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Galatasaray Imagines Istanbul: Urban Memory and Transregional Meaning in the 1947 Commemorative Issue

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Abstract

This article investigates how multiple and sometimes competing urban imaginaries of Istanbul were articulated in the May 1947 commemorative issue of *Galatasaray Journal*, a special publication marking the 494th anniversary of the city's conquest. Drawing on Stuart Hall's theory of representation and a transregional historiographical framework, the study analyzes six essays by Galatasaray-affiliated contributors—Turkish, French, and Swiss—to explore how Istanbul's symbolic meaning was constructed through memory, emotion, and cultural brokerage. These essays range from nostalgic laments over lost moral order (Talu) and spiritual longing (Gökyay), to poetic spectacles (Dubois), imperial cartographies (Mamboury), trans-Mediterranean comparisons (Larroumets), and cosmopolitan Ottoman syntheses (Bayhan). The article argues that Galatasaray High School operated as a portal of globalization, where meanings emerged through representational negotiation across Turkish, French, and Swiss voices. Via close reading, it develops a discourse-analytical microhistory of commemoration that tracks how Istanbul's identity was recast through national memory, imperial legacies, and global entanglements. Istanbul is thus presented not as a fixed heritage object but as a palimpsest of intersecting imaginaries within Galatasaray's transregional environment.

Keywords: Galatasaray High School, urban imaginaries, Istanbul memory, transregional history, portal of globalization

Özet

Bu makale, İstanbul'un birden fazla ve zaman zaman birbirileyle çelişen kentsel tahayyülerinin, kentin fethinin 494. yıl dönümünü anmak üzere yayımlanan Galatasaray Dergisi'nin Mayıs 1947 özel sayısında nasıl dile getirildiğini inceliyor. Stuart Hall'un temsiliyet kuramı ve transbölgesel tarih yazımı çerçevesinden hareketle, çalışma; Galatasaray topluluğuna mensup Türk, Fransız ve İsviçreli yazarların kaleme aldığı altı yazıyı analiz ederek İstanbul'un simgesel anımlarının nasıl hafıza, duygusal ve kültürel aracılık yoluyla inşa edildiğini araştırıyor. Bu yazılar; kaybedilmiş ahlaki düzenin ardından duyulan nostaljik özlemlerden (Talu), ruhani arayışlara (Gökyay), şırsel manzaralara (Dubois), imparatorluk haritalarına (Mamboury), Akdeniz ötesi karşılaşışlara (Larroumets) ve Osmanlı kozmopolit sentezlerine (Bayhan) kadar uzanan çok çeşitli perspektifler sunmaktadır. Makale, Galatasaray Lisesi'nin bir küreselleşme kapısı olarak islediğini; farklı konumlanışların hibrit kent anıtlarını şekillendirdiği bir alan olarak işlev göründüğünü ileri sürmektedir. Yakın metin çözümlemelerine dayanan çalışma, kurumsal bir arma pratiğini söylem çözümlemeli bir mikro-tarih aracılığıyla ele alarak, İstanbul'un kentsel kimliğinin ulusal hafıza, imparatorluk mirası ve küresel iç içe geçmişlik gibi farklı merkezler üzerinden nasıl yeniden tasarılandığını göstermektedir. İstanbul'u sabit bir kültürel miras nesnesi olarak tasvir etmek yerine, çalışma onu Galatasaray'ın transbölgesel ortamında müzakere edilen katmanlı tahayyülerin palimpsestik (üst üste yazılmış) bir kenti olarak konumlandırmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Galatasaray Lisesi, kentsel tahayyüler, İstanbul hafızası, transbölgesel tarih

Introduction

The establishment of Galatasaray High School in 1868 marked a critical transformation in the Ottoman Empire's educational vision. Founded under the patronage of Sultan Abdülaziz (1830–76) and in cooperation with French educational reformers, most notably Victor Duruy (1811–94), the institution embodied an ambitious project of educational modernization and

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cross-cultural engagement.¹ Renowned for its emphasis on French as the main language of instruction and for its secular and inclusive admission policies, Galatasaray High School quickly distinguished itself from traditional Ottoman educational structures.² Strategically located in Beyoğlu, Galatasaray High School embodied the empire's transregional aspirations and Franco-Ottoman educational ambitions.³

Serving as a site where students from diverse religious and linguistic backgrounds encountered pedagogical models shaped by both Ottoman reform and French influence, the school exemplified a "portal of globalization," a node where imperial modernities were not merely transferred but dynamically negotiated and reconfigured across cultural frontiers.⁴ The multilayered identity of Galatasaray, situated at the crossroads of Ottoman, French, and wider global imaginaries, rendered it more than an educational institution. It became a dynamic platform for reimagining the cultural and urban landscapes of Istanbul itself. In this context, the evolving ways Istanbul was represented by actors connected to the school can be understood within the framework of urban imaginaries, shaped through the interplay of local histories and global forces rather than merely reflecting either imperial heritage or modernity in the republican era.⁵

This article investigates the multiple urban imaginaries of Istanbul articulated in the May 1947 special issue of *Galatasaray Journal* (*Galatasaray Lisesi Dergisi*). It aims to explore how different representations of Istanbul were produced by students, teachers, and affiliates of Galatasaray High School, reflecting the institution's enduring engagement with layered cultural, political, and educational networks. The central research question guiding this inquiry is twofold: What different urban imaginaries of Istanbul were on display in the May 1947 issue of *Galatasaray Journal*, and what do these representations reveal about processes of transregional connectedness and the negotiation of spatial and cultural entanglements?

The article offers a distinct contribution by analyzing Istanbul's multifaceted memory and identity construction through written cultural expressions, rather than relying solely on institutional archives. Its primary source material, the May 1947 issue, was expressly dedicated to the conquest of Istanbul and, unlike other publications, assembled a concentrated cluster of essays that take Istanbul itself—its memory, symbolism, and moral-aesthetic horizon—as their explicit subject. That singular commemorative focus brings together Turkish, French, and Swiss Galatasaray affiliates writing side by side about Istanbul in the same register, which makes it possible to trace competing imaginaries within one institutional frame. In short, only the 1947 issue provides a snapshot of how Galatasaray authors narrated and ritualized the city on a designated day of remembrance, allowing for a discourse-analytical microhistory in a way that other annual issues do not.

Methodologically, the article draws on a representational and discourse-analytical approach, guided by Stuart Hall's theory of meaning production and representation.⁶ Hall emphasizes that representation is not a mere postscript but a constitutive moment in which meaning is actively produced and circulated. It is "the way in which meaning is somehow given to the things which are depicted through the images or whatever it is, on screens or the words on a page which stand for what we're talking about."⁷ In this sense, representation is not neutral description but an act that shapes what will be adopted, resisted, or re-coded. Hall further defines the system of representation as "an image, or set of images. It condens-

1 Adnan Şişman, "Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultanisi," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 13 (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1996), 324.

2 Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1968).

3 François Georgeon, "La formation des élites à la fin de l'Empire ottoman: Le cas de Galatasaray," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 72 (1994): 18.

4 Claudia Baumann, Antje Dietze, and Megan Maruschke, "Portals of Globalization: An Introduction," *Comparativ: Journal for Global History and Comparative Social Research* 27, no. 3–4 (2017); Matthias Middell, "Cross-Cultural Comparison in Times of Increasing Transregional Connectedness: Perspectives from Historical Sciences and Area Studies on Processes of Respatialization," *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 22, no. 2 (2021).

5 Andreas Huyssen, *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age* (Duke University Press, 2008).

6 Stuart Hall, "Introduction," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (Sage and the Open University, 1997), 1–11.

7 Stuart Hall, *Representation & the Media: Transcript* (Media Education Foundation, 1997), 6.

es a number of different characteristics into one picture. It calls up in our mind's eye—it represents in verbal and visual language—a composite picture of what different societies, cultures, peoples and places are like.”⁸

Meaning, therefore, emerges from a network of concepts, images, and symbols that structure how cultural objects are perceived. Applying this framework, the commemorative essays in the 1947 *Galatasaray Journal* are treated as symbolic practices that mobilize language, emotion, and memory to produce particular urban imaginaries. Through a close reading of six essays about Istanbul, this article maps how Galatasaray's transregional institutional milieu helped produce overlapping, and at times competing, imaginaries of Istanbul as a city shaped by plural pasts and aspirational futures articulated through Galatasaray's own transregional ethos—neither fully Ottoman nor fully French, but emerging from a unique culture of institutional hybridity.

The article is structured to foreground the historical and discursive stakes of the analysis. It begins by situating Galatasaray within its longer institutional trajectory, from its founding in the Ottoman imperial era in cooperation with the Second French Empire under Sultan Abdülaziz through its later existence in republican Turkey. From its inception, this legacy has rendered the school an in-between and contested institution—at times categorized as French, Ottoman, or Turkish, and debated as either an imperial or a national school.

Before turning to the textual analysis, the study first outlines the school's original purpose and the shifting debates surrounding its categorization from the imperial to the republican era. The study then turns to the 1940s, a decade when representations of Istanbul gained new prominence in literature and public discourse. While Ankara had emerged as the emblematic capital of the republic, Istanbul resurfaced in cultural production as the repository of imperial memory and urban nostalgia. These discursive tensions—between a newly planned capital and a city saturated with imperial heritage—resonated with Galatasaray's own hybrid position. In this context, the ways in which Galatasaray alumni and affiliates represented Istanbul take on particular importance. It is at this juncture that the article moves to the core analysis of the May 1947 commemorative issue of *Galatasaray Journal*, examining how contributors portrayed Istanbul through memory, aesthetics, and political imagination. Just as their own school was subject to competing definitions and historical claims, their depictions of Istanbul simultaneously reflected and negotiated the city's imperial past and its continuing role within the republic.

Portals of Meaning: Galatasaray and Istanbul's Urban Imaginaries

In response to the growing complexity of global interconnectedness since the nineteenth century, transregional history emerged as a critical approach that moves beyond the constraints of methodological nationalism and conventional cross-cultural comparison.⁹ Traditional comparative frameworks often failed to capture the mutual constitution and asymmetrical power relations characterizing historical encounters.¹⁰ Early twentieth-century historians such as Karl Lamprecht (1856–1915), Henri Berr (1863–1954), Henri Pirenne (1862–1935), and Lord Acton (1834–1902) promoted comparative history as a methodological innovation, yet their work typically assumed bounded cultural or national units and paid little attention to the entanglements that shaped them.¹¹ Marc Bloch (1886–1944), who carried this tradition forward, became one of its strongest advocates in the late 1920s, but he also mentioned its limitations by noting that societies were never fully isolated and that historical actors constantly operated within interwoven realities.¹²

⁸ Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,” in *Formations of Modernity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (Polity Press in association with the Open University, 1992), 277.

⁹ Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, “Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences,” *Global Networks* 2, no. 4 (2002): 301.

¹⁰ Middell, “Cross-Cultural Comparison in Times of Increasing Transregional Connectedness.”

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

Traditional comparative approaches also suffered from a structural ahistoricism, since they tended to exclude precisely the historical relations—such as transfers, migrations, and cultural hybridizations—that connected the very entities under comparison.¹³ As Michel Espagne reminds us, comparativism tended to juxtapose entities as though they were stable and self-contained, neglecting the dynamics of their genesis and the asymmetrical relations shaping them. According to Espagne, “the parallelisms established by comparative social history . . . [separated] the elements being compared from the dynamic of their own genesis and [analyzed] them as though they were invariant data.”¹⁴ Particularly when it came to non-European histories, such frameworks largely failed to capture entanglements and reciprocal constitution.¹⁵

In contrast, a focus on transregional entanglements and intercultural transfer highlights the co-production of historical phenomena across spatial boundaries. These perspectives call for analyzing not only the flows of ideas, goods, and people but also the reconfigurations of spatial orders and the uneven intensities of connectedness.¹⁶ By situating Galatasaray High School within this framework, this article treats the institution as part of transregional processes in which Ottoman, French, and other cultural influences interacted. Its establishment in 1868 through cooperation between the Ottoman central government and the Second French Empire introduced French as the main language of instruction and brought in French teaching staff, thereby creating a multicultural environment in which students from diverse backgrounds were educated under imperial auspices.¹⁷

This constellation illustrates why the cultural transfer and transregional entanglements paradigm is appropriate. Rather than viewing Galatasaray as a mere imitation of a French high school, it recognizes transfer as a process of transformation in which languages, practices, and ideas are transposed and reconfigured across contexts.¹⁸ In this sense, Galatasaray was a hub where Ottoman and French influences converged, adapted, and interacted, exemplifying Espagne’s observation that “all national constellations are the result of past hybridization.”¹⁹ Similarly, the notion of “portals of globalization” allows us to approach sites that mediate global flows through a spatial angle.²⁰ Portals are places where the negotiation of global connections becomes tangible, where circulations of goods, people, and ideas intersect with processes of territorial control and cultural regulation.²¹ Hence, Galatasaray High School can be understood as a site of global entanglements, channeling transregional flows of knowledge, education, and cultural imaginaries within Ottoman and later republican Istanbul.

The analysis of Istanbul’s urban imaginaries around Galatasaray High School in 1947 also benefits from the conceptual lens of cultural brokerage. Cultural brokers and mediators have played a crucial role in enabling and shaping transregional interactions by facilitating translations, negotiations, and transmissions across cultural frontiers without merely replicating fixed identities.²² Far from being passive channels, these mediators combined translation skills, media connections, and cross-border mobility to shape how external elements were reframed and appropriated—put differently, “experience as translator[s], close relationship with the media sector . . . , and . . . high mobility across borders were essential

¹³ Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung: Der Ansatz der Histoire croisée und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28, no. 4 (2002): 612.

¹⁴ Michel Espagne, “What Are Cultural Transfers? The Russian and Scandinavian Cases,” in *Cultural Transfer Reconsidered: Transnational Perspectives, Translation Processes, Scandinavian and Postcolonial Challenges*, ed. Steen Bille Jørgensen and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink (Brill, 2021), 25.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Middell, “Cross-Cultural Comparison in Times of Increasing Transregional Connectedness.”

¹⁷ Selçuk Akşin Somel, *Osmanlı'da Eğitimin Modernleşmesi (1839-1908): İslamlama, Otokrasi ve Disiplin*, trans. O. Yener (İletişim Yayınları, 2015), 78.

¹⁸ Michel Espagne, “Comparison and Transfer: A Question of Method,” in *Transnational Challenges to National History Writing*, ed. Matthias Middell and Lluís Roura (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 41–42.

¹⁹ Ibid., 43.

²⁰ Claudia Baumann, Antje Dietze, and Megan Maruschke, “Portals of Globalization: An Introduction,” *Comparativ: Journal for Global History and Comparative Social Research* 27, no. 3–4 (2017): 13.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Antje Dietze, “Cultural Brokers and Mediators,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, ed. Matthias Middell (Routledge, 2018), 494–502.

qualifications for these intermediaries.”²³ Their role directly aligns with Stuart Hall’s understanding of representation, which stresses that meaning is actively produced in and through representational practices. For this reason, Galatasaray must be seen as a representational arena. The writings of its students, teachers, and alumni about Istanbul—like Galatasaray itself, marked by an imperial past that continued into the republican period—reveal how worldviews were shaped through entangled legacies. This is particularly significant given that Galatasaray High School, since its establishment, has been alternately described as a French school, a Turkish school, and an imperial school, and these contested representations shaped not only how the institution was perceived but also how its members depicted Istanbul.

Galatasaray’s contested positioning has also invited postcolonial readings, particularly in the production of binary oppositions between the so-called West and East that cast the latter as passive, traditional, and static.²⁴ While traces of such attitudes may appear in the writings of the French and Swiss educators at Galatasaray, the transregional framework adopted here allows for approaching Galatasaray as a hybrid space shaped by multidirectional flows. The representations of Istanbul in the 1947 journal can be understood as outcomes of cross-cultural negotiation, revealing how both the school and the city functioned as dynamic constellations of memory and meaning within global entanglements.

Galatasaray’s Contested Categorization and Istanbul’s 1940s Imaginaries

During his reign, Sultan Abdülaziz—following his European tour in 1867, which included visits to schools in the Second French Empire—sought to transplant aspects of the French educational model into the Ottoman system.²⁵ On 15 March 1867, official negotiations to open a secondary school in Istanbul based on the French educational model began between Ottoman and French officials.²⁶ Cemil Pasha (1828–72), serving as the Ottoman ambassador in Paris, cooperated with Victor Duruy, the French minister of education, to refine the institutional framework.²⁷ Ultimately, Sultan Abdülaziz granted formal approval on 15 April 1868, and on 1 September of that year the school was inaugurated by imperial decree.²⁸

Leadership of the school reflected this cross-cultural orientation. Its first director was Ernest de Salve-Villedieu (1815–93).²⁹ He was supported by Selim Sâbit Efendi (1829–1911) as vice principal, ensuring cooperation between Ottoman and French pedagogues.³⁰ The instructional program further illustrated this hybrid structure. Subjects such as religion, Ottoman and Islamic history, Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, literature, and geography were taught in their respective languages, while disciplines including science, law, philosophy, and classical European languages such as Latin and Ancient Greek were conducted in French.³¹

Yet from its inception, Galatasaray’s status as an innovation was accompanied by persistent debates over its proper categorization. Even prior to its inauguration, the Vatican voiced strong opposition, condemning the institution’s French influence and issuing two decrees that prohibited Catholic families from enrolling their children.³² This papal ban was soon echoed by the Russian embassy, which formally barred Russian pupils from attending the

²³ Matthias Middell, “The Intercultural Transfer Paradigm in Its Transnational and Transregional Setting,” in *Yearbook of Transnational History*, vol. 1, ed. Thomas Adam and Austin E. Loignon (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2018), 43.

²⁴ Hall, “The West and the Rest,” 303.

²⁵ Emel Engin, “Türk Modernleşmesinde Galatasaray Lisesi’nin Önemi,” in *Türk Modernleşmesi*, ed. A. Kolay (Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2013), 42.

²⁶ Şişman, “Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultanisi,” 324.

²⁷ Aylin Semiz, “Türk Ortaöğretim Sisteminde Galatasaray Lisesi (Mekteb-i Sultanı): Yeri ve Tarihsel Gelişimi” (master’s thesis, İstanbul University, 2008), 68.

²⁸ Şişman, “Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultanisi,” 324.

²⁹ Bayram Kodaman, *Abdülhâmid Devri Eğitim Sistemi*, 2nd ed. (Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), 135.

³⁰ Yahya Akyüz, *Türk Eğitim Tarihi M.O. 1000–M.S. 2007*, 11th ed. (Pegem A Yayıncılık, 2007), 203.

³¹ Somel, *Osmancı'da Eğitimin Modernleşmesi (1839–1908)*, 78.

³² Ernest Salve-Villedieu, “Création du Lycée de Galata-Sérai à Constantinople, sous les auspices du gouvernement français,” *Mémoires de l’Académie des sciences, agriculture, arts et belles-lettres d’Aix* 15 (1893): 353–54.

school.³³ Within the Ottoman Empire, members of the Greek community also protested the exclusion of their language from the curriculum.³⁴ Such reactions highlight the extent to which Galatasaray's categorization as an imperial school—built with French cooperation yet embedded in a multicultural Ottoman context—was contested from the outset.

Within the Ottoman Muslim community, anxieties toward Galatasaray also surfaced. As reported in the newspaper *İstanbul* on 22 June 1868, some parents worried that the school's multireligious composition might undermine their children's faith.³⁵ At the same time, sections of the Ottoman intelligentsia openly criticized the state's initiative. The newspaper *Hürriyet* ran an article on 21 September 1868 denouncing the project on the grounds that Ottoman Muslim students should not be placed under the authority of French instructors.³⁶ Similar critiques continued into the early twentieth century. In 1913, the journal *el-Medâris* published a piece by one Y. Sami,³⁷ who described Galatasaray as nothing less than "the hearth of Western imitation."³⁸

Interestingly, while some framed the school as excessively French, certain French officials themselves perceived a loss of influence over time. Ernest de Salve-Villedieu, the school's first principal, later remarked that after his departure "the curricula have undergone changes, and the French language no longer holds the dominant position it once did."³⁹ In his view, the intended symbiosis of French pedagogy and Ottoman modernization had not materialized as originally envisioned.⁴⁰ These divergent perceptions—Ottoman critics denouncing Galatasaray as overly Westernized, and French observers lamenting the decline of French dominance—highlight the contested and fluid categorization of the institution from its very inception.

The contested status of Galatasaray did not end with the Ottoman period but extended well into the republican era, when the institution's social role and symbolic position remained under scrutiny. A particularly vivid episode occurred in 1935, when the prominent novelist and journalist Peyami Safa (1899–1961) published a provocative article titled "Galatasaray Feudalism" in the daily press.⁴¹ Safa accused the school of functioning as a "privileged" institution, likening it to "a House of Lords, a school for noblemen."⁴² His critique framed Galatasaray as a relic of social hierarchy, disconnected from the egalitarian ideals of the republic.

This polemic, however, was immediately met with rebuttals from Galatasaray affiliates who sought to defend the school's reputation. Ercümend Ekrem Talu (1888–1956)—himself a graduate of Galatasaray and son of the distinguished writer and former Galatasaray teacher Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem (1847–1914)—published a response in the public press. In his article, Talu represented Galatasaray's graduates as citizens who, "thinking with a European mind, became the forerunners in breaking free from Europe's domination."⁴³ He depicted Galatasaray as a cornerstone of Türkiye's intellectual, political, and even military development, while at the same time implicitly distancing it from its Ottoman heritage by aligning it with the moral and civic ideals of the republic.⁴⁴

³³ Evrim Şençan Gürtunca, "The Role of Foreign and Turkish Schools in Changing Late Ottoman Educational Policy: Robert College and Mekteb-i Sultani," *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 17, no. 35 (2017): 11.

³⁴ Sişman, "Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultanisi," 324.

³⁵ İhsan Sungu, "Galatasaray Lisesinin Kuruluşu," *TTK Belleten* 7, no. 28 (1943): 333.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 332.

³⁷ The author Y. Sami could not be identified in existing biographical or archival sources.

³⁸ Y. Sami, "Mekteb-i Sultânî = Garbin Taklîd Ocağı," *el-Medâris*, no. 9 (11 July 1913): 129–30 [Ottoman script].

³⁹ Salve-Villedieu, "Création du Lycée de Galata-Séraï à Constantinople," 358. Original: "Les programmes ont été modifiés et la langue française n'y remplit plus le rôle prépondérant qui lui avait été assigné."

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 362.

⁴¹ Peyami Safa, "Galatasaray Feodalizmi," *Tan*, 5 December 1935, accessed through İstanbul Üniversitesi Gazeteden Tarihe Bakış Projesi, <https://nek.istanbul.edu.tr/ekos/GAZETE/gazete.php?gazete=tan>.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2. Original: "Sınıf ve imtiyaz farklılarını tanıtmak istemediğimiz halde Galatasaray lisesini küçük bir lordlar kamarası, bir asılzadeler mektebi olarak nasıl muhafaza ediyoruz."

⁴³ Ercümend Ekrem Talu, "Galatasaray," *Cumhuriyet*, 6 December 1935, 5, accessed via İstanbul Üniversitesi Gazeteden Tarihe Bakış Projesi, <https://nek.istanbul.edu.tr/ekos/GAZETE/gazete.php?gazete=cumhuriyet>. Original: "Avrupali kafası ile düşününen bu gençler Avrupa boyunduruşunu kirip atmaya önyak oldular."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

The debates over Galatasaray's categorization persisted well into the twentieth and even twenty-first centuries, acquiring new dimensions with the rise of postcolonial theory. Within this scholarship, defining the school as French has often been coupled with the assumption that French-language education necessarily entailed cultural alienation.⁴⁵ Bayram Kodaman, for instance, describes the institution as serving French interests and producing "colonized native individuals."⁴⁶ This line of critique draws explicitly on the framework of Frantz Fanon, particularly his reflections on the "colonized intellectual."⁴⁷ The underlying premise is that language, especially when acquired in colonial or semi-colonial contexts, is never a neutral medium but a vehicle that transmits a worldview.⁴⁸

In response, Galatasaray graduates and affiliated scholars have often adopted defensive positions, seeking either to minimize French influence or to emphasize the school's Ottoman foundations. Historian and Galatasaray alumnus Vahdettin Engin exemplifies this perspective when he writes, "When evaluating Galatasaray . . . it should not be confused with schools such as Saint Joseph. . . . The Mekteb-i Sultani differs greatly from the aforementioned foreign schools, and the French influence present at its foundation should not be exaggerated."⁴⁹

While debates over Galatasaray's categorization continued, the cultural discourse of the 1940s also turned its gaze toward Istanbul itself. During this period, the city's symbolic position was undergoing redefinition within the republican imagination. Though described in the 1920s as "a small town deprived of many facilities, with irregular streets and modest buildings," Ankara was celebrated in literature as the emblematic city of the republic.⁵⁰ Even before 1923, Ankara had already been envisioned as a cultural center: In 1921, Mübarek Galib Eldem (1871–1938), then director of the Department of Culture, initiated a project to establish a Hittite Museum.⁵¹ The founding of the Ankara City Planning Office in 1928 also marked Türkiye's first major urban planning initiative, which preceded Istanbul's comprehensive plan of 1933.⁵²

Yet from the mid-1930s onward, Istanbul gradually reentered the cultural and intellectual imagination of the republic. The appointment of the French urban planner Henri Prost (1874–1959) in 1936 symbolized a renewed effort to modernize the city while integrating its imperial heritage.⁵³ By the 1940s, this renewed interest was echoed in literature and popular culture. Galatasaray alumnus Edip Ayel (1894–1957), for instance, published poems in *Çınaraltı* between 1941 and 1948 that evoked Istanbul's mosques, monuments, and memories of conquest, transforming the city into a poetic site of imperial remembrance.⁵⁴

These developments illustrate how, by the mid-twentieth century, Istanbul's imperial past was being reframed within a republican cultural idiom—culminating in the commemorations of the 500th anniversary of the conquest in 1953, when the city was reimagined as both a historical capital and a cornerstone of national identity.⁵⁵ By the mid-twentieth century, this renewed interest in Istanbul converged with Galatasaray's intellectual milieu, where teachers, alumni, and students participated in shaping new urban imaginaries.

45 Kodaman, *Abdülhâmid Devri Eğitim Sistemi*, 150.

46 Ibid., 34. Original: "Sömürge tipi yerli insan . . ."

47 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre (Grove Press, 1963), 44.

48 Alamin Mazrui, "Language and the Quest for Liberation in Africa: The Legacy of Frantz Fanon," *Third World Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1993): 351–52.

49 Vahdettin Engin, *1868'den 1923'e Mekteb-i Sultani* (Galatasaraylılar Derneği, 2003), 285. Original: "Galatasaray Sultanisi'ni değerlendirdirirken . . . vurgulanması gereken . . . Saint Joseph . . . tarzi okullarla karıştırılmaması gereğidir. Mekteb-i Sultani, yukarıda sözü edilen yabancı okullardan çok farklı olup, kuruluşundaki Fransız etkisini de fazla abartmamak gerekmektedir."

50 Hale Gürlü Gürkanlı Kutlu, "Türk Edebiyatında İstanbul İmgesinin Teşekkülü (1930–1945)" (master's thesis, TOBB Ekonomi ve Teknoloji University, 2020), 3. Original: "1920'lerin Ankara'sı pek çok imkândan mahrum, yolları ve binaları düzensiz ve küçük bir kasabadır."

51 Alper Bakıcı, "Cumhuriyet Dönemi (1930–1940) Kültür Politikalarının Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi'ne Olan Etkisi," *Akademi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 8, no. 22 (2021): 160.

52 Seda Bayındır Uluskan, "Atatürk Döneminde İstanbul'un İmarı ve Henri Prost Planının Basındaki Yankıları (1936–1939)," *Erdem* 16, no. 48 (2007): 113.

53 Ibid., 119.

54 Gürkanlı Kutlu, "Türk Edebiyatında İstanbul İmgesinin Teşekkülü," 189.

55 Ibid.

This section begins by analyzing Orhan Saik Gökyay's (1902–94) contribution to the May 1947 issue.⁵⁶ A renowned literary scholar and poet, Gökyay taught at Galatasaray High School between 1946 and 1951, and was deeply immersed in Ottoman literary historiography.⁵⁷ His poetry, published in journals such as *Çağlayan* and *Açiksöz*, ranged from patriotic and lyrical to reflective verse on nature and solitude, while his later scholarly works—such as *Dede Korkut* (1938) and his editions of Kâtib Çelebi (1609–57)—secured his place among the leading editors of Ottoman classics.⁵⁸ In his piece, Gökyay offers a poetic search for a city that exists more vividly in cultural memory than in contemporary geography.

Rather than describing Istanbul as it stood in 1947, Gökyay constructs a symbolic landscape shaped by loss and longing. His narrator wanders the city in search of an Istanbul that can no longer be located through its visible monuments, such as Üsküdar, Haliç, minarets, or even the Bosphorus. What he seeks is not a physical city, but a remembered one, which is an Istanbul of soul, imagination, and myth:

Üsküdar, the Golden Horn, the walls, the minarets, the domes, the cypresses, and an eternal spring climate embracing them all. . . . Then the Bosphorus, on whose two shores time rushes by with the murmur of history: "That festive city." This, I say, is Istanbul, this is Istanbul. . . . Yet I know that the dream I seek, the dream I cannot find, is not this one. Each time, with a renewed zeal to conquer the horizons, I take flight, yet at the very first beat of my wings, I fall powerless, as if struck by the night.⁵⁹

For Gökyay, modern transformations have drained the city of its historical vitality, leaving behind what he calls "a defeated city whose beauty we have long been striving to overcome. Yet this was not it."⁶⁰ To recover this lost urban essence, Gökyay turns to the past—not as mere nostalgia, but as a way of knowing. He immerses himself in Ottoman sources, declaring,

Who, which guide, will step before me and lead me out of this heap of stone and concrete, out of this web of iron lines, to the battlefield of history? Like a fortunate man plunging into horizons of desire in a sea of green, I too immersed myself in books. I read . . . the works of Evliya Çelebi; the *Hadikatü'l-Cevami*; the *Sahilname*. Like a joyful father and son setting out on a journey, I wander through Istanbul with Evliya Çelebi.⁶¹

In this way, he re-enters an Istanbul experienced through words rather than sights. Reading becomes a kind of spiritual journey. The narrator wanders among old fountains, mosque courtyards, and the echoes of storytellers, using these intertextual references to revive a vibrant city that survives only in shared memory.

In the second part of the essay, Gökyay brings memory to life through a vivid list of artisans, guilds, and performers from the Ottoman urban tradition:

I came to know, one by one, the guards, the secondhand booksellers, the storytellers, the kohl-sellers, the surgeons, the sherbet-sellers, the salt dealers, the engravers, the silver-thread makers . . . , the fifty-seven artisans of Istanbul's people. Filled with delight, I gazed upon them in a rich and hitherto unseen procession.⁶²

⁵⁶ The Turkish to English translations are mine, except where explicitly stated otherwise.

⁵⁷ İsmail E. Erünsal, "Gökyay, Orhan Saik," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1996), 14:144–46.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Orhan Saik Gökyay, "Fetih Yıldönümünde İstanbul'u Arıyorum," *Galatasaray Lisesi Dergisi*, no. 2 (May 1947): 1. Original: "Üsküdar, Haliç, surlar, minareler, kubbeler, selviler ve hepsini birden kucaklayan sonsuz bir bahar iklimi. . . . Sonra iki kıyısında zamanın, bir tarih üğültüsüyla çağıldıyap aktığı Boğaz: 'O şehrayın.' İşte İstanbul, diyorum, işte İstanbul. . . Fakat biliyorum ki aradığım hayal, arayıp bulamadığım hayal bu değildir. Her seferinde yeni bir şevkle ufukları zaptetmek azımlıye havalandır, daha ilk kanat darbesinde geceye çarpmış gibi mecalızsiz düşüyorum."

⁶⁰ Ibid. Original: "Nice zamandır, güzelliğini yemekle uğraştığımız mağlup bir şehirdir. Halbuki, bu değildi bu."

⁶¹ Ibid. Original: "Kim, hangi kılavuz öňüme düşüp beni bu taş ve beton yığınlarının içinden, bu demir çizgilerin agından tarihin er meydânına ulaştracak? Bir yesilin denizinde murat ufuklarına dalam bir bahtlı insan gibi ben de kitaplara gömüldüm . . . Evliya Çelebi'leri; Hadikatü'l-Cevami'leri; Sahilname'leri okudum. Bir şen yolculuğa çkmış baba-oğul gibi, Evliya Çelebi ile İstanbul'u geziyorum."

⁶² Ibid., 1–2. Original: "Bekçileri, sahafları, meddahları, sürmecileri, cerrahları, şerbetçileri; tuzcuları, hakkakları,

These figures are not just nostalgic references. They appear as active participants in a dreamlike procession that evokes the city's forgotten rhythms. The artisans (*ehl-i hıref*) are represented as part of a living cultural choreography that once gave everyday life its spiritual and artistic richness. Gökyay's narrative blends calligraphy, music, architecture, and craftsmanship into a sensory vision of Istanbul as a cosmopolitan center of creativity. Yet this vision is not allowed to remain idyllic. As the essay unfolds, the tone shifts toward melancholy:

Then another spirit led me to wander, one by one, through the courtyards of the mosques. This great pleasure garden—now in places ruined, in places stripped of the fame and renown once attached to its names—is called the *Hadikatü'l-Cevâmi*.⁶³

Walking among the decaying remains of libraries, mosques, and urban rituals, Gökyay recognizes the irreversible ruptures brought by modernity. His gentle warning underlines this sense of loss: “But let one not awaken from this inexhaustible journey; let one not, with a crude curiosity, begin to ask where these have gone, in the twilight hour when beauty is struck by evening. Beyond that lies only the beginning of a tale: ‘Once upon a time . . .’”⁶⁴ This acknowledgment makes clear that the Istanbul he evokes may now exist only in memory, prayer, or poetic imagination.

Gökyay ends his essay with a spiritual turn. He shifts the focus from the city's outward appearance to an inner vision, suggesting that only those who hold Istanbul's memory deep inside—like a secret inheritance—can uncover its hidden beauty. As he puts it,

Yet it is only those who bear this unsullied love within them, as if it were a secret, who can draw back the veils one by one and reveal the horizons beyond—stretching boundlessly, never again to be closed. And it is they who can tell us what it is, and which part of Istanbul it is, that is truly beautiful. Turkish Istanbul, like every eternal beauty, is an infinite enigma, in need of the interpretations of those who are enthralled by it.⁶⁵

These individuals, he argues, are able to express what cannot be easily described: the qualities that make the city beautiful, and the deep emotional connection it inspires. For Gökyay, Istanbul is not a city that can be fully captured through facts or official narratives. It is a place that remains just out of reach and requires a special kind of devotion—like that of the *meczup*, the spiritual lover touched by divine madness. In this final reflection, Istanbul becomes more than a place of nostalgia or artistic inspiration. It is a sacred mystery that cannot be fully explained or contained, but only approached through love, memory, and reverence.⁶⁶

Gökyay's depiction of Istanbul resonates with the impressionist interiority of Ahmet Haşim (1887–1933) and the historical continuity of Yahya Kemal (1884–1958). Yahya Kemal's poetic vision transforms the Ottoman world—and particularly Istanbul's reflective seascapes such as İstinye and Üsküdar—into a realm of inner perception and continuity.⁶⁷ In his verse, motifs of water, sound, and twilight become metaphors of remembrance and moral devotion, evoking a metaphysical geography where the Ottoman past flows into the present through aesthetic contemplation.⁶⁸ Similarly, Ahmet Haşim—himself a Galatasaray graduate—re-

sirmakeşleri. . . elli yedi *ehl-i hıref* İstanbul halkını bir bir tamidim. Zengin ve şimdiye dek görülmemiş bir alayda bunları doya doya seyrettim.”

⁶³ Ibid., 2. Original: “Sonra, bir başka ruh beni camilerin bahçesinde bir bir dolaştırdı. Bu büyük, fakat şimdî yer yer harap, yer yer nâm ü şâni kalmamış isimlerle dolu bu hasbahçenin adı ‘Hadikatü'l-Cevâmi'dir.”

⁶⁴ Ibid. Original: “İnsan bu doyulmaz yolculuğundan ulyanmaya görsün; kötü bir tecessüsle gözünü açtığı bu güzelliğin akşamı yuran saatinde, onların yerini sormaya kalkışmasın. . . ondan ötesi bir masal başlangıcıdır: ‘Bir varmış, bir yokmuş. . .’”

⁶⁵ Ibid., 2, 15. Original: “Ancak bu lekesiz muhabbeti bir sir gibi içlerinde taşıyanlardır ki, perdeleri bir bir açı, onun ardındaki, alabildiğine ve kapanmamak üzere uzanıp giden ufukları gösterebilir. Ve onlardır ki bizim kuru bir kelime halinde, kendi payına, âdet yerini bulsun diye, güzelliğini söyleyegelip söyleyegittiğimiz İstanbul'un nesinin ve neresinin güzel olduğunu; sevgimizin nerede başlayıp nerede bitmediğini anlatabilirler. Türk İstanbul da ebedî her güzellik gibi meczubu olanların tefsirlerine muhtaç bir sonsuz muammadır.”

⁶⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁷ Pınar Aka, “Yahya Kemal'de Yolculuk ve Şiirin Varoluş Serüveni,” *Göç Dergisi (GD)* 1 (2015): 156

⁶⁸ Ibid., 148, 150, 156.

imagines urban and natural space through impressionist interiority.⁶⁹ In poems such as “O Belde,” he constructs a dreamlike geography shaped by loss and longing, where the visible city dissolves into reverie and emotional perception.⁷⁰ Gökyay’s representation of Istanbul echoes both sensibilities. Like Yahya Kemal, he seeks moral continuity in beauty, and like Haşim, he turns memory into a landscape of introspection. His Istanbul thus belongs to the same generation’s effort to reconcile Ottoman remembrance with modern sensibility through inward vision and poetic devotion—an aesthetic pursuit that, for Gökyay, also affirms a distinctly local, culturally rooted sense of belonging.

The second essay analyzed in this section is a nostalgic yet didactic reflection on the city’s allegedly lost moral fabric by Ercümend Ekrem Talu, a prominent humorist, novelist, and journalist of the early republic. Educated at Galatasaray High School and the École Libre des Sciences Politiques in Paris, Talu published widely in periodicals such as *İkdam* and *İleri*, gaining fame for his satirical columns *Evliyâ-yı Cedid* (1920) and *Zeyl-i Evliyâ-yı Cedid*—serialized in 1923 under the title *Ramazan-nâme-i Evliyâ*—which humorously reimagined the city of Istanbul through parody and moral observation.⁷¹

Talu opens by asserting that no other city has suffered such a rapid loss of its cultural identity as Istanbul. The transformation he mourns is not architectural or political, but ethical. The Istanbul he remembers was shaped by customs, manners, and a shared code of conduct that structured everyday life:

I bring before my eyes the Istanbul of fifty years ago. No other city has so completely altered, has so utterly lost its freedom within so short a span of time. The Istanbul of fifty years ago, with the customs and traditions it still preserved and continued, was a city of its own distinct character.⁷²

Although the city had already begun to absorb European influences by the late Ottoman period, Talu insists that it had not yet produced what he derisively calls the “freshwater Turk,” a superficial imitator of Western habits.⁷³ In his view, Westernization was once filtered through local values and integrated into a deeper structure of Ottoman and Turkish civility, unlike the uncritical mimicry he associates with the present. He continues:

The imitation of the Franks that the Tanzimat had brought into the country had affected only a small group. . . . Western civilization was entering our midst slowly, and only through its finer aspects. Those who grew familiar with it strove to think in French [Western European languages], yet, without doubt, they still felt in Turkish.⁷⁴

In the original Turkish text, Talu uses the term *Frenkçe*, derived from *Frenk*—a word that Ottoman writers used broadly to denote Western Europeans, particularly Latin-Christian peoples such as the French and Italians, rather than referring to France alone.⁷⁵ At the center of this moral order stood the *İstanbul efendisi* and *İstanbul hanımı*, idealized figures whose refined speech, gestures, and self-restraint defined the city’s social tone. Talu notes,

The Istanbul gentleman and the Istanbul lady were models for everyone. Courtesy, composure, and decorum seemed to be their exclusive domain. . . . Istanbul, among all the regions of the country, had gathered within itself the very essence of Turkish manners.

69 Taylan Abiç and Vecihe Solmaz, “Ahmet Haşim’in Şiirlerinde Mekân,” *Karadeniz Uluslararası Bilimsel Dergi* 51 (Autumn 2021): 454.

70 Ibid., 461.

71 Atilla Çetin, “Talu, Ercümend Ekrem,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1995), 11:274–76.

72 Ercümend Ekrem Talu, “Elli Yıl Evelveli İstanbul Terbiyesi,” *Galatasaray Lisesi Dergisi*, no. 2 (May 1947): 3. Original: “Elli yıl evelveli İstanbul’u şöyle bir göz önüne getiriyorum. Hiçbir şehir bu kadar az bir zaman içerisinde hürriyetini bu derecede değiştirmemiş, kaybetmemiştir. Elli yıl evelveli İstanbul, henüz muhafaza etmeye ve devam ettirmekte olduğu âdetleri ve gelenekleri ile, özelliği olan bir belde idi.”

73 Ibid. Original: “Burada . . . tatlı su Türkü diye bir şey yoktu.”

74 Ibid. Original: “Tanzimat’ın memlekete soktuğu Frenk taklitçiliği . . . ufak bir zümrəyi bulastırılmıştı. Garip medeniyeti aramızda yavaş yavaş ve ancak iyi taraflarından sokuluyordu. Onunla ülfet edenler Frenkçe düşünmeye gayret ediyor, fakat muhakkak ki Türkçe duyuyordu.”

75 Mahmut H. Şakiroğlu, “Frenk,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1996), 13:197–99.

... The mansions of the elite, as well as the hearths of families of modest means, were all the same in this regard. Within the patriarchal Turkish family, a constitutional order of respect and courtesy was observed, maintaining harmony without disruption. ... The same affection and reverence were shown to relatives both near and distant. An uncle was regarded as a second father; an aunt was equated with one's own mother. ... The Istanbulite family, like all Turkish families, regarded the schoolteacher as higher than everything and everyone. ... Wherever the teacher struck, roses would bloom ...⁷⁶

Talu paints a world where deference, discipline, and respect governed not only family hierarchies but also public life. According to him, elders were obeyed without question, teachers were revered, and even household staff were treated with ceremonious respect. Central to this structure was the patriarchal family, which, in his view, functioned as the bedrock of Turkish virtue. What emerges is a tightly organized moral geography—gendered, hierarchical, and deeply nostalgic. As the essay continues, Talu expands this vision into a broader map of social memory. School memories during the Ottoman–Greek War of 1897, especially the thrill of reading newspaper reports of Ottoman victories, mark for him the birth of a national consciousness rooted in pride and sacrifice. Even domestic objects—old weapons, family heirlooms—are invested with symbolic power, linking household life to collective history. Talu states,

The sword, pistol, or flintlock of a grandfather, father, or uncle who had fought in some war would hang in a place of honor within the home. On feast days, people would pour into the streets to see the soldiers and the banner departing in parade, to feel the noblest and sweetest of emotions. During the Ottoman–Greek War of 1897, we were at school. I can never forget how, during recess, we would crowd before the great iron gate, waiting for the special editions announcing one victory after another. If we managed to get hold of a single copy, our joy knew no bounds.⁷⁷

This moralized urban imaginary also carries a distinctly gendered perspective. As Talu notes, “It was not customary to harass women; on the contrary, they were protected. Such respect and protection were considered requirements of manliness.”⁷⁸ This ideal of protection, grounded in patriarchal virtue rather than equality, situates gender relations within a moral hierarchy where restraint defines civility. In this framework, vulgar language and unrestrained behavior signal moral decay.⁷⁹ Public conduct, speech, and emotion are governed by an implicit code of decorum.⁸⁰ Istanbul, in this memoryscape, emerges as a city sustained by fixed values and inherited norms—and whose decline, for Talu, stems from the erosion of these moral foundations.

Talu closes with a gesture toward the future. Despite his lament, he expresses cautious optimism, placing his hope in the youth of the republic. These new citizens, he suggests, may yet revive the lost ethics of the old Istanbul, provided they remain anchored in the “essence” of their character. Talu states,

Such was Istanbul fifty years ago. In time, its order was lost. Various misfortunes swept away those beautiful traditions. And now, as we feel their longing in our hearts, we find consolation in a single hope that the youth, who have inherited the Republic ... establish even greater traditions and revive that fine, old Turkish refinement.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Talu, “Elli Yıl Evvelli İstanbul Terbiyesi,” 4. Original: “İstanbul efendisi, İstanbul hanımı herkes için birer örnektiler. Nezaket, vakar, edep, bunların inhisarında gibiydi. İstanbul, bütün yurdun içinde Türk terbiyesini kendinde tekasüf ettiirmiştir. Kabir konakları da, orta halli aile ocakları da öyle idi. Pederşahı Türk ailesinde saygı ve nezaketi bozulmayan bir düzene tâbi tutan bir mesrutiyet silsilesi gözetiliirdi. ... Yakın, uzak akrabaya da aynı yakınlık ve aynı hürmet gösterilirdi. Amca, baba yarısı sayılır, teyze anne ile bir tutulurdu. ... Mektep hocasını İstanbullu aile, esasen bütün Türk aileleri gibi her seyden, herkesten yüksek tutar. ... Hocanın vurdugu yerde gül biter[di] ...”

⁷⁷ Ibid. Original: “Bilmem hangi harpte bulunmuş dedenin, babanın, amcanın, dayının kılıcı, tabanca, filintası evin içinde bir ihtiram mevkiinde asılı dururdu. Bayramı günlerinde halk, alaya giden askerleri ve sancacı görmek, heyecanılarla en asıl ve en tatlısına duymak maksadıyla sokaklara döküldürdü. Tesalya Harbi’nde mektepte idik. Hiç unutmam, teneffüslerde büyük parmaklıklı kapının önüne yığılır, birbirini takip eden zafer haberlerini yayınlayan ilaveleri beklerdim. Şayet bir tane ele geçirecek olursak, sevincimize payan olmazdı.”

⁷⁸ Ibid. Original: “Kadınlara sarkıntılık etmek âdeti yoktu. Bilakis onlar himaye edilirdi. Bu saygı ve himaye erkekliğin icabı sayılır.”

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid. Original: “Elli yıl evvelki İstanbul işte böyleydi. Zamanla düzeni kayboldu. Türlü türlü musibetler o güzel

This move allows him to bridge past and present. He neither rejects the republic nor fully embraces its rupture with the Ottoman past. Instead, he constructs a moral genealogy in which the republic can reclaim its Ottoman inheritance—not through institutional continuity, but through personal virtue. In this sense, Talu's call to the younger generation is not merely moral but civilizational. He urges them to reanimate the ethical spirit and cultural refinement of Ottoman Istanbul within a modern national framework.

While debates around Galatasaray High School—both during the late Ottoman period and after the establishment of the republic—often centered on whether the institution was “French,” “Turkish,” or “Ottoman,” Talu's essay takes an opposite stance, defending what he portrays as a distinctly Turkish moral ethos. His recollection of “the Istanbul of fifty years ago” expresses a selective nostalgia for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a time he considers ethically superior despite its exposure to Western influence.⁸² For him, the Westernization of the Tanzimat era had remained moderate and morally anchored, absorbed through local values rather than imitation, whereas the 1940s represented a decline marked by moral laxity.

Contrary to the postcolonial assumptions of some who argued that a French education at Galatasaray inevitably produced Western-oriented or culturally alienated intellectuals, Talu's stance exemplifies the opposite. A Galatasaray graduate educated in French, he assumes the role of a moral custodian, seeking to safeguard what he calls “Turkish refinement” from the excesses of Westernization.⁸³ His position is particularly striking given his Galatasaray background. Talu voices a conservative nostalgia rooted in Ottoman or Turkish ethical codes. This view gains further resonance when read against postcolonial theories that link linguistic acquisition to cultural alienation. This position also becomes clearer when viewed in light of his family background. Talu's father, Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem—an influential Galatasaray teacher and author of *Araba Sevdası*—had introduced the literary figure of the *züppə*, the Westernized dandy who loses touch with his cultural roots.⁸⁴ Talu's own invocation of the “freshwater Turk” clearly echoes this archetype, marking moral decay through mimicry of French habits. In this sense, Talu—like the Tanzimat authors Berna Moran describes, who held that one could adopt Western forms yet remain a tradition-bound, civilized Muslim—casts himself as a custodian of cultural authenticity.⁸⁵ Educated at Galatasaray, he thus polices the boundary between adaptation and imitation, styling himself as a guardian of national manners and moral integrity.

Finally, Talu himself defended Galatasaray's reputation in his 1935 exchanges with Peyami Safa, insisting that the school's elite status and Ottoman heritage did not contradict its national character.⁸⁶ Yet his nostalgic imagination of Istanbul reveals a different impulse. While publicly distancing Galatasaray from its Ottoman past to affirm its compatibility with the newly established republic, he simultaneously elevates the Ottoman city as a moral and emotional ideal. In this sense, Talu's position embodies a paradox. He seeks to preserve Galatasaray's modern, national image while longing to revive the ethical and spiritual world of Ottoman Istanbul.

Istanbul, City of Empires: Imperial Geographies and Universalist Legacies

The third essay examined in this study was written by Ernest Mamboury (1878–1953), a Swiss art historian, painter, and educator who lived in Istanbul for over four decades. Trained in Geneva and Paris, Mamboury arrived in the Ottoman capital in 1909 and went on to become a key figure in documenting the city's architectural and archaeological heritage. He began teaching at Galatasaray High School in 1921 and contributed extensively to interna-

an'aneleri sildi süpürdü. Ve şimdi biz onların hasretini yüreklerimizde duyarken, teselliyi tek bir ümitte buluyoruz. . . . Cumhuriyeti emanet alan gençlik, . . . daha üstün an'aneler kuracaklarına ve o güzel, eski Türk terbiyesini ihyâ edeceklerine inanmışız.”

⁸² Ibid., 3.

⁸³ Ibid., 4. Original: “Türk terbiyesi.”

⁸⁴ Berna Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış 1* (İletişim Yayıncılık, 1998), 43.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁸⁶ Talu, “Galatasaray!”

tional archaeological collaborations, producing maps, restoration plans, and popular guides that shaped how Istanbul's historical landscape was understood both locally and abroad. His intellectual and cartographic work positioned him as both a chronicler and mediator of Istanbul's multilayered urban past.⁸⁷ His essay in the 1947 issue was published in Turkish.

Beyond his teaching and restoration work, Mamboury gained international recognition through a series of widely circulated publications. His *Constantinople: Guide touristique* (Istanbul, 1925) became a landmark in early urban archaeology and was later translated into German and English in 1930, helping to popularize Istanbul's heritage among European travelers.⁸⁸ He also published studies in major European journals, including *L'Illustration* (Paris, 1930) and *Die Denkmalpflege* (Berlin and Vienna, 1931).⁸⁹

In his contribution, Mamboury offers a panoramic historical account of the city's sieges, tracing over thirty military assaults from antiquity to the Ottoman conquest. He begins by emphasizing Istanbul's geopolitical position—bridging continents and controlling key waterways—which rendered it a target of imperial ambition:

With its geographical position at the juncture of two continents and upon the Straits that unite two great inland seas, Istanbul has always attracted the desire of nations both near and far. All the shared or conflicting political, military, religious, racial, and social interests that have given rise to wars, disputes, and negotiations—still far from being concluded—meet here.⁹⁰

His account proceeds chronologically, moving from early Greek and Roman campaigns to Arab-Islamic sieges in the seventh and eighth centuries, Slavic and Russian incursions, Byzantine rebellions, the Latin occupation of 1204, and ultimately the Ottoman conquest in 1453. As Mamboury notes, "Throughout its three thousand years of existence, Istanbul has witnessed some thirty waves of rebels or enemies crash against its walls and has, seven times, been forced to submit to the harsh laws of the conquerors."⁹¹ Each episode is presented with concise detail, technical insight, and spatial awareness, constructing a narrative of the city as both a prize and a protagonist in civilizational conflict.⁹²

Mamboury's essay stands apart from the more affective or nostalgic texts in the 1947 issue by adopting a detached, almost cartographic tone rooted in historical-geographical narration. His description unfolds as a chronological panorama:

In 477 BCE, Pausanias besieged and captured the city. . . . At the end of the fifth century, the city again changed hands after being besieged by the Greeks under the command of Alcibiades. . . . In 197 CE, when Emperor Septimius Severus took the city following a siege, he destroyed it from top to bottom.⁹³

Each siege is rendered with topographical precision—anchored in exact dates, commanders, and city quarters—producing what might be called a cartography of endurance.⁹⁴

Rather than invoking personal sentiment or aesthetic longing, Mamboury constructs a representation of Istanbul grounded in geopolitical continuity and spatial resilience. His chronology transforms the city's sieges into markers of civilizational transition, represent-

⁸⁷ Semavi Eyice, "Mamboury, Ernest," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1995), 27:550–51.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 550.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ernest Mamboury, "İstanbul Muhasaraları," *Galatasaray Lisesi Dergisi*, no. 2 (May 1947): 5. Original: "İki Kit'anın mültekesinde ve iki büyük iç denizi birleştiren Boğazlar üzerindeki coğrafi durumuyla İstanbul daima, yakın veya uzak milletlerin arzusunu celbetmiştir. Harplere, kavgalara, münekasalarla, henüz bitmekten çok uzak olan konferanslara sebep olan bütün müşterek veya aykırı, siyasi, askeri, dini, irki, içtimai menfaatler burada karşılaşırlar."

⁹¹ Ibid. Original: "Üç bin yıllık mevcudiyeti boyunca İstanbul, otuz kadar isyancı veya düşman dalgasının surlarına çarptığı görülmüş ve yedi defa galiplerin sert kanunlarına boyun eğmeye mecbur olmuştur."

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid. Original: "M.Ö. 477 senesinde Pausanias şehri muhasara etmiş ve ele geçirmiştir. . . V. asırın sonlarında Alcibiade kumandasındaki Yunanlılar tarafından muhasara olunan şehir tekrar sahip değiştirdi. . . M.S. 197'de İmparator Septime Severe şehri muhasaradan sonra ele geçirince baştan başa çıktı."

⁹⁴ Ibid., 5–6.

ing Istanbul as a palimpsest of imperial ambition and contested sovereignty. As he observes, “The new capital, well-founded and surrounded by magnificent walls, had little difficulty in rendering fruitless the siege laid against it in 616 by the Persian Emperor Chosroes.”⁹⁵ The statement epitomizes the city’s enduring fortitude amid successive imperial contests. Each wave of attack—from Greeks and Romans to Arabs, Bulgars, Crusaders, and Ottomans—thus reaffirms Istanbul’s identity as a transregional nexus shaped by continuous flows of power, belief, and exchange.

This geopolitical framing inevitably recalls the popular “Great Game” myth—canonized by the English novelist Rudyard Kipling’s (1865–1936) *Kim* (1901) and perpetuated in twentieth-century adventure histories—that narrates Eurasia through rivalry, chokepoints, and civilizational brinkmanship.⁹⁶ That literature often substituted anecdote, exaggeration, and imperial romance for rigorous analysis and projected a continuous Anglo-Russian duel across Central and South Asia.⁹⁷ While Mamboury’s piece is not an instance of that genre—his mode is chronological siege history rather than espionage adventure—its emphasis on Istanbul’s liminal position and recurring imperial pressures does resonate with the same geographical determinism that made the Great Game so compelling in the popular imagination. Geoffrey Hamm describes this as Britain’s attempt to secure itself by constructing a “zone of buffer states stretching from Turkey, through Persia, to Khiva and Bukhara, with agreed-upon frontiers.”⁹⁸ This geopoliticized imagination of spatial vulnerability and perpetual rivalry—transposed from Europe to Asia—illustrates how imperial narratives converted topography into a logic of competition and endurance. In that sense, Mamboury’s depiction of Istanbul as a city continually besieged and yet enduringly central mirrors the same geographical determinism that underpinned the Great Game myth.

Ultimately, Mamboury’s essay represents a distinct mode of urban imaginary, which constructs Istanbul as a stage for imperial contestation and strategic endurance. It offers an alternative to the personal, moralized, or nostalgic visions found elsewhere in the volume. Within this mosaic, Mamboury’s cartographic imaginary anchors the city not in loss, but in longevity—defining Istanbul as a site where civilizational currents converge, collide, and leave their trace.

While Mamboury situates Istanbul within a geography of empires, the issue shifts focus to the individual figure who most symbolically shaped that imperial legacy. In his essay, A. Yavuz Bayhan presents an emphatically admiring portrait of Mehmed II (1432–81), representing him as a singular historical figure whose legacy transcends religious and civilizational boundaries.⁹⁹ He states,

Eastern and Western thinkers who have studied the era of Mehmed the Conqueror in the history of Ottoman civilization agree that during his lifetime, Sultan Mehmed himself embodied the very spirit and intellect of the masses. This visionary ruler opened a new epoch not only in Turkish and Islamic history, but also in the history of the world.¹⁰⁰

Rather than presenting Mehmed solely as a triumphant conqueror, Bayhan depicts him as a philosopher king—an enlightened, multilingual ruler who embodied Renaissance values.¹⁰¹ This humanist reading of the sultan becomes a central device in reimagining the conquest

⁹⁵ Ibid. Original: “İyi kurulmuş ve muhteşem surlarla çevrilmiş olan yeni başkent, 616 senesinde kendisine saldıran İran İmparatoru Chosroes’in muhasarاسını neticesiz kılmakta zorluk çekmedi.”

⁹⁶ Zahid Anwar and Abdul Hamid Khan, “Kipling’s Depiction of the Great Game Between British India and Czarist Russia,” *Al-Idah* 33, no. 2 (2016): 68–85.

⁹⁷ Geoffrey Hamm, “Revisiting the Great Game in Asia: Rudyard Kipling and Popular History,” *International Journal* 68, no. 2 (2013): 397.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 401.

⁹⁹ The author of this essay, A. Yavuz Bayhan, could not be identified in existing biographical or archival sources. However, his contribution to the 1947 special issue of *Galatasaray Journal* suggests a likely affiliation with Galatasaray High School, as either a teacher or an alumnus.

¹⁰⁰ A. Yavuz Bayhan, “Fatih Sultan Mehmet Devri,” *Galatasaray Lisesi Dergisi*, no. 3 (May 1947): 9. Original: “Osmanlı medeniyeti tarihinde Fatih devrinin inceleyen şarklı ve garplı mütefekkirler, Sultan Mehmed’i yaşattığı zaman içinde, şahsen kültülerin ruhu ve beyni olduğu hususunda mütefekkirlər. Bu ileri görüşlü padişah, Türk ve İslâm âlemiyle beraber dünya tarihinde de bir çığır açmış[ır] . . .”

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

of Istanbul not as a rupture, but as a moment of civilizational renewal that repositioned the city at the crossroads of the so-called East and West. Bayhan continues:

He [Mehmed II] knew how to reconcile authority with tolerance by winning hearts, and he never allowed blind fanaticism to approach his realm. His consideration of freedom of property, life, and conscience not from the perspective of the Middle Ages but instead with a secular mind, and his firm conviction that knowledge and learning are universal to humanity, stand among the superhuman virtues of this great ruler. . . . The Byzantine historian Phrantzes writes of him: “Sultan Mehmed was extraordinarily active, a spark of fire in all things; he appreciated men of merit and perfection. . . . He understood and spoke Turkish, Persian, Arabic, Greek, and Latin.”¹⁰²

Bayhan emphasizes Mehmed’s moral authority, intellectual openness, and cultural pluralism. He recounts how the sultan offered humane terms to the Byzantines before the conquest and maintained symbolic gestures of respect, such as keeping a candle burning at Constantine’s tomb:

The peace treaty sent . . . in the days preceding the conquest deserves to be regarded as a document of culture, containing the most humane of terms. Was it not an unparalleled act of humanity that the expense for the candle, to burn day and night at the tomb he had built for the slain Emperor Constantine, was to be paid from the imperial treasury?¹⁰³

Such acts, Bayhan argues, earned Mehmed not only admiration from Muslim subjects but also reverence among Christian observers:

For the fanatical Christians whose lands had been invaded, [Mehmed] the Conqueror . . . was regarded as a divine being, a saintly savior. Pope Pius declared . . . : “Only a small thing would suffice to make you the greatest, most powerful, and most renowned of all mortals . . . merely a few drops of water to baptize you.”¹⁰⁴

Citations from Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), Michael Critobulus (1410–70), and European poets are strategically invoked to frame the sultan’s image within a transregional canon of political greatness. Bayhan reinforces this universal admiration: “And Machiavelli: ‘The Turkish administration is superior to all other forms of government’ . . . And the Byzantine historian Critobulus . . . refers to him as ‘Basileus.’”¹⁰⁵ The text amplifies this universalist framing by highlighting Mehmed’s patronage of artists like Gentile Bellini (1429–1507): “Sultan Mehmed persistently requested that Venice . . . send ‘a painter skilled in depicting the human form’ . . . and ‘a sculptor,’ . . . and as a result, the Venetian Gentile Bellini . . . was dispatched.”¹⁰⁶ These details position him as both a leader and a patron of cosmopolitan aesthetics.

The essay constructs a near-hagiographic representation of Mehmed II as a singular figure who orchestrated a synthesis of civilizational forces. Istanbul becomes the material expression of this synthesis—a city not merely conquered but re-scripted as a global capital under Mehmed’s leadership. In this telling, the conquest is elevated from military victory to symbolic world event. Rather than lamenting loss or narrating decline, as in other essays in the volume, Bayhan offers a redemptive genealogy of Ottoman greatness, grounded in a

¹⁰² Ibid. Original: “[Mehmed] otorite ile toleransı, gönüller kazanarak telif etmesini bilip, kör taassubu semtine uğratmamıştır. Mal, can ve vicdan serbestisinin Orta Çağlar düşüncesinden ayrı, laik bir zihniyetle mütalası; ilmin ve irfanın beşeri olduğuna dair kat’ı kanaati, bu büyük sultanın insanüstü mezetylere arasındadır. . . . Bizanslı tarihçi Françez onun hakkında ‘Sultan Mehmet gayet faal, her seyde bir atespare idi, erbab-ı liyakati ve kemali takdir ederdi. . . Türkçe, Farsça, Arapça, Rumca ve Latinceyi anlar ve tekellüüm ederdi’ diyor.”

¹⁰³ Ibid. Original: “Fethen takaddüm eden günlerde . . . gönderilen sulhname en insanı şartları havi bir kültür vesikası sayılmağa değer. Maktul Kayzer Konstantin'e yaptırdığı medfenein başında gece gündüz yanacak olan kandile ait masrafın kise-i hümeyun'dan ödenmesi, misilsiz bir insaniyet örneği değil midir?”

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Original: “Toprakları istilaya uğrayan mutaassip Hristiyanlar için Fatih, . . . ilahî bir varlık, kurtarıcı bir aziz gibi telakki edilmiştir. Papa Pius . . . ‘Seni bütün fanilerin en büyük, en kadir ve en meşhuru yapmak için küçük bir şey kafidir. . . seni vaftiz etmek için birbiri damla su. . .’ der.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Original: ‘İşte Machiavelli: ‘Türk idaresi mevcut idarelerin hepsinden üstünür.’ diye yazıyor. . . . İşte Bizanslı müverrih Cristobulos . . . ona ‘Vasileus’ diyor.’

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Original: “Sultan Mehmet, Venedik'e . . . ‘İnsanı tasvirı yapmakta mahir bir ressamal . . . bir heykeltıraşın . . . gönderilmesini’ israrla talep etmiş, bunun üzerine Venedikli Gentile Bellini . . . gönderilmiştir.”

cosmopolitan past. The Ottoman conquest is framed as a hinge moment that opened Istanbul to a new era of global significance. At the same time, Bayhan's representation implicitly reterritorializes Istanbul's identity around a unifying imperial figure. His essay anchors the city's symbolic power in the person of Mehmed, suggesting that it was through the sultan's enlightened leadership that Istanbul attained its civilizational role. The text's emphasis on intercultural admiration and artistic exchange also affirms Istanbul's place within a network of transregional flows.

Cities of the Soul: Istanbul, Emotion, and Transregional Aesthetics

The next essay in the 1947 commemorative issue was written in French by René Larroumets (1913–91), a French educator and author of *Éléments de philosophie* (1944).¹⁰⁷ Born in the canton of Semur, France, Larroumets taught philosophy at Galatasaray and Saint Joseph High Schools in Istanbul between 1937 and 1959. Following his return to France, he continued his academic career at various institutions, most notably as a professor in the Department of Philosophy at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bordeaux, where he taught from 1959 until 1978.¹⁰⁸

Larroumets opens his essay with a lyrical reflection on the emotional atmosphere of urban affect. He begins by asserting that every city emits something intangible—an emotional presence that cannot be fully explained. He writes, "There emanates from every city something that escapes analysis, and which the word charm, full of magic, summarizes obscurely."¹⁰⁹ For Larroumets, this charm is not a fixed trait but a shifting set of impressions—subtle and often indescribable because they are felt more than understood. Cities, he suggests, have personalities. Some captivate instantly and spark an emotional bond, while others are more distant and require time to reveal their appeal. Larroumets states,

It is a complex and unstable ensemble, made up of very diverse and almost imperceptible elements, which disturb us all the more because we perceive their nature less clearly. There are cities that move the traveler from the very first day . . . and others that confuse us, on the contrary, seeming hostile at first, and only reveal themselves after conquest. Some tire us after a short stay, and we leave them without regret. But there are others that endlessly stimulate the mind and keep hold of it forever.¹¹⁰

For Larroumets, Toledo, Venice, and Istanbul fall into the latter group, united by a shared, though elusive, emotional and aesthetic power.¹¹¹ This connection, Larroumets reveals, is deeply personal. His fondness for these cities is not casual. It reflects a recurring theme in his own emotional and intellectual life. "To speak of them," he writes, "would therefore be to speak a little of myself."¹¹² These cities are not just places he has visited; they are spaces filled with meaning, where the most subtle yet lasting impressions on the self are formed. Each one, like a labyrinth, offers the chance to lose and rediscover oneself. Still, Larroumets does not treat charm as entirely mysterious. Though it often defies precise explanation, he suggests that its sources can sometimes be identified:

But if charm cannot be translated, the astonishing combination from which it is born can be easily perceived. There are cities, like Rio de Janeiro, which impose themselves by the splendor of their site; others, like Paris, by the elegance of their buildings; others like Athens, for the past they evoke. There are very few cities that offer such attractions, and even fewer that combine them in such harmonious proportions. Perhaps only in Toledo, Venice, and Istanbul can one find, to the utmost degree of grandeur or delicacy, the marvelous harmony of nature's beauty, artistic creations, and the vestiges of history.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ The French to English translations are mine, except where explicitly stated otherwise.

¹⁰⁸ Oktay Aras, *Mekteb-i Sultani Galatasaray Lisesi: Müdürler ve Öğretmenler 1868–2018* (pub. by author, 2019), 210.

¹⁰⁹ René Larroumets, "Venise, Istanbul, Tolède," *Galatasaray Lisesi Dergisi*, no. 3 (May 1947): 12. Original: "Il émane de toute ville quelque chose qui échappe à l'analyse et que le mot charme, tout chargé de magie, résume obscurément."

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Original: "C'est un ensemble, complexe et instable, d'éléments fort divers et presque imperceptibles, qui troublent d'autant plus qu'on en perçoit moins la nature. Il y a des cités qui émeuvent le voyageur dès le premier jour . . . et d'autres qui déroulent, au contraire, paraissent hostiles dès l'abord, et ne se livrent qu'après conquête. Il en est qui lassent au bout d'un court séjour et qu'on quitte sans regret. Mais il en est d'autres qui excitent sans cesse l'esprit et le retiennent pour toujours."

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid. Original: "Parler d'elles, ce serait donc un peu parler de moi-même."

¹¹³ Ibid., 12–13. Original: "Mais si le charme ne saurait se traduire, l'étonnante conjoncture dont il naît s'aperçoit

For Larroumets, some cities captivate with their dramatic natural settings, others with the elegance and balance of their architecture. With this contrast, Larroumets sets the stage for why Venice, Istanbul, and Toledo stand apart. Their unique power lies not only in their beauty or scale, but in how their layered histories and atmospheres evoke a personal, deeply felt response, which is for him difficult to articulate, yet impossible to ignore.

According to Larroumets, this triad of cities achieves aesthetic grandeur and an almost metaphysical synthesis, which allows them to stand as living archives of civilizations, suspended between past and present. He attributes this synthesis, in part, to geography:

These admirable syntheses must necessarily have similar causes, and their success is undoubtedly due to the eminent role that geography destined for them. Indeed, they are three key locations. Toledo, because it forms a natural bastion, with its rocky outcrop almost entirely enclosed in a bend of the Tagus; Venice, because its port is an inviolable haven at the heart of the immense bay of the Adriatic; and Istanbul, because it lies at the junction of two continents. All three were capitals of mighty nations, at the summits of an ideal triangle stretched across the waters of the Mediterranean. And all three finally mark the boundary zones where East and West have always met, in passionate dialogue.¹¹⁴

Yet for all their affinities, Larroumets insists on their distinctions. Each city possesses “a different soul.”¹¹⁵ What unites them, however, is their shared commitment to permanence—a devotion to memory expressed in “monuments and tombs” that transform them into “museum-cities.”¹¹⁶ In their stillness, their cultivated reverence for the past, Larroumets locates what he calls “the supreme poetry of death and eternity.”¹¹⁷ He concludes not with resolution but with reverence—for cities that do not merely survive history but enshrine it, “the same concern for permanence, the same veneration of the past, which make them witness-cities . . .”¹¹⁸

Larroumets invites readers to view Istanbul through a cosmopolitan lens—alongside Venice and Toledo—as part of a trio of cities defined by geography, aesthetics, and historical depth. He represents Istanbul as part of an emotional and cultural map of what he calls “museum-cities.”¹¹⁹ In this framework, Istanbul is understood through a network of comparisons and feelings, rather than through a single national or historical narrative. Meaning emerges through relationships. Venice and Toledo do not serve as opposites to Istanbul but as reflective parallels. Together, they share key qualities—a striking natural setting, layers of history, and a blending of artistic traditions. Larroumets’s focus, then, is not on local details but on transregional affinities.

This sensibility corresponds closely to what can be described as a “poetics of metropolitan space.”¹²⁰ Casey M. Walker defines this as a literary mode in which the city becomes inseparable from the interior life of those who imagine it.¹²¹ Drawing on Gaston Bachelard’s phenomenology of space, Walker argues that urban experience is not merely external observa-

aisément. Il y a des villes, comme Rio de Janeiro, qui s’imposent par la splendeur du site ; d’autres, comme Paris, par l’élégance des bâtiments ; d’autres, comme Athènes, par le passé qu’elles évoquent. Il y en a fort peu qui offrent à la fois de tels attraits et bien moins encore qu’elles unissent en d’heureuses proportions. Peut-être n’y a-t-il même que Tolède, Venise et Istanbul où l’on puisse trouver, à l’extrême de la grandeur ou de l’exquis, le prodigieux accord des beautés de la Nature, des créations de l’Art et des vestiges de l’Histoire.”

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 13. Original: “Ces admirables synthèses ont nécessairement des causes analogues, et leur réussite tient sans doute au rôle éminent que la géographie leur destinait. Ce sont, en effet, trois positions-clés : Tolède, parce qu’elle constitue un bastion naturel, avec son piton rocheux presque entièrement enclos dans une courbe du Tage ; Venise, parce que son port est un asile inviolable au fond de l’immense baie de l’Adriatique ; et Istanbul, parce qu’elle est au point de jonction des deux continents. Toutes les trois furent capitales de nations très puissantes, aux sommets d’un triangle idéal tendus sur les flots de la Méditerranée. Toutes les trois, enfin, marquent les lieux limites où se rencontrent toujours, pour un dialogue passionné, l’Orient et l’Occident.”

¹¹⁵ Ibid. Original: “Car ces trois villes ont une âme différente.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Original: “Des villes-musées. Et c’est cette pérennité, attestée par tant de monuments et de tombeaux . . .”

¹¹⁷ Ibid. Original: “La suprême poésie de la mort et de l’éternité.”

¹¹⁸ Ibid. Original: “Ce même souci de permanence, ce même culte du passé, qui en font des villes-témoins . . .”

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Casey M. Walker, “Intimate Cities: *The Portrait of a Lady* and the Poetics of Metropolitan Space,” *Studies in the Novel* 45, no. 2 (2013): 162.

¹²¹ Ibid.

tion but a “participation between imagination and city, the interplay between abstract space and space transformed by an experience of it.”¹²² In this view, the city is an active element in shaping emotional and moral consciousness—“the qualities of metropolitan spaces are transfigured . . . within the intimate space of the self.”¹²³ Cities thus emerge as living parts of the self, capable of evoking desire, loss, liberty, and consolation through the affective processes of memory and imagination.

Larroumets’s prose embodies the romantic sensibility that runs through the 1947 commemorative issue. His Istanbul is not a modern metropolis but a poetic landscape shaped by affect and memory—a city whose meaning is felt rather than known. This romanticization operates, in Bachelardian terms, as a poetics of space, transforming geography into emotional interiority. The external city becomes an inner landscape of longing, contemplation, and moral beauty. His triad of Venice, Istanbul, and Toledo represents not simply geography but a deeply felt topography of the self. Larroumets’s attachment to these cities transforms them into moral and affective landscapes, where the act of seeing becomes an act of self-knowledge. In this sense, his reflective lyricism also parallels Gökyay’s interiorized vision of Istanbul, as both writers cultivate a poetics of space that turns urban form into an emotional geography in which memory and imagination intertwine.

Larroumets represents Istanbul as part of a Mediterranean triangle—alongside Toledo and Venice—each located at a geopolitical hinge point and shaped by intertwined histories of imperial expansion, religious pluralism, and aesthetic refinement. This triangle serves as a metaphor for transregional entanglement, where so-called East and West do not oppose but interpenetrate. His vision thus transcends rigid cultural categories. He proposes a universal outlook in which the three cities embody a shared sensibility grounded in harmony, beauty, and memory. Yet this romantic mode also carries traces of what Edward Said called the aestheticization of the Orient.¹²⁴ In depicting Istanbul as a city of timeless charm and spiritual depth, Larroumets employs a vocabulary that resonates with the romantic gaze upon the East. His reverence for stillness and permanence aligns with what Stuart Hall identified as the representational dichotomy through which the Orient is imagined as contemplative and eternal in contrast to a dynamic West.¹²⁵ Still, Larroumets’s essay oscillates between admiration and abstraction—between cosmopolitan empathy and the aesthetic distance inherited from Orientalist discourse—revealing the layered ambivalence of mid-century French representations of Istanbul as a city of soul, memory, and transregional meaning.

The last essay featured in the May 1947 commemorative issue of *Galatasaray Journal* was authored in French by Monsignor Pierre Dubois (1906–89), a Catholic clergyman, educator, and long-serving faculty member at Galatasaray High School. Born in Toner, France, Dubois entered the Capuchin Order during his secondary studies and later pursued philosophy, theology, and philology at the Università Gregoriana in Rome. Deeply influenced by Thomism and eager to explore Slavic mysticism, he came to Istanbul in late 1932.¹²⁶ Dubois joined Galatasaray High School in 1939, where he taught Latin, French, and philosophy for nearly three decades. Later in his career, Dubois would rise to become the Apostolic Nuncio, the official diplomatic representative of the Vatican in Türkiye, a position that placed him among the highest ranks of the Catholic Church.¹²⁷

Dubois opens his essay with a philosophical reflection on landscape as a mirror of the soul. He writes, “A landscape, it is said, is a state of the soul. It is a portrait, and therefore much more than a photograph.”¹²⁸ For Dubois, just as an art photographer frames a face in profile or seeks the correct lighting to capture nature’s elusive glow, the viewer must also approach Istanbul through an aesthetic and emotional sensibility:

¹²² Ibid., 161.

¹²³ Ibid., 162.

¹²⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage Books, 1979), 227.

¹²⁵ Hall, “The West and the Rest,” 303.

¹²⁶ Aras, *Mekteb-i Sultani Galatasaray Lisesi*, 437.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Pierre Dubois, “Panoramas d’Istanbul,” *Galatasaray Lisesi Dergisi*, no. 3 (May 1947): 7. Original: “Un paysage, a-t-on dit, est un état de l’âme. C’est un portrait, par conséquent beaucoup plus qu’une photographie.”

The art photographer knows that one face must be shown in profile, while another reveals itself only when seen three-quarters; he knows that one landscape will shine marvelously through the blossoming branches of a peach tree, while another reveals itself only when seen through the narrow slit of a fortress. Each fragment of nature is a unique jewel that demands its own velvet case, a capricious gem that reveals its brilliance only under the light it prefers.¹²⁹

The city cannot be revealed through distant observation; it must emerge gradually, as a kind of revelation. To illustrate this point, Dubois quotes extensively from Alphonse de Lamartine's (1790–1869) *Voyage en Orient*, invoking the French poet's first encounter with Istanbul in 1833. Dubois continues:

To experience the revelation of Istanbul, the traveler arriving by sea must not seek to make it out from afar, nor to watch its silhouette slowly emerge before his eyes. Having attempted to do so, Lamartine, on his approach to Istanbul on the morning of 18 May 1833, knew only disappointment.¹³⁰

Lamartine, Dubois reminds us, had expected a sublime vision on par with the Bay of Naples, surrounded by volcanic islands, dramatic cliffs, and mythic seas. Instead, Istanbul's shores appeared "monotonous," its hills "rounded," and the spectacle failed to meet the grandeur promised by its reputation.¹³¹ Lamartine's lament sets the stage for Dubois's deeper exploration of visual expectations and emotional perception.

Through this extended quotation, Dubois sets up a dialectic between poetic disillusionment and the deeper revelation of Istanbul's character. This contemplative stance recalls the figure of the *flâneur*, the reflective urban observer. Mary Gluck notes that the *flâneur* was not merely an idle stroller but a "visionary, in search of 'poetic and marvelous subjects' and the 'epic side of modern life.'"¹³² The *flâneur* rendered the urban landscape "legible and transparent" through an aesthetic sensibility that humanized modernity.¹³³ Dubois's Istanbul requires a similar rhythm of perception—slowness, receptivity, and affective immersion—transforming the act of seeing into a form of contemplation and self-discovery.

Pierre Dubois continues his engagement with Lamartine. The key argument is that Lamartine's initial disappointment stemmed from a premature approach to the city. Seeing it from afar, without the proper vantage point, rendered Istanbul underwhelming. But once he reached the optimal viewing location, Lamartine was overwhelmed by the sublime grandeur of the scene. Dubois continues:

And Lamartine was right, for he was thereby preparing for the true first vision one must have of Istanbul. He had that vision in the morning . . . when the city appeared from the point at which it must be shown to the traveler who awaits the prestigious manifestation. Let us give the floor again to the great friend of Turkey: "We are now touching the walls of the seraglio, which, following those of the city, form, at the end of the hill bearing Istanbul, the angle that separates the Sea of Marmara from the Bosphorus Strait and the Golden Horn. It is there that God and man, nature and art, have placed or created in unison the most marvelous viewpoint that human eyes can behold on earth. I cried out involuntarily and forgot forever the Gulf of Naples and all its enchantments; to compare anything to this magnificent and graceful ensemble is to insult creation."¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Ibid. Original: "Le photographe d'art sait que le visage doit être présenté de profil, tandis que tel autre ne sera lui-même que s'il apparaît de trois quarts; il sait que tel paysage resplendira merveilleux à travers les branches fleuries d'un pêcher, tandis que tel autre ne rendra vraiment que vu par la meurtrière d'une forteresse. Chaque morceau de nature est un bijou particulier auquel il faut un écrin de velours différent, un brillant capricieux qui ne donne ses feux que sous la lumière qu'il préfère."

¹³⁰ Ibid. Original: "Pour avoir la révélation d'Istanbul, le voyageur qui vient par mer ne doit pas chercher à le deviner de loin; il ne doit pas voir sa silhouette se préciser peu à peu à ses yeux. Pour avoir cherché à le faire, Lamartine, approchant d'Istanbul, n'éprouva au matin du 18 mai 1833 qu'une désillusion."

¹³¹ Ibid. Original: "Monotones et arrondies . . ."

¹³² Mary Gluck, "The Flaneur and the Aesthetic: Appropriation of Urban Culture in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Paris," *Theory, Culture & Society* 20, no. 5 (2003): 57–58.

¹³³ Ibid., 65.

¹³⁴ Dubois, "Panoramas d'Istanbul," 8. Original: "Et Lamartine fit bien, car il se prépara ainsi la véritable première vision que l'on doit avoir d'Istanbul. Cette vision, il l'eut au matin . . . lorsque la ville lui apparut du point où il faut la montrer

The extended description of Lamartine is lush, visual, and sensorial. Forests, ravines, painted houses, rose gardens, scattered villages, anchored fleets, and the dynamic play of water and light all contribute to a near-hallucinatory vision of the Bosphorus landscape.¹³⁵ The winding strait becomes a “sunken river,” with shadowy mountain slopes on either side, reinforcing the impression of Istanbul as a layered, immersive environment that slowly reveals its magic through movement and closeness.¹³⁶ By framing this transformation through Lamartine’s words, Dubois reinforces his central thesis: Istanbul’s essence lies not in static form or distant profile but in a carefully choreographed revelation, accessible only to those who arrive with humility, patience, and a receptivity to poetic vision.

Dubois’s invocation of Lamartine situates his work within the romantic tradition of aesthetic Orientalism. As Edward Said observes, Lamartine’s work was conceived as an act of inner life.¹³⁷ Rather than documenting the places he visited as they were, Lamartine transformed them into a poetic reconstruction that reflected his own spiritual and emotional preoccupations. In Said’s words, he became “the incorrigible maker of an imaginary Orient.”¹³⁸ He projected analogy and sentiment where empirical understanding was absent. Nineteenth-century Arab intellectuals such as Khalil al-Khuri (1836–1907) exposed the fictional nature of Lamartine’s romantic East, replacing, as Peter Hill writes, “the picturesque savagery of Lamartine’s Orient of deserts and ruins . . . [with] an urban, civilized East, part of the ‘sociable world’ and possessing its own notions of class-bound taste and respectability.”¹³⁹ Yet Dubois’s engagement with Lamartine instead reproduces the poet’s perspective, representing Istanbul not as a lived urban environment but as a scene awaiting revelation.

On the final page of his text, Pierre Dubois brings his reflection on Istanbul’s visual and emotional richness to a lyrical high point. To strengthen his argument, he introduces another literary reference—this time, from François-René de Chateaubriand (1768–1848).¹⁴⁰ To convey how one should encounter this vision, Dubois uses a powerful theatrical metaphor. He imagines a traveler arriving blindfolded, eyes closed, and being guided to the perfect viewpoint. Dubois notes, “To truly enjoy the discovery of Istanbul, the traveler should keep his eyes closed until the very moment he finds himself at the most favorable point for that discovery.”¹⁴¹ Only then, as if unveiling a staged performance, should the traveler hear the words: “Now look!”¹⁴² In that moment, Istanbul is transformed from a city into a visual spectacle—a carefully orchestrated scene meant to overwhelm and enchant. This idea echoes Dubois’s earlier reflections on Lamartine and highlights the notion that Istanbul’s beauty must be framed and revealed with care. Dubois reinforces this theatrical framing by quoting at length from Chateaubriand’s description of arriving in Istanbul:

I find Chateaubriand’s fortune in coming to our city so unique. Nature, as though it were the unveiling of a work of art, had first covered Istanbul with an impenetrable veil; then, once he reached the right spot, the veil was lifted and the wonder appeared all at once. Listen to how he describes his enchantment: “. . . As we approached the tip of the seraglio, the north wind rose and, within minutes, swept the fog from the scene; I suddenly found myself in the midst of the palace of the Commander of the Faithful, as though at the stroke of a magician’s wand.”¹⁴³

au voyageur qui en attend la prestigieuse manifestation. Laissons encore la parole à ce grand ami de la Turquie: ‘Nous touchons aux murs du séraïl, qui font suite à ceux de la ville, et forment, à l’extrémité de la colline qui porte Stamboul, l’angle qui sépare la mer de Marmara du canal du Bosphore et de la Corne d’Or: c’est là que Dieu et l’homme, la nature et l’art, ont placé ou créé de concert le point de vue le plus merveilleux que le regard humain puisse contempler sur la terre. Je jetai un cri involontaire et j’oubliai pour jamais le golfe de Naples et tous ses enchantements; comparer quelque chose à ce magnifique et gracieux ensemble, c’est injurier la création.’

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid. Original: “Le Bosphore, comme un fleuve encaissé . . .”

¹³⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, 177.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Peter Hill, “Arguing with Europe: Eastern Civilization Versus Orientalist Exoticism,” *PMLA* 132, no. 2 (2017): 408.

¹⁴⁰ Dubois, “Panoramas d’Istanbul,” 32.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. Original: “Pour jouir vraiment de la découverte d’Istanbul, il faudrait donc que le voyageur fermât les yeux jusqu’au moment où il se trouverait à l’endroit le plus favorable pour cette découverte . . .”

¹⁴² Ibid. Original: “Maintenant regarde !”

¹⁴³ Ibid. Original: “Et c’est pourquoi je trouve unique la chance de Chateaubriand venant en notre ville. La nature, comme s’il s’était agi de l’inauguration d’une œuvre d’art, lui avait recouvert d’abord Istanbul d’un voile impénétrable; puis, quand il fut arrivé au point convenable, le voile fut enlevé et la merveille apparut alors tout d’un coup. Écoutons-le

Chateaubriand's tone captures the moment of revelation that Dubois seeks to convey. In this vision, Istanbul appears as a transcendent spectacle, one that surpasses the limits of both artistic representation and verbal description. With this final reference, Dubois closes his essay by declaring that Istanbul offers "the most beautiful viewpoint in the world."¹⁴⁴

Dubois's reference to Chateaubriand positions his text within a representational logic that Edward Said identifies as the mode of romantic Orientalism. As Said observes, Chateaubriand "brought a very heavy load of personal objectives and suppositions to the Orient, unloaded them there, and proceeded thereafter to push people, places, and ideas around in the Orient as if nothing could resist his imperious imagination."¹⁴⁵ In Dubois's essay, Istanbul likewise becomes the stage on which the Western observer projects his aesthetic and spiritual longings. The city's revelation enacts what Said calls the rendering of the Orient as "a decrepit canvas awaiting [the traveler's] restorative efforts."¹⁴⁶ It is a scene animated and redeemed only through the agency of the Western gaze. By invoking Chateaubriand's image of the lifting veil, Dubois reproduces the trope of divine revelation that Said attributes to Chateaubriand, who, in his view, "is no longer a modern man but a visionary seer . . . [who] can hear the silence, understand its meaning, and—to his reader—make the desert speak again."¹⁴⁷ In both cases, the landscape's meaning depends upon the Western intermediary who interprets and gives it voice. The city, unveiled through Dubois's guided vision, thus becomes a site of aesthetic possession—a totalized harmony that confirms the power of the Western imagination to both reveal and complete the Orient.

Conclusion

While Ankara came to symbolize the new republic in the decades immediately after its establishment, Istanbul gradually reentered the cultural imagination from the mid-1940s onward.¹⁴⁸ Its imperial past was reinterpreted within a framework of cultural commemoration—a process that culminated in the 500th-anniversary celebrations of the conquest in 1953.¹⁴⁹ It is therefore no coincidence that the 1947 commemorative issue of *Galatasaray Journal* was dedicated to Istanbul. The six essays from the May 1947 commemorative issue converge on a shared poetics of Istanbul. Across distinct national and intellectual backgrounds, most contributors cast the city through romantic lenses—remembered, moralized, historicized, aestheticized, and mythologized.

The Turkish affiliates complicate prevailing postcolonial assumptions that Galatasaray, as a "French" institution, inevitably produced culturally alienated graduates.¹⁵⁰ Ercümen Ekrem Talu's 1947 contribution is particularly revealing in this regard. While in his 1935 debate with Peyami Safa he publicly defended Galatasaray by aligning it with the ideals of the republic, he adopts an unmistakably conservative tone in the 1947 issue. He mourns the disappearance of the Istanbul of fifty years earlier, that is, the late Ottoman city of his youth. For Talu, early Western influences had been filtered through local ethics and civility, whereas the post-war generation had, in his view, lost its moral compass under the influx of imported manners. His critique is directed at Turkish society itself. Given that the 1940s marked a cultural turn toward commemorating Istanbul's imperial past, it is likely that such a climate made it easier for Galatasaray alumni to recall the city's Ottoman heritage with renewed affection.

Notably, both Talu and Gökyay focus exclusively on the Turkish character of the city. Despite their affiliation with a French-language institution, their writings remain rooted in

nous décrire son ravisement: ' . . . Comme nous approchions de la pointe du sérail, le vent du nord se leva et balaya en moins de quelques minutes la brume répandue sur le tableau ; je me trouvai tout à coup au milieu du palais du Commandeur des croyants : ce fut le coup de baguette d'un génie.'

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Original: "Le plus beau point de vue de l'univers."

¹⁴⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 171.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 173.

¹⁴⁸ Gürkanlı Kutlu, "Türk Edebiyatında İstanbul İmgesinin Teşekkülü," 3, 189.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Kodaman, *Abdülhâmid Devri Eğitim Sistemi*, 34.

local sensibilities rather than in French cultural reference. This selective emphasis may also reflect Talu's earlier efforts, as in the 1935 debate with Safa, to distance Galatasaray's legacy from overtly Francophone associations. This inward-looking conservatism complicates postcolonial readings inspired by Fanon, which tend to frame Francophone education as a source of alienation. In the Galatasaray context, Talu's position demonstrates that graduates of a French-language institution could adopt distinctly conservative or traditional outlooks. His stance resonates with Berna Moran's observation that "according to these Ottoman intellectuals [during the Tanzimat], who saw themselves as civilized Muslims devoted to their traditions, it was possible both to modernize . . . and to remain a devout Muslim Ottoman."¹⁵¹ The same pattern recurs in A. Yavuz Bayhan's essay on Sultan Mehmed II. Taken together, Talu and Bayhan illustrate a revealing paradox in the post-republican reimagining of Galatasaray. Following Stuart Hall's concept of representation, these essays reveal how Galatasaray affiliates actively produced alternative representations that challenged dominant public discourses. While alumni publicly positioned the school as compatible with the modern republic, their nostalgic imaginaries of Istanbul remained anchored in Ottoman moral and aesthetic worlds.

By contrast, the essays authored by the French and Swiss contributors—Mamboury, Dubois, and Larroumets—display recognizable Orientalist inflections despite their differing approaches. Mamboury's chronicle of sieges recalls the geographical determinism of imperial rivalry epitomized in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, a narrative that Edward Said identified as central to the Orientalist construction.¹⁵² Larroumets, in turn, aestheticizes Istanbul as a city of timeless beauty and cultivated permanence, while Dubois, through his quotations from Chateaubriand and Lamartine, reproduces the romantic trope of revelation—the lifting of the Oriental veil—so familiar to the nineteenth-century French imagination. All three draw on motifs that Said located at the heart of Orientalist discourse. In contrast to their Turkish counterparts, these European authors imagine the city as an object of perception and possession—a site of beauty to be unveiled, surveyed, or mapped. Their essays reflect the positionality of French and Swiss educators who may have viewed Galatasaray as a French school abroad, an outpost of cultural expertise situated within a Turkish setting.

Yet this should not be read as a simple top-down imposition of meaning. The transregional and cultural-transfer framework adopted here emphasizes interaction rather than unilateral influence. What occurred at Galatasaray was a dynamic process of mutual translation—where teachers, students, and institutional practices continually redefined one another. The Orientalizing sensibilities evident in Mamboury, Dubois, and Larroumets therefore illuminate the complex representational negotiations at work in this hybrid space. Further research is needed to trace how these encounters may have reconfigured perceptions on both sides.

What remains clear, however, is that within the 1947 commemorative issue, Istanbul emerges as a discursive meeting ground where multiple imaginaries intersect—constituting not a hierarchy of perspectives but a field of representational entanglement that embodies the transregional condition of Galatasaray. Hall's insight that representation is constitutive is borne out here.¹⁵³ Through juxtaposed genres and voices, the 1947 volume co-creates a multilayered Istanbul that cannot be reduced to a single civilizational script or a simple colonial binary.

Transregional history and cultural transfer help make sense of this outcome. Rather than copy-paste diffusion, we see situated translation, selective appropriation, and reciprocal framing. The result is a composite urban imaginary—at once romantic and strategic, Ottoman and republican, local and trans-Mediterranean—that unsettles fixed categorizations of both Istanbul and Galatasaray. This close reading of the 1947 volume also invites further exploration of how commemorative media in other institutional contexts—schools,

¹⁵¹ Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış* 1, 12.

¹⁵² Said, *Orientalism*, 226.

¹⁵³ Hall, *Representation & the Media*, 6.

journals, or civic anniversaries—mediate Istanbul's symbolic presence within transregional networks. By applying a discourse-analytical lens to a little-studied historical source, this study contributes to both the urban historiography of Istanbul and debates on entangled history, memory politics, and the transregional production of meaning in twentieth-century educational spaces.

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