Christiane Gruber. "In Defense and Devotion. Affective Practices in Early-Modern Turco-Persian Manuscript Paintings"

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Christiane Gruber. "In Defense and Devotion. Affective Practices in Early-Modern Turco-Persian Manuscript Paintings" in Kishwar Rizvi (ed.). *Affect, Emotion, and Subjectivity in Early Modern Muslim Empires. New Studies in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Art and Culture*. Leiden: Brill, 2017, ISBN: 978-90-04-34047-3, pp. 95-123 (*Arts and Archaeology of the Islamic World*, vol. 9), p. 95-123.

- 1 Inquiring into early-modern Muslim viewers' habits, impressions, impulses, and reactions in confrontation with book paintings, this essay challenges established academic paradigms which generalise the Islamic world and over-emphasise hostile Muslim attitudes towards images. Through a thoughtful selection of written sources and visual testimonies, Christiane Gruber opens up a much wider range of emotions which often included affirmative, protective, and iconophile sensibilities with respect to representations, far from a permanent readiness for iconoclastic action, thus the essay effectively dismantles deeply-rooted notions about a supposed normative Muslim way of seeing. These emotions, the author goes on to say, might have been instrumental even when an intervention resulted in damages.
- 2 Gruber, in addition, demonstrates how images were actively shaping the viewer's emotional makeup: as a consequence, these artworks were not static, finished creations left to their fate by artists but constituted a layered legacy of a succession of viewers who may have added their own comments for posterity through glosses, effacement, or

– more implicitly – preservation. With the help of these later interventions, images kept constantly evolving after they have been supposedly completed, and so did the opinions of their successive beholders. The essay examines in detail two different iconophile emotional preconditions which could paradoxically trigger action against paintings. One of these situations was a defensive attitude which inflicted damage on selected figures in a composition in order to “safeguard” another characters. The targets of such “ethico-emotive” responses could have differed in different places and at different periods: in some cases non-Muslim opponents of Muslims were “neutralised” to prevent their unlawful acts against the latter; in other instances Sunni figures were “stopped” before they would harm their Shi’i opponents. While the depiction of the torturers of Muslims sometimes proved too unbearable for a later beholder to leave it intact, the article shows that a number of such Safavid and Ottoman depictions may have been ready-made arenas for such discursive practices.

- 3 In addition to these “pre-emptive” damages, devotional over-use could also lead to the deterioration or effacement of an image. Effacement with gold, for instance, was practised out of respect for the targeted portraits, having no iconoclastic sentiment behind it.

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