In contrast, Ottoman Baghdad remained on the outskirts of Süleyman's territories, a city almost without domiciles in Nasuh's imagination. It becomes a site of Muslim shrines, the conquered gateway to the Persian Gulf, to Safavid dynasties in what is now Iran and the trading routes beyond. Although Baghdad changed hands several times, passing from the Sunni Ottomans to the Shiite Safavids and back again, it remained an Ottoman stronghold for almost four centuries: a jewel in the Turkish crown.

This Ottoman map of Baghdad adorns the cover because it adds history and luster to the essays on Turkish literature that open the issue and because the map, merging Turkey's empire and Baghdad's mosques, echoes the twenty-first-century barbarism of America's tryst with Iraq. With this in mind, I would like to examine Nasuh's work from three perspectives. First, how is Baghdad featured in the geographically entranced poetry of Nasuh's ruler, Süleyman the Magnificent? Do we find parallels between that verse and the unpoetic utterances of George W. Bush? Second, how does Nasuh's story compare with the miniatures in Orhan Pamuk's *My Name Is Red*, also set in the Ottoman Renaissance? Like Pamuk's Butterfly, Olive, and Stork, Nasuh has learned a great deal from his European contemporaries, but unlike Pamuk's

miniaturists, he takes this knowledge in new directions, improvising unexpectedly with imperial imagery. Finally, what happens when we stitch this 1537 map of Ottoman Baghdad to a present-day map of American Baghdad? What does Nasuh teach us about America's Green Zone?

Before turning to these questions, I want to celebrate the fact that the January *PMLA* is crowned with a cluster of essays on Turkish literature, including several assessments of literary challenges to Ottoman and Kemalist sovereignty. Hülya Adak, Jale Parla, and Nergis Ertürk focus on the problems with modern Turkey's nation-based and state-directed poesis. How do we define "Turkish" literature when the twentieth-century Turkish state demanded—but Turkish authors refused—a language purged of Ottoman influence? Parla's and Ertürk's essays home in on Kemal Atatürk's rejection of Turkey's hybrid, multicultural past as well as on the differing costs of this dismissal for authors like Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and Pamuk, who embrace this past. In the introduction Adak describes the status of Armenians in a Turkish "homeland"; she makes a case against nation-based literary study, using Turkey's diverse histories and peoples as illustration. Ian Almond meditates on Johann Gottfried von Herder's varying views of Islam (and a general Western confusion of Turk and Arab) during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the Ottoman Empire was in slow decline. *PMLA*'s Turkish cluster is complemented by Z. Esra Mirze's interview with Pamuk: a postmodern flourish.

The issue moves northward in Jacob Emery's essay on Andrey Bely's *Petersburg* and visits French classicism in Melissa Ianetta's essay on Germaine de Staël and Aspasia as woman rhetor. Todd Kontje writes about Thomas Mann's sexuality, Karen Leick explores an anglophone modernism that appeals to the masses, and Sheila J. Nayar enunciates a new and controversial theory of cinematic literacy.



FIG. 2

Sultan Suleiman II,
ca. 1530. Oil on
canvas, 39 × 33½ in.
(99 × 85 cm).
Kunsthistorisches
Museum, Wien.

In addition to two rediscovered nineteenth-century texts by Maria W. Stewart, introduced by Eric Gardner; James Phelan's overview of narrative theory; and a wide-ranging debate on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's influences, this issue also traces the trajectory of a "new lyric studies" in a group of essays that Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins brought together, by Jonathan Culler, Brent Hayes Edwards, Stathis Gourgouris, Oren Izenberg, Jackson, Robert Kaufman, Prins, and Rei Terada. Since several of these essays are in conversation with Marjorie Perloff's arguments about poetry in her 2006 MLA Presidential Address, we've asked Perloff to respond in the May 2008 *PMLA*.

The Sultan-Poet

To further this conversation about the lyric, I want to look once more into the Ottoman past and examine one of Süleyman the Magnificent's many poems, "My Very Own Queen, My Everything," a poem that consolidates the Baghdad miniature's claims of empire. If, as Prins argues, "lyric reading is alienated from, rather than attached to, the speaking voice," how do we consider a sultan's poetic "speech"? In the sixteenth-century Turkish Renaissance, lyric vied with painting and music to be the most convivial of the arts. Amid a flowering of poets, Süleyman made himself—at least in rank—Istanbul's foremost bard (fig. 2). He wrote under the pseudonym *Muhibbi*, and his most famous poems are passionate encomia to his wife, *Hürrem Sultan*, or *Roxelana*, a Ruthenian Christian (fig. 3). In "My Very Own Queen"

Baghdad flits by as one of Süleyman's many kingdoms while the poet concentrates on lifting his queen above the sublunar sphere:

My very own queen, my everything,
my beloved, my bright moon;
My intimate companion, my one and all,
sovereign of all beauties, my sultan.
My life, the gift I own, my be-all,
my elixir of Paradise, my Eden,
My spring, my joy, my glittering day,
my exquisite one who smiles on and on.
My sheer delight, my revelry, my feast,
my torch, my sunshine, my sun in heaven;
My orange, my pomegranate,
the flaming candle that lights up my pavilion.

My plant, my candy, my treasure who
gives
no sorrow but the world's purest
pleasure. . . .

Metaphor piles on metaphor until the jumble of orange, pomegranate, and candy absorbs metaphysical space. Muhibbi turns his poem toward empire and tries to mesmerize the audience with his rank; he literalizes the geographic source of his "treasure":

Dearest, my turtledove, my all,
the ruler of my heart's Egyptian
dominion.

My Istanbul, my Karaman, and all the
Anatolian lands that are mine;
My Bedakhshan and my Kipchak
territories,
my Baghdad and my Khorasan.

Karaman is now part of Turkey, Badakhshan in Afghanistan, the Kipchak lands part of southern Russia and Ukraine, and Khorāsān in northeastern Iran. The range of these place-names makes the possessive pronoun, the "my" of the sultan-poet's conceit, at once shocking and hectoring: he carelessly reduces myriad people and geographies to one woman's body. The first sultan to marry one of his slaves and elevate her to the status of queen, Süleyman still returns Roxelana to poetry's harem; in the geographic "everything" he makes her body a topographic seraglio and reduces *Baghdad* to an erotic name.²

My Name Is Red

In "My Very Own Queen" the pleasure of putting territories, like queens, in the mouth of the poet-as-sultan is palpable. Four and a half centuries later Pamuk repackages these territorial pleasures in his fabled detective story *My Name Is Red*. Set in and around the court of Süleyman's grandson, Murad III, Pamuk's



FIG. 3

Portrait of Roxelana. *La piu bella e piu favorita donna del gran Turcho dita la Rossa*, 1540–50. Woodcut, 20½ × 14½ in. (52 × 35.9 cm). © The Trustees of the British Museum (1878,0713.4166).

novel bypasses this sultan to focus on his miniaturists. Their passion for paint is so palpable that even their colors speak deliriously: "I'm so fortunate to be red! I'm fiery. I'm strong. I know men take notice of me and that I cannot be resisted" (186). In Pamuk's novel *Baghdad* is a fantasia as well as a portal for trade: "In an Arabic book that had come by way of Baghdad, we watched the flight of the merchant who clung to the feet of a mythical bird as he spanned the seas" (305). The myriad forms of Ottoman trade and colonization—one of Pamuk's main themes—coalesce when Black, the novel's protagonist, scrutinizes rooms brimming with

the sultan's possessions. Black encounters the sultan's "everything" in the blood-red materiality of the royal treasure-house. Looking for clues to a double murder, he crouches in one of Murad's forbidden chambers:

This chamber was red, tinged with the color of the velvet cloth, carpets and kilims hanging on the walls. With due reverence, I considered how the accumulation of all this wealth was the consequence of wars waged, blood spilt and cities and treasuries plundered.

"Frightened?" asked the elderly dwarf. . . .

. . . Behind us we heard the clattering of the seal being affixed to the lock on the door, and we looked around in awe, motionless.

I saw swords, elephant tusks, caftans, silver candlesticks and satin banners. I saw mother-of-pearl inlaid boxes, iron trunks, Chinese vases, belts, long-necked lutes, armor, silk cushions, model globes, boots, furs, rhinoceros horns, ornamented ostrich eggs, rifles, arrows, maces and cabinets. There were heaps of carpets, cloth and satin everywhere, seemingly cascading over me from the wood-paneled upper floors, from the balustrades, the built-in closets and small storage cells built into the walls. (299)

Pamuk reproduces imperial wealth as the entombment of other people's things. This cascade of accumulation is made possible by the violence of empire and a "lavish expenditure of eyesight" (305). While these objects are reserved for the sultan's eyes alone, Black mourns the lost vision, the eyes damaged, in the making of the sultan's miniatures. Pamuk's reading of Turkish history and politics seems, at this point, resolutely anti-Ottoman, anti-empire. Murad III and his ancestors emerge as wastrels of human beings and cities.

But Pamuk's interest in colonization stretches beyond the Ottomans' damaged bodies and possession of alien territories. He also explores these questions: Which modes of representation should dominate Turkish or Ottoman art? How has Turkish art been colonized by the West? Pamuk's prose navi-

gates the politics of reception and innovation among the sultan's quarrelsome miniaturists. Should European perspectival painting (supplanting Allah's creation with realism) or traditional Ottoman painting (with its homage to Islam and invocation of the ideal) reign supreme? While these questions torture Pamuk's characters, Nasuh appropriates from—and contributes to—Western sources freely. The spike of imitation Pamuk locates in Murad's reign represents a continuous weave of cross-cultural influence and theft that moves not only from West to East but also from East to West. In fact, the influences Pamuk chronicles in *My Name Is Red* postdate Nasuh's playful inheritance of European models. While Pamuk's miniaturists sample the forbidden pleasures of portraiture and perspective, Nasuh's borrowings are geographic.

As Süleyman's geographic miniaturist and one of his janissaries, Nasuh was assigned to create topographies of Ottoman cities and fleets, including Aleppo, Belgrade, Bitlis, the walls of Tabriz, and Barbarossa's ships grazing the harbors of Toulon and Nice (fig. 4). In "Itineraries and Town Views in Ottoman Histories," J. M. Rogers suggests that the map of Aleppo is particularly original, a "product of careful observation" that includes a variety of approaches to topographic miniature making. "In style and coloring Aleppo is distinct from other illustrations in the work. The Great Mosque with its conspicuous minaret is not recognizable, but below the citadel are shown curious features resembling umbrellas, now difficult to interpret" (240).³ Influenced, like Pamuk's miniaturists, by new strategies in European painting and topography, Nasuh is also heir to Renaissance Europe's advances in mapmaking, especially the increasing fashion during this period for town views (Manners 73). Nasuh gives us a close imitation of European techniques of city gazing in his map of Istanbul, which swims street by street, letting monuments surge up in a sea of houses that suggest Nasuh's intimacy with the city's

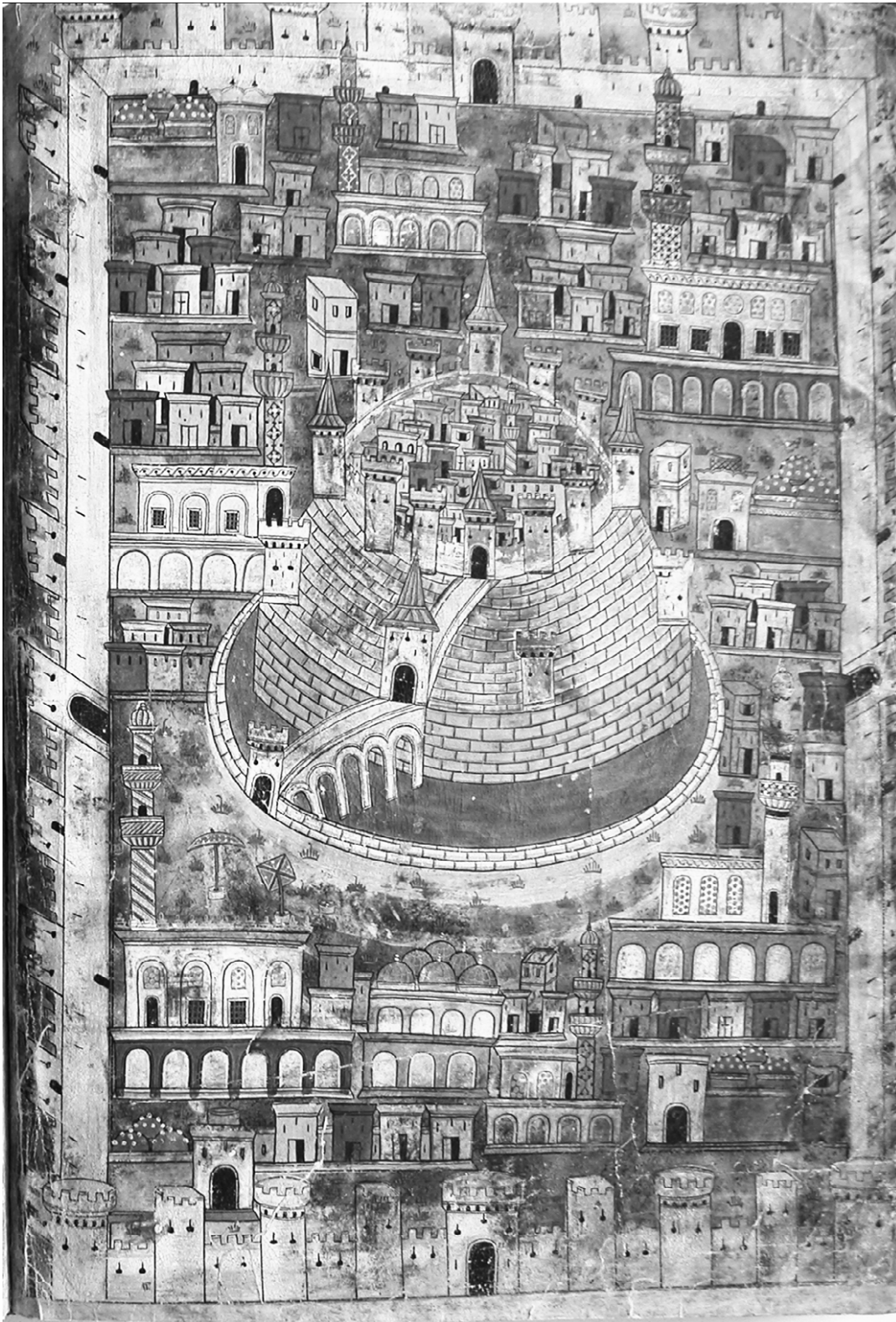
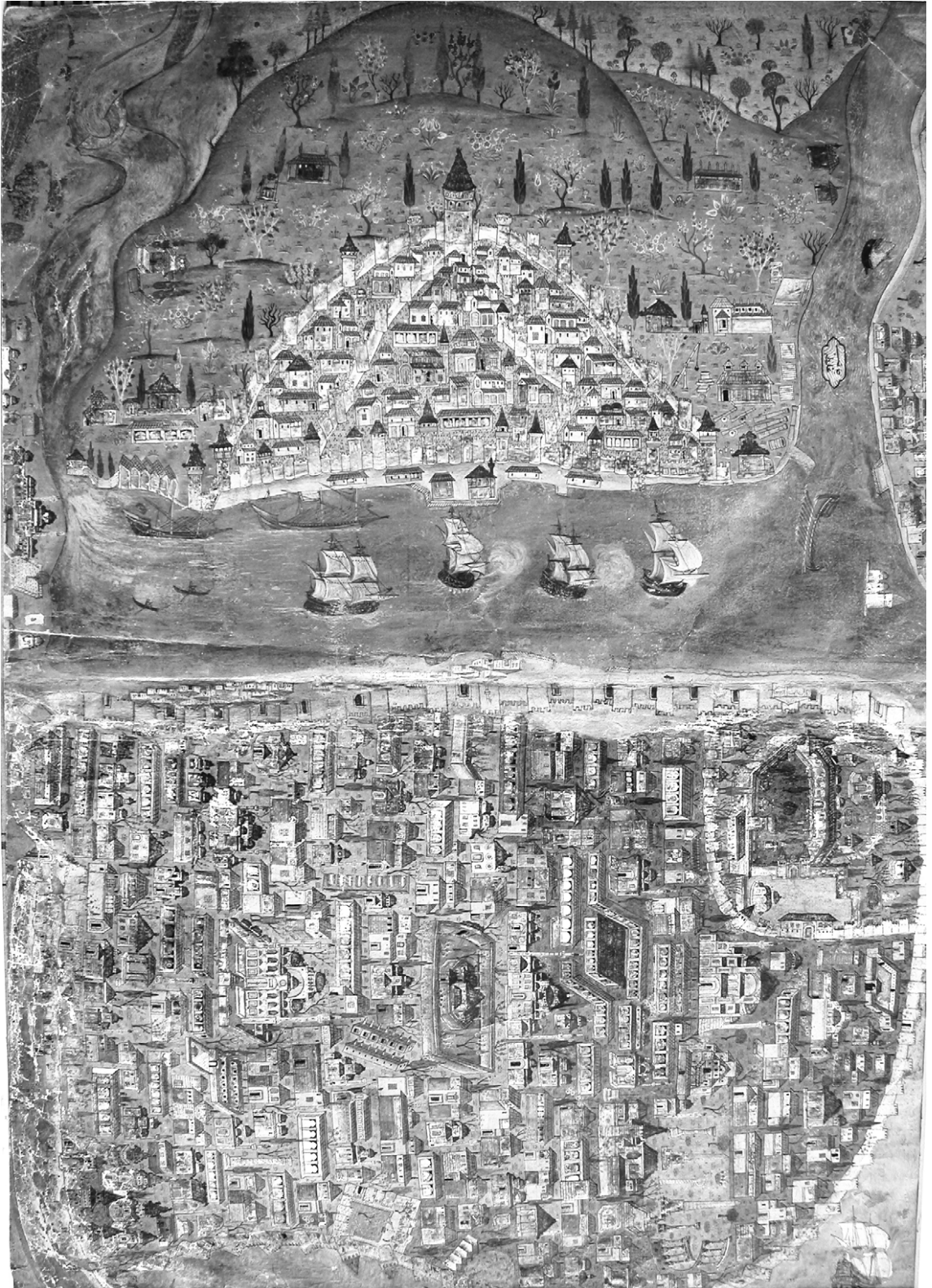


Fig. 4

View of Aleppo, from Matrakçı Nasuh's *Beyan-i menazil-i sefer-i 'Irakeyn-i Sultan Süleyman Han*, ca. 1537 (T5964, Istanbul Univ. Lib.) 106r.



everyday life (fig. 5). In Europe's Renaissance maps we often see cities as two-dimensional scenes, with buildings popped up in rows, as in a theater.⁴ In contrast, Nasuh's Baghdad is beautifully empty. Shrines outside the city vie for attention with walled gardens; the artist has carefully limned a pontoon bridge. Amoeba-shaped gardens consort with the river's lapis banks; the wall of the city marches right up to the Tigris—the stones' white punctuated with reds and greens. For these illustrations Nasuh depends less on European models and more on individual observation. "Foreign influences, whether drawn from East or West, cannot . . . fully account for the emergence of an Ottoman interest in the detailed representation of cities and landscapes," Rogers comments. With the exception of a few inaccurate views of Baghdad found in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century copies of Rashid al-Dim Fazl Allah's *Collection of Chronicles*, "urban topography is almost totally ignored within the general context of the Islamic painting before the first half of the 16th century. Thereafter we can identify the emergence of the distinctive Ottoman cartographic element in manuscript illustration, expressed to the detailed representation of cities" (230–31). In his miniature of Istanbul Nasuh depends on earlier maps of Rome and European representations of Constantinople. His innovation consists in showing Istanbul as a fully Ottoman city, its landmarks no longer Christian. But in depicting Baghdad, Nasuh pursues a greater sense of space as risk and play. A minaret, now nestled in the *M* of *PMLA*, sports a mystifying millstone, while outside the walls animals play or prey on each other in a dry, golden landscape.

Moving from Nasuh's map to the conflicting miniatures in *My Name Is Red*, we see two different responses to European influences. In *My Name Is Red* Black also contemplates the significance of landscape miniatures. In one painting he admires "high mountains interwoven with curling clouds in a landscape illustration . . . [that] seemed to go on forever.

I thought how painting meant seeing this world yet depicting it as if it were the Otherworld" (301). These images tell Black little about topography and a great deal about eternity. Pamuk pinpoints a moment in Turkish visual history where painting—dependent on the mimesis of ideals or types—makes way for the dangers of European realism. He insists that the contest between two schools of painting—an Islamic tradition based on iconic, idealized representations and European innovations based on empiricism and perspective (on the science of thrusting lowly details into the foreground to make a hierarchy of otherworldly ideals disappear into the mundane)—is not only aesthetic but also political.

In Pamuk's novel, European influence grows dangerous in its challenge to Islamic philosophies of representation, but in Nasuh's Baghdad map (created fifty years earlier) these issues have been partly resolved. Nasuh not only inherits a European mode of imitative picture making, he begins to reinvent it. Decades before the drama that takes place in *My Name Is Red*, his maps make a new foray into the "actuality of contemporary history" and give us a glimpse of the intellectual achievements of the Ottoman golden age (Rogers 228). His Baghdad map illustrates the intellectual ferment of Süleyman's kingdom and represents a leap forward in Turkish mapmaking, an original contribution to cartography.

Nazım Hikmet and American Baghdad

In addition to honoring *PMLA*'s Turkish cluster, this map from Nasuh's collection adorns the cover because—in dreams—I want another image of the city that Americans have so violently squandered. When I think of present-day Iraq, I feel rage and depression; my name is blue.⁵ Within this threnody, Nasuh's images become a layer that lingers or oscillates in the twenty-first-century map of American Baghdad (fig. 6). Much is changed in this layering. First, the pretty blue of

Fig. 5

View of Istanbul, from Matrakçı Nasuh's *Beyan-i menazil-i sefer-i 'Irakeyn-i Sultan Süleyman Han*, ca. 1537 (T5964, Istanbul Univ. Lib.) 8v–9r.



FIG. 6

Locations of combat outposts and US-Iraqi security stations in Baghdad (4 Sept. 2007).

Sources: graphic by Gene Thorp and Dita Smith accompanying Raghavan; graphic by Richard Furno accompanying Knickmeyer.

Nasuh's Tigris is destroyed and replaced with smoke and debris, with the dead, and with the brown sheen of oil. Second, large sections of the city become houseless, not because the city is unfamiliar but because huge swaths of Baghdad have been bombed to oblivion and ethnically purged. Third, Nasuh's multicolored western bank now extends into the blast walls and bureaucracy of the Green Zone. Dust is the color of this metropolis, and despair. In a city without comfort, where death crowds the landscape, I want to turn to a Turkish artist once again, to a communist poet who knew about working-class misery, about torture and imprisonment. Nazım Hikmet was born in Ottoman Turkey, schooled in Istanbul and Moscow, imprisoned for years in Turkish jails, and then exiled by the Kemalist regime for his activism. His poem "On Living" captures the ever-fresh despairs of imprisonment and of a war "which could last years."

Let's say we're at the front—

.....

There, in the first offensive, on that very day,
we might fall on our face, dead.

We'll know this with a curious anger,
but we'll still worry ourselves to death
about the outcome of the war, which could
last years.

Let's say we're in prison
and close to fifty,
and we have eighteen more years, say,
before the iron doors will open.

We'll still live with the outside,
with its people and animals, struggle and
wind—

I mean with the outside beyond the
walls.

I mean, however and wherever we are,
we must live as if we will never die. (129)

Can anyone in American Baghdad live as if one never dies? Perhaps in gazing at Nasuh's miniature, with its golden earth and jade gar-

dens, we can pretend—for a moment—to join Nazım's fantasy of a prisoner who imagines "people and animals, struggle and wind": a space outside domination. But American Baghdad has obliterated this outside. Instead, our politicians and capitalists, those surly non-conquerors, can only repeat the bloody words of the sultan-poet: "my Baghdad, my Baghdad, my Baghdad, my . . . my . . . my . . ."

Patricia Yaeger

NOTES

1. This translation is Johnston's (159).

2. If Süleyman eroticizes his empire, George W. Bush, America's Süleyman, monetarizes his. In the 12 May 2003 issue of the newsletter *Counterpunch*, Chris Floyd reminds us that for Bush Baghdad is a metonym for economic greed and corporate gain:

"Last week, while . . . George W. Bush . . . was basking in the man-musk of a shipload of sailors, reciting his usual lies about al Qaeda's 'alliance' with Saddam Hussein . . . Bechtel was quietly pocketing a secret, closed-bid, open-ended Iraq contract that could give them almost \$700 million in taxpayer money before the 2004 election—with the alluring prospect of untold billions to follow, Mother Jones reports.

"What's more, as the New Yorker reports, this public largess will also fill the coffers of a key Bechtel partner in Saudi Arabia—a well-connected global conglomerate that has also been a long-time financial partner of both George Bush I and George Bush II: the Bin Laden Group.

"Bechtel, which has served Saudi royalty for more than 60 years, bristles with heavyweight kleptoplute connections."

3. Johnston suggests that the Aleppo miniature is also distorted by its positioning on the page. He notes "the domination of Halab [Aleppo] by its moated citadel with stone-paved glacis, the rough regularity of the city's walls reduced no doubt to additional precision as [an] accommodation to the composition of the page" (162).

4. I want to thank Karl Longstreth, map librarian at the University of Michigan, for this observation.

5. Blue is also the name of the fundamentalist activist in Pamuk's *Snow*. Although this editorial's title comes from my own depressive state (in Pamuk's novels moods, as well as characters, don the names of tints or shades), *blue* can be connotative and includes activism (and Blue's commitment to Islam?) among its possibilities.

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