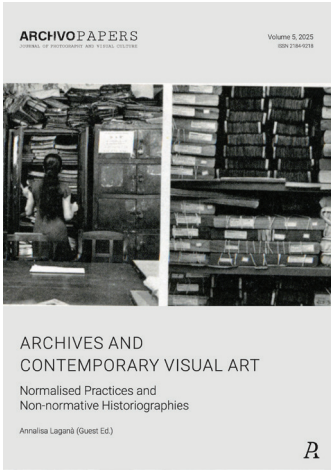

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CONTEMPORARY ARTISTIC PRACTICES FROM TÜRKIYE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY AROUND 6-7 SEPTEMBER 1955

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ARTICLE

MEDIATING THE PAST, MAKING (IN) THE PRESENT
CONTEMPORARY ARTISTIC PRACTICES FROM TÜRKIYE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY AROUND 6-7 SEPTEMBER 1955

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Testimonial discourse, in its verbal and written performances or material expressions breaks down the separation between categories of private/public life by mobilising memory. In Türkiye, following the turn of the twenty-first century, historians and cultural critics increasingly focused their inquiry into minorities' lived experiences of state-sanctioned violence within the national project of modernization through testimonies. Among the series of social ruptures that needed to be re-constructed and contextualised in line with this informal mode of historical narration was the Istanbul pogrom of 1955. This state-supported attack targeted the Greek citizens and other minority residents of the city, concurrent with arson and violations in Izmir and other urban areas including the capital. Although, the riots were neither limited to one city nor initially recognised as a pogrom,[1] in daily language the episode was displaced by the euphemism "the events of 6-7 September." By contrast, survivors' eyewitness testimonials to the simultaneous organisation of armed mobs on 6 September 1955 in Istanbul and other large Turkish cities, their attack against non-Muslim citizens' businesses, residencies, and places of worship circulated as emphatic records of violence for new generations.[2] Details of what the victims and bystanders saw and felt on the day juxtaposed the pogrom's long-lasting destructive effects such as bankruptcy, dispossession and mass migration with quotidian activities. In Dilek Güven's influential book

on the pogrom, *6-7 Eylül 1955 Olayları* [The Events of 6-7 September] (2005), the testimonies themselves would substantiate official data documenting the country's demographic change in the pogrom's aftermath, adding nuance to the meaning of historical knowledge.[3] While this article will not recapitulate historical analyses of the governmental policies and political alliances that led to the pogrom, it seeks to examine contemporary visual culture and the artistic practices that conjure the memory of the pogrom from 1955 to the present moment.

The Memory and Art Talks (2018-2021), led by the local human rights organization Hafıza Merkezi [Truth Justice Memory Centre] in Istanbul, once again demonstrated that remembering is not an individual act but is dependent on the constitution of social frameworks regarding *how and when to remember*. Within art's political and aesthetic operations, forgetting, missing and remembering are posed as complementary, sometimes co-existing notions. Building on this understanding, I will focus on a critical category of visual practices that mediate the memory of the pogrom, underlining the conceptual interlinkages between memory and mediation. To mediate can at once be taken to mean to reconcile, alter, and form. Raymond Williams first noted mediation's three-fold semantic complexity and in an entry devoted to the term in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976). As he pointed out in a reference to Theodor Adorno's *Theses on the Sociology of Art* (1967), mediation can be more than an ideologized process acting as an intermediary to real experiences or relations: "mediation is in the object itself, not something between the object and that to which it is brought."[4] Williams is interested in the conflict that arises from the seeming autonomy of form and the bilateral relationship in communication that renders art and, in fact, all cultural objects subject to mediation by social relations. Personal and collective memories function similarly. They reconcile, alter and form perceptions of the past as mediations themselves.

The stakes of addressing the pogrom on artistic terms have to do with being a witness to one's own time through its breakages and continuities with the past. Genocides, pogroms, disappearances, and forced migrations are carried out in ways that undermine collective processes of witnessing, or at least their political efficacy. The following vignettes draw on photography, installation, and virtual reality to exemplify diverse representational techniques for memorializing the pogrom. In the first instance, images of the pogrom in Fahri Çoker's archive are juxtaposed with two photographs taken by Dimitrios Kalumenos (1912- 2006) on 7 September, 1955. The method of tarrying over images that are not considered artworks, to account for invisible power relations signalled in the act of photography and caption was inspired by Ariella Azoulay's approach to a particular photograph in *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (2012).[5] This is followed by a discussion of the 2005 exhibition of Çoker's photographic collection by Karşı Sanat and the virtual reality project titled *Eylül 1955*. Three respective spatialisations of memory emerge: in the archive, in public space, and in digital realms. As contemporary art and exhibition-making practices enter into dialogue with archival

imagery, they facilitate historical reckoning and problematise recognition as long as it is something to be conferred upon others. They address themselves to the ethical responsibility to "work through the past,"[6] that is, to transform the social conditions that gave rise to the racialisation of Greek and other minority citizens in Türkiye. In her book *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (2001), Kelly Oliver focuses on the relational aspects of witnessing tied to vision, being seen and heard:

> If space is not empty, and if vision connects us rather than separates us, if vision is indeed is a proximal sense like touch (…) we can imagine an alternative form of recognition, which gives rise to an alternative conception of subjectivity and identity.[7]

The aesthetic dimension of this interconnectedness is telling. Arguably, artistic practices can re-stage the process of witnessing that was lost in the 1955 pogrom for different social actors, audiences, collaborators and artists, without reproducing dichotomous oppressed/oppressor or victim/perpetrator roles.

Close visual analyses of the pogrom's imagery as primary sources for investigation would not have been possible prior to the 2000s due to a half-century-long censorship. In a similar vein, the obstacles in accessing the original photographs from Fahri Çoker's archive, which was closed to the public until further notice when I was undertaking field research in 2023 and negotiating for access to newspaper issues dating back to 1955 elsewhere, shaped this research rather than halt it. The ensuing investigation traces how the archive is activated through various strategies to question whether it can be worked against its own mode of representing violence.

OF AN ARCHIVE TO COME: PHOTOGRAPHY AND WITNESSING

> And yet, and yet, there is a future for the archive, perhaps, and there is, perhaps, an archive for the future. And that hope would belong, equally, to Freud's notion of the archive which, while producing the erasure of itself in the name of the one and the same, also delegates itself to the traces that carry the promise of the future. Those archigraphic traces open the archive to the Other, to the memory of the other and to every other other. — Dragan Kujundzic, *Archigraphia*

In a black and white photograph dating to 6 September, 1955, middle-aged men are squeezed into the frame by a larger crowd, constituting what may be described as a sea of bodies. The Turkish flag stretched to their right separates the central figures from the rest; some look directly at the shutter of the camera while others lift their gaze to a point approximate to its position. The ones who do hold our gaze smile widely. A man salutes the camera more directly, arguably he has raised his hand in a gesture that calls upon the photographer to join in. This scene easily leads one to presume an air of national celebration as in a parade. The reality of the visual records of the pogrom are not always delivered through what is contained within the frame. Against the visible qualities of the shot, what the contemporary viewer encounters is a "critical image" in the sense that Judith Butler coins in

Figure 1.
Anonymous, photograph 66a, Fahri Çoker Archive. © Tarih Vakfı Arşivi

The caption reads: "İsmail Salıpaya? Lives in the building. Ömer(?) in one of the restaurants behind the hotel. Salih Özvatan." Published in *6-7 Eylül Olayları, Fotoğraflar-Belgeler, Fahri Çoker Arşivi*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2005), 120.
Image courtesy of Tarih Vakfı Arşivi (Turkish History Foundation Archive).

Precarious Life, where the photograph comes to show its own failure to address its violent referent.[8] Photograph 66a and others bear witness to the night through this failure.[9] A close examination of the conditions of their production, distribution, censorship and belated reception will give nuance to their claim on representation.

Admiral Fahri Çoker was a judge who served on the Beyoğlu District Martial Law Court established in the immediate aftermath of the 1955 pogrom. Çoker compiled the documents that came into his possession during this time, including 246 photographs from 6-7 September, and later donated them to the Turkish History Foundation. His archive was made public upon his death in 2001, published in print in 2005 under the title *6-7 Eylül Olayları, Fotoğraflar-Belgeler, Fahri Çoker Arşivi* [6-7 September Events, Photographs-Documents, Fahri Çoker Archive], and remains one of the key comprehensive historical and visual sources related to the pogrom in Türkiye. Most of the photographs published had never been visible or accessible on mass scale before. Having surfaced approximately fifty years after the event, the visuals played an important role both in terms of public reckoning and in allowing such historically specific memories to be constructed in public consciousness for the first time across generations. This temporal delay is partly explained by the government's repressive tactics employed under martial law in 1955, including heavy censorship of local media and the confiscation of visual materials possessed by foreign press members at the borders.[10] The hand-written captions in German on the backside of some photographs give an indication of the scale of this intervention. The rest of the photographs, some known to be taken by Turkish National Security forces,[11] are sheltered from their own status as witnesses under the cover of anonymity. The extent of the photographers' participation in the very acts of civil and state violence they sought to capture is unknown. Thus, the two distinct but interlinked events at play here, the event of photography which we

can only imagine via what is pictured and the event of state-sanctioned violence, are both marked with a certain ambivalence. For instance, the workings of the camera welcomed by some of the perpetrators as affirmations of their cause, also produced what became evidence of their violation. Spread across the photographic archive like a leitmotif, X marks appear on the bodies of individuals. These black pen traces are from ensuing police investigations, superposed on the printed surface as an added physical and semantic layer.[12]

A nation that portrays itself as unified in language, thought and religion at devastating costs produces silent civil subjects that are implicated in its systematic construction (by destruction). Encountering the images in Çoker's archive, the contemporary onlooker can neither be placed at a subject position that the rioters appealed to, nor identify with the officials who inspected, purloined and kept these records. Here lies the critical task for the photographs' new-found audience. If explicating the politics of photography brings about analyses in the negative mode, these must not only assume a form of retrospective contemplation and critique the discursive frameworks of the photographic archive as a space for official memory. They must also displace the visible and tie questions of what is photographed to what and whom *are not*.

Most noticeably, Çoker's archive is shaped through the profound absence of the pogrom's victims. Since most were in hiding on the night, the subjects who occupy its sphere of visibility are the armed men and women. As such, the images can't help but reiterate the prevailing exclusionary logic that severs minorities' links with political and civil life in Türkiye, albeit on a representational level. As others have argued, the history of photography as a technology and means of recording is deeply imbricated with the development of the modern state complex and the power it wields over its subjects. In *Evidence, Truth and Order: Photographic Records and the Growth of the State* (1980), John Tagg notes how the camera's frontality captures bodies and spaces to measure them up against a Foucauldian ideal space of "a new strategy of power-knowledge."[13] He likens the camera to the state, where neither operate in a neutral manner.[14] Thus, one might ask, how can photography, as medium and act, render violent histories and its victims accessible as the historical subjects they are, without reproducing a similar violence?[15]

The writing of light may deliver us still images, yet their referents and respective truths are not so still. State apparatuses are subject to time and change. More importantly, so is one's gaze that disrupts or challenges those apparatuses. Admitting that "the photograph is not political in itself" Ariella Azoulay poses the practical gaze, the civil gaze, employed on and with the photograph as political in *Civil Imagination* (2012).[16] This gaze is attuned to consider the image, the event of its making, the photographer and the photographed in continuous correspondence. Azoulay spatialises the political as one of "relations between people who are exposed to one another in public."[17] It is not enough to finally get to look at the materials in Çoker's archive, what is at stake is also what we are able to see in images of the pogrom: a plural exercise of re-constructing what lies outside the

frame. How we are able to participate in this space of potentiality through the civil gaze is an aesthetic matter as it is an ethico-political issue.

Another way to trouble the clandestine archiving process of the photographs in Çoker's possession is to bring them into contact with another personal archive. Dimitrios Kalumenos was an Istanbul-born photojournalist who worked as the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate's photographer at the time of the pogrom. He took 1,500 photographs on the two days which saw the city upturned. Upon being briefly arrested, then exiled from the country in 1958, Kalumenos moved to Athens with his photographic archive, where it still remains with his family. On the 60th anniversary of the pogrom (2015), 60 photographs from his collection were finally published in Türkiye in an edited book format similar to Çoker's.[18]

Figure 2.
Anonymous, photograph 116b, Fahri Çoker Archive. © Tarih Vakfı Arşivi

Part of the caption reads: Foto Basın, Kemeralt Hükümet Karşısı, no: 24, Izmir. Published in *6-7 Eylül Olayları, Fotoğraflar-Belgeler, Fahri Çoker Arşivi*, 205.
Image courtesy of Tarih Vakfı Arşivi (Turkish History Foundation Archive).

Two of Kalumenos' shots depicting military troops employed on city streets on the morning of September 7 differ greatly in register when contrasted with the dangerous frontality of another anonymous image that made it to Çoker's archive. While the affective qualities of all three photographs arise from the conflation of the camera/photographer's viewpoint and that of the contemporary viewers, risk and injurability are communicated much more subtly in the cryptic framing of the former images. In Kalumenos's first photograph, he is inside a building, either at the Greek Consulate or the Patriarchate, looking outwards to the street. In the other, he has gotten closer to his subjects but remains behind a garden railing. The shallow depth of field in both frames creates textured images, bringing military men into sharp focus while blurring the rails and foliage or curtains in the foreground. The distance between Kalumenos and his subjects is at once flattened and brought into relief. Elsewhere, with the close-up, making things feel closer to incite emotion or appeal to empathy could be a visual stand-in for intimacy. Instead, Kalumenos was

not only taking purely aesthetic decisions with his camera, he was trying to conceal and distance himself behind objects as he feared the consequences of becoming visible to his subjects. This determined, to an extent, not only the possibilities of what he was to photograph but also how he pictured what he saw and how we come to access the memory of the morning through this recording gesture. Appearing in public with a camera would have entailed great risk to many during the pogrom, especially if you were a Greek Orthodox photographer. Kalumenos' practice established strong links between mediation and content, where the visual could not be separated from the embodied process of its making or its maker.

These photographs suggest a distinction between a desired visibility and an unwanted one for those occupying subject positions who are othered, racialised and dispossessed of their feelings of belonging as well as their rights to property. When, at times, this subject evades being seen, it is possible that s/he demonstrates a refusal to act out the seer/seen object dichotomy. In the context of Kalumenos' body of work, the act of photography is a resistant strategy which alters the conditions of his own visibility, and the wider international recognition of the pogrom. By moving away from the two extreme poles of representation in public space and national imaginaries, victims' daily hypervisibility or total absence, his work demands "being a party to the perception making that shapes our world, being as seeing in addition to being as being seen."[19] The pogrom's photographic documentations address a social unit that is always more than one, larger than the singular viewer. The tension between Kalumenos' insistence on recording history in spite of all and other events that have gone unphotographed during the pogrom, such as rapes and home invasions, is parallel to the tension between the impossibility and necessity of eyewitness testimony that is usually in excess of the kind of knowledge recorded as historical truth. According to Kelly Oliver, this tension is what "produces the possibility of getting beyond a mere repetition of either history or trauma."[20]

Although neither memory nor history is directly commensurate with the archive, the public exercise of control over it, that is how it is accessed, staged and interpreted, whether the archive was private or institutional from the beginning, has come to be a right rather than a privilege.[21] The two visual archives discussed here are characterised by the same temporal lapse that documents go through in state archives, where the technical demand for collecting and processing contemporaneous materials or security concerns result in a considerable delay in their release. For Dilek Güven, this has meant that the Greek Foreign Affairs Ministry's sources were inaccessible for a period of fifty years while she was researching the pogrom.[22] Yet another kind of obstacle in building collective historical awareness, this time on the level of erasure, is at work when historical records are fully omitted from the modern archive. Güven remarks that in Ankara, Cumhuriyet Arşivi [the Archive of the Republic] does not contain any correspondence or reports related to the 1955 riots.[23] In this case, far from being incidental or intrinsic to the Archive's negation-in-abundance, concerning what is preserved and what that preservation

destroys, the erasure becomes constitutive of the state's legitimacy. Photographs from both Çoker's and Kalumenos's archives with their respective blind-spots and gaps pose a challenge to this historical gap.[24] As such, their photographs can be seen as projecting themselves into the future, where they await becoming part of a larger archive that remembers the pogrom, an archive which does not necessarily remain loyal to the filing cabinet and can configure itself in writing as in other media formats.

ANOTHER SPACE FROM THE RUIN

An exhibition titled *50. Yılında 6-7 Eylül Olayları* [6-7 September Events on their 50th Anniversary] comprising a selection of Çoker's photographs was planned to open on September 6, 2005 simultaneously with the Turkish History Foundation's release of *6-7 Eylül Olayları, Fotoğraflar-Belgeler, Fahri Çoker Arşivi*. The interdisciplinary art collective *Karşı Sanat Çalışmaları* [Dissident Art Works] housed the exhibition in their central space in the historical Elhamra passage on İstiklal Caddesi, a street that had been targeted heavily in the 1955 attacks. The choice of location was not a mere coincidence, of course. Returning to the exhibition in a 2021 essay, Ezgi Bakçay who has been part of Karşı Sanat since 2016, attests to the politically engaged organisation's will to "open up a space which would gather temporalities and generations around the void created by (these) losses."[25] The said losses refer to periods in recent local history which could be listed under somewhat abstract yet evocative terms; state violence, migrations, the 1980 coup, the disappearance of family members. Karşı Sanat's "opening up of a space" comes as a response to what they perceived as a narrowing public sphere, making it difficult for exhibitions to address contemporary predicaments and historical events such as the pogrom. Indeed, on the exhibition's opening night, a right-wing mob carrying Turkish flags gathered in protest against the display. Without an initial police intervention, they entered the space, tearing photographs down and throwing them out the windows.[26] We only need to use a fraction of our imagination to note how the sight of this crowd was haunted by the original shots depicting the perpetrators in 1955. The organisers' decision to keep the display in its ruined state for the duration of the exhibition,[27] was an attempt at self-archivisation. They refused to clean up the ruinous effects of the same violence recurring fifty years apart.

Bakçay lists three functions of exhibition making as a political act, which we can trace in the exhibition, *50. Yılında 6-7 Eylül Olayları*: giving "birth to new collective actors, to collectivities; (…) open[ing] up physical and symbolic spaces; (…) allow[ing] for the transformation of the relations between image and meaning in the realm of representation."[28] The protesters' fury against this exhibition was not simply directed towards the content of the images nor to the charge they made against their identity as "Turkish citizens." Instead, it targeted a specific social framework for memory that aims to create a progressive collective identity around the exhibition, enabling the images to express a call for political transformation

in the present. Ultimately, the meaning of the photographs in Çoker's archive was re-coded twice over: first, when the 2005 attack in Karşı Sanat brought the display of the visual sign closer to the violence signified in pictures, then, when solidarity marches with the exhibition occurred on İstiklal street, giving rise to a form of collectivity proposed earlier by Bakçay.[29]

The professed suspension of time in archives, the surface of confiscated photographs and an exhibition that opens up as a portal to the past are all entities that reflect the remembrance of the pogrom back onto one another. They may seem distinct in their representational methods. The archive orders, the photograph points, the exhibition gathers; yet, they all register the visual in the realm of collective memory. It is the audience that needs to remember what they have not lived through by looking. Çoker's archive's failure to figure the victims of the pogrom set against Kalumenos' reinscription of the camera's viewpoint, requires us to account for different attitudes towards representing danger and destruction depending on subject positions. The contrasts between the two kinds of images, taken in public and in hiding, suggest the viewer's own embeddedness in the set of relationships between what is seen and who does the seeing in the photograph. The dates, 6-7 September, are themselves made into signifiers of loss with each anniversary, every photograph that is printed, every exhibition that re-counts violence hoping that it is not repeated.

EYLÜL 1955 IN 2016

Documentary reconstruction of real-life events in new media shows a developing desire to transform audiences' engagement with traces of historical time from one of looking to watching. This shift introduces a renewed sense of duration to our anachronic witnessing of state violence in the case of the pogrom. *Eylül 1955* [September 1955] (2016) is a virtual reality project Turkish filmmaker Deniz Tortum made in collaboration with Nil Tuzcu and Çağrı Hakan Zaman. The eight-minute VR project, reconstructs three scenes from the day of the pogrom divided by blackouts. As an imaginative as well as documentary exercise, it uses computer generated imagery running on Unreal Engine. Like other virtual reality documentaries, the level of immersion in *Eylül 1955* has to do both with the construction of a narrative sequence and computer-generated excerpts from real life audio-visuals. It, however, deviates from illusionism over the course of its duration and challenges the very promise of immediacy attached to the medium's mode of viewership. This has to do with the question of how we get to see through time even if we get to see through space in virtual realms, the notion of memory work.

The piece is structured to break with a linear chronology unless one stays in the experience for longer periods to watch it repeat. It starts at night, jumps further back in time in the day and then moves to the afternoon when attacks on businesses in İstiklal started. A new cyclical conception of time emerges out of the audience's disorientation. With each scene fading in and out of view, the virtual

Figure 3.
Scenes from the first sequence of *September 1955*, Deniz Tortum, Nil Tuzcu and Çağrı Hakan Zaman, 2016. Photographs taken by the author while running the VR experience on Unreal Engine, 08.02.2023, London.
Courtesy of Deniz Tortum.

reality experience simulates the fragmented workings of memory in recalling a past event. Where reminiscing on the pogrom is doubly impossible due to the traumatic impact of the violence and the passing of its eyewitnesses, a process of vicarious remembrance is generated for the audience.

In order to narrate and to be narrated, *Eylül 1955* calls for a change in both vision and language from the third person to the first. You find yourself on the deserted street, virtually there, with sounds of glass being shattered in the distance. Ideological and temporal markers of the pogrom emerge along the street: a CGI Turkish flag is propped up on one side of the street and a newspaper issue which was distributed on the day of the attacks lies on the ground. Not only do these ominous signs repeat in the photographs from Çoker's archive, but they give a heightened sense that you are now in the spacetime of the photograph, of the event. In *Eylül 1955*'s display at Keller Gallery, different to the 2017 exhibition at Istanbul's International Independent Film Festival (!F), the audience physically faces the archival photographs hung on the walls of the gallery. The piece's relationship with photography is thus staged in a more direct manner as one of remediation.[30] In this light, *Eylül 1955* could be seen as refashioning the sense of witnessing the "truth" of violence, just in an interactive medium, if it was not for physical obstacles to interactivity in the experience. The creators make sure that the users perceptually witness the distant sounds of violence but can neither approach another person on the street, victim or perpetrator, nor act on the course of events. The sense of being within the environment is complicated by the vanishing point that is viewer's

personal history, out of time with the pogrom. The limiting of interactivity creates a reflexive atmosphere that makes the user aware of their own effort to bear witness. After all, the opening sequence insinuates that the only real interaction that can take place between the user in the VR experience and the pogrom appeals to memory.

If, for Tortum, reconstruction means creating "a generative environment for memory,"[31] it happens across places that never were and places that no longer exist, at the overlap of digital and physical worlds. *Eylül 1955*'s second and third sequences take place in a fictional photography studio in the district. The environment shows resemblance to Maryam Şahinyan's Foto Galatasaray which once occupied the first floor of Çiçek Pasajı. Şahinyan was the country's first woman photographer and Armenian; she kept her business running after the pogrom and the decades that followed. As contemporary historical reconstructions memorialising the pogrom base themselves on oral testimonies, the creators of the virtual experience seem to rely on the visual testimony of Şahinyan's photographic records in their attempt to re-build the past. These become crucial not only as points of reference for the accuracy of digital spatial constructions, but also for shaping the audience's hypermediated relationship with the simulation. A selection of photographs on the virtual studio wall brings together images taken by Osep Minasoğlu and Şahinyan. A second storyline, another archive based on Şahinyan's 50 years of practice and life, along with those of her subjects, far exceeding the duration assigned to the pogrom by officials comes into view.

Scenes left outside the main body of the work signify the limitations of reconstructive VR artworks. The experience ends in another blackout when anonymous figures gather outside the shopfront and start banging on the windows. This abrupt cut into the storyline when the narrative tension reaches its peak is also the moment many consider to be the beginning of the events of 6-7 September. The final scene, of course, is not quite a cliffhanger ending for the Turkish audience, the following events can be imagined by referring to the repository of media images put into wide circulation after the 2000s in their memory. But the creators refuse to make explicit acts of violence the starting point of their story or re-create it in a direct manner for the sake of immersion. The impossibility for anyone to go back in time and be physically and emotionally vulnerable to the lootings; the fear; the bodily violations set ethical and aesthetic boundaries for any creative interpretation of the event. Tortum's artistic decisions demonstrate that despite the user's avowed condition of double occupancy, straddling two visual/spatial realms with the VR headsets, bodies made of flesh and bone can't be carried over, at least for now. The visceral affect of the work lies elsewhere in the instances where it breaks with the conventions of linear storytelling and photorealism.

Embodiment in digital media has been overwhelmingly depicted as either an absent presence or a present absence. For *Eylül 1955*, such oxymorons are telling of the work's ontological status. To recreate the sense of duration that corresponds to the day of the pogrom, the work too must pass with the passing

of time. Once seen in its totality, it can only survive in the minds of its audience as an afterimage. This afterimage is distinct from the traumatic afterimage that Joshua Hirsh identifies in "posttraumatic cinema" exemplified by Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog*, which produces "an image that formally repeats the shock of the original encounters with atrocity…"[32] Tortum and his collaborators attempt less to shock than *make time* for dwelling in recent history, even if for eight minutes.

Eylül 1955's afterimage haunts its contemporaries, the Turkish historical narratives that insist on painting an image of the past as one of glory, either by way of association with Islamic culture, the birth of the republic or the Ottoman Empire. The AK Party government's political efforts to define a new national identity based on reinterpretations of the Ottoman past in the last two decades have also found its parallels in daily life: the increased cultural production around Ottoman period dramas or the building of mega-mosques in landmark spots in Istanbul are only a couple examples.[33] Against these monuments cemented by state policy, virtual media's ability to conjure up immaterial visions; the short duration of the experience; the risk that most hardwired VR works face in terms of being rendered obsolete by future technologies, all contribute to the precarity of the work's display. *Eylül 1955* is not accessible in any permanent collection in Türkiye. Its tendency is to disappear after evoking the after-image of the pogrom.

The repetition, re-construction and remediation of the event yields difference as an intervention in processes of memorialization that fix and treat memory as a unitary entity in constant decline. The time of memory, as Tortum's VR experience shows, is more cyclical than linear. This intervention suggests that in our mode of relating to the works and documents of the pogrom, empathy is displaced by the continuous failure to be witnesses to the atrocities committed in the pogrom, those that were captured in images and those that were not photographed. Seen in relation to Çoker and Kalumenos' photographs, Tortum's choice of setting provokes further reflections on the extreme violence that turns Istanbul into a ruin, or a borderless photography studio. In virtual reality, in Karşı Sanat's building peering over İstiklal, or at archival photographs from computer screens, our bodies set a shifting line between the image and the event, between the past and the future. To deny this boundary would be to deny the corporeal vulnerability that victims of the pogrom experienced. Artistic mediation is a necessity, of less than perfect solidarity, because of this boundary.

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1 Dilek Güven, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları Ve Stratejileri Bağlamında: 6-7 Eylül 1955 Olayları*, translated from German by Bahar Şahin. Istanbul: Iletişim, 2010, 3-4. First published in 2005.

2 Two comprehensive studies in this line are Rıfat N. Bali's, *6-7 Eylül 1955 Olayları: Tanıklar Hatıralar.* Ii. Istanbul: Libra Kitapçılık ve Yayıncılık, 2018, first published in 2010, and Güven's *6-7 Eylül 1955 Olayları*, 1-215.

3 Türkiye's Greek-speaking population in 1955 was seventy-nine thousand six hundred ninety-one, whereas by 1960 this was down to forty-eight thousand ninety-six. Ibid., 146.

4 Theodor Adorno quoted in Raymond Williams, "Mediation," in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Flamingo ed., revised and expanded, (London: Fontana, 1983), 206.

5 Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography*, translated by Louise Bethlehem, (London: Verso, 2012), 75-76. First published in 2010.

6 Theodor Adorno, "The Meaning of Working through the Past," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, translated by Henry W. Pickford, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 89-103.

7 Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 12.

8 Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, (London: Verso, 2004), 144-146.

9 Visual culture and media theorist Susan Schuppli uses material witness as an operative concept that explores "the evidential role of matter as both registering external events as well as exposing the practices and procedures that enable such matter to bear witness. Material witnesses are non-human entities and machinic ecologies that archive their complex interactions with the world, producing ontological transformations and informatic dispositions that can be forensically decoded and reassembled back into a history." Susan Schuppli, "Material Witness," accessed online 23.06.2023.

10 Dilek Güven, and Tarih Vakfı, *6-7 Eylül Olayları, Fotoğraflar-Belgeler, Fahri Çoker Arşivi*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2005), x.

11 Dilek Güven, and Tarih Vakfı, *6-7 Eylül Olayları, Fotoğraflar-Belgeler*, ix.

12 The arrests were highly performative; the attacks were blamed on communists who were seen as a threat to national security by state officials and newspapers. See *Hürriyet*, 9 September 1955 issue, no. 2665: 1.

13 Originally published as "Power and Photography" in 1980, this essay was reprinted as "Evidence, Truth and Order: Photographic Records and the Growth of the State," in John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan Education, 1988), 64.

14 Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, 63.

15 In her comparative essay on contemporary videoworks addressing state violence in Türkiye, Nora Tataryan raises similar points on artistic responsibility with respect to artworks' capacity to disrupt regimes of truth. Nora Tataryan, "An Essay on the Representation of Violence and the Possibility of Confrontation with the Past," *Talks on Memory and Arts 2020*, (İstanbul: Hafıza Merkezi, 2021), 69-77.

16 Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination*, 54 and 72-75.

17 Azoulay, *Civil Imagination*, 52.

18 Dimitrios Kalumenos, and Serdar Korucu, *Patriklik Fotografcisi Dimitrios Kalumenos'un Objektifinden 6-7 Eylül 1955*, (İstanbul: Istos Yayincilik; 2015).

19 Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 52.

20 Ibid., 86.

21 See Sonia Combe, "Confiscated Histories. Access to 'Sensitive' Government Records and Archives in France," *Zeithistorische Forschungen*, 10, no. 1 (2013): 124.

22 Güven, *6-7 Eylül 1955 Olayları*, 9.

23 Ibid.

24 Paul Ricoeur notes "…the most valuable traces are the ones that were not intended for our information" in his essay, "Archives, Documents, Traces" (1978) in *The Archive*, edited by Charles Merewether, (London: Whitechapel, 2006), 67.

25 Ezgi Bakçay, "'The Politics of Art' in Turkey in the 2000s: Karşı Sanat Çalışmaları," in *Talks on Memory and Arts 2020*, , edited by Eylem Ertürk and Sevim Sancaktar, translated by Baptiste Gacoin, (İstanbul: Hafıza Merkezi, 2021), 28.

26 Anadolu Ajansı (AA), *Cumhuriyet* no. 29190 (September 2005): 8.

27 AA, *Cumhuriyet* no. 29190, 8.

28 Bakçay, "'The Politics of Art' in Turkey in the 2000s," 31.

29 Bakçay, "'The Politics of Art' in Turkey in the 2000s," 32.

30 Bolter and Grusin also point to the affinity between photography and digital graphics, which are both "automatic" processes. J. David Bolter and Richard A. Grusin,

Remediation: Understanding New Media, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999) 27.

31 Deniz Tortum in conversation with the author, 30.05.2023.

32 Joshua Hirsch, *Afterimage: Film, Trauma and The Holocaust*, (Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2004), 19.

33 See Umut Uzer, "Glorification of the Past as a Political Tool: Ottoman History in Contemporary Turkish Politics," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 9:4 (2018): 339-357. A recent artistic critique to the subject is Andréas Lang's exhibition *Broken Memories* (18.04.-24.06.2023) at Depo İstanbul. Lang re-frames the battle panoramas and Ottoman set props from historical fiction productions as archaeological traces of state ideology.