

us until the next chapter:

“Even social and cultural analysis highlighting the importance of other living beings continues to privilege human relations with other humans. We learn that there are varied ways people make sense of and live with other organisms. We learn that human-nonhuman relations form part of human systems of power and knowledge. We learn that other cosmologies challenge the tools of Western science. Too often, the active responses of other beings are not part of the analysis—even when the whole point is to move beyond the Enlightenment-sponsored nature-culture dichotomy. Indeed, social and cultural analysts have been wary of attention to the active practices of other organisms for fear of subsumption into hegemonic scientific logics. In contrast, I argue that allowing bird responses to human projects, as well as the other way around, into social and cultural analysis opens more avenues to consider how science and its alternatives variously shape birdwatching practices.”⁹

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The Bird is Unseen, Yet its Voice is in the Tree

PILE OF IMAGES

In her book, *The Taming of Death*, Zeynep Sayın expressed the history of image production as the history of looking at the corpse and said: “Image production is a doubled production that begins with the corpse: the first houses are not dwellings, but tombs. The first sculptures are tombstones (holding up the lying dead), and the first portraits are death masks. Anthropology is the anthropology of the corpse; imagology is the anthropology of the corpse.”¹ In the first chapter of his book *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger emphasized that seeing is not one-sided and that seeing and being seen are a mutual dialogue. However, according to Berger, the image is one-sided because it is human-made, unlike the dialogue between seeing and being seen. In other words, the image is a recreation and reproduction. Therefore, the context of the image is detached from its time and place.²

The research process of Eda Gecikmez’s solo exhibition “The Bird is Unseen, yet Its Voice is in the Tree” begins with a dialogue. It is a dialogue from 2017, a year-long period the artist spent at the Ashkal Alwan Plastic Arts Association in Beirut. The escape of the displaced white-eared Arabian Nightingale, and the story Gecikmez begins to trace, is not limited to the nightingale but is a multi-layered story of migrations that took place at various

times. The story begins in Deir-i Zor, a city where memories and pain are buried, which has been the home of the white-eared Arabian Nightingale and many other humans and nonhuman beings.

The images accumulated by the artist during the research process turn into a pile, and this archival pile turns into an alternative historical narrative. While the images that come together generate new dialogues and meanings, the artist criticizes the nation-state historiography and reconstructs minor stories with her narrative. Jussi Parikka’s book *What is Media Archaeology*³ mentions using artistic practices for alternative historiography. Although the media in Parikka’s book is research on new media and technology-based media, if we accept Eda Gecikmez’s mass of images as a mass of media, we can find the critical and alternative historiography Parikka talks about in Gecikmez’s visual narrative. Anne Swartz is another researcher who states that archival practices have turned into an artistic research technique. In a period of technological development and easy access to digital data, Swartz explains the artists’ creation of an archive and the transformation of this archive into a material with the expression ‘archive as narration.’⁴ In this article, she analyzed women artists’ narratives using archiving techniques based on identity, politics and personal

- 1 Zeynep Sayın, *Ölüm Terbiyesi [The Taming of Death]* (Istanbul: Metis Press, 2018). S. 10.
- 2 John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972).
- 3 Jussi Parikka, *What Is Media Archaeology?* (Cambridge, Malden: Polity, 2012).
- 4 Anne Swartz, ‘Archive as Narration’, *Art Pulse Magazine* (blog), 2013, <http://artpulsemagazine.com/archive-as-narration>.
- 5 Anna-Sophie Springer, Etienne Turpin, and David Bonter, ‘Post-Digital Ornithology’, in *Publication: These Birds of Temptation*, Intercalations 6 (Berlin: K. Verlag & Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2021), 40–50, https://www.hkw.de/en/media/publikationen/2021_publikationen/publikation_these_birds_of_temptation.php.
- 6 John W. Fitzpatrick and Peter P. Marra, ‘The Crisis for Birds Is a Crisis for Us All’, *The New York Times*, n.d.; Springer, Turpin, and Bonter, ‘Post-Digital Ornithology’.
- 7 Jason W. Moore, ‘Anthropocene, Capitalocene & The Myth of Industrialization II’, 4 July 2013, <https://jasonwmoore.wordpress.com/2013/07/04/anthropocene-capitalocene-the-myth-of-industrialization-ii/>; Anthropocene Working Group, ‘Media Note: Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) – University of Leicester’, 29 August 2016, <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/press/press-releases/2016/august/media-note-anthropocene-working-group-awg>; Tuçe Erel and Seval Şener, *Şimdi Buradasınız / Now You Are Here, Exh. Cat* (Ankara: Arte Sanat, 2017).
- 8 Anna Tsing’s book *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015, Princeton University Press) was a reference book for Eda Gecikmez and Sevil Tunaboğlu’s exhibition, titled *The Sun Is Still There* (2018, Artsümer, Istanbul).
- 9 Anna Tsing, ‘The Sociality of Birds: Reflections on Ontological Edge Effects’, in *These Birds of Temptation*, ed. Anna-Sophie Springer and Etienne Turpin, Intercalations 6 (Berlin: K. Verlag & Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2021), 139–66, https://www.hkw.de/en/media/publikationen/2021_publikationen/publikation_these_birds_of_temptation.php, p. 164.

stories. These narratives, with their experimental, content-rich and complex structures, lead to open-ended interpretations. Based on the context introduced by Swartz, the collage images created by Gecikmez's solo exhibition allow the viewer to create a new reading and narrative from their perspective.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW, BORDERS AND MIGRATION

In the history of cartography, the term "bird's eye view" draws attention as a concept frequently used in the mid-19th century. A bird's eye view, a view of a settlement from above, shifts in meaning and becomes absurd as we think about border politics because maps are the projection on paper of the power politics that determine borders in history. They are the documents that show which sovereignty owns which territory or where targets are set, and war strategies are developed in order to dominate. This power is also an economic one. It determines the regions where taxes are collected. It shows trade routes. Oh, and in fairy tales and cartoons, a magic map always shows where treasures are hidden. A bird's eye view shows the location of that priceless trove.

Nomadism is essential for many animals. The migration of birds is a movement that crosses borders with the change of seasons. Nightingales migrating from Africa to Europe do not know how many cities or countries they pass through during their intercontinental migration. The migration of species in

search of better weather conditions, mating and food is indispensable nomadism. There is also the movement of birds in captivity in cages for commercial reasons. This migration story shows human selfishness and allows us to read capitalism through another living being.

The migration of birds and all nonhuman creatures and their mobility across borders is, of course, a subject of research that scientists carefully follow. The results of a study conducted by seven institutions from Canada and the USA were published as a comprehensive report in the journal *Science* on 19 September 2019. This report shows that one-third of wildlife has disappeared since the 1970s.⁵ Dr John W. Fitzpatrick (director of the Cornell Birdwatching Laboratory) and Dr Peter P. Marra (director of the Georgetown Environmental Initiative), writing in response to the report, highlight the role of birds: "Birds are indicator species, serving as acutely sensitive barometers of environmental health, and their mass declines signal that the earth's biological systems are in trouble. Unfortunately, this study is just the latest in a long line of such mounting evidence."⁶

Along with birds, the extinction of bees, insects and many other species is already referred to as the 'Sixth Mass Extinction', which marks the twenty-first century and contemporary world history as an indicator of the Anthropocene epoch.⁷ We see the story of these extinctions directly or indirectly in the works of many visual artists. Eda Gecikmez's emphasis on the little-known story of

the white-eared Arabian Nightingale (*Pycnonotus Leucotis*) also adds to this history of extinctions. It is estimated that this bird species, which had been living around Deir-i Zor, migrated to the north following the Euphrates River due to the war and the plunder of its habitat. The birdwatchers in Turkey first observed the white-eared Arabian Nightingale in 2014 in the vicinity of Birecik – Şanlıurfa. Subsequently, the white-eared Arabian Nightingale was added to the national catalogue of birds in Turkey. This imaginary excavation, which started with a bird in particular, turns into a story that is woven deeper and deeper into the layers of the region's history with Eda Gecikmez's exhibition "The Bird is Unseen, yet Its Voice is in the Tree".

CONCLUSION (OR BEGINNING)

In the course of the dialogues between Eda Gecikmez and me, we realized that we should increase the dialogue between us, and that we should expand these conversations by inviting/including different names/people/opinions to learn more about several subjects. This realization led to us programming a series of talks.

The talk program starts with the dialogue between Eda and me on 18 June 2022 at 16:00 at the Goethe Institut Ankara. The second event on 22 June 2022 will be with Engin Sustam and Aylin Vartanyan Dilaver. Focusing on the violence and displacement in the Middle East, Engin Sus-

tam will discuss the victimization shared by human and nonhuman beings and the memory created by this victimization. Aylin Vartanyan Dilaver will talk about the expression of collective trauma, pain and memory through art and the healing power of art. The third event hosts Nesrin Algan and Kerem Ali Boyla on 29 June 2022. In this meeting, Kerem Ali Boyla will start with the etymology of the word "nightingale" and focus on the forced migration of the Arabian Nightingale and the illegal animal trade, which has become even worse in the war zone. Nesrin Algan, on the other hand, will discuss the environmental destruction/ecocide suffered by living and nonliving beings due to war in terms of environmental political science. Finally, the talk program ends on 6 July 2022 with the participation of Ömür Harmanşah and Zeynep Sayın. In this meeting, in the context of climate change and violence, Ömür Harmanşah will discuss the unknown scales of the destruction of cultural heritage in the Middle East under the regimes of late capitalism. Zeynep Sayın, on the other hand, will focus on the fragmented history of images and death based on her books *Ölüm Terbiyesi [The Taming of Death]* and *İmgenin Pornografisi [The Pornography of Image]*.

Although these talks and the exhibition will end by the end of August, they are actually the beginning of a long-term process. There is still a long way to go for us. Therefore, instead of writing a conclusion to this fragmented text, let us end with an excerpt from the report text of Anna Tsing⁸'s birdwatching research in Indonesia to be a compass in front of