

'The Eye and the Hand: Brakhage's Challenge to Ocularcentrism' is a wonderful foray into the filmmaker's tendencies against a single sensory dominance of vision in viewing his films, despite the frequent writings that suggest this very point. Evans implies Brakhage's approach strives for a more corporeally holistic viewing practice, and elucidates this notion through examples from *Interim*, *Desistfilm*, and *Dog Star Man*. Nicky Hamlyn's contribution, 'Brakhage's Blacks', with its discussion of Brakhage's visionary optimism towards the possibilities of the color black is one of the strongest in the entire volume; it reframes the physical, metaphorical, functional, and graphic properties of the color black in film so that it 'is an equal partner in so many of these films which are more usually described in terms of their light qualities' (p. 25).

This particular nickname for Stan Brakhage, *the Realm Buster*, is an interesting starting point for a book of collected essays. Curiously, the new essays – unlike the reprinted ones – rarely invoke the notion of a realm buster. And while the book's core assumption, the presence of opposing tensions at the core of Stan Brakhage's oeuvre, forecloses to a sizable extent the limitless potential of realm busting, in actuality the book is greater than the sum of its parts. This is to say, succinctly, that while the individual essays do not necessarily further Anker and McClure's idea terribly much beyond its present state, the volume as a whole honors the practice of realm busting by including radically diverse perspectives from several of the field's premier scholars. Lori and Leslie preface that there is no proper order to reading their book, nor is there even a beginning; and, in doing so, they maintain the very spirit of the realm buster himself, free from restrictive understanding, open to infinitely new critical possibilities.

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Begüm Özden Fırat, *Encounters with the Ottoman Miniature: Contemporary Readings of an Imperial Art*. London: IB Tauris, 2015. 260 pp. ISBN 978-1780763910 \$46.88

In *Encounters with the Ottoman Miniature*, Begüm Özden Fırat genuinely searches for the ways to discuss an ancient imperial art (and a way of looking) through the glances of contemporary theory, as well as around present-day problematics, concepts, and concerns. In this context, she presents quite dynamic, evocatory and (of course surprisingly) practical uses of a quite vast theoretical background, in a self-reflexive and conscientious way. By way of an interdisciplinary perspective, she proposes new directions and new angles

in the fields of Art History and Art Theory, but also in Cultural Studies, and invites both scholars and curious readers to decipher a new map on an old territory.

Putting the concept 'encounter' at the heart of her analysis, Firat pursues what happens when words and images encounter one another in manuscripts, when today's critics encounter the works of the past, when art encounters theory, when artists of the 'Orient' and 'oriental' styles encounter Western artists and styles. But firstly and mostly, Firat searches for what happens when an art object and a viewer encounter each other. She envisages this encounter within a relationship of reciprocity, where the art object also looks back at the viewer; as a performance, where the viewer occupies an active position; as a process rather than a moment, where the baggage, concerns, and knowledge of the present meet with the past, in a conflict or a duel. Thus, looking becomes a productive and provocative site of combat that disturbs, thereby forcing us and our existing system of knowledge towards new ways of thinking. In this respect, Firat claims her own concern as 'the instances when images surprise their viewers' (p. 2).

Firat employs close reading as her main methodological device, where every detail gains the status of a key analytical tool. Thus, the absence of a tiny belly button in a miniature may lead us to revise radically one of the main, constructive and well known myths – the Adam and Eve parable – into a new and alternative context. Or two petite female figures in the margins of the plane of another miniature may guide us to rethink the status of the frame and the liminal experience of looking. Firat openly claims that such a strategy of close reading carries in itself a threat of over-interpretation; but she defends over-interpretation as a necessary method that can give the art object an opportunity to 'speak for itself'. In addition, as a reader, I argue that, as long as the relationships between every detail of miniaturized narrations and the way they link with the whole or with a general theoretical account are assured, as she does, such a reading directs us all the more to interesting and provocative new ways of thinking, rather than speculative interpretations.

Firat's book is organized around six different miniatures, three from the 17th century and three from the 18th century. She is, then, not focused at all on the 16th century, which has gained considerable academic interest as the Golden Age of miniature art. She explains that her chronological choice is based on the fact that the 17th century – following the decline of the imperial atelier's influence and thus the monopoly of the institutionalized artisanship – witnesses the introduction of new conditions of production, new codes, new techniques, new formats (such as the single page miniature) and new subject matter (such as scenes from everyday life or female figures). So, this chronological choice fits with her position to pursue alternative meanings.

Firat's choice also presents a diversity of subject matter, ranging from war scenes to a scene in an Islamic theological school. Such an organization of the book, around different periods or subject matter may at first seem eclectic; however, as each chapter is linked to the previous and subsequent ones through a main concept or a theoretical account, the book still preserves a comprehensive wholeness.

In the first chapter, concerning a representation of Adam and Eve, Firat analyzes the narrative function of the miniature: the ways in which word and image encounter one another. In this brilliant analysis, she demonstrates how details may lead to a reconsideration of this fundamental myth, thereby showing the dynamism of the myths and how the viewer actively re-interprets the images, following his or her action of viewing.

In the second chapter, by analyzing a nude from the 18th century, a single page without any textual referee, Firat negotiates with the voyeuristic gaze of an orientalist imaginary. Proposing a new concept, 'intimate encounter' where the image also 'looks back' at the viewer (and thus itself revises the concept of intimacy), she argues that this nude raises a new kind of haptic and erotic intimacy, in which the boundaries between knowing and not knowing the other's body are reevaluated. Thus, this new way of looking provokes an epistemological challenge too, in addition to a cultural or political one.

In the third chapter entitled *Surname*, on a series of miniatures from the 17th century and which describes the circumcision feast of Ahmed the Third's sons, Firat explores how miniatures deal with the problem of creating an effect of a seriality of events or *eventness*, a problem with which cinematic techniques are also concerned, and that is focused on the treatment of time and space within a visual realm.

Surname indeed seeks to construct a particular visual representation of imperial power. The same may also be found in the portraiture of sultans. In the fourth chapter devoted to an 18th-century portrait of Ahmed the Third, Firat analyzes how ornament functions to create an auratic shield around the Sultan. Thus, the idea of sultan-ness is guaranteed by an effect of invisibility where the Sultan appears only as a silhouette and the viewer is kept at a certain distance. This portrait differs from the Western portraiture tradition, which seeks to represent individual traits upon a premise of likeness. In this way, Firat demonstrates how ornamentation serves to create meaning, rather than being a mere supplement to the main subject, while also introducing new insights on the relationship between Islamic art's *horror vacui*, and its obsession with ornaments.

The fifth chapter, on a miniature from the 17th century presenting a war scene from the Campaign of King Timour against Sultan Husayn, deals with the physical conditions in which the miniatures are presented. In contrast to the tableaux on walls, which call for a vertical act of viewing, the miniatures are presented as parts of books, in a way promoting a horizontal act of reading. Thus, both the bodily position and the intellect of the viewer are conditioned in a quite different way. This new, alternative way of viewing is enforced by the miniaturized scale of the figures.

The sixth and final chapter, organized around a miniature from the 17th century presenting a theological school, provides us with an account of how the artist combines different techniques from the Western imaginary and the Ottoman tradition, to create a new vision differing from the tableau window. Opening the idea of frame into the discussion, Firat thus demonstrates how different details, as well as the miniature itself, function as a threshold between different realms, and thus also work as an epistemological metaphor between known and unknown (thus seen and unseen) objects, landscapes, and finally, worlds.

Firat concludes her book with a short account of the traces of miniature painting in contemporary artistic forms. Through a concise analysis of the use of miniature in a novel (*My Name is Red* by Orhan Pamuk) and in a movie (*Waiting for Heaven* by Derviş Zaim), she depicts the afterlife of a so-called 'dead' artistic form and indeed examines how it lives on today, through both stylistic influences and contextual impacts. This brilliant insight on the contemporary uses of the miniature (that is incidentally also noted in the second chapter, around a discussion on the touristic use of the miniature) should be deepened further, as it promises many fruitful conclusions.

As a whole, through insightful analysis and by employing a vast theoretical territory from Gaston Bachelard, Mieke Bal, Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze, and so on, Firat opens the miniature up to many of the main concerns of Visual Studies. Linking these concerns with the perspective provided by Cultural Studies, in her exploration where the words follow on from what the visuals tell us (rather than the reverse), she invites us, as readers and viewers, to re-think many assumptions: the belief that portraiture is prohibited in Islamic art, the idea that there are no female figures or nudes in Muslim painting practices, etc. Most significantly, she reminds us how alternative ways of viewing and meaning, how alternative visual epistemologies are still hidden in the works themselves. These new and alternative ways of looking, differing from the educated 'good eye' of the art historian, imply a childish view too, in a way provoked by the toy-like, little colorful figures of the miniatures. Thus, the question of the 'innocent' view, or the view that is not mediated by culture or civilization, could have been added to Firat's provocative discussion also.

In conclusion, Fırat succeeds in her initial promises: to depict how the miniature functions, and, in so doing, she goes beyond conventional inquiries that seek merely to describe it by way of the artist's authorial voice. Furthermore, she manages to handle miniatures as theoretical objects, rather than historical documents, and thus to disorient the established ways of analyzing a non-Western artistic field. Because of this, East and West, modern and non-modern painting practices, thus appear in Fırat's analysis as spheres of negotiation (as duals), rather than mutually exclusive categories. In this respect, while Fırat misses the opportunity to add the insights of History and the historian's gaze to an account of the miniature, she nonetheless genuinely asks thereby deepening general, trans-historical, philosophical questions that still echo in this historical artistic form.

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