

Enchanted by Akdeniz: The Fisherman of Halicarnassus's Narratives of the Mediterranean¹

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Abstract

In the cultural narratives of Akdeniz (White Sea), the Turkish name for the Mediterranean sea, the people living on Turkey's Aegean and Mediterranean shores have been defined in terms of their interconnections with their seas. For example, the Sumerians in 3000 BC called the western Anatolians the "people living in the sunny garden by the sea," and later the Egyptians referred to the Aegeans as "the people living in the art of the sea." The ancient traditions, and the biodiversity of Turkey's Mediterranean shores have produced a polysemic cultural imaginary reflected in the writings of Turkish novelists and poets. This essay focuses on the Fisherman of Halicarnassus, the pen name of Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı (1886-1972), who depicted the Mediterranean landscapes and the marine environments as powerful sites of ecological enchantment. I discuss his poetics of marine life, and the flora and fauna specific to Bodrum peninsula, as literary reflections of quantum nonlocality, the principle of inseparability of all material processes. The permeable boundaries in his narratives between life in the sea and on the land inevitably recall this quantum principle. He also launches the sea fauna as translocal entities without any sense of demarcations. Epitomizing Mediterranean ecocriticism, his emphasis on the ethical partnership between human and nonhuman life has immensely contributed to bringing the biological diversity and cultural richness of the region to public attention and in raising ecological awareness about the endemic species of the Bodrum peninsula.

Keywords: The Fisherman of Halicarnassus, Bodrum, Anatolia, Blue Voyage, ecology of culture, biodiversity, nonlocality, translocality.

Resumen

En las narrativas culturales del Mar Blanco—el nombre que el Mediterráneo recibe en turco—los habitantes de las costas mediterráneas y egeas de Turquía se han venido definiendo por sus interconexiones con los mares Mediterráneo y Egeo. Por ejemplo, en el año 3000 a.C., los sumerios se referían a los anatolios occidentales como "los pueblos que vivían en el jardín soleado junto al mar," y, más tarde, los egipcios llamaron a los egeos "los pueblos que vivían en el arte del mar". Las tradiciones antiguas y la biodiversidad de las costas mediterráneas de Turquía han dado origen a un imaginario cultural polisémico que se refleja en las obras de poetas y novelistas turcos. Este trabajo se centra en el Pescador de Halicarnaso, el seudónimo de Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı (1886-1972), que presentó los paisajes mediterráneos y los entornos marinos como lugares de un poderoso encanto ecológico. Analizo su poética de la vida marina, y de la flora y fauna específicas a la península de Bodrum, como reflexiones literarias de la no localidad cuántica, el principio de inseparabilidad de todos los procesos materiales. Los límites

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permeables de su narrativa, entre la vida en el mar y en la tierra, traen a la mente de manera inevitable este principio cuántico. Como ejemplo de ecocrítica mediterránea, su énfasis en la cooperación entre la vida humana y la no-humana ha contribuido enormemente a captar la atención pública sobre la diversidad biológica y la riqueza cultural de la región, así como a despertar la conciencia ecológica sobre las especies endémicas de la península de Bodrum.

Palabras clave: El Pescador de Halicarnaso, Bodrum, Anatolia, Viaje Azul, ecología de la cultura, biodiversidad, no localidad, translocalidad.

The Fisherman of Halicarnassus is the pen name of Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı (1890-1973), Turkey's most environmentally oriented writer. The intimate relations between land and marine life, as well as between human and nonhuman existence in the Bodrum peninsula, constitute the fundamental themes of his poetically charged ecological narratives about the region. He has played a significant role in the maintenance of the region's environmental health during his time. He could not anticipate, however, that his attempts to bring Bodrum's biological and cultural richness to public attention would also prove to be detrimental for the region's natural health in later years with increased touristic activities.²

Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı was the son of a prominent Ottoman aristocrat, Mehmet Şakir Pasha, the brother of Grand Vizier Ahmet Pasha. Cevat Şakir finished Robert College in Istanbul (1904), and studied modern history at Oxford University (1908). After he returned to Istanbul he wrote for newspapers and magazines, such as *Resimli Hafta* (Picture Weekly), *İnci* (Pearl), and *Kirpi* (Porcupine), and published caricatures (1910-1925). Because of a column he wrote under the pen name "Hüseyin Kenan" in *Resimli Hafta* on 3 April 1925 after the establishment of the new Turkish republic, he was subjected to an investigation which accused him of "alienating the public from military service" and was arrested on 24 April 1925 together with Zekeriya Sertel, the owner of the magazine. After his trial, Cevat Şakir was sentenced to exile for 3 years in Bodrum, then a remote fishermen's village used as a place of banishment for dissident intellectuals. Finding himself in one of the greatest cities of antiquity, Halicarnassus (Bodrum's ancient name, and the birth place of Herodotus, the father of historiography), Cevat Şakir settled down and adopted the name "The Fisherman of Halicarnassus." Although he was pardoned one and a half years later, he stayed in Bodrum for the rest of his life, because he was enchanted with this small picturesque town at the junction of the Aegean and the Mediterranean seas. He became one of the locals, spending all his time with fishermen and sponge divers whom he helped with their export of sponges. He introduced new fishing techniques, planted trees, and wrote engaging stories about Bodrum and its people who lived on the Aegean coast of Anatolia (Asia Minor) since

* All translations from The Fisherman's texts are mine.

² The interest the writer awakened in the region has, in recent decades, caused an explosion of tourism with impending dangers to the environment. Bodrum today has become a holiday resort for rich Turks as well as foreigners. This poses a considerable threat to Bodrum's local ecosystems.

ancient times. His relation to Bodrum provided a grounded meaning in his life, and his deep love of the Aegean and the Mediterranean marine life, as well as his interest in the historical layers of human culture in Bodrum, formed the basis of his moral and ecological imperative. He offered lyrical reflections on the shorelines of the Aegean and the Mediterranean, their species evolution and the cultural heritage of the entire Archipelago in his eleven story collections, five novels, eleven books of essays, and memoirs, all of which are imbued with ecological sensitivity and environmental concerns.³

Cevat Şakir's poetics of marine life, and flora and fauna specific to Bodrum peninsula⁴ qualify him as an important Mediterranean writer with a highly ethical sense of place. In this regard, the Fisherman's entire oeuvre comprises what Lawrence Buell calls "an environmentally oriented work," which he defines in *The Environmental Imagination* as one where the "nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history" (7, italics original). Buell's remark is specifically perceptive for the Turkish Mediterranean eco-cultural imaginary, especially if we consider how, since the Paleolithic period, the cultural tides on Turkey's western shores, where European civilization emerged with Ionians and Aeolians, gave rise to forty-five civilizations. The eco-cultural visions that have evolved since the time of Carians, the ecological imagination that arose from where the land meets the sea are rich, multifaceted, and always "diffractive" like the ripples of waves expanding out to the open seas. Therefore, studying the Turkish Mediterranean in terms of its literary and cultural representations provides a rich ground for Mediterranean ecocriticism. As the Fisherman of Halicarnassus lucidly states in his prologue to his collection of essays titled *A Flower Left to the Aegean Sea*:

This deep blue sky of southern Anatolia, its violet sea, light and land, has nourished various trees, fruits, flowers, human being and civilisations. These stories too are the product of

³ His short story collections include *Ege Kıyılarından (From the Aegean Coasts, 1939)*; *Merhaba Akdeniz (Hello Mediterranean, 1947)*; *Ege'nin Dibi (The Bottom of the Aegean, 1952)*; *Yaşasın Deniz (Long Live the Sea, 1954)*; *Gülen Ada (The Smiling Island, 1957)*; *Ege'den (From the Aegean, 1972)*; *Gençlik Denizlerinde (At the Seas of Youth, 1973)*; *Parmak Damgası (Fingerprint, 1986)*; *Dalgıçlar (The Divers, 1991)*; *Denizin Çağırışı (The Call of the Sea)*; *İmbat Serinliği (The Coolness of the Breeze)*. His Novels are: *Aganta Burina Burinata (Haul out the Bowlines, 1956)*; *Uluç Reis (1962)*; *Turgut Reis (1966)*; *Deniz Gurbetçileri (Those Away at Sea, 1969)*; *Ötelerin Çocuğu (The Child of the Other Side, 1969)*. His ecological Essays are: *Anadolu Efsaneleri (Anatolian Legends, 1954)*; *Anadolu Tanrıları (Anatolian Gods, 1955)*; *Mavi Sürgün (The Blue Exile, 1961)*; *Ege'den Denize Birkalmış Bir Çiçek (A Flower Left to the Aegean Sea, 1972)*; *Merhaba Anadolu (Hello Anatolia, 1980)*; *Düşün Yazıları (Philosophical Essays, 1982)*; *Altıncı Kita Akdeniz (The Mediterranean, the Sixth Continent, 1982)*; *Sonsuzluk Sessiz Büyür (Infinity Grows Silently, 1983)*; *Çiçeklerin Düğünü (The Wedding of the Flowers, 1991)*; and *Arşipel (Archipelago, 1993)*.

⁴ Bodrum peninsula is located at the Northwestern corner of the Gulf of Gökova. Its coasts are carved by many coves and inlets of various sizes and resort towns. The topography varies from mountains to fir forests and affects the local climate. While the northern region, the western side of the peninsula facing the Aegean Sea, is cooler in the summer, the southern region is considerably hotter.

these heavenly hands, mountains, grass, coasts, wild rocks, ruins and open seas. I dedicate all the stories to them. (Italics original)

The marine and terrestrial biodiversity and the intermingling of many cultures on Turkey's Mediterranean coastlines from 3000 BC to today have always inspired ecologically oriented life styles, narratives, and cultural practices. Defined as "the land of eternal blue" by Homer, this local ecosystem is all about the coexistence of human and nonhuman individuals since times immemorial. Therefore, thinking about Mediterranean ecocriticism in the Turkish context means thinking about a mesh of different naturalcultural elements, the coevolution of human and nonhuman agencies, eco-cosmopolitanism, Mediterranean legends (like the legend of Iassos who rode on the backs of dolphins in the open seas), myths (like the story of Hermaphrodite), and stories (like the story of Queen Stratonikeia), meeting at the crossroads of the sea and the land. It is also about bridging the gap between culture and nature in ways that would highlight how nature is emergent in culture and how culture marks the lives of nonhuman individuals such as the bottlenose dolphins whose habitats extend from the Sea of Marmara to the Mediterranean sea. It is important to note that, being considered the world's most biologically outstanding habitats and ecoregions,⁵ the Mediterranean sea (in Turkey's waters) supports a wide range of marine life, and has the world's second highest percentage of endemic species, including the endangered Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*), green turtle, (*Chelonia mydas*), loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), striped dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*), and short-beaked common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*). They are still considered "family" among the local fishermen in small fishing towns that are struggling to cope with harmful transformations brought about by the tourism industry, endangering not only the crustacean and fish species, but also many other endemic species. Among them are the meadows of the endemic Mediterranean seagrass *Posidonia oceanica*. Stabilizing the seashore and maintaining water quality, particularly through oxygen production,⁶ these underwater meadows provide important breeding, feeding, and resting areas for fish, crustaceans, and marine turtles. This biodiversity as well as the crucial importance of preserving the endemic species are frequently discussed themes in the Fisherman's stories and essays.

As noted before, the metaphor of the bridge actually marks Turkey's cultural and geographical identity, and it can be used as an apt trope for Mediterranean ecocriticism, because it provides for a mutual engagement of nature and culture that gives rise to a Mediterranean naturalcultural dynamics. Key to the development and articulation of Mediterranean ecocriticism is, thus, a rejection of binary thinking, and an

⁵ See World Wildlife Foundation WWF's Global 200 Ecoregions, a science-based global ranking of the world's most biologically outstanding habitats and the regions.

⁶ This information is quoted from wwf.panda.org. For more information please visit "Monk seal project: Turkey's Mediterranean coast" at http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/mediterranean/about/marine/monk_seal_project/area/

acknowledgement of mutually implicated cultural-ecological relationships. From this perspective, the Fisherman's narratives of the Bodrum peninsula can be read as telling examples of Mediterranean ecocriticism, as they invite a "diffractive" reading of naturalcultural practices specific to the Turkish Mediterranean regions. Diffraction, a method proposed by Karen Barad following Haraway, is useful in reading Mediterranean naturecultures through one another as the Fisherman had so insightfully done. Unlike the metaphor of reflection that "reflects the themes of mirroring and sameness," diffraction, Barad argues, "attends to the relational nature of difference" (72). Diffractive method then helps foreground the Fisherman's emphasis on the complementarity of Bodrum's natural and cultural dynamics and the relational differences of the region's human and nonhuman inhabitants. Diffraction also enhances the bridge metaphor the author had fully embraced in explaining the significance of the Mediterranean naturecultures. Highlighting the intimate connections between the translocal subjects of the sea and human cultures, his work epitomizes this approach and underscores the full implications of Mediterranean ecocriticism.

In his writings on the local nature and history of Bodrum peninsula, the Fisherman also expressed the great antiquity of Anatolia as the cultural and geographical bridge between Europe and Asia. He tried to prove that the roots of Western civilization had started in Anatolia, and wrote about the history of Anatolian civilizations, myths, and legends that had flourished on these coasts. He would have been delighted, for example, to hear the news that the linguists in New Zealand have "traced the origin of all Indo-European languages ... to Anatolia" (Williams 92). What would even be more interesting for the Fisherman is the news that in 2008, "an international study of DNA evidence showed that the Neolithic populations of central and northern Greece, as well as the Minoans in Crete, had arrived from Anatolia around 7000 BC. A year later DNA tests carried out by Turin University concluded that the Etruscii, antecedents of the people of Tuscany and Umbria, also came from Anatolia, from the region around İzmir" (Williams 92). Referring to this evidence that Western civilization emerged in Anatolia, Roger Williams notes: "This was the essential tenet of Blue Anatolian Humanism, the philosophy that developed during days and nights of discussion among the Fisherman and his Blue-ist (*Maviciler*) friends on their voyages along the Carian and Lycian shores" (92). Indeed, the Fisherman observed, the people in Bodrum lived with a distilled wisdom of countless civilizations, as well as with a deep sense of awareness of their ecological interdependence with nonhuman beings. One of his essays, "The Laughing Tombstones," is a testimony to this sense of interconnection. Examining the epitaphs from various tombstones in Bodrum's old graveyard, the Fisherman emphasizes the environmental sensitivity of the locals showing how the natural places affect meanings people make of their environment: "I have swerved away from you for a long time. But in soil, air, cloud, rain, plant, flower, butterfly or bird, I am always with you" (qtd. in Freely 237). On another tombstone carrying the bas-relief of three trees--an almond, a cypress, and a peach-tree--we read: "I've planted these trees so that people might know my fate. I loved an almond-eyed, cypress-tall maiden, and

bade farewell to this beautiful world without savouring her peaches" (qtd. in Freely 237). These epitaphs also testify to how, as Greta Gaard reminds us, the human embeddedness with and relationship to nature have such a deep and lasting effect on human physical, cultural, and psychological identity" (15).

Living fully engaged with the colorful expressions of the Mediterranean sea and the landscape known as the great Archipelago of Bodrum, the Fisherman fosters the vibrancy of a wide spectrum of life around him in such lyrically written "onto-tales" that the detachment between human and nonhuman realms, experiences, and perceptions dissolves in his account into a conjoint creativity and an expressive bond. He sees all that exists on the land and in the sea as collaborative partners engaged in creativity. That is why in the Fisherman's Mediterranean narratives we find what the biologist E.O. Wilson has called *biophilia*: an "urge to affiliate with other forms of life" (85), as well as a distinctive interest in the stories of cultures since the time of the Carians that recount this affinity.

Located in the southeast of Turkey where the Aegean Sea meets the Mediterranean, and surrounded by 32 islands and islets that form a 174 kilometer long coastline, the Bodrum peninsula is a site where an ecologically minded culture has always existed for centuries. Findings from the Chalcolithic Age prove that these lands have a cultural past going back 5000 years. Bodrum, or Halicarnassus as it was known in antiquity, is thought to have been founded by the Carians in the 11th century BC. Carians (the *Kars* people, whose name *karia* came from the Persian *karka*, a plumed helmet) have been indigenous Anatolian people who lived in the southwest Anatolia from 3000s BC to the 4th century AD. Like Ionia to its north, Caria was a center of culture; its capital city in particular, Halicarnassus, was home to noted philosophers, historians, architects, and physicians of antiquity, including Herodotus of Bodrum, Hippocrates of Istandkoy (Kos), Heracleitos of Ephesus, Thales and Anaximenes of Miletos, and Eudoxos of Knidos, as well as history's first woman admiral, Artemisia I.⁷ Herodotus writes that in the 7th century BC Halicarnassus was a member of the Hexapolis, a union of six cities. Dating back to the 4th century BC, Mausoleion, the tomb of Caria's famous king Mausolos of Halicarnassus, was among the seven wonders of the ancient world. King Mausolos had made Halicarnassus the capital of the kingdom of Caria (meaning "steep country") which, in his time, was one of the cities that successfully repelled the Persian attacks. Because the tomb was taken to England in 1856, the Fisherman asked for the return of the Mausoleum parts to Bodrum in a letter addressed to the Queen of England, saying

⁷ Herodotus, born in Halicarnassus in 484 BC, said that the city had been founded by the Dorians. The next settlers were Carians and Lelegians. In the 6th century BC, the region came under Persian rule. Its most brilliant period was around 353 BC when it was the capital of the Satrap of Caria (in this century it was famous for its trade, sailing and boat building). Artemisia, who was a warrior-woman, played a significant role in the protection of the Asian Union and she achieved fame by adopting a stance against Rhodes as the Admiral of the Carian fleet in 480 BC. See "Bodrum in Ancient Times": <http://www.bodrum-info.org/English/history/index.htm>, (also at <http://users.skynet.be/WVDH/Vakanties/Bodrum/bodrunin.htm>).

that such exquisite works of art were not finding their true place under the foggy and grey sky of London. The letter he received in response stated the following: "Thank you for reminding us of the matter. We have painted the ceiling where Mausolos and the Mausoleum is located in blue" ("Bodrum in Ancient Times"). After the rule of Mausolos in 334 BC, Halicarnassus was conquered by Alexander the Great, and later became a naval base for the Lagos Dynasty of Egypt, and in 192 BC a Roman colony. Halicarnassus fell to Seljuk Turks in 1071 AD, and with the permission of Sultan Çelebi Mehmet the Knights of St. John from Rhodes constructed the crusader Castle of St. Peter (between 1406 and 1523), a.k.a. the Castle of Petrion, which transformed to 'Bodrum' in Turkish. The city came under Ottoman rule in 1522 AD when Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent captured Rhodes and forced the knights to move to Malta, and thus turned the Mediterranean into what he called a Turkish lake.

Feeling immersed in this rich historical heritage, the Fisherman knew that it was imperative that he reflect responsibly on Bodrum's history and ecology of culture, and its predicament for the future generations. When, in the early 1960s, visiting intellectuals from Istanbul dropped in, in search of new aesthetic values aligned with nature and spiritual purification, he took the opportunity to introduce them to the fishermen's way of life.⁸ Together they sailed in the Gulf of Gökova exploring the Sporadic islands, bays, and coves off the shores of Bodrum on the Fisherman's simple sponge diver's boat, Yatağan. Their aim was to rediscover the Aegean coasts of Turkey chanted by Homer. They called their tours "The Blue Voyage," and thus initiated a tradition of blue voyages, a major source of touristic enjoyment since the 1960s. The Fisherman's writings guided and inspired both Turks and foreigners for this journey to the turquoise coasts of Turkey, sailing into the islands and the virgin bays of mythological legends, such as the antique port of Phaselis where Alexander the Great loved to spend his winters.

In his famous essay on the archipelago off the shores of Bodrum, "The Sea of Islands: The Mediterranean," the Fisherman extols on the wonders of these islands:

Sali (pious) islands, Çatal (fork) islands, Keremit (rocky) islands, Sivri (pointed) islands, Black Island, Kisle-Bükü (waterside thicket) islands, and their small offspring islets are a circle of fairies around the Bodrum peninsula. Out in the open sea the Sporadic islands and Cyclades islands form a bigger circle. It is as if a giant, with his palms full of island seeds, rested himself in the middle of the Bodrum peninsula, and has scattered island seeds all over the Archipelago with a wide sweeping movement of his arm. After all, the word "sporad" means to cast seeds.

[...]

They are such clean, innocent islands that one is embarrassed to relieve oneself, feeling as if you dirty the face of a sleeping child. Islands before us, behind us, islands on our right and left; pick as many as you like. When I entered those bays, sailing in the silence of calm waters, my voice would carry my "hello" to the islands. Each one of them would shout back "hello" to me with my own voice; first the nearby islands, then the ones far

⁸ They included a classical scholar, the Turkish translator of Homer, two prominent painters, a political philosopher, and a socialist theorizer.

ahead with their cliffs recollecting the echo. These soft Sporadic islands swim in the sea like the clouds floating in the blue skies. You can take one as a pillow to rest your head.

[...]

Here is the Island Sea, Archipelago, the Aegean, the Mediterranean. (*The Blue Exile* 239, 240)

The rhythms of the sea gave the writer a holistic insight into an interconnected experience of all life. The sea spoke to him, and fascinated him in its richness of life; it drew him to the elemental forces at work in its abysmal depths, filling him with awe, as he wrote in *The Blue Exile*:

Here was a sense of profoundness enveloping us in its infinity. The great archipelago, darkening in the turquoise of the evening—*the old sea*—showed me its majestic presence. The sea cracked upon the horizon without warning like a vast blue thundering infinity. It was a deep blue roar ... I felt like watching infinity from the hill I was standing on. (172)

This kind of ecological imagination, one that is consciously anchored in the existential significance of the great archipelago, not only implies a deep engagement with local natural history, but also transmits the writer's sublime experiences of the place. These are, to quote Mitchell Thomashow, "moments of great awareness and serendipity, when you feel that you are deeply touched by something unfathomable" (212-213). In such narratives the Fisherman underlines the environmental and cultural significance of how, in the juncture of the Aegean and Mediterranean seas, the evolution of human and nonhuman life is an entirely interrelated process. This process also entails a connection that flows over time, creating a sense of permeability between the human experience and the presence of natural forces. Calling the sea "old" reinforces the bonds between the sea and the humans; at the same time it invites us to be part of a more profound and slow and mythical dimension of time. It humanizes the sea in order to naturalize the human.⁹

The naturalcultural relations in the Bodrum peninsula are such that nature becomes a regulatory force in the construal of social meanings. Thus, the figuring of the sea here points to a flux of ongoing intermeshed dynamics. The presence of the sea is fundamental to both human and marine life which are, as the Fisherman also observes, always entangled. "If you notice," he writes, "the main bulk of the Earth is sea. The bodies of land creatures are mainly composed of water. Human blood is salty like sea water" ("The Sea of Islands" 246). This is perhaps the most palpable example of human kinship with the main bulk of the Earth as it elicits a compelling model of physical interconnectedness between human and nonhuman bodies; because, to use Stacy Alaimo's words, " 'body' and 'nature' are comprised of the same material ..." (257). Alaimo calls this a trans-corporeal space, "which has been constituted, simultaneously, by the forces of evolution, natural and human history" (257). This perception is precisely what we find in the Fisherman's narratives where the sea functions as a vital

⁹ I am indebted to Serenella Iovino for this comment.

force that needs to be ethically correlated with human actions, by which he meant a moral recognition of the basic needs of all flora and fauna. The Fisherman believed that the scope of ethics should extend to everything in nature beyond the traditional anthropocentric paradigm about what is morally valuable. He strongly advocated moral responsibility towards all life forms and condemned exploitative treatment of nonhuman animals, sea creatures, and the land. He conceived of natural elements in terms of their intrinsic value. His ethical understanding comprised a moral life that should allow all organisms enough space to exist on their own right, regardless of their usefulness for the human beings. His ethical stance, in this regard, is similar to what Jim Cheney observes in an ecological ethical outlook, one that must “locate us in a moral space which is at the same time the space we live in physically” (129). The Fisherman’s environmental ethics affirms values that, as Anthony Weston also puts it, “open up the possibility of reciprocity *between* humans and the rest of nature” (335). He also claimed that there should be no ethical divide between human and nonhuman subjects, because in all their diversity all nonhuman beings are regarded as complete life forms. Therefore, he views both fish and marine mammals as “subjects” with emotional and mental lives despite their evident difference from those of human subjects. In this context, the Fisherman urges us to rethink what we mean by “consciousness” and/or “subjectivity” and their ethical implications. The sea fauna may not have language, reason, purpose, or intentionality in the human sense of these terms, but according to the Fisherman they have an autonomous existence and thus are considered as moral subjects. As such, the relations between human and nonhuman natures comprise a reciprocally constituted natureculture paradigm in his narratives. The interchanges between the fish and the fishermen, sea and human agency, for example in his novel *Aganta Burina Burinata*, is rendered in terms of their interrelatedness. The seamen he writes, “were the supple dolphins of the sea [...]. When I climbed the hill in Gümüslük and arrived at the top of Meşelik, I turned around to look at the sea. I could hardly refrain from looking at the sea. When I was descending down the slope the sea was no longer visible. Suddenly the whole world turned dark for me” (192). In his essay, “The Craftsmanship of the Mediterranean Fish,” he also writes:

You all know about the cuttlefish. You know how it leaves a trail of ink behind. You think it colors the sea black to escape its enemies. Not so at all! This rowdy is more cunning than you can imagine. Think that a blue-fish, or a sea-bream, its deadly enemies, is chasing after it. No master chameleon can match the cuttlefish in shapeshifting. Now it is intense red, then it suddenly turns deep green. Anyway, the more it is chased by the blue-fish it becomes pitch black. But can it really escape from under the noses of blue-fish, sea-bream, sea-bass, leer-fish, and dolphins? It gets caught. But, when it realizes the situation, it suddenly turns cotton white and tries to get away. When it moves sideways it leaves its ink, explodes it one after the other. Then the enemy sees eight or ten holes of darkness. The cuttlefish has escaped in its sheer whiteness while its follower is snapping at empty darkness. (51-52)

The concept of experience here extends beyond human beings, assuming that even less complex entities, such as the cuttlefish, have some degree of internality and creativity.

Acknowledging the autonomy of sea creatures, the Fisherman envisions them having a certain moral standing; because for him, the sea is alive with an "ecology of mind." Of course, this Batesonian echo may come as a surprise when we consider that animal ethics, cognitive science, and ethology were not yet in the cultural horizon during his time.¹⁰

In the Fisherman's Mediterranean narratives, the character of the sea is worked in such a way, through the use of myths, metaphors, and striking images, that it becomes central in the constitution of culture. That is why the Fisherman placed special emphasis on the eco-cultural significance of the sea in the role it plays in shaping human identity. Thus, the experience of the sea is a central element in our own selves. The Fisherman reinforces this relationship by what Lawrence Buell calls "storypower" (*The Future* 75), which contributes essentially to the maintenance of the environmentally engaged matters, in aesthetic, social, and cultural sense. He describes this experience as "music of the emotions" ("Halicarnassus" 47). Indeed, writing "compelling narratives of life in place" (Buell, *The Future* 68) has enabled the Fisherman to effectively transmit his "sense of place" across time to many generations of readers. His stories underline the significance of what Val Plumwood also calls a "place-sensitive culture" (233)¹¹ in Bodrum. His Mediterranean narratives are wholly embedded in the local traditions of knowledge and language of the Bodrum peninsula. In "The Sea of Islands: The Mediterranean" (*The Blue Exile* 1961), he explains why we call the Mediterranean Akdeniz, the White Sea. Here he narrates the dramatic struggle in the sea he witnessed while cruising at night around the Bodrum peninsula:

(There is no herring, that is *Clupea Harengus*, in the Mediterranean. These, from *Sardina Pilchardus* descent, must be some sort of really big sardines. But the local people call them herring). From the twilight of the depths a fateful life struggle had surfaced. The vast bosom of the waters did not seem large enough to take in this life flood. The depths became an abyss of life and death. These fish are the chief birth givers of the Mediterranean. Togetherness is their life-law. They live together, love and rejoice together, and they die together. The herd is like one fish. In this world of fish that knows no separation and reunion, making love is a swimming adventure. In their swimming course they lay off eggs, milk and a flood of offspring. The waves of the sea become sticky, and water stretches. Within this life-yeast, life itself boils. Their eggs are a tiny round blue lantern in the vast darkness of the sea. This discharged volcano of egg and milk stifles the seas whose choking fame is well known. At night miles and miles of sea turn milky white with these currents of fish and motherhood. The sea like Divine Light! This is the reason why the Mediterranean is called The White Sea in Turkish. (243)

¹⁰ See Cary Wolfe's *Animal Rites* for an extended discussion of the theories of subjecthood, and its ethical and political questioning with regards to species distinctions. Also Jodey Castricano's edited collection of *Animal Subjects* provides important theoretical and ethical discussions of nonhuman animals as "subjects."

¹¹ Today there are several projects that focus on creating place-sensitive culture, such as the one called "Intercultural Bridge of Bodrum" launched by the Gümüslük Academy in 2002. This project aims at recovering Bodrum's local cultural and biological richness, and establishing an intercultural bridge in Bodrum extending from the Aegean to the Mediterranean.

Significantly, the Fisherman's statement that "the world of fish knows no separation and reunion" recasts the quantum principle of nonlocality in poetic terms. It also launches the sea fauna as translocal subjects without any sense of demarcations. The nonlocality principle in quantum theory posits that the reality of the universe is nonlocal, in that all objects and states are interconnected with one another and instantaneously know one another's change of state. Quantum physicist David Bohm discovered that an aspect of quantum reality manifests itself as a strange state of interconnectedness between apparently unrelated subatomic events. In 1943, while working on plasmas (a gas containing a high density of electrons and positive ions, atoms that have a positive charge) at the Berkeley Radiation Laboratory, Bohm found out that, once they were in a plasma, electrons started behaving as if they were part of a larger and interconnected whole. Seeing that the "plasma constantly regenerated itself" (Hiley and Peat 3), and functioned the same way as a biological organism did, Bohm remarked that he had the impression the electron sea was "alive" (qtd. in Briggs and Peat 96). Thus, in 1952 he proposed a new field of *quantum potential*, a new kind of field that existed on a subquantum level. Bohm claimed that the quantum potential pervaded all of space and space did not diminish its effect. It was everywhere at all times. Bohm also discovered that the quantum potential had a radical feature, that the behavior of parts was organized by the whole. The implication was that wholeness was, in many ways, the primary reality of the universe. It explained how the electrons in plasmas, or in other special states, such as superconductivity, could behave like interconnected wholes. The most radical feature of the quantum potential was its implications for the notion of location. That is, since location ceases to exist where the quantum potential operates, it becomes meaningless to speak of anything as separate from anything else. This property is called "nonlocality," and was successfully tested by the French physicist Alain Aspect and his team in 1982, proving that everything in the physical reality is fundamentally interconnected. In other words, communication between electrons occurs faster than the speed of light, which indicates that they belong to a deeper unity that is ultimately indivisible. Ours then, is a "participatory universe," as the physicist John Wheeler also concurred (qtd. in Selleri 297).

This is the underlying theme in the Fisherman's ecological narratives, even though he never mentions that he has heard of this principle. He renders the sea fauna as nonlocal agencies in a boundless space that recalls Bohm's quantum potential. Interestingly, in their geographical mobility and in extending their locality beyond the immediate geographical area, the fish also appear as translocal entities, at least symbolically so. The Fisherman brings these cultural and quantum notions into dialogue in his Mediterranean narratives. He implies that in their connections to all marine life and all humans, the fish create a constellation of physical and symbolic influences. As transnational migrants, they symbolize the relational effects of mobility in terms of translocal dynamics.¹² The citizens of the Mediterranean know no borders and thus they

¹² Calling the fish "transnational migrants" is actually rather problematic in terms of its ideological implications concerning those groups of people who face cultural alienation and racism. However, my

are beyond national categories, because they are Earth agencies. They are transnational migrants, then, not in the sense of human transnational migrants who most often become subjected to racism, sexism, and ideologies of hatred, but in the sense of being "naturally" above and beyond all national, cultural, and social boundaries. Since the fish do not occupy a specific location with boundaries, and perform a coordinated movement, they appear part of an indivisible system, reminiscent of quantum potential's most distinct feature. In other words, the fish behave like interconnected wholes just like the electrons do in plasmas. In the Fisherman's stories the plasma is the Mediterranean sea: "in every cubic meter of the Mediterranean waters there exists more than forty million small creatures. In the Spring and Summer they bleach the sea water at nights. The whitened waters are called sea milk" ("The Sea of Islands" 243). He continues to define these creatures: "These are the microscopic creatures—the earliest representatives of all living things, including humans, who made us name the sea waters as sea milk. It is always the land that is associated with fertility and productivity. However, the real symbol of motherhood is the sea. *Sea Milk* it is called. It is the sea that is the giant breast that suckles all living things" (245-246).

The Fisherman also casts his human characters as interconnected entities of the islands and the sea. In his "Laughing Island," he narrates the story of a mad man called crazy David, who was madly in love with one of the islands called the Laughing Island. "Everything, the sea, the waves, the foams, rock, tree, branch, sky ... whatever exists would rejoice," he writes, when crazy David is around smiling (80). No one seems to know where the island begins and where it ends. "The strange thing about the island was that it was not the man who had chosen it, but that it was the island who had chosen the man" (81). This story explicitly enacts what Serenella Iovino calls "the integration of culture and land" (9). Iovino reminds us of the crucial significance of "partnership between humans and nature" that, she says, "can occur in many forms" (9). In the Fisherman's narratives this partnership takes the form of translocal and nonlocal connectedness of the world of human and nonhuman agencies. In all of his narratives these interactions defy any notion of separateness. As "The Sea of Islands" indicates, the Fisherman understood the cultural context of the entire region of Bodrum as an indivisible aspect of its ecological system. Therefore, he developed a poetics of place with an emphasis on the mutuality between the environment, animals, fish, and the people. He knew that any cultural environment's welfare hinges on a certain human-nonhuman dynamic, which he perceived in terms of their coexistence and coevolution.

The Fisherman also expresses his ecological vision through the animals' perspectives in some of his stories, such as "The Autobiography of a Donkey" where a

intention here is to call attention to geographical mobility of the fish, which spans national borders, specifically in the sense of natural freedom the migration entails in marine life. For lack of a better expression, I have also stated that the sea creatures are translocal since they are multiply located and inhabit natural fields that spread across many locations. Translocality, in this sense, is a better concept for thinking about the kinds of mobility that characterizes many species.

donkey records in realistic detail the cultural landscape he was born into, his interactions with the villagers and other animals and donkeys: "It was an April morning. I was born on the soft grass in the shadow of a magnificent pine tree. I couldn't speak, but I could understand what the humans were saying. The entire village had come to celebrate my healthy birth joyfully. They called me a foal and my old mother a donkey" (88). The donkey projects a vivid picture of the cultural landscape he is born into, his interactions with the villagers and other animals and donkeys: "I was a male. I learned braying from my uncle Kamber. He would stretch his belly, fill it up with all the wind from the sky and bray with all his might. He would bray like thunder and I would pull up my ears and watch him in admiration" (90). When he grows up, the donkey learns human language, and is taken from his stable to a barn which has an inscription on its door, "Domestic Animals Training and Breeding House." He realizes that he will be used for breeding and complains about it and the way he is treated for refusing to cooperate: "They took me to a farm two days away from here. I had heard from my mother. She heard it from her grandmother. We had been carrying the village economy on our backs for 500 years" (93). When he refuses to carry an overweight man he is beaten, but is saved by a veterinarian who is passing by on his way to the stables. The story ends when the donkey tells the reader that those who suffer on earth go to donkey heaven and rest forever there enjoying the dew tapped flowers. "There will be no load on my back, no stick, no saddle, no belt," he says. "When the eagles and hyenas eat my flesh, I will be having sweet dreams on the paradise hills" (94). As this story shows, the Fisherman's moral imagination always crosses the borders between human and more-than-human existence.

In such stories the author situates humans and animals on equal footing by endowing the animals with agency,¹³ which then enables him to claim a partnership. It is a partnership that evidently takes the form of translocal and nonlocal connectedness of all beings. His specific emphasis on the well-being of nonhuman beings, and in particular the fish in the Aegean and the Mediterranean seas, as equally important agencies as the human ones, is what makes the Fisherman's work and his place in Turkish literature unique. As a kind of blueprint the natural here regulates the cultural that acts upon it, because the island ecologies he writes about seem imbued with a strong self-evident sense of active agencies in the shaping of their geographies as well as of human cultures. It was from this eco-cultural standpoint that he advocated the importance of a relational equilibrium which should be the ultimate goal of social communities if we are to live in a healthy environment. In his essay, "Aphrodites of Knidos," he writes: "Life is such that the mutually created should love one another. Because if they do something else than love one another, they will be the executioners of one another" (23).

¹³ I use "agency" here as "an enactment, not something someone does or someone has" (Barad 178). According to Karen Barad, everything exists in a phenomenon of insperability that "*signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*" (33). Thus, agency is not a mere human attribute.

The Fisherman himself lived a climate-oriented life in Bodrum, reproducing its rhythms, reflexes, traditions, and its culture and ecosystem in what he called the rhythms of Anatolian language. As the Australian ecologist P. B. Bridgewater perceptively notes, “A key issue in the maintenance of cultural diversity as a complement to biological diversity is language” (10). The Fisherman knew very well that the people of Bodrum had intrinsic knowledge of the peninsula encoded in their language. “It is difficult to determine which paths the spoken Turkish followed to arrive at its present accent here,” he notes in his essay “Halicarnassus.” Because here, he notes, “Turkish is not enfolded by dialect but by music. Its people have merged with Carians, Lelegians, Phrygians, Phoenicians, Lydians, Helens, Seljuk Turks and the present Turks. The sun that ripens the oranges breeds nice people here” (46). The language is also a part of the land and the sea. For example, the fishermen in his novel, *Aganta Burina Burinata* shout to the sky, to the land, and to the sea “Aganta Burina Burinata” challenging the stars. This is their language, a local password, so to speak, of communication on the boat. It is a command given when they set sail on the open sea, and when the wind fills up their sails and their boat cuts across the waves and the wind, they shout again. This command is gradually and steadily transformed to the land and is adopted by the farmers, shop keepers, cooks, tailors, and shepherds. “The authentic land man, the cook Yaşar would,” he writes, “let loose his voice, and yell 'Aganta'” (45). “Our sails have transformed into the wings of an eagle, flying high in the silence of the clouds, reaching across the sky to the people of the land, carrying our command, ‘Aganta’” (45), say the fishermen. So “Aganta” passes from shop to shop, person to person, carrying a sense of joyful freedom, an enchantment. Everyone in the land uses it and begins greeting each other with “Aganta.” “It’s no kidding,” the narrator observes, “the exclamation of Aganta Burina Burinata was coming from the very core of their hearts in a world of land” (45). In this respect, the Fisherman's stories have significantly contributed to the new understanding of what Bridgewater calls “biocultural landscapes” (9). According to Bridgewater, “all landscapes are subjected to cultural influences. And as such, we must understand that sustainability of ecological systems is achievable only within the context of maintenance of culture. Equal emphasis should, therefore, be given to the cultural aspects of ecosystems in their management—the concept of biocultural landscapes” (9). The Fisherman’s writings in this sense helped raise awareness about the rich biodiversity and biocultural heritage on the Aegean and the Mediterranean coasts of Turkey.

In “The Seals and Dolphins” (from *Cool Aegean Summer Sea-Breeze*), he gives a precise detail of how the monk seals and dolphins enrich Bodrum’s sea and recounts his own encounters:

On the Black island in Bodrum near the sea there is a cave with a flowing sulphur water. I used to stand on top of this cave. In the winter when there was no one around, a seal would regularly visit the cave. We used to have intimate eye contact and gaze at each other for a while. When he didn’t see me I would send him my greetings, calmly saying hello. Then he would turn around and look at me in the eye. His eyes were so innocent. (145)

One night while watching the sea's phosphorescence in darkness, he is startled by the noise of sneezing. He notices a dark shadow near him who suddenly jumps into the sea soaking him. Then he hears a heavy panting that sounds like "hoh" and recognizes his seal friend from the cave. He realizes that they have been sitting together, enjoying the view in silence. He continues the story with the ecological importance of the seal's existence in the Turkish shores of the Mediterranean. "Everywhere except the Anatolian shores of the Mediterranean the seals were massacred in masses and brought to the brink of extinction. Our folks do not kill the seals, because they believe it brings bad luck to them" (145-146). This story he wrote in the 1960s is based on a tale a fisherman had told him in the 1930s. "Grandpa Selim always told my father, 'never kill the seals. For they are humans like us, our fellow travelers on the sea.' My father was a child when Grandpa Selim told him these things. His grandfather made my father swear that he would never hurt a seal. And my father never ceased believing in his grandfather's words."¹⁴ Endorsing the seals' intelligence the Fisherman writes that since the seal is part of our eco-cultural heritage, we should protect this endemic species. When we consider how Turkey's coastal habitats are threatened today by intense tourism, pollution from industrial sources and oil transportation, and agricultural run off, the Fisherman's ecological call becomes even more important. Anticipating these threats he had repeatedly emphasized the significance of developing an ethics of care. In his famous words: "Protecting the Mediterranean seal means protecting the Mediterranean!" The Fisherman sends out a call to future generations, claiming that maintaining an ecological sensibility is of utmost importance in maintaining an ethically balanced co-presence of sea life and land life; because, as he reminds us, they participate in creation together. His famous last words deeply echo this ecological sensibility: "Oh this is such a pain. Nature has locked my hand at a crucial moment [...] I guess I am leaving. I will just say hello to the world and leave. I can smell flowers. Open the windows. I want to see the sun one last time. I want to see this unique land one last time. Hello children. Hello World. Hello."¹⁵ The Fisherman died in Izmir in October 1973. He is buried in a simple tomb in Bodrum on a hill overlooking the city.

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¹⁴See *THY SkyLife Magazine*, 2005.

http://www.thy.com/en/INT/skylife/archive/en/2005_6/konu10_3.htm

¹⁵ From "Halikarnas Balıkçısı" at ToplumDusmani.Net (<http://www.toplumdusmani.net/v2/sair-ve-yazar-biyografileri/3853-halikarnas-balikcisi-cevat-sakir-kabaagacli.html>)

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